

***“Then I was labelled sick with a capital S...”:  
suffering and narrative identity of elderly men with  
incurable cancer***

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# The suffering of elderly men with incurable cancer

- Why look specifically at the reality of these men?
  - Medical aid in dying and suffering
  - Incurable cancer and aging
  - Aging population
  - Incurable cancer and male suffering




# Context

- Previous research: I) A research with older women with incurable cancer; II) A pilot project with caregivers of older men with incurable cancer.
- Objective of the current research: To better understand the psychological suffering experienced by older men with terminal cancer from their perspective.
- Sub-objectives: To explore how the concept of narrative identity can inform our understanding of the suffering experienced by these men regarding:
  - Communication,
  - Social roles transformation,
  - Transmission.




# Suffering and masculinity

- A definition of Suffering (Ricoeur)
  - Suffering, cancer and end of life
  - Hegemonic masculinity
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# Critical Gerontology

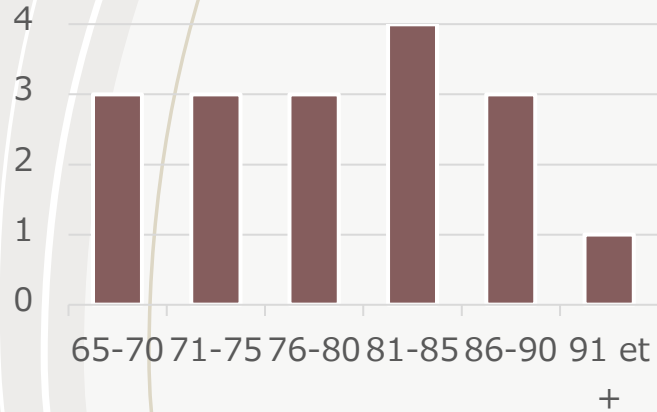
- Encompasses various theories addressing social, economic, cultural, political, gender factors related to aging;
- Different interpretations of aging;
- Giving voice to seniors;
- Interdisciplinary approach.

# Self-narrative, illness & narrative identity

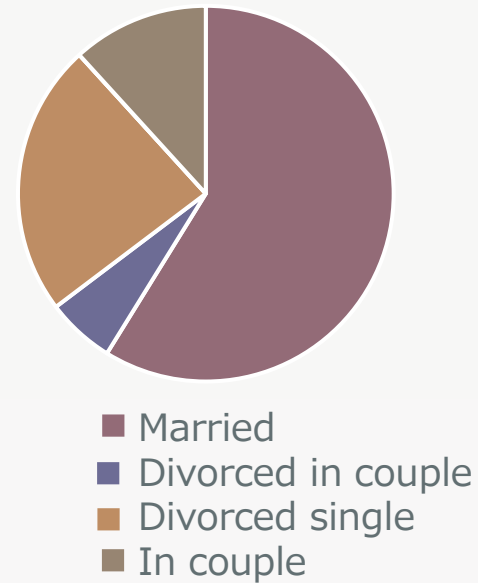
- Illness and discontinuities of the self-narrative (Narrative Medicine);
  - Search for identity and narrative unity (Wholeness).
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- The bottom of the slide features several decorative, overlapping wavy lines in shades of light gray and beige, creating a sense of movement and depth.

# Socio-demographic data

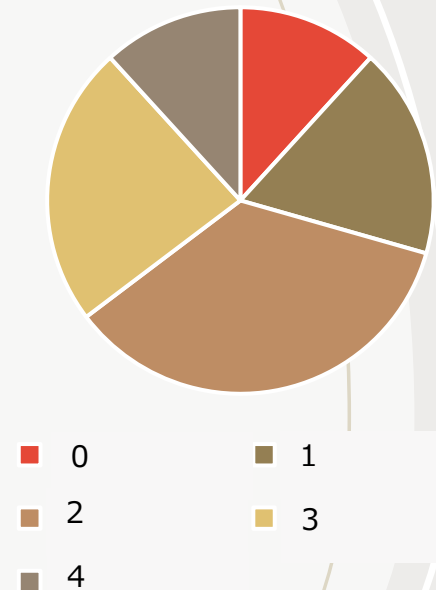
## Age



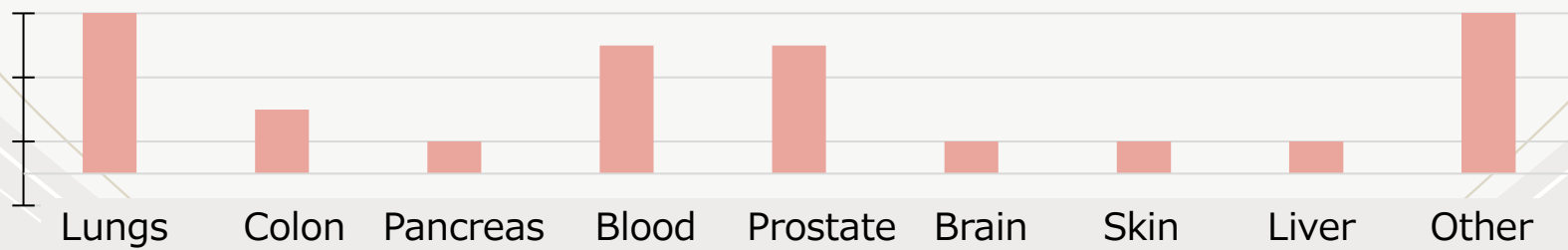
## Conjugal status



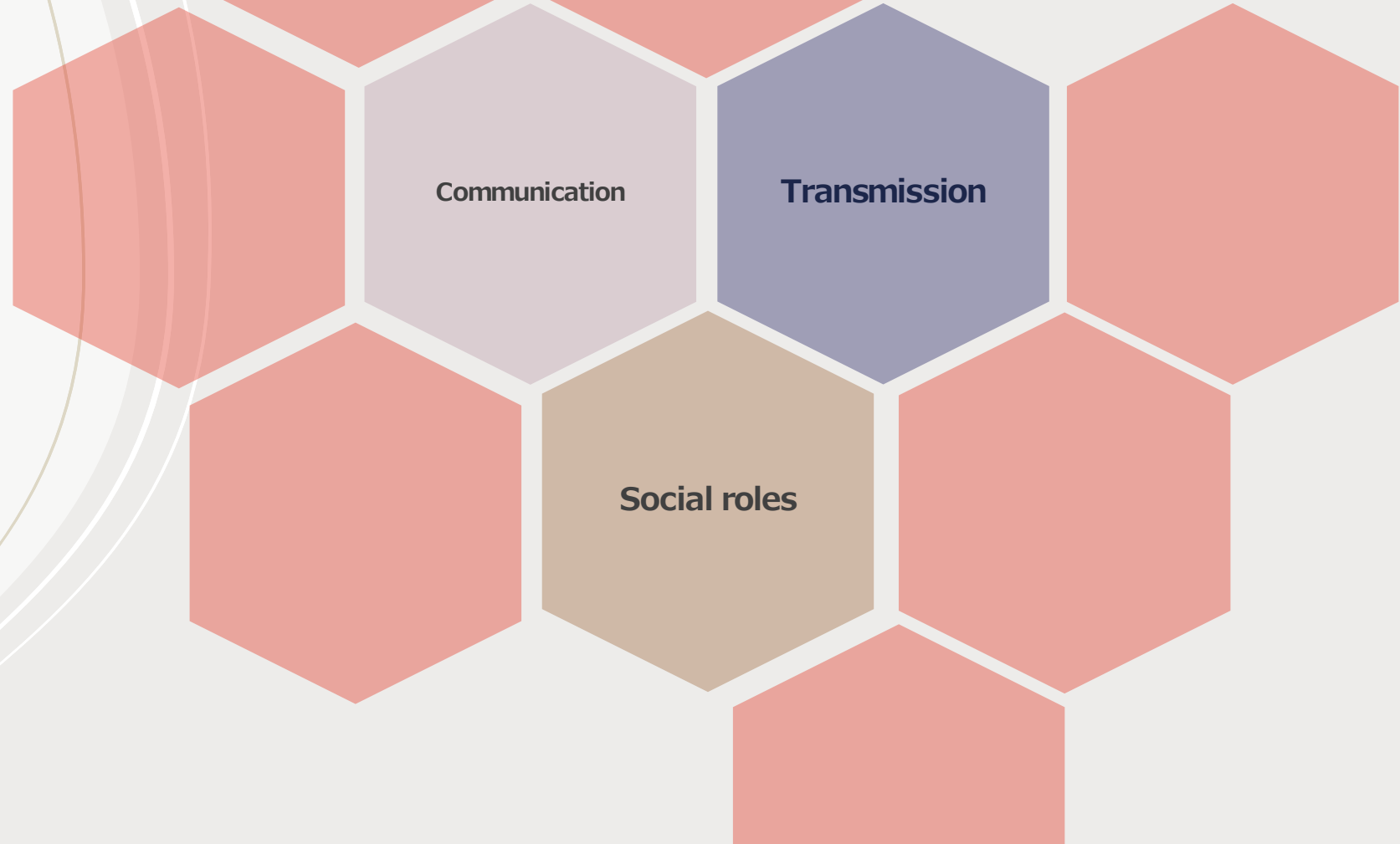
## Nb of child(ren)



## Types of cancer



# Struggles integrating different parts of their experience into ones' narrative identity







- **Communication**

- Transparency, preservation and socialization: between being told, wanting to tell and being able to tell

*"I operate best if I know what's going on (he laughs) [...] This allows me to go through, for me, the long and drawn process of coming to accept."*

*" I think it feels good -it doesn't feel good you know, there's nothing happy about it- but, uh ... talking with you sure helps a bit, but ... the problem is still there."*



# Dialectics

## • Social roles

- Body identity, material identity: different changes

*" It's not a pain, it's a psychological suffering. It's true that suddenly losing the role of provider or driver (...) I can't go up and down the stairs like I used to. But there are all kinds of roles that you have to admit that you won't get the lead anymore."*

*" We had a truck, camper, safari condo, eighteen footers, small thing, but we were going everywhere with that. Sleeping in the streets of New Orleans, going to Mexico and all that. (He cries.) That, that stays. (...) Because we were both going. No more. You have to face up to it, right? You have to understand that it's over."*

# Dialectics





- **Transmission**

- Singularity and universality: between distancing and belonging

*"Live what you have to live, don't live your bad. You live with the bad, but don't live your bad. There are some who will live only that, there are other things to do! Start reading, if you are able to read, read. Uh... if you want to, uh... draw, then draw! If you can paint, then paint! Paint your emotions if you want, do anything, get rid of that bad to stay with the part that is yours, still there... well that's it, live that part."*



# Dialectics

# The storyline of their 'wholeness'

