



VirginiaTech®

College of Liberal Arts and  
Human Sciences

**Sociology (0137)**

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Caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia is an important but challenging task. We want to learn from those who are involved in this valuable activity, in order to understand different experiences and what can be done to support caregivers.

I am Toni Calasanti (<https://liberalarts.vt.edu/toni-calasanti.html>), a professor of sociology at Virginia Tech, and together with Brian de Vries, Professor Emeritus at San Francisco State University, I am conducting a national study, funded by the National Institute on Aging, on older adults who care for their spouses and partners with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. I have done previous research on older heterosexual spousal caregivers, and from this have come to appreciate deeply the challenges that this presents, and the work that caregivers perform. Results from my previous study have helped to inform us about the role that gender plays in caregiving for a spouse with dementia, and the different kinds of interventions that might help.

The present study builds on this previous research, and seeks to interview 15 heterosexual male and 15 heterosexual female spousal/partner caregivers as well as 15 gay and 15 lesbian spousal/partner caregivers. I am interested in the roles that both gender and sexual orientation play in the experiences of caregiving, some of the similarities as well as any unique challenges—and how we can apply what we learn to better support *all* caregivers.

Based on my previous study, I expect interviews to last about 1½ hours. While I am unable to pay participants, I can offer a small (\$30) gift card as a token of appreciation.

If you are interested in participating, or have any questions, please contact me by email at [toni@vt.edu](mailto:toni@vt.edu), or by phone (540-951-2065). I will conduct interviews in person only if it is safe for all to do so; otherwise, it will be over the phone or using computer technology (Zoom, Skype, etc.), whichever is best for you.

Thank you for your help with this important study. Your experiences are a crucial part of our efforts to help caregivers.

Sincerely,

Toni Calasanti, Professor  
Sociology  
Faculty Affiliate, Center for Gerontology  
Virginia Tech

*Invent the Future*