"THERE'S NO EXCUSE FOR SLOWING DOWN":

DOING GENDER, RACE, AND CLASS IN THE THIRD AGE

by

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Abstract

Within social gerontology, the third age is often imagined to be a time of healthy, prosperous, flexible retirement, yet this interpretation can overshadow the experiences of more marginalized elders. Drawing on over 135 hours of participant-observation and twenty-six semi-structured interviews conducted between January and September 2015 at a Vancouver Neighbourhood House, I explicate how elder volunteers and staff take up the third age discourse through their development and implementation of a Seniors' Drop-In Program. Drawing on feminist gerontology and the sociology of gender, I trace how these low-income elders "do" gendered and generational conceptions of aging through accessible, affordable, productive activity by replicating and revising the third age discourse mediated through institutional texts targeted toward the "boomer" generation. At the same time, elders develop distinct relationships to and perform different interpretations of these Seniors' Drop-In activities, particularly the multicultural lunch components, based on their intersecting social locations, including generation, class, race, and gender. This thesis also explores the standpoint of staff in order to demonstrate how the work of senior-driven programming is constrained and enabled by grant-based funding and workload pressures articulated through the discourse of managerial efficiency. In sum, this work's key findings concern how a senior-driven Drop-In Program in a Neighbourhood House context is coordinated by the complementary and contradictory textually-mediated discourses of the third age, senior-driven programming, and managerial efficiency that elders and staff enact and bring into being in particular interindividual and institutional contexts. This dissertation is sociologically significant in centring age and generation within theories of intersectionality and performativity through an inductive, qualitative exploration of low-income

elders often erased from dominant third age scholarship, and through an examination of senior-

driven program planning dynamics within the unique understudied context of a community-

based Neighbourhood House.

Preface

This research, including design, data collection, and analysis, is the sole intellectual work of the author and all research was conducted independently. Ethics approval for this research was obtained from the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The Ethics Certificate for this research is numbered H15-00339.

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Acknowledgements

For Adam, Bunny, and David

Chapter 1: The changing structure and meaning of aging

On a rainy Tuesday in the Spring of 2015 I was seated at a circular table with two elder white women and one elder white man[1] at the Seniors' Drop-In Lunch at Spruce House[2], a recently renovated Neighbourhood House (NH)[3] on Vancouver's West side. I could hear the chatter of the mostly white women elders finishing their dessert at the five other tables spread across the room. The tables were particularly colourful on this day, with several sheets of bright floral-pattern origami paper placed on each one by the Japanese entertainer who had finished his Japanese circus arts performance at the front of the room moments earlier. Today's Seniors' Drop-In theme was "Japanese," and the kitchen staff and volunteers prepared miso soup and a stir-fry with rice. The Seniors' Advisory Group (SAG), a council of elder volunteers who worked with House staff to make planning decisions for the Drop-In, had recently decided to incorporate a multicultural theme into the program once per month. The Drop-In took place every Tuesday from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm and included a meal, a fifteen-minute light aerobics session, and entertainment that usually consisted of music, dancing, a slideshow of an elders' recent travels, or a presentation by a local seniors' service provider.

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[1] Unless otherwise indicated, these are provisional descriptions from my own perceptual standpoint, rather than essentialized categories or assumptions about how people see or identify themselves.

[2] This is a pseudonym in order to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of participants. Although I decided to employ pseudonyms for ethical reasons, I experienced ambivalence about this process of concealing contextual and historical specificities and legacies. I selected the pseudonym, "Spruce House" to highlight the institutional Neighbourhood House setting and as a nod to the numerous streets in Vancouver named after trees. That symbols of nature, such as trees, are privileged in the texts assigned within Vancouver (e.g., street signs) may be seen as a reflection of the colonial narrative of Canada as a vast, empty land prior to colonization. I draw upon this imagery to highlight and question the institutionalization of this interpretation of local history.

[3] Later in this chapter I will explain in detail the history and functions of Neighbourhood Houses.

The Drop-In was well attended this Tuesday, which was common when the weather was poor. On sunny days some of the elders chose to attend other programs and groups that they were part of through the House and local community centres, such as the weekly outdoor walking group. At the table next to mine I could see Emma, the new program coordinator, engaged in conversation with two elder women. In the background at the buffet table, new staff member Elizabeth was clearing dishes with Frank, a recently retired volunteer who owned a free-standing home in the neighbourhood and who helped out at the House five days a week when not travelling.

We were on the second floor of the House in the large multipurpose room with wood floors, high ceilings and large stained glass windows restored from when the space was a Greek Orthodox Church. Across the hall was the entrance to the fifteen subsidized seniors' independent living housing units owned and managed by the House. The space occupied by the seniors' housing did not exist prior to the renovations completed in 2014, at which point the House purchased the adjoining lot and expanded their space and their programs. The House now included a reception area, a daycare with an outdoor playground, two kitchens, a rooftop garden and terrarium, a community "living room," staff offices, a staff lunch room "crash pad," and several multipurpose meeting rooms and programming spaces that were used by staff, volunteers and community members and that could be rented out for private events.

This seniors' housing, completed only months before I began my fieldwork, is quite unique to Neighbourhood Houses and is innovative in its distinction from established housing models for old adults, such as assisted living and complex care facilities, retirement communities, cooperative housing, and cohousing. The independent, subsidized seniors' units

also blur the line between a NH as a "house" and a "home" for those who live there and whose involvement with House programs crosses categories of resident, neighbourhood volunteer, and program participant. As I will discuss in chapter two, all fifteen of my elder interview participants live in the subsidized seniors' housing managed by the House. Overall, the House has thirty-seven old adults in residence. Interestingly, government grants for the seniors' housing units were pivotal in renovating and expanding the entirety of Spruce House. If the Board had forgone the development of these units, the funding for the many additional NH spaces—such as the multipurpose room where the Seniors' Drop-In was held—would not have materialized, as I discuss in chapter four.

   At my table at the Drop-In was Bridget, a House resident in her late 70s who had moved to Canada decades earlier from the United Kingdom, Joan, a House resident in her late 60s who had immigrated from the United Kingdom more recently, and Rod, a man in his late 60s who had immigrated from Holland in his youth. Unlike Bridget and Joan, Rod lived in co-op housing in the neighbourhood and walked over to the House for the weekly Drop-In. When the Japanese performer came around to our table to instruct us on how to fold our red, purple, yellow, and blue origami paper pieces into cranes, Rod excused himself to get some coffee. He did not tend to participate in the Drop-In activities. On sunny days Rod would usually step out to walk around the block before or after the meal was served. Today he stood by the buffet table with his coffee while Bridget, Joan, and I made origami cranes and giggled at our frequent folding errors leading to nonsensical objects. Joan joked, "I try something new every day, but that doesn't mean I'm good at it!" Joan and Bridget had not met before even though they both lived at the House. The House residents, who had been selected based on their history with and interest in community

involvement and their ability to live independently, had only moved into their units a month earlier and were still getting to know one another.

Joan asked if she could have our cranes for a floral center-piece she was making for a dinner party. Even though they were folded imperfectly, she thought the bright colours would go with the leaves and branches she had collected from her walk in the Endowment Lands, a large forested area where she exercised regularly as part of the House's 55+ Healthy Living program funded by Vancouver Coastal Health. This weekly program involved making a healthy snack in the House kitchen with a staff member, and then heading to an outdoor location chosen by the participants to walk at a brisk pace. Joan encouraged Bridget to come to the program the following week, but Bridget expressed concern that she would not be able to keep up with the group on the walk. Joan suggested some alternatives, such as a free seniors' fitness study being conducted at a local academic institution where elders worked out while monitored by the research team. Bridget was not sure she would be able to go, given that she spent a lot of time caring for her husband who had a chronic health condition and who was less interested in socializing[4].

It was months after this lunch conversation that I came to contextualize Bridget and Joan's positioning in relation to the "third age," a term developed within social gerontology in the late 1980s and adapted by marketers targeting the large 55+ demographic and governments

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[4] Given that my own academic background is in gender and sexuality, I was initially interested in focusing this project on elders' perceptions of and experiences with intimacy. However, I found that elders more often wanted to discuss their social and cultural activities and health initiatives. For both methodological and ethical reasons (that I discuss in chapter two), the project shifted from an emphasis on intimacy to an emphasis on elders' negotiating activity in the third age.

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implementing population health management initiatives for seniors. Although there are multiple

definitions of the third age, ranging from a set of national and demographic trends (Laslett,

1989), a phase of the life course (Weiss & Bass, 2002), a social construct (Bass, 2006), a cultural

sphere (Katz & Marshall, 2003), and a cultural field (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, 2005), most

emphasize productive, healthy, agentic activity and consumption patterns of the "young old"

(Neugarten, 1974) that challenge ageist stereotypes of decline and dependence, particularly

within the "baby boomer" generation. In their edited volume *Gerontology in the Era of the Third

Age* (2011, p.4), Carr and Komp suggest that within the current context of multiple working

definitions and assumptions, a broad way to distinguish the third age would be a "period of

healthy retirement in later life." Many elders at the House were indeed engaging in productive,

healthy activities, reinforced through the House requirement that residents volunteer at least five

hours per month at one or more of their programs.

As I became more familiar with third age literature, however, I struggled to see my

participants fully reflected within it. Due to their subsidized housing and access to federal and

provincial universal and targeted pension and subsidy programs, most House elders were able to

meet their basic needs and had free time to pursue their interests. Elders such as Joan, however,

had to be quite mindful about which activities they could afford, most often attending public

events and programs that were free or low-cost (the Seniors' Drop-In is only $4.00, for instance).

Others like Bridget were encouraged to take part in activities they did not necessarily have the

time and mobility for or interest in. I also wondered about the other elders in Vancouver who

were not as well connected to affordable housing and community programs and who may have

poor health and mobility. Were they part of the imagined third-agers most visible within

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academic literature, marketing, and government programs? Calasanti and King (2011, p. 72) question whether the third age is in fact a "phantom phenomenon" useful for studying only the most privileged elders who have benefitted from a lifetime of systemic advantage and social privilege.

I began to wonder about the extent to which literature on the third age was describing common trends, or was itself also *producing* those trends through textually-mediated discourses, that is, through talk and writing disseminated through official texts and taken up by elders and those who support, service, and market to the "55+". The British Columbia Seniors Guide (2011), produced by the BC Seniors Advocate, describes (or rather *pre*scribes) the unique attributes and habits of current old adults in BC. The following is written under the heading "Seniors redefine the concept of aging":

> By 2031, more than 1.3 million British Columbians will be over 65 – almost a quarter of the population. Today's seniors enjoy increased life expectancy and generally better health than ever before. They are more physically active and more involved in groups and activities in their communities…. *It's all about* living a healthy lifestyle, and staying active is *the key*. The decisions *you* make every day affect how *you* age. Only about 30 per cent of the way you age can be explained by biology and genetics. *You* can actually reduce *your* risk of chronic disease and disability by staying physically active, eating a healthy diet, living smoke-free, avoiding falls and related injuries, and remaining socially engaged. (2011, p. 13; emphasis added)

By emphasizing individual decisions and habits over biology, by shifting from aggregate level data to personal recommendations, and by largely erasing social and environmental conditions, texts such as this responsibilize elder to age in "active," "healthy" and "engaged" ways.

If the third age is a regulatory discourse at least as much as it is a description of the actual material conditions, interests, and habits of located elders, how might the elders at the House – who are often less privileged than those imagined in third age texts – take up (or undo) this discourse? What role might House staff and House programs play in mediating this discourse? Before further developing and contextualizing these questions I provide an overview of the history and mandate of Neighbourhood Houses.

1.1   Situating Spruce House in the history and geography of Neighbourhood Houses

Spruce House is located in a diverse neighbourhood in the West side of Vancouver. The Neighbourhood House (NH) serves many functions but is concentrated in its geographical reach. The physical NH building takes up two consecutive housing lots on one block. The House has dedicated and multipurpose spaces for a variety of programs for different community groups and needs. The scope of programs and services includes education, support, resource referrals and capacity development for recent immigrants, families, parents, youth, preteens, children, and other community members. Like many other NHs in Vancouver, the House also offers many programs for older adults, the goal of which is to "empower and encourage participation through improved access to information, peer support, healthful activities, and programs that support independence and well-being" (The House, 2016).

When I began volunteering at the House in January 2015 I was placed in the Seniors'

Drop-In Program by the volunteer coordinator. This program was in need of additional

volunteers at the time, given that the Seniors' Advisory Group (SAG) and program coordinator

had recently decided to expand the program by incorporating multicultural meals. Since the

House relies on volunteers to contribute to the running of its programs, I felt it was most

appropriate for me to conduct my fieldwork with the seniors' program most in need of volunteer

support—a decision that enabled me to engage in reciprocity with the House itself. I also

attended the monthly Seniors' Advisory Group (SAG) meetings where a group of elder women

planned the upcoming Drop-In themes and meals. However, the Seniors' Drop-In and the

Seniors' Advisory Group are only two of the many seniors' programs the House manages.

Additional programs and resources for seniors include the Seniors' Resource Centre (SRC),

Westside Seniors Hub, Seniors' Housing, Better at Home, Seniors Links, Seniors Peer Support,

Knitting Circle, Seniors' Art, Osteofit for Life, and Group Outings. With so many programs,

many staff members run multiple programs at once and juggle competing community-facing and

administrative tasks. Staff were particularly overwhelmed during my fieldwork because they

were still adapting to the new House space, expanded program offerings, and increased capacity

for participants and volunteers. The House executive director, Lynn, was also on sabbatical

which meant some additional managerial and administrative tasks were taken on by staff.

The House is relatively small in scale compared to others NHs with only thirty-four staff,

all of whom were women at the time of my fieldwork, and twenty-two of whom were part-time.

However, as a member of the BC Association of Neighbourhood Houses, it is reliant on funding

through the City of Vancouver, the Province of BC, the federal government, and organizations

such as the Vancouver Foundation, The United Way, Vancouver Coastal Health, and BC Housing. The House also depends on donations from private businesses and individuals. As I will discuss in chapter four, program funding for Neighbourhood Houses is often grant-based, short-term, and/or non-renewable (Yan, Lauer & Riaño-Alcalá, 2016, p.6) and, therefore, is subject to funders' regulations and accountability measures that can shape which programs run, how they are delivered, and how they are assessed based on quantitative markers.

Perhaps most interesting for my purposes is that House staff and the texts they write describe attempts to develop and maintain programs based on the input, needs and capacities of people who live in close geographical proximity. The House Strategic Plan, published in 2016, notes that a central goal for the institution is to "provide innovative neighbourhood-based programming that responds to the emerging needs of people, accessible in the neighbourhoods in which they live" (The House Strategic Plan, 2016, p. 1). As a Neighbourhood House, Spruce House focuses on engaging people within the boundaries of a specific local proximity. "Neighbourhood-based" and "place-based" are two terms that staff used interchangeably. Both refer to a model for providing services and building community that is intended to be developed in contextually-specific ways based on the needs of people in a particular time and place. The word "emerging" used in the Strategic Plan suggests that House staff intend to be sensitive to changes over time, based on changing people and neighbourhood conditions.

This mandate indicates that programming has the potential to address and remain rooted in the embodied experiences of actual local people (Smith, 2005, p. 90). However, program participants, volunteers, and staff do substantial work to ensure that people's local experiences become institutionally accessible so that they can be funded and programmed, and, therefore,

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generalized and standardized in particular ways. "Participant-driven" and "senior-driven" are terms commonly used by House staff in their speaking and writing about programs. Institutional texts written by House staff present some of their programs as being driven or led by program participants and program volunteers. For example, the Seniors' Drop-in Program where I conducted participant observation from January 2015 to September 2015 is described as a "senior-led program" in the program flyer (The House Programs, 2016). A group of six to ten elder women who constitute the Seniors' Advisory Group (SAG) meet once per month with the program coordinator to discuss the Seniors' Drop-In and plan the food and entertainment for upcoming meals. These elders all live in the area, most within walking distance, and some even reside in the subsidized affordable seniors' housing built right in the House.

The "senior-driven" approach is intended to make elders' voices central in program planning processes and to highlight and build upon their existing capacities. A senior-driven program planning process allows for elders to collaborate with staff in brainstorming, developing, running and revising programs such as the Seniors' Drop-In. The ideal of senior-led programming in many ways aligns with principles of third age social science and popular discourse, emphasizing elders' agency and freedom in pursuing productive activities and leisure of their own choosing (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, 2005). Senior-driven programs invite elders to become invested in and to feel accountable to the programs they help to develop and implement.

Neighbourhood Houses have a long history of place-based community engagement going back to the Settlement Housing Movement that emerged in England in the mid 1800s. This movement was led by Rev. Samuel Barnett and Henrietta Barnett who sought a way to build connections across the divisions between people from diverse social locations (Sandercock &

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Attili, 2009, p. 115; Yan, Lauer & Riaño-Alcalá, 2016). Toynbee Hall, one of the first settlement houses, was developed in 1884 in a marginalized neighbourhood in east London. Unlike contemporary Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver that focus on a wide range of programs and services, including those for seniors and recent immigrants, the primary social issue in London at the time was perceived to be the widening gaps between social classes. At Toynbee Hall upper class men attending university would pay to live among men who were wage labourers. The goal was to create opportunities for dialogue and mutual sharing of knowledge, with university students learning about the challenges faced by the lower classes and the lower classes learning through the students' research and teaching. This first attempt served as a model for future settlement houses in the United Kingdom that came to offer a variety of programs organized around culture, recreation, health services, employment and advocacy for the working classes (Sandercock & Attili, 2009).

Settlement houses (SHs) spread quickly across Europe and became popular in North America in the late 1800s, first in the eastern United States and then in Canada, and inspired the development of NHs that continued the tradition of community-building (Yan, Lauer & Riaño-Alcalá, 2016). Hull-House, established in Chicago in 1889, was one of the earliest and most well-known US settlement houses. The founders, Jane Addams and Ellen Starr, retained the Barnetts' vision for the movement rooted in connecting and building bridges between people (Addams, 1961). Although they provided similar services to diverse populations like those in the United Kingdom, SHs in North America faced different population demographics, social anxieties, and migration trends. North American SHs were oriented around immigration issues, working to ensure that European immigrants were able to connect with and adapt to the values of

a nation imagined as largely white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant (Yan, Lauer & Riaño-Alcalá, 2016). Sociologist Herbert Gans called this process "reach[ing] the client," meaning "involving the client in the settlement program and encouraging him [or her] to develop values and behavior patterns favoured by the settlement staff" (1964, p. 3). Programs, resources, and social support have sometimes been geared toward assimilation of recent immigrants, with many houses offering English language classes and some forms of education for immigrant children (Sandercock & Attili, 2009, p. 116). North American SHs, connected to the professionalization of social work in the 1960s, also have a legacy of a "white, middle-class mentality" that has limited their ability to engage with people of colour in certain contexts (Gans, 1964; Yan, Lauer & Riaño-Alcalá, 2016, p.3). Racism embedded within some settlement houses meant that they were not necessarily prepared to accommodate recent black migrants, such as those moving from the South to the North of the US. African-American churches in some states founded settlement houses specifically to address this racialized service gap (Harvard, 2016).

Contemporary NHs are most often embedded in highly diverse communities, such as Vancouver, and continue to work with recent immigrants—now from a greater variety of source countries—and have expanded to include a variety of programs for families, youth, children, seniors and other community members. Spruce House, where I conducted my research, is one of nine NHs currently in the City of Vancouver, most of which are members of the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC (ANHBC). With an operating budget of $19 million in 2016, ANHBC serves more than 100,000 per year through more than 300 different programs and services (ANHBC, 2016). The core mission of ANHBC is to "play a leadership role in building

healthy and engaged neighbourhoods by connecting people and strengthening their capacity to create change" (ANHBC, 2016).

In its earliest form, a Neighbourhood House opened in 1938 in the West End of Vancouver (Lauer & Reisz, 2012, p. 2-3). In the 1960s, the West End saw a dramatic increase in young adults moving into the heavily residential area. A 1968 survey of West end residents documented an interest in the development of a new NH to provide local services. The director of the Neighbourhood Services Association at the time, Elmer Helm, suggested that a new Neighbourhood House was needed to "combat youth alienation, family breakdown, and anti-social behavior resulting from poverty and urban life" (Lauer & Reisz, 2012, p. 4). The provincial government also expressed concern about the well-being of the old adults in particular living in the area, and, therefore, agreed to support the development of a Neighbourhood House in the nearby West Side to provide seniors with recreational opportunities. Spruce House began operating in 1974, from a heritage home on the same street between 1968 and 1972. However, this development was met with some criticism from the Neighbourhood Taxpayers Association (NTA)[5]. The NTA was a well-established community group and was committed to developing "single-family homes in the area, discouraging rezoning for non-residential uses, and protecting property values" (Lauer & Reisz, 2012, p. 4). They were also concerned about the dramatic increase in young adults to the area, labeled "hippies." Even the Vancouver Mayor at the time declared that the House "would be a 'crash pad' for hippies" (p. 5). These debates took place against the backdrop of the 1971 Gastown Riot, marking the clash of broader tensions between

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[5] This name has been changed so as to protect the identity of the neighbourhood.

the city of Vancouver and hippies at the time. However, City and taxpayer anxieties did not materialize and the House remains in operation today. The House has solidified the historical presence of this hippie history with the naming and signage for the staff room, which is lovingly called "The Crash Pad" out of respect for those who contributed to its development. This grass-roots approach to community development still informs house programming development processes today.

1.2 Situating the project and research questions in the literature on gender, aging, and intersectionality

In this dissertation I engage with, critique and build upon research on the third age by drawing on theoretical and methodological frameworks from feminist gerontology and the sociology of gender to explicate my participants' experiences participating in and volunteering with the Seniors' Drop-In Program. Through participant observation of the Seniors' Drop-In, qualitative interviews with House staff and elder residents, and textual analysis of formal and informal House texts, I engage with and centre the intersectional experiences of a group of low-income, largely white women elders who are sometimes overlooked in third age literature focusing on more privileged groups. I also ask how staff interpret and conduct their work with elders in this senior-driven programming context shaped by Neighbourhood House funding structures.

My elder participants are positioned, and position themselves, as simultaneously dependent and independent in their relationship with the House. All of my elder participants (15/15) reside in subsidized rental housing for people over the age of 55 that is owned and managed by the House. Most of my elder participants fall within a common age range. Thirteen

of fifteen were born between 1945 and 1954, making them older "baby boomers" (OBB) (Badley et al., 2015). Elders born between 1955 and 1964 (younger "baby boomers" (YBB)), it is argued, experienced a different set of structural conditions throughout their lives.

In order to qualify for this subsidized senior's housing these elders must fit, or be able to be placed within, institutional categories of dependence and vulnerability connected to their class position and age. Based on Household Income Limit (HIL) criteria set by BC Housing, a regulatory body that the House is accountable to, residents must have an annual income that is less than $38,000, with no more than $100,000 in assets. Priority is also given to seniors who are inadequately housed, meaning "homeless, living in temporary shelter / housing, living with family / friends, high rent contribution (more than 30% of income), or current housing does not meet their needs (physical and mental health, social, emotional, cultural, and safety needs)" (The House, 2013). However, my participants were also selected for this housing by House staff because of their perceived ability to manage their independent living and remain active and integrated in social activities in the House and the broader neighbourhood community. They are held institutionally accountable to particular forms of activity and engagement through mandatory unpaid volunteer participation in House programs required as a condition of their housing agreement. How these older adults produce themselves as simultaneously dependent and independent – vulnerable yet actively self-monitoring – in their involvement with House activities is of interest to me given the way aging is being individualized within this neoliberal moment in Canada, as I discuss elsewhere in this dissertation.

This dissertation is guided by five analytical questions—developed gradually and iteratively—that I consider in addressing the standpoint of House elders and staff:

- How are my elder participants positioned within intersecting axes of privilege and oppression in relation to the third age?

- How are elders' perceptions of productive aging activities shaped by gender, race, class and generation?

- How do elders at the House "do" age in ways that intersect with gender, race, class and generation?

- How do staff engage with the third age discourse in their senior-driven programming work?

- How do Neighbourhood House funding structures constrain and enable staff in their approach to senior-driven programming?

In the following paragraphs I discuss and contextualize each of these questions in relation to literature from social gerontology, feminist gerontology, and the sociology of gender.

As I noted earlier, the third age has been conceptualized in multiple ways by various scholars since the late 1980s. Laslett (1989) positions the third age largely as a new phase in the life course. Social gerontologists have mapped out the life course based on an idealized set of typical stages. The first age is characterized by socialization, education and vocational training, the second age by career and family obligations, and the fourth age by decline and dependence. Up until recent decades the life course was thought to consist of a long second age followed by a fourth age for most of the population. However, Laslett argues that with more people retiring earlier, and with prolonged health and activity post-retirement, the duration, accessibility and significance of a third age has increased for many people in Western nations with adequate wealth distributed between the working and retired and with sufficient development of social, cultural and educational programming for all ages. Laslett emphasizes that in order for

individuals to maintain productive activities post-retirement, nations must be in a position to provide accessible education for the duration of the life course as well as opportunities for cultural development and leisure. Therefore, infrastructure and investment at the municipal, regional and national levels is relevant to consider along with individual circumstances.

Third age scholarship, while identifying meaningful shifts in the structure of aging, tends to emphasize generational commonalities while decentering systemic interlocking lifetime inequalities within the same generation. As a result, literature on the third age tends to center the experiences of the most privileged – often wealthy white men – over the experiences of a diversity of elders, including poor women, women of colour, and trans* folks[6]. A primary factor discussed in relation to the third age is the age at which people retire and the length of retirement where individuals can expect to have adequate health and resources to have control over their activities and consumption (Laslett, 1989; Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, 2005). When considered over time, the average age of retirement has fallen significantly. In pre-industrial Europe, for example, retirement was a privilege accessible to only a small fraction of the population (Gilleard and Higgs, 2005, p. 5). Most people worked until they experienced debilitating illness, disability or death. Retirement was not expected or planned for. State-supported funds and programs for older adults gradually developed alongside the rise of the modern wage economy, but until recent decades individuals who relied primarily on this support often faced conditions of relative poverty. In many Western nations' investment in more robust public and private pensions has

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[6] Trans* is an umbrella term referring to a spectrum of gender identities for individuals who may not identify with their sex assignment at birth. As none of my participants identified as trans* or as having a trans* history, my data does not reflect the experiences of trans* elders.

increased, resulting in a more equitable distribution of wealth between those who are working and those who are retired (Gilleard and Higgs, 2005, p. 6). Conditions for membership in the third age do not solely rely on individual income and wealth, but also on the wealth of the nation in which elders are living, which makes the third age largely a phenomenon within wealthy nations in the Global North. As Laslett explains, "disposable wealth, both of society and of the individual, is of fundamental importance" (Laslett, 1989, p. 100).

The emphasis on retirement from paid work as a primary factor distinguishing the second and third ages is an indication of the androcentric assumptions informing theorizing about this stage of the life course. In this sense, some aspects of third age theorizing are reminiscent of social gerontology's long history of writing from and about (privileged) men's experiences. Although the idea of feminist gerontology has been around since at least the 1970s (see Troll, Isreal & Israel, 1977), social gerontology has struggled to take up and centre on feminist thinking, much like sociology has in the same period. Before the 1980s, gerontologist scholars often overlooked the existence and experiences of women elders, while also taking gender for granted as a natural fact not to be problematized through research. Theories and concepts fundamental to social gerontology were developed based on the experiences and activities of men, particularly those who were white, heterosexual and middle-class (Calasanti, 1993), yet this androcentrism was largely invisible at the time to researchers embedded in academic institutions (Kolb, 2014, p. 76). For instance, men's experiences of retirement from paid labour outside the home were taken to be central to disengagement theory, drawing on the structural functionalist tradition (Cumming & Henry, 1961; Parsons, 1942).

Early attempts at developing a broader basis of inclusion primarily involved "adding" older women to research samples to address gender bias. When women were incorporated into aging research, it was within the context of existing theories rather than as part of a reformulation of the assumptions and knowledge generation processes upon which those theories rested (Krekula, 2007). Gender (assumed to align with sex assignment) was typically treated as a binary variable for analysis rather than problematized as a social process and institutionalized system. For example, early researchers identified and described different trends in men's and women's labour force participation rates and retirement benefits yet "failed to ask why women's work histories were more intermittent, why Social Security rewards stable participation, why dependent spouse benefits amount to only half of the retired worker benefit, or whether women and men garner similar workplace returns for similar human capital attributes" (Calasanti, 2009, p. 472). Furthermore, when gender was treated as a variable it was often in order to control for and therefore "eliminate" the impact of gender on other variables (e.g, income), with gender conceptualized as an individual trait rather than a relational social process (Calasanti, 2004, p. 305). In other words, gerontology scholars began making some elements of women's lives visible but did not draw upon theoretical frameworks for connecting these patterns to processes through which gender is constructed and reified at the micro and macro levels.

This binary approach also lent itself to a focus on differences between men and women, often overshadowing similarities between these groups (as well as potential differences within these groups). "Gender" was also often used as a proxy for "women," positioning masculinity as an unquestioned, neutral norm and status with women treated as outside and other (Arber & Ginn, 1995; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Krekula, 2007; McMullin,

1995). As Krekula (2007, p. 160) explains, the existence of "research on older women does not necessarily imply that they have also attained a position as the *subject* in theories. Older women can still be visualized against a male norm, or against a younger norm, and consequently maintain a position as deviant" (my emphasis).

This persistent androcentrism can be seen to be based on the way retirement is understood in third age scholarship. To account for the tendency for women to do more unpaid work in the home than men and participate in the labour force at different rates, some third age scholars note that the end of parenting obligations is similar to leaving paid employment. What is overlooked in this argument is the nature of care work, which often continues beyond the confines of parental care for children under eighteen, particularly with the rising trend of "delayed adulthood" where children live at home for longer or return home after leaving (Myles, 2005). Care work also persists through care for grandchildren, disproportionately taken on by poor, older women of colour, often in the context of prohibitive childcare costs (Calasanti & King, 2011, p. 69). Care for an aging spouse is also done by women more often than men. In fact, men's access to third age privileges and expectations may be mediated by and dependent on women's invisible labour: "the ability of some (privileged) men to experience freedom in retirement rest[s] on women's assumption of reproductive labour and domestic work" (Calasanti & King, 2011, p.71; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001).

Scholars of the third age also emphasize the potential for elders to experience freedom and personal meaning-making to an extent not possible for previous generations. As James and Wink (2007, p. xx) argue, the third age is "the age of opportunity for personal fulfillment" (James & Wink, 2007, p. xx). What often goes unexplored is what this "freedom" means for

different elders. Although women and men in some studies have reported experiencing "freedom" during retirement, they defined this freedom in ways that were structured by gender (Calasanti, 1993; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001). In research with 57 men and women retirees in the United States, Calasanti found that for the women in the study, "retirement entailed giving up labour-force activity but maintaining responsibilities for domestic labour" (Calasanti, 1993; Calasanti & King, 2011, p. 70). When women spoke about freedom, therefore, they often described being able to complete domestic tasks at a slower pace and based on a more flexible self-determined schedule, in comparison to their earlier years. Men, on the contrary, emphasized not having to engage in paid work and being able to try new activities, often employing narratives that conform to dominant third age models that are implicitly written from and based on men's experiences. Furthermore, certain key tenants of the third age—including the emphasis on independence, freedom, and control—may be seen as gendered in that they align primarily with the masculinist side of idealized, gendered binaries.

Life expectancy and the size of the elder population are also factors in the emergence of the third age (Laslett, 1989). Low fertility rates in combination with increased life expectancy have contributed to aging populations in many Western nations. In 2011, the number of Canadians over 65 across Canada was one in seven (Statistics Canada, 2014). Statistics Canada estimates that this number will increase to one in four by 2036. In 2011, the average life expectancy in Canada was 83 years for women and 79 for men, up approximately 7 years since 1970 for women and 10 years for men. Life expectancy, however, differs according to intersecting social locations structured by systemic inequalities. For example, the life expectancy of Métis and First Nations men (73-74 years) and women (78-80 years) differs from that of Inuit

men (64 years) and women (73 years), and the average life expectancy among the Aboriginal

population is lower than that of other ethnic groups in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Individuals 65 and over constitute 11% of residents in the West side neighbourhood

where the House is situated, and 13.6% of residents in the City of Vancouver (Statistics Canada,

2011). Overall, people in highly developed cities like Vancouver are living longer, retiring

earlier, and can expect to spend more post-retirement years with functional health, yet these

outcomes are not equally distributed. While Laslett acknowledges that the benefits of the third

age are less accessible to elders who are women, poor and/or who have health challenges, he

dismisses this point by situating his arguments within broader national conditions:

> In setting out the conditions permitting and accompanying the emergence of the
>
> Third Age[7] into a national social structure, we are not required to survey the whole of
>
> that structure, in our own country or in any others. Least of all can we be expected to
>
> produce a set of expedients which might get rid of class divisions. Nor can we
>
> possibly take into account every social circumstance, influence and consequence.
>
> The issues of health and fitness, for example, cannot concern us here in spite of the
>
> fact that the sick and disabled can scarcely expect to live a fulfilled life in the Third
>
> Age. (Laslett, 1989, p. 117)

While Laslett clarifies that individuals are differently positioned in relation to the third age, he

implies throughout his work that gender, class and health are private troubles rather than public

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[7] Throughout this dissertation I refer to the "third age" in lower case. I do so to avoid reifying this term. My aim is to emphasize the ways actual located elders make sense of third age discourses within the context of popular, professional and academic texts. However, when I directly quote the work of third age scholars I retain their chosen capitalization.

issues (Mills, 1959), and are somewhat outside the analytical scope of his project. He seems to suggest that intersecting inequalities are relevant yet distinct processes from the changing structure of aging. Sociologists Weiss and Bass (2002, p.3) also emphasize the experiences of privileged elders in their account of the third age, noting that "many in their retirement years have available to them pensions and savings adequate to maintain middle income styles of life….[with the] freedom and resources [to] permit them to enter into any of a very wide range of activities. To an extent, remarkable outside the realm of the very rich, they fashion lives to suit themselves." This account imagines elders who have amassed enough wealth to live on a middle class income.

In taking up the conditions and consequences of the emergence of this third age Gilleard and Higgs also argue that the material conditions for people entering retirement in late modernity have changed, but they further suggest that the structure of class has shifted such that reflexive meaning-making in older adulthood is organized more around life style and consumption patterns than around employment based-identities and social positioning in relation to the means of production. They emphasize the increasing diversity in class position of retired people, thus destabilizing a coherent class identity for those considered elderly (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005, p.35). In other words, "the images and assumptions that working and non-working people have of later life are viewed through the prism of a retirement that has become less homogeneous, less totalizing, and, potentially, less restrictive than it once was" (Gilleard and Higgs, 2005, p. 2). Conceptualizing the third age as a cultural field, Gilleard and Higgs argue that consumption and activity are a primary symbolic currency, or form of capital, for older adults concerned with defining themselves in youthful ways:

Third age identities are likely to be elaborated through increasing material consumption,

a sense of 'packing life in' to a period of adulthood of uncertain length and a wary and

ambivalent position in relation to providing for 'old age'. Third-agers, while

acknowledging old age, are likely to prefer to live at a considerable physical and

psychological distance from it. (Gilleard and Higgs, 2000, p. 45)

While taking a poststructuralist position oriented to aging as a reflexive project, Gilleard and

Higgs note that not all elders are equally positioned to access the third age. They clarify, for

instance, that people who experience economic and health-related disadvantage, often associated

with class, gender, race and ethnicity, have limited access to the third age (2000, p. 136-7).

However, they suggest that despite some groups that remain vulnerable, the majority of elders

are experiencing a much more affluent and agentic old age than ever before.

While scholars of the third age are often focused on broader processes of social change

between generations, they tend to downplay current inequalities within generations. For instance,

Gilleard and Higgs (2000, p. 48) argue that the retirement income gap is closing and will

continue to close as there is less distinction between men and women in regard to factors such as

years of work and average pay, thus "erod[ing] those vertical inequalities associated with

gender." However, their analysis of gender is somewhat limited. Under the subheading 'Gender

and retirement' in their book, *Cultures of Ageing: Self, Citizen and the Body* (2000), they focus

on women, thus equating women with gender as has been common within the history of

gerontological research. They note that although wage inequalities are decreasing, the "duty

older women feel toward maintaining the domestic economy" – including tasks such as

housework, maintaining family ties, and caring for partners – can constrain their participation in

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the third age (2000, p. 49). That this section makes women explicitly visible, while the rest of the book does not make men explicitly visible, suggests that they are to some degree taking the experiences of (healthy, white, wealthy) men for granted. Furthermore, that feminized unpaid care work is seen as limiting access to the third age suggests that their engagement with the concept itself is based on androcentric assumptions to which they have "added" women.

In light of existing scholarship on the third age, one of my analytical research questions for this project is: **How are my elder participants positioned within intersecting axes of privilege and oppression in relation to the promises and expectations, benefits and privileges, of the third age?** I argue that intersecting lifetime inequalities structured by race, gender and class persist and must be centered in research on the third age (Calasanti & King, 2011; Calasanti & Slevin, 2006). In doing so, I build upon a tradition within socialist feminist and feminist political economy theories of aging that flourished in the 1990s. Socialist feminists of aging initially focused on the role of patriarchy in shaping relations of production and reproduction, with an emphasis on the ways gendered (and racialized) organizations shape the distribution of wealth and therefore men's and women's retirement experiences, often problematizing the lack of status and compensation for unpaid labour in the home (Calasanti & Zajicek, 1993, p. 123). Like this thesis, socialist feminism is informed by standpoint scholarship given the need to produce new concepts and theories within social gerontology that are based on and reflect women's often marginalized experiences (Smith, 2005; Hill Collins, 1986, 1990; Hartsock, 1983). As I will discuss in depth in chapter two, standpoint as a method of inquiry can enable researchers to generate theories and concepts based on the experiences of diversely located people rather than the experiences and perspectives of a minority of often white, wealthy

men within academia and other institutions producing categories and managing knowledge claims (Smith, 1990, 1999, 2005).

More recently social feminists of aging have embraced an intersectional lens, with scholars in this tradition increasingly unpacking the way race and sexuality inform gender and age (Kolb, 2014). Building on the intersectional theorizing of Crenshaw (1989) and Hill Collins (2005, 1990), socialist feminists working in gerontology demonstrate how age is a social location intersecting with and informing other axes of power and privilege within systems of inequality (Calasanti, 2009, p. 174; Calasanti & Zajicek, 1993; Kolb, 2014). Work in this area has focused in particular on how the gendered structure of the idealized nuclear family (Stoller & Gibson, 2004), the labour market, and the welfare system (Estes, 1991) inform the diverse experiences of elder women and men. For instance, the heteronormative, classed, and gendered assumption that women remain dependent on men within the home was fundamental to legitimizing Social Security benefits in the US in the 1980s and 1990s that were distributed unequally between men and women (Calasanti & Zajicek, 1993, p. 125; Moon, 1990; Rodeheaver, 1987). Furthermore, Calasanti and Slevin (2001, p. 107) found that although African American women exhibit more steady labour force participation than white women, the lower wages they receive still leave them in a position with less retirement income. This intersectional approach has created space for the study of privilege as well as oppression in shaping aging experiences.

Feminist political economists take a similar structural approach to consider how these capitalist relations of production shape the experiences of women and racial minorities in particular. Feminist political economy of aging theories frame gender as a relational construction structured by dominant institutions, with an emphasis on the organization of capitalist economies

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in relation to systems of power (Estes, 1979, 2006). While the socialist feminist approach highlights intersectional locations of both privilege and oppression, political economist feminists emphasize the structural creation of vulnerability and dependency through cumulative disadvantage. Many of these disadvantages accumulate throughout the life course based on the feminization of poverty and women's relationship to masculinist codes of governance in modern nation states (Brown, 1995; Estes, 2006, p. 85; Kolb, 2014, p. 82; Orloff, 1993). Some political economy of aging theories are informed by yet also critique Dowd and Bengtson's (1978) double jeopardy thesis addressing multiple oppressions. This thesis holds that prejudice and discrimination are additive for individuals who are members of multiple minority groups. For instance, to be elderly and an immigrant would be double jeopardy, while being an elderly immigrant woman would be triple or multiple jeopardy (Ovrebo & Minkler, 1993, p. 294). This focus on the structural production of disadvantage, while intended to highlight multiple social inequalities, has been called the "misery" approach. It can support the assumption that "women's ageing [is] more problematic than men's", thus potentially restigmatizing older women and ethnic minorities by shaping research questions only around the challenges of diverse experiences of aging (Krekula, 2007, p. 161). Feminist gerontologists taking up the lens of intersectionality critique the double jeopardy thesis, noting that it takes an additive approach to oppression and does not account for differences and interactions between structures of oppression and privilege.

It is from an intersectional feminist perspective that I problematize Gilleard and Higgs' (2000) assertion that, because the wage gap is getting smaller, it is not a primary issue to be addressed in third age scholarship. Persistent inequalities still remain that fundamentally shape

income, wealth and health disparities in retirement. These are, in fact, the inequalities that shape the lives of the "baby boomer" generation who tend to be the focus of Gilleard and Higgs' work. In 2011, average earnings for all earning women in Canada were $32,1000, which is 66.7% of the earning of all earning men (Statistics Canada, 2013a). Among full-time workers the gender wage gap is 72%, with women earning an annual average of $47,300 in comparison to men's $65,700 (Statistics Canada, 2013b). This gap holds even when education levels are taken into account (Statistics Canada, 2015).

The gap widens when the intersections of gender and race are considered. For instance, in 2005 visible minority women working full time for the full year earned only 91% of what their white women counterparts earned and only 63% of what their white men counterparts received (Block & Galabuzi, 2011, p. 4). It is important to note, however, that access to full time, full year employment is itself racialized and gendered. When considering overall income, as opposed to amount and duration of employment, visible minority women earned 55.6% of the income of white men in 2005 (Block & Galabuzi, 2011, p. 4). Aboriginal women encounter a similar pattern as recorded by the 2006 Census: "For an Aboriginal woman to earn as much as a non-Aboriginal man she would need to work two days for every one of his" (Lambert, 2010, p. 5; Statistics Canada, 2015). These findings are part of a larger trend in which the financial benefits of economic growth are unevenly distributed along gender and racial lines. Consider, for instance, that from 2000 to 2005 the average income of white Canadians grew 2.7% but the average income of visible minority Canadians declined by 0.2% (Block & Galabuzi, 2011, p. 4). Trans* people, who face above average rates of discrimination and unemployment, and below average annual incomes, are also further erased through the ways income statistics are collected

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and reported (Bauer et al, 2010; Ryan, 2003). Research about the gender wage gap and its implications for inequalities in old age can therefore perpetuate the assumption that gender and sex correspond in linear, binary ways that are organized and experienced as stable throughout a person's life.

Persistent disparities in income that ultimately shape retirement inequalities are due to a variety of factors. Women's labour force participation, a key factor in annual income, has grown substantially since WWII yet has stalled since the late 1980s (Guppy & Luongo, 2015, p. 245). Guppy and Luongo argue that this trend will likely continue unless substantial policy changes are adopted, such as universal child care. Although occupational sex segregation decreased from 1991 to 2011, this is largely due to women entering male-dominated jobs (while struggling to obtain the highest positions in these fields) (Guppy & Luongo, 2015, p. 246). Industries and jobs that are most accessible to women and visible minorities remain feminized and/or devalued. Furthermore, there is often an overrepresentation of visible minority men and women in jobs that tend to be "precarious, insecure, low-paid… with few or no benefits" (Block & Galabuzi, 2011, p. 10). All of these factors shape how retirement is organized for privileged and marginalized groups.

Women's lower incomes are directly tied to the lack of visibility and value placed upon unpaid care work in the home (Calasanti & Zajicek, 1993). The average hourly earnings of women with children has been 12% lower than women without children since 1993 (Statistics Canada, 2009; Zhang, Xuelin. 2009.) The gendered structure of organizations persists based on the imagined life course of the "social man," the salience and hegemony of which relies upon continued unpaid domestic work (Acker, 1990). The experiences and outcomes of the "second

shift" remain an individualized problem, one consequence of which is that women are more likely to work part time (Hochschild, 1989). The demands for women's unpaid care work in the second age echo those of women in the third age who are more likely to care for partners and grandchildren, to maintain family ties, and to sustain the daily operations of the home – tasks that are often excluded from interpretations of "active" aging within the third age (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, p. 49).

The effects of the wage gap over the course of a lifetime are compounded in retirement given that women are able to contribute less to pension funds and retirement savings plans. Although 47% of contributors to the Canada/Québec pension plans are women, their average annual contributions are only 82% of men's annual contributions (based on data from 2007) (Statistics Canada, 2015). The percentage of women contributing to Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSPs) increased from 45% in 2000 to 47% in 2008. However, the median RRSP contribution for women in 2008 was only $2,240.00 compared to men's median contribution of $3,220.00 (Statistics Canada, 2015). Put another way, in both 2000 and 2008, women's RRSP contributions constituted 39% of the total contributions whereas men's contributions made up 61%.

Divorce and widowhood also have a greater negative impact on long-term after-tax family income for women than men (Martin-Matthews, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2012). According to measurements based on replacement rate – meaning the extent to which family income during "working years" is replaced by other sources of income in retirement – divorced women had the lowest replacement rate, followed by widowed women. On the contrary, divorce had little impact on men's replacement rates, and widowerhood actually increased replacement

rates for middle and high-income men. It is worth noting, however, that the effects of divorce and widowhood on the replacement rate for women in the bottom quintile were reduced by public pension income (the existence of which is a defining feature of the third age in countries like Canada), whereas women with middle and high-incomes saw more substantial income declines.

These and other factors are evidence and outcomes of the systemic inequalities that can make women, particularly visible minority and gender non-conforming women, more vulnerable in old age. The persistence of gender and racial inequalities can be masked by the overall reduction in poverty for people over 65 in Canada that has occurred in recent decades. From 1976 to 2008, the incidence of low income for elder men and women fell from 29% to just below 6% due largely to increases is targeted government funds for seniors (Statistics Canada, 2015). However, women over 65 are still twice as likely as men over 65 to be living with low income after tax[8]. In 2008, just 4% of men over 65 were low income in comparison to 8% of women (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Access to third age benefits relies not just upon income and wealth, but health as well. Many definitions of the third age assume high levels of mobility and physical activity. Although health care technologies and accessibility have improved in the latter half of the twentieth century (including the availability of immunizations and legal birth control), health and health care systems are shaped by gender, race, and class (Veenstra, 2011, 2009; Wu, Noh, Kaspar,

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[8] Low income is calculated based on Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO), where low income constitutes 63% of after-tax income spent on necessities.

Schimmele, 2003; McDonough & Walters, 2001; Spitzer, 2005; Humphries & van Doorslaer, 2000). Grafova, McGonagle, and Stafford (2007, p. 34) document that wealth and health are positively correlated. Poverty and economic marginalization have profound effects on health status and interactions with health care systems, particularly for Indigenous people who face systemic barriers in accessing the health care they require (Tang & Browne, 2008; Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2004; Adelson, 2005). 51% of the Aboriginal population in Canada aged 75 and over has three or more chronic conditions, whereas only 23% of non-Aboriginal people in this age group experience the same number of chronic conditions (Wilson, Rosenberg, Abonyi & Lovelave, 2010, p. 369). Visible minority Canadians report lower perceived satisfaction and quality of medical care than white Canadians and are less likely to receive treatment upon reporting certain conditions (Lasser, Himmelstein, & Woolhandler, 2006, p. 1303). LGBTQ elders also report concerns about accessing medical services and experiencing discrimination and lack of recognition for their relationships and identities from health care professionals (Addis et al., 2009; Brotman, Ryan & Cormier, 2003; Brotman et al., 2009; Butler, 2004; Hughes, 2009). Lack of training for medical professionals and care providers to appreciate LGBTQ experiences and needs is a primary factor (Hughes, 2009; Qmunity, 2014). Health care inequalities cumulate over the life course, leading trans* elders to be at higher risk for disability, depression, stress, and poorer physical health (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2013, p. 488). Overall, racial, sexual and gender minorities are more likely to enter the third age with poorer health, or may skip the third age altogether, depending on how it is defined (Brown, 2009; Calasanti & King, 2011, p. 79).

As Calasanti and King (2011, p. 68) argue, what is required is "less attention to the construction of voluntary retirement as lifestyle and more attention to the constraints that prevent so many people from exercising such an option." On the one hand, third age scholarship provides a counter-narrative to interpretations of old age as a time of dependence and vulnerability, thus challenging the "misery approach" within feminist political economy perspectives as well as expectations of elder disengagement characteristic of older functionalist disengagement models (Parsons, 1942). Third age scholarship, however, also has a tendency to overemphasize elders' agency while overlooking the realities of persistent social inequalities. Laslett (1989) expresses a clear commitment to challenging ageist stereotypes in the interest of redefining aging for the "young" old. In making his arguments, however, he minimizes and individualizes other social factors and thus becomes complicit in reproducing the very social inequalities that lead more marginalized older adults to have less control over their aging. Gilleard and Higgs (2005, p. 3) distance themselves from Laslett's activist orientation and explicitly state that their "intention is not primarily to study inequality in later life." Their emphasis on the third age as a cultural field shaped by generational consumption patterns, expanded market segmentation, and the changing nature of class within late modernity (Gilleard and Higgs, 2000, 2005; Gilleard, Higgs, Hyde, Wiggins, and Blane, 2005), though sociologically sophisticated, represents a particular set of analytical goals and scholarly commitments (Calasanti and King, 2011). As Holstein (2011, p. 233) notes, "organizing efforts in the pursuit of social justice remain sidelined in these [third age] discourses, and gerontologists seem strangely unconcerned with how their agendas build upon a lifetime of relative advantage." The fundamental assumptions about the nature and purpose of research that inform my work, including how research is always political and contextual,

motivate me to emphasize how persistent inequalities in the third age are structured and experienced for a diversity of elders. My epistemological position, which I detail in chapter two, is informed by feminist standpoint scholars who seek to generate politically useful knowledge rooted in and accountable to the experiences of differently located people – often groups who are further silenced and misrepresented by dominant academic concepts (Smith, 1990, 1999; Harding, 2004, 2009, p. 195).

The discourse of the third age has emerged through social science scholarship but is also taken up within government population management initiatives and professions targeting the sizeable market of individuals entering advanced adulthood. Canada has an aging population that will accelerate between 2010 and 2031 as members of the "boomer" generation continue to reach 65. Tracking the growing consumer base of older adults, a variety of industries, including financial, cosmetic, medical, leisure, and real estate, have "recast later life as an active, youthful commercial experience," while downplaying daily material realities of aging structured by systemic inequality (Katz & Marshall, 2011, p. 5; Meyrowitz, 1984). As such, the third age can be understood as a textually-mediated discourse coordinated by the writing and speaking of institutionally embedded experts, and taken up in particular ways by actual located elders. Social scientific conceptions of aging have shifted alongside developments in marketing and professional services:

> The popular media has marketed books describing ways third-agers can engage in more "purposeful" living (e.g., Sadler, 2000). A variety of websites, books, and companies have become dedicated to providing information (and marketing) to healthy individuals in the later stages of their careers and the early stage of

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retirement for whom the term "Third Age" resonates better than other language

associated with later life such as "senior" or "older adult. (Carr & Komp, 2011, p.

3).

This new phase of the life cycle taken up through a variety of popular texts is imagined to be

associated with personalized choices regarding leisure, consumption, and paid and unpaid labour

(Marshall, 2011). Individuals are expected to make a smooth transition to this stage of older

adulthood, retaining many elements of independence and self-regulation associated with middle

age (Katz & Marshall, 2003). Although the third age is most accessible to those with disposable

income, health and mobility, and ample leisure time, it must also be understood as a regulatory

discourse that elders with less access are still held accountable to.

This emergence of the third age is embedded in processes of individualization occurring

within the context of neoliberalism in Canada. Neoliberalism is typically seen as a new form of

governance, deeply entrenched within Western nations, that coordinates many dimensions of the

social according to the logic of economic and political rationality connected to the shrinking

governmental safety net and privatization of services. Aging for the "baby boomers" is shaped

by this larger project in the West through which individuals participate in producing themselves

and others as autonomous and self-managing (Gill and Scharff, 2011, p. 6). Conceptions of aging

within neoliberalism have been studied in a variety of ways, all emphasizing the greater attention

placed on individual accountability. Professional discourses position elders as responsible for

self-managing their aging bodies (Rudman, 2015), often through constant social activity (Ekerdt,

1986, p. 243; Moody, 1988, p. 238) and idealized athleticism (McGowan, 2013) within the

context of government population health management initiatives and professional anti-aging

services. Elders are also encouraged to cultivate youthful sexual function contingent on penile-vaginal penetration and penile ejaculation, often necessitating medical interventions (Katz & Marshall, 2003). Katz (2000, p. 148) argues that "we are witnessing today a new mandate to encourage people to be "retirement ready" and "retirement fit" by allying their active subject efforts at maintaining autonomy and health with the wider political assault on the risks of dependency." Individuals are ultimately compelled to minimize their risk and dependence in the face of a shrinking safety net and anxieties about aging populations as a drain on state resources. This third age discourse compels individuals to "gro[w] older without aging" (Katz & Marshall, 2003, p. 5).

It is within this social context that my low-income, white, mostly single and/or divorced elder women participants make sense of their daily lives. Although scholars such as Gilleard and Higgs attempt to minimize the compulsory moral implications of the third age (in comparison to the work of Laslett), for my participants aging is still very much structured by this moral imperative through programs at the House and other social services within the province of British Columbia. For example, The British Columbia Seniors Guide (2011), produced by the BC Seniors Advocate is heavily focused on health and activity. Under the heading "Your Lifestyle," readers are prompted to answer the following questions:

> How do you plan to stay physically active as you get older? How will you stay
> connected with your friends, family and community? Have you considered
> sharing your skills and knowledge as a volunteer for an organization or cause
> that's important to you? Have you thought about lifelong learning and what new
> skills or knowledge you want to gain? What recreational opportunities do you

enjoy that can help you stay active and engaged in your community? (2011, p.

12).

These questions are not rhetorical. Space is allocated on the page for readers to respond in

writing, compelling them to think, write and act in relation to the organization of the text. The

questions themselves emphasize individual decision making and responsibility for maintaining

healthy, active living.

Shifting beliefs about dependency are fundamental to unpacking changes in how aging is

understood in the third age. In their genealogy of the concept and practice of dependency in the

United States, Fraser and Gordon (1997) argue that dependency has become stigmatized as an

individual moral and psychological characteristic in Western nations where equality and

meritocracy are held as core values. Whereas in industrial societies some forms of dependency

continued to be treated as a natural and essential feature of hierarchical social organization

(epitomized by the 'slave', 'colonial native', and the 'housewife'), the removal of formal legal

barriers to economic and political participation predicated on new conceptions of nation-state

citizenship and the declining ideal of the family wage meant that dependency became

individualized in postindustrial nations. There is, "no longer any self-evidently "good" adult

dependency in postindustrial society. Rather, all dependency is suspect, and independence is

enjoined upon everyone" (Fraser & Gordon, 1997, p. 135). In this context, the lingering visibility

of dependence is essentialized and stigmatized as a feature of feminine and racial inferiority.

This historical shift in the positive valuation from dependence to independence has

implications for the regulation of older adulthood that are captured through the rise of the third

age discourse. Dependency is no longer seen as a structural feature, but a matter of individual

character for both adults and older adults (excluding adults in the fourth age where narratives of decline dominate). The responsibilizing conceptions of the third age produced through professional and academic texts remove focus from structural constraints and place emphasis on the 'senior' as an accountable, independent, self-regulating citizen. While prior narratives of old age have assumed dependence and vulnerability as an acceptable and expected component of aging, the discourse of the third age firmly roots individuals in their 50s, 60s, and 70s as within the expectations of citizenship common to the rest of the adult population. While in previous decades stages of older adulthood were not as clearly distinguished, the marketing and professions surrounding and arising with the "boomers" have constructed a third age that is distinct from the fourth age associated with substantial age-related health challenges and gradual decline. In some ways, third age narratives position elders as generationally privileged with substantial supports in place through private and public funding, thus further stigmatizing elders who do not or cannot conform to the model of productive, independent aging (Grenier, 2012).

In many ways the third age model minimizes structural limitations and positions the individual as an empowered and accountable decision-maker responsible for avoiding any forms of dependence. As a result, the third age discourse can be seen not just as an attempt to describe shifting structural conditions shaping aging, but also as a discourse informing what "successful" aging *should* look like. As scholars in disciplines such as sociology, social gerontology, social work and nursing create new ways of speaking and writing about aging, they also produce and become part of "a whole machinery for speechifying, analyzing, and investigating" older adulthood that surveil, discipline, and produce the 'senior' in particular ways (Foucault, 1980, p.

27, 32). However, it is important to note that some critical gerontologists also self-reflexively identify and critique this process (see Katz, 2005).

Given that many seniors' programs at the House, and the associated grants that fund them, are based on the promotion of healthy, productive, active aging, another key research question informing this dissertation is: **How do staff engage with the third age discourse in their senior-driven programming work?** The notion of "active" aging is fundamentally intertwined with the third age discourse. Accounts of the third age in the late 1980s and 1990s were often based on the assumption that activity and productivity were essential to successful aging (Laslett 1989; Young & Schuller, 1991). The value of activity, whether physical, social, or based on the exploration of personal interests, has generated a core debate within social gerontology since before theories were formalized within the field (Katz, 2000). As Katz (2000, p. 135) notes, "the association of activity with well-being in old age seems so obvious and undisputable that questioning it within gerontological circles would be considered unprofessional, if not heretical". Positive aging has been associated with a variety of aging models, with various terms being used sometimes interchangeably in gerontology literature, including "successful," "productive," "active" and "healthy" aging (Estes, 2011; Ranzijn, 2010; Ranjzin & McMahon, 2006).

Successful aging is associated with gerontological research and government initiatives to enhance health outcomes and decrease health risks among aging populations (Palmore, et al 1979; see also Pruchno, 2015). Rowe and Kahn (1997) define successful aging with reference to three components: low likelihood of disease, high physical and cognitive function, and active engagement. These approaches, though accounting for both

individual habits and social and environmental factors, tend to emphasize individual lifestyles without fully addressing the structural barriers that limit elders' ability to achieve intended health outcomes. Holstein and Minkler (2003) argue that Rowe and Kahn's (1997) operationalization of successful aging is most relevant for elders with a lifetime of cumulative advantage, thus positioning already marginalized elders within a narrative of personal failure (Braun, Browne, Ka'opua, Jung Kim & Mokuau, 2013).

Productive aging, a later adaptation of the frameworks of successful aging, was intended to dislodge stereotypes of elders as a drain on resources, and to focus on how old adults can make economic contributions at the national and community level. Definitions of productive aging tend to emphasize elders' activities that allow them to produce goods and services, with some interpretations prioritizing paid activities (Morgan, 1988) and others incorporating a broader range of paid and unpaid work that creates value, including housework, volunteering, childcare and assistance to others (Herzog, Kahn, Morgan, Jackson, Antonussi, 1989; Bass, Caro, Chen, 1993; Bulter and Schechter, 1995). Some definitions emphasize elders' development of the capacity to produce useful outputs, along with the outputs themselves (Bass, Caro, Chen, 1993). Common to all of these definitions is the recognition that old adults are an important national and community resource, that these activities can enhance elders' sense of achievement, and that elders are capable of meeting their own and others' needs (Estes, 2001). Much like the successful aging model that individualizes health outcomes, the productive aging model often overlooks the structural conditions that limit more marginalized elders' ability to engage in these versions of productivity. More recently "active" aging has become a more popular term,

combining elements of productivity, health and independence (Ranzjin, 2010; Walker, 2002).

Active and productive aging models have been critiqued for their emphasis on individual accountability and responsibility "for the costs and consequences of unproductive aging" (Estes, 2001, p. 27). These concepts may be seen as an extension of market ideology into aging processes through which elders and their activities are commodified and evaluated according to their utility for capitalist expansion (Estes, 2001). For example, Komp (2011, p. 55-56) suggests that welfare states should consider economic *outputs* (state costs related to pensions, social assistance, and support for productive activities) against third agers' valuable *inputs*, including their private contributions to social assurances (e.g. private insurance plans) as well as their value-added activities such as volunteering, informal caregiving, engagement with social interest groups, and participation in democratic political processes. By framing elders' activities in this manner, the productive aging model ultimately shifts the onus from the state and the community to the individual, and prioritizes production and economic growth over human needs and circumstances. Any failures to age productively and successfully are seen as individual failures, which can be particularly harmful for elders with chronic health issues or disabilities (Holstein, 1992). The individualization of active aging is particularly problematic given that access is mediated by a variety of social and environmental factors. Elders who experience various forms of marginalization may have less access to the education, exercise facilities, seniors' centres, social networks, transportation means, and

financial resources that are required to engage in active aging (Minicuci & Noale, 2005; Ranzijn, 2010; van Heuvelen, Hochstenback, Brouwer, de Greer, & Scherder, 2006).

In addition to feminist political economy critiques of productive aging models, it is important to question the utility of these prescriptive aging models, given that only a minority of the population can achieve them (Depp & Jeste, 2009; Ranzijn, 2010) and given that they do not align with how the majority of old adults assess and conceptualize their own positive aging criteria (Townsend, Godfrey, & Denby, 2006). Whether aging is conceptualized as successful, productive or active, these terms are less a description of current conditions and experiences and more a "*pre*scription for what is approved, acceptable, normative and 'good' (Ranzijn, 2010, p. 717).

Active aging models not only deviate from what is seen as attainable and desirable by actual elders, but they are also based on and perpetuate ethnocentric conceptions of ideal aging (Braun et al., 2014). Definitions of active aging are predicated on a Western, individualistic worldview which "values independence, autonomy, and self-reliance" (Ranzjin, 2010, p. 720). Australian Aboriginal elders, for example, report that these values do not align with their worldviews "characterized by interdependence, mutual reliance, reciprocity and an intricate kinship system" (Ranzjin, 2010, p. 720). Indigenous elders facing systemic inequalities may not only have less access to the resources needed to achieve these idealized versions of aging, but may find them to be disconnected from what fulfilling aging means in their own cultural context. That various active aging policies and programs are implemented by colonial governments suggests that active aging models should be studied as colonial processes of management. This is a particularly salient

insight given that the Musqueam Indian Reserve No.2 inhabited by members of the Musqueam First Nation falls within the House catchment area. One powerful contrast between Western and Aboriginal conceptions of aging can be found in the treatment of death. While many Western cultures emphasize youthful vitality, as exemplified by how the anti-aging industry has expanded into more and more facets of life (Calasanti & King, 2005), many Aboriginal cultures embrace the circle of life-death-life, which changes how aging is perceived and experienced (Ranzijn, 2010). Death in this context "is not something to be feared and fought again, and ageing is accepted as an important part of the circle of life" (Ranzijn, 2010, p. 721). Elders at the House are overwhelmingly white of European descent. That few Indigenous elders engage with House programs raises questions not just about access, but about the dominant cultural frameworks that inform House seniors' programs, often hooked into government grants at the municipal and provincial levels. Given that successful, productive and active aging models tend to be defined in ethnocentric ways, I ask **how perceptions of productive aging activities at the Seniors' Drop-In, sometimes organized around multicultural food and entertainment themes, are interpreted by elders based on race and ethnicity.**

The question of how elders make sense of third age discourses in the context of the House is particularly intriguing given that my participants are uniquely positioned in relation to the third age. As mostly low-income elder white women living independently in subsidized housing, they are privileged with regard to generation, race and education yet marginalized based on gender and class. They have the time, flexibility and health to engage in fulfilling pursuits associated with this life stage, largely due to their access to subsidized housing, government

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funds targeted for seniors, and public health care, yet must make careful choices about activities, entertainment and consumption given that their fixed incomes leave them with little disposable income.

My approach to the third age as a discourse is informed by the work of poststructuralist feminist gerontologists who focus on role of discourse in producing aged and gendered subjectivities involving multiple, fragmented masculinities and femininities. Drawing on queer studies (Butler, 1990; Seidman,1997), scholars in this area demonstrate how "gender may be (per)formed as 'subjectivities' and 'subject positions' in and as discourse(s)" (Hearn & Wray, 2015, p. 204). Age is taken up in relation to gender, race, class, and sexuality as a "social construct that is unstable, fluid and subject to regulation through power/knowledge discourse" (Hearn & Wray, 2015, p. 204). Part of this work involves deconstructing gender and age binaries that have pervaded social gerontology, noting how genders, sexualities and life stages are shaped and taken up differently over time, place, and generation as the life course itself is acknowledged as fluid and negotiated (Spector-Mersel, 2006)[9]. Given that scholarly attention to discourse can in some cases decenter the embodied and material, there has been a turn toward examining the material processes and implications of gendered aging discourses (Clarke & Griffin, 2007; Laz, 2003; Twigg & Martin, 2015). Research on 'active, 'positive' and 'productive' aging often

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[9] For instance, Brown (2009) and Cronin and King (2010) problematize rigid life course stages constructed insofar as they are based on marriage, reproduction and grandparenting that implicitly maintain heteronormative assumptions within research on older adults. Spector-Mersel (2006) also considers lifespan time, with an emphasis on the ways different idealized masculinities are ascribed to different periods in men's lives. Feminist and queer work on aging informs and engages with the emerging field of cultural gerontology, characterized by a shift in emphasis from structural explanations to a focus on subjectivity and meaning-making within post-modern social contexts where aging itself is culturally produced through activities such as consumption (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, 2005; Katz, 2001; Twigg & Martin, 2015).

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considers how cultural ideals regarding activity, beauty and youthful bodily functionality serve to discipline elder bodies (Foucault, 1988; Katz, 2000)[10]. Laz (2003), draws on interviews with adults over 50 to show how they accomplish age in embodied ways related to activity, fitness, health, energy, appearance, and illness. Arguing that the "corporeal body contributes to the accomplishment of age," Laz (2003, p. 505) suggests that the material and corporeal cannot be disconnected from discourses and representations, and thus must be theorized together. The work of feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith (1990, 1999, 2005) has been fundamental to understanding the mutually constituting relation between the discursive and the material, given her attention to the relations of ruing brought into being as embodied individuals draw upon textually-mediated discourses in their daily lives. As I will discuss in chapter two, I take up Smith's materialist ontology by conceptualizing thinking, speaking, reading and writing as material practices producing the 'social,' or individuals' concerted activities (Smith, 2005). It is the daily activities, or 'work' of located elders and staff that produce aging in particular ways in the specific House context. I therefore ask: **how do elders at the House "do" age in ways that intersect with gender, race, class and generation?**

Lastly, I consider **how Neighbourhood House funding structures constrain and enable staff in their approach to senior-driven programming.** The ability of Neighbourhood Houses to develop and deliver seniors' programs must be understood in the context of the New

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[10] Material-discursive work in gerontology considers the corporeal reality of aging bodies while acknowledging that perceptions of 'natural' bodies are always already cultural (Hurd Clarke & Griffin, 2007; Laz, 2003; Twigg & Martin, 2015). This approach frames "nature as a social text," thus blurring constructed binaries between male and female and nature and culture (Twigg, 2004, p. 60). For instance, Calasanti and King (2007) examine intersections in the ways technology, medicine, media and consumerism produce and redefine sexual function in aging bodies, often in ways that are gendered.

Public Management (NPM), based on the imposition of managerial regimes from private

enterprise to the public sector (Griffith & Smith, 2014, p. 5). NPM can be seen as "a major

institutional specification of neoliberalism aiming to produce in the public sector a simulacrum

of private-sector organization and management" (Griffith & Smith, 2014, p. 6). Management as a

business discourse developed in the late 1800s and early 1900s, beginning with the growing

influence of Frederick Taylor's 'scientific management'. Organizational management came to be

seen as an area of scientific expertise to be studied and implemented not only with regard to

direct worker supervision, but as an "overall governing function and authority" that includes

administrative practices (Griffith & Smith, 2014, p.6). Management discourse includes but is not

limited to a quest for value and the identification and implementation of more efficient,

inexpensive and institutionally accountable ways of providing public services (Hood, 1995, p.

97). Smith (2014, p. 8) argues that public-sector front-line service work is being transformed

within the context of NPM so much so that it "reorganiz[es] people's everyday/everynight lives

and how their work [is] being done".

New Public Management is informed by the neoliberal logic taken up in Canada since the

mid-1970s. This logic can be characterized by a set of assumptions, including that state

regulation of the labour market is harmful for economic productivity, that public deficits are

inherently negative, and that "the social protections guaranteed by the welfare state and its

redistributive policies hinders economic growth" (Clark, 2002, p. 771). Within the context of

globalization, neoliberal ideology posits that the state should not take on the socially productive

role reminiscent of the Keynesian era. Instead, the state should facilitate "positioning the

economy and society in order to best compete in an increasingly open and competitive global

economy" (McBride & McNutt, 2007, p. 182). Within Canada, the Keynesian welfare state "was placed on the defensive" beginning in the mid-1970s when programs such as unemployment insurance were gradually reduced (McBride & McNutt, 2007, p. 185). Fundamental changes to the state continued to be implemented by the neoliberal Mulroney Conservatives in the mid-1980s and the Liberal government in the 1990s under Jean Chrétien. These changes were characterized by public service downsizing, cuts to social programs, and a reorganization of the way services were delivered (Clark, 2002, p. 778). This included decreasing federal transfers to provinces and redesigning the purpose, amount and dissemination of unemployment benefits (McBride & McNutt, 2007). Notably, many social programs that were universal shifted to those that were targeted through means-tested eligibility requirements in an attempt to make the state's social spending more efficient, cost-effective and accountable under the broader mandate of decreasing the national deficit (McBride & McNutt, 2007, p. 186). The federal government also endeavoured to run programs within specified cost-parameters and/or to make them self-financing (Houle, 1990).

House staff are affected by the economic implications of neoliberal logic as it shapes the running of and resources for NHs. In their study of 15 NHs in Metro Vancouver, Yan, Lauer and Riaño-Alcalá (2016, p.11) call the short/non-renewable government funding model for NHs as a "financial predicament". They suggest this funding structure inhibits NH functioning, including their ability to hire and retain staff. The programming work of many staff members is organized around limited, project-based grants rather than core funds that help sustain the long-term running of the House. Most of the program funding that NHs in Metro Vancouver rely upon comes from the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government as well as charitable

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organizations such as the United Way. In contrast to the "government's rehetoric about rebuilding community, funding for community programmes is diminishing" rather than being sustained or even growing (Yan, Lauer and Riaño-Alcalá, 2016, p.11). Overwhelmingly, grants from these funding sources are offered in limited terms of at most three years that are often non-renewable (Yan, Lauer & Riaño-Alcalá, 2016, p.6).

The grants that House staff are able to secure shape the seniors' programs they can develop or renew as well as how the success of these programs is quantified and assessed. For some staff members, particularly those who are part time or temporary, their ongoing and future employment at the House and/or their number of hours can depend on their frequent and successful grant-writing. On a daily basis, staff who report having an overwhelming number of tasks to complete must manage their time between doing front-line work with program participants and volunteers and doing behind-the-scenes paperwork associated with the quantitative markers that secure their employment. This daily negotiation means that staff sometimes organize program planning meetings with volunteers around institutional program outcomes, thus constraining the potential for considering senior-driven ideas and incorporating modifications that do not fit within established institutional needs. It is within this context that staff who organize the Seniors Drop-In Lunch operate. Their emphasis on program efficiency and cost-saving measures can overshadow more open-ended and potentially critical discussions and feedback about the Drop-In.

1.3 Chapter overview

In the remaining chapters I draw upon the literature and discourses discussed above to present my research process and findings. In chapter two I layout my theoretical and methodological frameworks for this project. Theoretically, I build on West and Zimmerman (1987) and Butler (1990) to conceptualize aging as something that individuals *do*, in addition to gender, race, ethnicity and class. I draw on Mannheim's concept of "generation location" (1952 [1927]) and feminist intersectional thinking (Denis, 2008; Hill Collins 1986; Hill Collins, 1990; Krenshaw, 1989) to contextualize the ways that elders at the House 'do' gender and ageing in specific situations. This theoretical framework enables me to demonstrate how elders at the House engaged with the Seniors' Drop-In Program in ways that are fundamentally intersectional. In this chapter I also provide an overview of my materialist ontology and standpoint methodology to ground this project in the textually mediated discourses that elders take up at the House. Lastly, I discuss ethical considerations for this project and outline my process for employing research methods and analyzing the data.

This theoretical and methodological framework enables me to explicate how differently located elders and staff at the house interpreted and engaged with the Seniors' Drop-In in distinct ways. The diagram below represents, in brief, the unique standpoints that my informants shared with me during our interviews and during my participant observation with the Drop-In. Some elders were positioned to see Drop-In activities as stimulating and productive, while others dismissed it as too 'old' and institutional. Still other elders questioned the ethnocentric assumptions upon which the activities rested, particularly the multicultural lunches. The staff

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tended to approach the program from an entirely different perspective, with a focus on managing

costs and ensuring the program was sustainable.
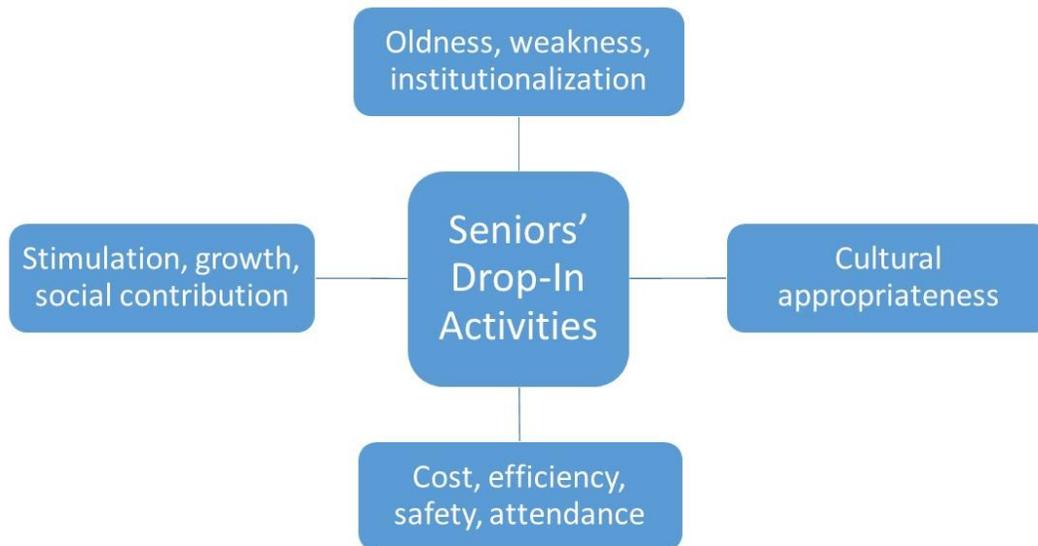
Figure 1. Different interpretations of the Seniors' Drop-In Program

Chapters three, four and five map onto and represent my attempts to trace these distinct

ways of knowing to the broader social relations they are coordinated by. In the third chapter I

take up the standpoint of elders at the House to consider how they engaged with "productive"

multicultural activities in generationally-specific ways shaped by their gender, race, and class. I

argue that these low income, mostly white women elders produce their own "productive" aging

through their participation in the multicultural meals at the Senior's Drop-In Lunch, coordinated

by the third age discourse. In chapter four I shift perspective to consider staff experiences of the

Seniors' Drop-In. I look at how staff draw upon the complementary yet contradictory discourses

of "senior-driven programming" and "managerial efficiency" as they organize and implement the

program. To trace the behind-the-scenes program planning work, I show how staff make the ideas of elder House volunteers institutionally accessible by turning them into texts coordinated by the discourse of efficiency. Within this participant-driven programming model, the ways staff transform volunteer ideas based upon institutional needs is noteworthy.

In the fifth chapter I magnify my exploration of aging through an intersectional lens by explicating elder men's relative lack of engagement with House seniors' programming. As elder men participants reject the House's seniors' programming, or only engage with it in limited ways, they also work to produce their own masculine vitality in the face of age-based dependence and decline. These elder men perform various scripts of masculine aging by associating House spaces with femininity, and by positioning themselves in contrast to a notion of femininity they identify with weakness and inferiority. I conclude this chapter by reflecting on the way that staff make sense of men's lack of participation in House senior's programs. In chapter six, the final concluding chapter, I provide an overview of my key arguments, discussing implications, future research directions and policy recommendations.

Chapter 2: The experience and institutionalization of gendered aging: Frameworks for studying the third age

In this chapter I discuss the core theorists, theories, and concepts that I engage with in this dissertation. I also detail my methodological orientation and decisions. I present my theoretical and methodological framework together in the same chapter because they are fundamentally interrelated; they mutually inform one another.

2.1 Theoretical frameworks

To explicate how elders' work as program volunteers and program participants is connected to broader social relations, I focus on their involvement with the the Seniors' Drop-In Lunch. I trace the ways these elders engaged with this program are coordinated by the third age discourse. To do so I bring sociological theory on generation, grounded in Mannheim's foundational text (1970[1950]), into dialogue with the 'third age'—an aging discourse connected to a variety of popular, professional, and academic texts. With an intersectional feminist lens I interpret the complex ways these elders cultivate their own (in)dependent aging within this institutional context. I also draw on the notion of gender as performative developed within the sociology of gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and queer theory (Butler, 1990) to situate aging as something that individuals *do* while also engaging gender, race, ethnicity and class positions. Below I provide an overview of the relevant concepts and theoretical insights that ground and guide this work.

2.1.1 The discourse and performativity of aging

In this dissertation I take up 'discourse' to elucidate how the activities of specific people in a particular time and place are interconnected with the activities of other individuals acting in other times and places, thus necessitating a focus on the variety of texts that connect them (Griffith & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2005). With the historical development of technologies for the mass production and dissemination of texts (in various forms and mediums), as well as the rise of national and international bureaucratic organization within industrial and post-industrial capitalism, texts have become fundamental to how social relations are organized. Discourses are textually-mediated in that they are produced and reproduced through writing, drawing, and speaking, which can be disseminated to multiple locations instantaneously (Smith, 1999, p. 79). Most individuals in Canada encounter and employ numerous texts every single day; many even carry texts on their bodies (e.g., tattoos, driver's license, care card, five dollar bill, and so on) and have access to electronic texts at the click of a button on a smart phone or portable computer. Texts informed by the third age discourse are pervasive within medical offices, gyms, travel stores, television and numerous other places and mediums people often encounter. Discourse, therefore, refers to the translocal relations that coordinate the activities of embodied, located individuals (Smith, 2005, p. 224). Discourse both enables and constrains people's material daily activities, including thinking, speaking, writing, watching, and other forms of action.

My approach to discourse is also informed by a Foucauldian conception of power as productive and pervasive rather than repressive and uni-directional (Foucault, 1978, p. 136). The notion that power is productive allows scholars to consider how subjects are produced through discourse as a medium through which power circulates. This understanding of power is

particularly relevant when considering how dominant ideals about 'youth,' 'age,' 'independence' and so on can actually produce new classifications with compulsory implications, such as the relatively recent construction of the term 'zoomer' that I will discuss throughout this work.

However, my emphasis on discourse does not negate the experiences of actual people. I do not envision discourses acting on passive bodies. On the contrary, people actively bring discourses into being through their activities, through which they have the potential to both reproduce and modify these discourses in contextualized local settings. Smith highlights the relevance of located people and their activities through the term 'discourse in action': "Though discourse is regulated in various ways, each moment of discourse in action both reproduces and remakes it" (Smith, 2005, p. 224). In other words, discourses are always active: they are brought into being through people's activities. For instance, texts are not passive words on a page; rather individuals take up their syntax and fill in their generalizing properties through local actualities engaged in through text-reader conversations (Smith, 2005, p. 105). Through this dissertation I show how elders and staff took up specific discourses at the House. They produced themselves and the multicultural lunches through these discourses in this specific local context.

Many feminist sociologists and queer theorists understand gender as a social process that people 'do' or 'perform' (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). I am able to theorize the complex ways individuals take up discourses through this constructionist framework. I suggest that like gender, age and aging are also institutionalized social processes that people perform as rituals through their daily activities. Although Smith (p1999, p.107) dismisses the concept of "performativity" as a nominalization that "substitutes for intention as the originator of action," I feel it is still useful in centring the experiences of particular people and the unique ways they

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draw upon and adapt discourses within particular contexts in a way that avoids discursive circularity. When I use the language of "performance," therefore, I am not suggesting that people are simply the effect of language. On the contrary, I recognize that the discursive and the material are always interrelated and cannot be understood separately. Given that my participants were *doing* aging and gender as daily work coordinated by discourse, I draw upon the notion of "performance" to highlight this work while also acknowledging the importance of actual experiences.

Just as sex is a system of classification assigned to bodies at birth, age is a classification system applied to bodies from the moment they are born. At various points in time different age classifications become more or less salient. In the early years of life, babies are classified according to the hours and months that have passed since their birth, and in middle age and old adulthood significant birthdays become a primary focus (e.g., "Happy 60th!"). Age is embedded in legal systems (e.g., age for marriage), the workforce (age for mandatory or optional retirement), the social safety net (e.g., Old Age Security), social norms (e.g., "Should she be wearing that at her age?"), social statuses (e.g., "Respect your elders!"), and cultural expectations (e.g., "Should you still be living on your own?"). Age also takes on meaning in particular contexts. For previous generations, being a 'senior' was associated with a gradual physical, mental, and social decline. Yet for the current generation of 'boomers,' dominant discourses, particularly those perpetuated through the marketing of medical and anti-aging products, situate the third age as a distinct time for the maintenance of good health, productive activity, and an opportunity to pursue new and fulfilling experiences (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002; Katz & Marshall, 2003; Marshall, 2011; McGowan, 2013; Rudman, 2015).

West and Zimmerman (1987, p. 128) have presented a framework for conceptualizing gender as something that people *do* (rather than something people *are*). They are responding to previous sociological conceptions of gender that reduced gender "to a fixed set of psychological traits or to a unitary 'variable' preclud[ing] serious consideration of the ways it is used to structure distinct domains of social experience" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.128). Their approach also critiques the notion of "gender roles" and "sex roles", which were originally useful in sociology because they highlighted how gender was learned and enacted at a time when gender was not seen to be a fundamental way in which the social world was organized. West and Zimmerman propose a social constructionist approach to conceptualizing gender based on how gender is 'done' routinely in everyday interactions and perceptions. In contrast to the cultural logic by which gender is situated as a natural expression of an internal or inherent 'masculinity' or 'femininity' (and corresponding sex as 'male' or 'female'), this social constructionist approach questions the taken-for-granted character of gender by focusing on micro-level interactions and their macro-level organization. Since social and institutional organization, such as separate toilets for men and women, is not simply *based* on gender but also *constitutes* gender, performing gender legitimatizes established social organization and hierarchies. Within the 'doing gender' framework, for example, individuals are understood to 'accomplish' their gender in order to appear competent and avoid judgment. Through my interviews and fieldnotes, I found that individuals were also 'doing' age in everyday interactions, not necessarily as an expression of an internal, biological age classification, but as a performance of expected behaviours associated with particular life phases legitimated through cultural expectations and institutional organization.

My thinking about individuals' performances of gender and age is also informed by the work of Butler (1990) who draws from a post-structuralist framework to suggest that gender is not only produced through interaction, but also performed through discourse. Butler pays attention to acts as they resonate with, replicate, and signify collective discourses that make them appear within the realm of the possible and knowable. Butler's analysis demonstrates that thinking and acting are constrained and enabled within established discursive options, often accompanied by a variety of accountability sanctions for perceived failures. For Butler, performativity refers to the idea that gender only comes to exist as a coherent identity in the enactment of scripts of value and meaning (1990, p.34). Much like gender, the conception of a stable, aged self is an achievement that is constrained and enabled by discourses that individuals take up and are subsequently the basis for policing behavior.

Although I find Butler's (1990) approach to performativity useful, my materialist ontology requires that I do not privilege language over the activities of actual people. I therefore engage with the notion of performativity to show how gender and aging are actions connected to discourse, but I do not fully embrace the implied circularity of Butler's notion of discourse insofar as it can lead to a devaluation of experiences and an erasure of what is achieved through people's concerted action. Instead, I draw on insights from theories of both "doing gender" and "performativity" to highlight the importance of language and daily interactions in conceptions of aging. Although textually mediated discourses play a powerful role in coordinating social relationships, I approach performativity cautiously and with ample attention to actual people and their daily contextualized activities that bring the social into being.

Elders at the House *did* aging in a way that was generational. They performed not only with reference to biological age (as classified and assigned by humans) but also in ways that were fundamentally intertwined with what aging and "old age" had come to mean throughout the course of their lifetime. People who were sixty-five in Canada in 1900 and 1950 did not encounter the same set of textually-mediated discourses shaping perceptions of aging. What is most salient for explicating my participants' activities is not solely how old they were, but the structural and cultural features of the time periods in which they were born, came of age, and were taking up old adulthood. As I will outline in chapter three, the third age discourse emerged and developed alongside the birth, adolescence, middle age, and old age of the "boomer" generation.

Karl Mannheim (1970[1950]) outlines some theoretical tools for understanding the sociological importance of generation. He argues that sociologists must explore generation location, meaning the year and time period one is born in, as pivotal to collective and individual consciousness, similar to how class location structures what and how an individual can know of the social world. Mannheim suggests that generation and class location "both endow the individuals sharing in them with a common location in the social and historic process, and thereby limit them to a specific range of potential experience, predisposing them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience" (1970[1950], p. 381-82). Building upon the materialist approach to class common among Marxists, Mannheim argues that generational consciousness is informed by the significant structural conditions experienced by a generation throughout their lives. He situates his notion of generational *entelechy*, meaning style or essence of a new generation (p. 401), by claiming that the views of any particular social group (including

class or generation) are conditioned according to what they have experienced in their daily lives. Indeed, Mannheim's own thinking was informed by his awareness of the generational tensions emerging in a tumultuous period in Germany, where he resided during the interwar years (Kemple, 2014). In this sense, Mannheim shares epistemological roots with standpoint scholars who connect daily experiences with various institutional and personal ways of knowing (Harding, 2009; Hartsock, 1983; Hill Collins, 1990; Smith, 1974).

In chapter three I discuss and contextualize House elders' aging in relation to the significant economic, political, and technological shifts that occurred during their lifetimes. The rise of the third age discourse must be situated within its historical context, including key economic and social events that led to its development. Mannheim was clear in outlining the distinctions and relationship between generation and age:

Individuals who belong to the same generation, who share the same year of birth, are endowed, to that extent, with a common location in the historical dimension of the social process. [However], biology only help[s] us explain the phenomena of life and death, the limited span of life, and the mental, spiritual, and physical changes accompanying aging as such; [it] offer[s] no explanation of the relevance these primary factors have for the shaping of social interrelationships in their historic flux….Were it not for the existence of social interaction between human beings – were there no definable social structure, no history based on a particular sort of continuity – the generation would not exist as a social location phenomenon; there would merely be birth, aging, and death. (1970[1950], p. 380-381)

While Mannheim acknowledged that age is a necessary precursor to generational experiences, he distinguished between analyses of age that begin and end with physiological facts and those that draw on age as a window into how social interactions and structures are shaped in particular times and places. To understand how the rise of the third age discourse has been taken up by elders at the House, I consider how their aging activities are performed or enacted. They produced youthful, ageless versions of themselves through our interviews and through the activities they participated in at the House. I theorize the relationship between age and generation location by reading these terms in relation to feminist analyses of sex and gender. In some ways, age is to generation as sex is to gender; 'doing age' is less about how systems of biological classification (age assignment) are assumed and applied and more about how the discursive construction of age and aging becomes enacted through and particular to one's generation location.[11] In other words, people perform their age based upon what they believe is expected of them in a particular time and place.

2.1.2 The intersections of class/status, sex/gender and race/ethnicity[12]

Canada is currently in a neoliberal moment that is redefining what it means to be aging. This moment is best exemplified through the development of the third age discourse of aging produced through the professions and social sciences, and also by the elders that take up and

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[11] It would also be productive to consider whether and how generational discourses of aging can be taken up to produce biologically aged bodies and associated medical classifications (much like cultural beliefs about gender can shape how humans classify and interpret biological sex) (Fausto-Sterling, 1987). However, this topic is beyond the scope of this project.
[12] Later in this chapter I discuss my engagement with intersectionality as a method.

reproduce these ideas in particular ways. Insofar as research is itself political, scholars of social gerontology and the sociology of aging are both documenting these changes and surveilling and reproducing them (Foucault, 1980, p. 27, 32). To fully grasp the extent of this changing conception of age for my participants, elders born between 1945 and 1955, it is useful to take up a generational lens to explicate how these changes are rooted in broader structural shifts that have occurred throughout the course of their lives and have continued to shape their experiences in old age. However, a generational analysis must take into account insights from feminist intersectionality scholars to be alert to the ways that aging ideals are structured by systems of power and oppression shaping intersecting relations of class, race, gender, sexuality, and ability.

There is space within Mannheim's work to build an intersectional analysis of generation. Mannheim did theorize the potential for members of the same generation to experience similar social changes in developing different "intellectual and social responses to an historical stimulus experienced by all in common" (1970[1950], p. 395-96). In doing so, he acknowledged that members of a generation could be oriented to a similar set of problems but not necessarily in the same way. He also clarified how some members of a generation will not be affected by the same social shifts and their outcomes (what he called "symptoms" and "motivating challenges") because of their differing proximity to these shifts. However, Mannheim's focus and examples were primarily oriented to his interest in social movements; he emphasized the beliefs and political leanings that different groups hold within a generation.

By contrast, I focus on how members of the same generation are positioned differently within relations of structural inequality. My arguments in the following chapters show how generational conceptions of aging are structured and experienced differently within systems of

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power and oppression that are racialized, classed, and gendered. I draw on valuable theoretical insights from intersectionality scholarship in approaching, contextualizing, and engaging with these forms of social differences and inequality. Intersectional scholarship informs how I theorize systems of inequality, and how individuals are positioned at multiple points in these interlocking systems. Through this approach I am able to root my insights in people's speaking and acting while connecting these insights to the larger processes of power that shape these experiences.

Following intersectional approaches to how systems of marginalization and oppression interact (Denis, 2008, p.678; Hill Collins 1986, p.19), I work to analyze how these multiple, intersecting systems affect the lives of elders. Intersectional theory highlights the ways in which individuals' experiences are rooted in their fundamentally intersectional social locations. Denis (2008, p. 678) suggests that feminist sociologists engaging in intersectional work share a political commitment to social change based on understanding and reducing marginalization (which I also take up through my engagement with standpoint as a method of inquiry, discussed below), as well as a reflective recognition that all analyses are partial (in contrast to certain enlightenment principles of universality).

It is important to acknowledge that women of colour primarily developed intersectional thinking in the 1970s and 1980s, including the Combahee River Collective (1978), Angela Davis (1981), bell hooks (1981), Audre Lorde (1984), Elizabeth Spelman (1988), and Patricia Hill Collins (1990), although the term itself was coined by Kimberly Crenshaw in 1989. These intersectionality scholars critically examine the tendency (highly visible within the second-wave feminist movement) through which multiple oppressions have been conceptualized as separate,

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additive and/or hierarchical, often with gender or class understood as the capstone mode of power. By challenging this approach, intersectional frameworks allow for more complex analyses that "*simultaneously* take into account the intersection of multiple social locations, each socially defined, with the constraints or opportunities that such a definition can entail" (Denis, 2008, p. 681). Furthermore, as McCall (2001) demonstrates, factors that increase inequality in one time and place can decrease inequality in another (McCall 2001). This contextual nuance highlights how the most accurate, useful knowledge production does not follow the logic of universal thinking or the tendency to privilege one form of oppression over others without a careful examination of people's actual experiences in social situations (Denis 2008: 681).

I have sought through my analysis and writing to demonstrate how various social locations are not cumulative, but rather inform and shape *how* participants experience and present multiple overlapping aspects of themselves and the specific situations they are in. A finding from my research that I will discuss in chapter three has implications for how I take up theoretical insights from intersectionality scholars. In learning about my elder participants I came to find that from a generational perspective, they have experienced substantial privileges with regard to economic conditions and government social programs in comparison to generations before them. However, in relation to people their own age, many of my elder participants are marginalized by their class position, particularly as single elders on fixed income renting in the context of Vancouver's unaffordable housing market. Given this unique class position and generation location, many of my elder participants managed on small fixed incomes, yet had access to healthcare and leisure options that they described as allowing them to lead flexible and interesting lives. With these points in mind, I explicate how experiences of class position are

informed by other axes of privilege and oppression, including those structured by generation, gender, race and ethnicity. By emphasizing generation location (Mannheim, 1927/1952), I highlight the relevance of historical time period for intersectional sociological analysis. Considering marginalization at a systemic level enables me to explore how my participants were *positioned* within the systems that they participated in. My goal is to learn about these systems while showing the ways participants drew on particular discourses within the context of these systems.

2.2 An ontology, epistemology and methodology grounding the third age in elders' daily experiences

My engagement with intersectional experiences of aging in the third age is informed by my materialist ontology and standpoint epistemology, largely shaped by the work of feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith (2005, 1999, 1990, 1987). Drawing selectively on Smith's work, I am interested in tracing how people participate in bringing textually-mediated discourses into being and action in the specific House context. Their speaking, writing, thinking and other activities are a part of this active process of producing and reproducing discourse. I take up Smith's approach to the **standpoint** of experience as a starting point for a method of inquiry by focusing first on how embodied knowing is done by my participants. I consider multiple standpoints as they are taken up from within the House: the mostly women elders who participated and/or volunteered in the Seniors' Drop-In Lunch, the staff who helped organize and implement this programming, and the mostly men elders who did not participate or who limited their participation in this programming. This research is also shaped by my own standpoint in the

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House, which I refer to and discuss throughout the dissertation. My own social location and daily experiences—including my youngish age, whiteness, female self-presentation, and status as a graduate student—shaped how I approached, perceived and interacted in the space, and how others interpreted and responded to me. Furthermore, I took on multiple, sometimes competing, roles in the House, including as a volunteer, researcher, and community member, that both constrained and enabled my access to conversations and insights, and that had ethical implications which I discuss later in this chapter.

I have chosen standpoint as a method for this work because of how the terrain of third age literature has developed, and because of my recognition of the political grounding and implications of social scientific research. Much of the literature on the third age has been explored through trends at the macro level, such as shifting demographics and the distribution of wealth within nations (see Laslett, 1989; Gilleard and Higgs, 2000, 2005), as well as through quantitative indicators of elder consumption and activity patterns (Chatzitheochari & Arber, 2011; Gilleard, Higgs, Hyde, Wiggins & Blane, 2005). Holstein (2011, p. 233) argues that this postmodern emphasis on consumption and productive aging produces "totalizing narratives that speak from and to the center and not the margins." Researchers in this area also diverge from the more explicitly political roots of the feminist perspective on the political economy of aging which centres on systemic inequalities within a social justice framework (Estes, 2001). As such, my interest is in beginning with and centring the daily experiences of diverse elders who may be less visible within established accounts in the interest of producing knowledge that addresses their realities and perspectives. My standpoint epistemology acknowledges that access to ways of knowing is structured by social locations and embodied experiences that often compete with or

contradict one another. Just as Smith (1990) found that women activists do not have access to the language within official texts to describe their experiences, and as Hill Collins (1986) found that research on African American communities is produced largely by white men academics in ways that often suppress meaningful self-representation among these communities, third age research often emphasizes generational commonalities while largely erasing the experiences of more marginalized elders who do not have access to the "active" aging and consumption practices described in the literature.

The ontology informing my approach is based on Smith's (1990, p. 35; 1999; 1987) understanding of social relationships rooted in Marx's **materialist** conception of history. Marx argues that research practices should be based on "real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity" (1845/2012, p.34). For Marx, accurate and reliable research must begin with a conception of the social that is rooted in the experiences of actual people (1845/2012, p. 34-35). Smith (2005, 1999, 1990, 1987) builds upon Marx's materialism through the development of her approach to a sociology *for* rather than *about* people. Smith outlines a materialist conception of social life and argues that the focus and purpose of sociological research must be to explore how people's daily activities are coordinated. This framework is evident within Smith's definition of the social as "the ongoing concerting and coordinating of individuals' activities" (1999, p. 6). Although much mainstream sociology is based on "devices for converting the world of actual people into a subjectless phenomenal universe" (Smith 1999, p. 24), understood in terms of structure and systems, for example, Smith begins with the standpoint of experience and in the

specific local and historical contexts in which people think, act, and work. This method thus places the embodied experiences of actual subjects at the centre of inquiry.

The standpoint of experience suggests a method of inquiry, a starting point for explicating how the practices of embodied people in local contexts are coordinated. This approach to inquiry, which maintains a connection to actual people and their interests, gets closer to producing knowledge that is accountable to the people under study and that is not discursively ordered to meet the needs of dominant institutions within corporate capitalism. In *The Everyday World as Problematic* (1987), Smith provides a detailed account of her experience walking her dog in her neighbourbood. Her particular thoughts and actions during this walk "giv[e] access to that which is not particular since [they are] embedded in categories whose meaning reaches into the complex of social relations" that can be explicated (1987, p. 154-56). Similarly, I begin with moments at the House, such as when a staff member writes the idea of one elder into the minutes for a program planning meeting but not the idea of another elder. This specific action is an entry point for tracing how the thinking of this staff member is shaped by the institutional needs of the House as they are connected to the discourse of managerial efficiency within a context of scarce program funding.

In this dissertation I take up a materialist ontology to understand how **discourses** are brought into being through located individuals who are "*active* in [their] ongoing concerting of activities with others" (Smith, 1999, p. 109). I engage in this work by conceptualizing discourses as textually mediated. I define discourse as "the translocal relations coordinating the practices of definite individuals talking, writing, reading, watching, and so forth, in particular local places at particular times" (Smith, 2005, p. 224). These translocal relations are coordinated through texts.

Texts are material, in that they are written at one point in time by a particular individual or group, but can be reproduced identically and taken up by other individuals in other times and places. Located readers activate texts; as they read, listen or watch, readers take up the text's syntax and institutional categories and fill in the gaps within their local context. Texts, therefore, become a medium for researchers to explicate the way particular local doings relate to broader social relations. Within the House context I consider how textually-mediated discourses of the third age, senior-driven programming and managerial efficiency are taken up in particular ways by elders and staff.

My approach to these institutional discourses is built from and remains connected to the experiences of my participants. In writing up the data from my fieldnotes, transcripts, and documentary analyses, I have attempted to avoid turning participants' actions (verbs) into nouns (although I have continued to catch myself doing so). My fieldnotes from participant observations and interviews describe my interactions with participants in the past tense in an effort to foreground that these were actual people acting in a particular place at a particular time (myself included). My use of the past tense also acknowledges that participants and their activities may change over time as they continue to engage in contextualized meaning-making. I have also chosen to highlight the ways participants are verbally producing their experiences with me by retaining the context and detail of each account (for example, by retaining longer interview excerpts where appropriate). When possible, I illustrate common thematic patterns across participants by focusing in depth on how individual accounts were produced. In some cases, I return to the same interviewee multiple times to show how their responses throughout our interview related to, built on, or challenged one another.

Additionally, and somewhat accidentally, I did not begin with a set of concepts or theories related to the third age and then search for their existence in the real world. The focus of my analysis shifted from a concern with sexuality and intimacy to questions related to aging in the third age *because* of what my participants were doing in their everyday lives (See Appendixes A – E). I noticed that my elder participants were doing aging in unique ways, and only then did I begin to reexamine and explore literature on the sociology of aging and social gerontology (which I was largely unfamiliar with up until that point). I moved from located experiences to theory and then back again. As I began to read the sociological work on aging, I was then able to 'see' what was happening around me at the House in new ways.

Lastly, I have tried to avoid presenting participants' activities as examples of generalizing sociological concepts. Instead, I have oriented much of my analysis to finding "generalizing and standardizing processes *in* the ethnographic data" (Smith, 2005, p. 135). This approach can be seen in the way I have attempted to situate participants in relation to the discourse of the third age. Rather than presenting participants as examples that illustrated the reified existence of a supposedly stable and objective third age, I show how participants are situated within and actively negotiate texts coordinated by this discourse. I demonstrate how the third age works as a regulatory discourse circulated through academic, government and marketing texts that participants bring into being in their local context.

However, I do still draw upon some established concepts to make sense of my participants' experiences. My dissertation is informed by literature on gender as a performance from the sociology of gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and queer theory (Butler, 1990). I build on this literature to suggest that much like gender, age may be seen as a social

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accomplishment constrained and enabled by discourse and brought into being through interaction within particular contexts. I therefore engage in a practice that may be seen as objectifying to the extent that I turn my participants into examples of sociological concepts in my effort to trace how social relations are coordinated within and beyond the House (Smith, 1990). In this sense, I participate in bringing the ruling relations into being by applying and extending existing theoretically-driven sociological discourse to make aspects of participants' lives knowable and generalizable to institutionally-embedded experts. My familiarity with sociological literature on gender meant that throughout my observations and interviews, I constantly saw how gender and age were being *done* by participants. The social construction of gender is a lens that deeply informs how I think and know, and it ended up shaping my understanding of House activities. I found my competing desires to explicate and objectify in constant tension. Nevertheless, I attempt to retain the presence of my participants in discussions of the performative nature of gender and age in order to demonstrate how they take up the third age discourse in unique, contextualized ways.

Furthermore, even though my use of the frameworks of gender as "performative" stands in contrast to aspects of my epistemology and ontology, the knowledge I generate still satisfies some components of validity set out by scholars who stress the need to start from and return to the standpoint of experience. Researchers engaging with approaches to experiential standpoints evaluate knowledge based on its utility for the groups under study: "Do[es it] in fact produce more accurate, comprehensive, rationally justifiable, and politically useful knowledge" for the groups who participate in the research and to whom the project is accountable (Harding, 2009, p.195)? Within this framework, accuracy is evaluated not in terms of relevance to discursively-

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ordered disciplinary debates, but on the connection of the data and write-up to the actual daily experiences of participants (Smith, 1987). From this perspective, it is not my contribution to the concept of "performativity" that makes my research useful, valid or accurate. Instead, what matters is that I closely engage with and remain connected to my participants' experiences, and that the information in this dissertation may be useful for them and other members of the House.

Smith argues that textually mediated discourses play a powerful role in coordinating the social, although the daily contextualized activities of people that bring the social into being should be the centre of academic work. The purpose of my inquiry is to observe what people actually do in the times and places they act in, and to consider how these activities are coordinated. This approach aims to retain the presence of participants in my writing, and to develop knowledge that is useful for them as well as for me. I do not try to produce 'truth' but to produce knowledge that can be relied upon as valid for the purposes of sociological argument and accountable for the people that are the focus of my work (Harding, 2009). This approach to knowledge production is one way in which I demonstrate responsibility and reciprocity to my participants (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

My decision to study one institutional setting means that my work shares some common features of a conventional case study. A case study is not a method, but a methodology that privileges the importance of context while enabling a researcher to utilize multiple methods to explore a chosen 'case' in depth (Stake, 1995; Swanborn, 2010). Although what constitutes a case may be debatable, in general a case can be a theoretical and/or empirical object, such as a person, organization, or geographical area, or process with clear boundaries specific to time and space. In this project I focus on the organization of the Seniors' Drop-In Lunch program.

However, my goal is to identify discourses that shape, but extend beyond, House activities. My intention is to see how this particular situation is put together, thus requiring the researcher to look beyond the situation to the broader social relations coordinating it, that is, to "the social relations that connect us all" (Sprague, 2005, p. 156). The purpose is not to study an individual, an isolated event, or a distinct phenomena, but rather to root an explication of the ruling relations—dominant objectified social relations that are both generalized and generalizing—within a particular context. The concept of the ruling relations alerts scholars to "the historical development of forms of social consciousness that can no longer be adequately conceived as arising in the life condition of actual individuals" (Smith, 1999, p. 78). In other words, I attempt to study the objectification of consciousness, thought, and culture by tracing how relations of power and governing work through concepts and symbols (Smith, 2005, p. 69; Smith, 1990, p. 14). Here "governing" means not simply government as political organization, but rather the "total complex of activities, differentiated into many spheres" through which contemporary society is managed and administered (Smith, 1990, p. 14). The **ruling relations** are produced and reproduced through management and administration taking place within institutions, including business, government, and education, and including academic scholarship. As such, I explore one site yet am able to discover textually-mediated discourses that have broader implications beyond Spruce House.

2.2.1   An intersectional analysis of the third age

Feminist intersectional work shapes how I conduct my analysis, including what I listen for in interviews, what I look for and notice in my fieldwork, and how I approach and make sense of

the data with an emphasis on an analytical treatment of social categories informed by intracategorical complexity (Denis, 2008; McCall, 2005, p. 172-3). Analytically and methodologically, I am working to develop an *interpretation* that is intersectional in nature (Denis, 2008, p. 685), rather than simply to incorporate an awareness of multiple social locations into my work.

Intersectional methodologies require intricate decisions about the treatment of social categories during all stages of the research process. Simply incorporating multiple social locations into my work is insufficient; therefore I strive to develop an intersectional interpretation as well (Denis, 2008, p. 685). Feminist researchers have engaged with a spectrum of approaches for conceptualizing analytical categories in intersectional work, namely inter-, intra-, and anti-categorical complexity (Denis, 2008; McCall, 2005, p. 1772-3). A significant difference between these three positions is the associated assumptions about and treatment of social categories for analysis. Attention to intercategorical complexity entails drawing upon reified categories in order to strategically focus on relations of inequality between established social groups whose social markers and boundaries are not meaningfully problematized in the research (Denis, 2008, p. 686). This approach lends itself to analyses that are informed by quantitative logic, often by comparing relationships among multiple groups conceptualized as relatively stable and rigid. On the other end of the spectrum is anti-categorical complexity focused on deconstructing analytical categories (Denis, 2008, p. 685). This approach is rooted in the notion that discourse produces subjects in action, and therefore to study crystallized groups apart from relations of talk and text is to reify relations of power.

More centrally located on the spectrum of intersectional analysis is intracategorical complexity—the position that my own work is most informed by—which incorporates elements of the two other approaches. This approach is most appropriate for explicating the lived experiences of my participants, yet also allows me to trace how those experiences are structured. Much like intercategorical complexity, this analytical framework enables me to listen for subjects' experiences of "stable and even durable relationships that social categories represent at any given point in time" (Denis, 2008, p. 685). Following this approach, I am able to highlight the ways that House staff carved out perceived groups and needs around which to organize programs, as well as the ways that elders and staff conceptualized the social categories to which they described belonging. I am also able to draw upon established social and analytical categories (e.g., age, generation, ethnicity, class, gender) yet carve out "neglected points of intersection" within the systems that organize these classifications (Denis, 2008, p. 685). Rather than remaining in this congealed terrain, however, I also focus on the ways that individuals produce themselves through their daily activities. For example, in chapter five I show how elder men at the House engaged in reproducing their youthful, virile masculinity through how they classify certain activities as feminized, and therefore also "old" within the context of their generational perceptions of aging. Through this work I treat participants' social locations as "neither neutral and passive nor fixed," and therefore as rooted within historically specific contexts (Lawrence, 2003, p. 4).

I am also aware that some elder participants employ and navigate within institutional identity categories in ways that allow them to mobilize around and access resources. Many of my elder participants depended on housing and income subsidies at the provincial and federal levels,

and they realized that they had to continue to meet the criteria to qualify in order to maintain their fixed income. Some elders explained to me how, prior to moving in, they had identified the particular classification systems they would need to fit within to increase their likelihood of being admitted into the House's subsidized seniors' housing. For example, Judy, an older woman who had experienced homelessness (what she called a "Gypsy life") for many years during her adult life, described to me her thought process for accessing this housing opportunity:

> **Katherine**: So how did you come to live here? At the House?

> **Judy: [….]** I went "okay, there's 30 [units]. Ten are low income, ten are medium, ten are high. Very likely, for sure, I'm the low income part". And there were more applications [remaining] for that.

Judy described assessing the institutional categories according to which she perceived the housing to be organized, and determining which category she fitted into. She also noted that more high income applicants had already been selected, making her chances greater (as far as she knew at the time through her friend who had also been admitted, but with a higher income). Judy, who was not "on the street homeless, but staying with [her] kids and family and friends for fourteen years," explained that once she had applied for housing at the House, she did not want to rent an apartment of her own. This was partially because she did not meet the income requirements for admittance into her daughter's housing co-op, and partially because her Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) monthly rent subsidy would not cover the cost for even a small apartment rented at market value in Vancouver. In addition to noting these constraints, however, Judy also demonstrated her awareness of the implications of her homeless status in relation to the administrative categories that governed the tenant selection process at the House. She explained,

"I also didn't want to take a place because then I knew I would have gone down low on the list for this one… because I knew it was going to be for senior's 'at risk'... so [I] was resistan[t] to find anything [so I could remain 'at risk']". Judy showed me that her understanding of her housing experiences and status was subject to context and negotiation. She sometimes called herself homeless but other times labeled herself as a traveler who had the opportunity to spend lots of time in the homes of loved ones across the country. When discussing her experience gaining access to the House's seniors' residence, Judy described employing the classification "at risk" and pursuing actions and self-representations that would ensure she remained within that category.

Throughout the interviews and observations, I am able to identify various points and processes through which elders and staff situated themselves in relation to different social and institutional categories, at different times in relation to class age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. Sometimes, these labels were strategically employed in the specific institutional context of the House, both for participants in accessing resources but also for staff in securing and mobilizing limited available grant funds around the conception of a particular 'need' or 'issue'. Other times these labels were part of participants' performances as they worked to achieve a coherent self that they desired to communicate to me in the context of the interview. By taking up an analysis rooted in intracategorical complexity, I am able to highlight participants' lived experiences of perceiving their subject positions as relatively entrenched and stable. Yet I am also able to show how they actively participated in processes of defining, maintaining, and/or challenging the boundaries of the groups that they associated themselves with and/or that they associated with others within this institutional context.

2.2.2 Getting to know my participants

Like Judy, all of my elder participants resided in affordable seniors' housing managed by the House. I interviewed fifteen of thirty-seven elder residents in this housing[13]. Their housing was significant not just because it located them at the same place at the same time, but also because they had all met the same subsidized housing income and asset requirements, situating them in an interesting position in relation to the third age that is less visible in dominant literature (see Weiss & Bass, 2002).

My elder participants (n = 15) can overwhelmingly be classified as members of the "boomer" generation. All but one was born in the 1940s and 1950s, and only three were born outside of Canada (one in the United Kingdom, one in Hungary, and a third in Poland). The majority of participants held an undergraduate or professional degree (12/15), with an additional two having taken some undergraduate courses as mature students. Their educational attainment demonstrates they had access to educational institutions throughout their lives, despite their gender. Most of my participants (12/15) identified as women. None indicated identifying as trans* or having a trans* history. It is not surprising that there would be more women in this low income housing as elder women in Canada are twice as likely to be low income as elder men (Statistics Canada, 2015). It is interesting that these mostly women elders are low-income in

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[13] I have chosen not to include a table of participant characteristics in the body or appendices of the dissertation. I do so out of respect for the privacy and confidentiality of my participants. Within the context of the small, tight community at the House, residents and staff may be able to identify one another quite easily. I therefore refer to certain relevant characteristics in the text when I introduce individual participants and when I discuss their responses to my interview questions, but I do not provide an overall summary chart of all of their characteristics together. I feel that this approach allows more uncertainty to remain about the real identities of each participant.

retirement despite their high educational attainment – a finding that complicates the notion that national conditions, including public education systems, fundamentally reshape old age for the masses (Laslett, 1989) and instead highlights the importance of an intersectional analysis. All participants had engaged in paid employment throughout their lives, yet some of the women worked part time at various points in order to accommodate child rearing and other unpaid domestic work. Despite their high educational attainment and high labour force participation rates, these elders acquired small amounts of wealth and, at the time of our interviews, relied on public funds as their primary source of income. Gendered patterns in earnings throughout their lives, despite high labour force participation rates, likely influenced their wealth and pension income in old age.

Their class position is likely shaped by their relationship status and the privileges afforded to couples. All of my participants are divorced (5), separated (1), or single (9), meaning never married and not dating or partnered (none were widowed). Statistics Canada documents that divorce has more negative financial effects for women than for men (Statistics Canada, 2012). Only three of my participants, however, expressed interest in having a partner (which I explicitly asked about), and none indicated they wanted to live with a partner. Women in particular expressed pleasure at their freedom, sometimes contrasted with previous relationships – a finding that echoes Klinenberg's (2012) analysis of the increase in people living alone.

When these elders told me about their occupations during our interviews, I realized the extent to which they worked in sex-segregated industries. Most of my elder women participants had been employed in the educational, childcare, administrative and medical fields, often in jobs that were entry level and/or seen to be for 'women'. Some had reduced their paid hours in order

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to focus on domestic work and/or to prioritize their husband's career. While my elder men participants were also low income, their careers were shaped by other factors. Stan, for example, was an engineer trained in Eastern Europe who, despite being highly educated, faced employment challenges when his training was not recognized when he immigrated to Canada. Like many others, Stan was not aware that his credentials would be devalued upon arrival even though they were valued in Canada's points-based immigration system. Peter, who was born in Canada, had access to manual blue collar jobs that provided him with enough funds to support his family, yet ultimately chose to pursue his passions in acting and writing which were less lucrative – a career decision that was part of the breakdown of his marriage.

Despite their low income, the health status and mobility of my participants is indicative of their access to public health care throughout their lives. Only two of fifteen elders had an illness that influenced their daily life. This is likely due partially to the fact that they had all been screened for 'independent' living, partially because they were in their 60s and 70s (as opposed to 80s and 90s), and partially because of Canada's public health care system, where the "boomers" were the first to experience many medical technologies that had become legal and affordable. Rose, one of the elders with a long-term illness, explained to me that she has access to free, public programs in the area that allow her to manage her condition while socializing and exercising. Rose is highly mobile, lives independently, and even teaches aerobics for other elders at the Seniors' Drop-In Program. Even for illnesses that could not be prevented by health technologies, the experience of those illnesses seemed to be more manageable within the context of Canada's health care services.

Evidently my participants are located at interlocking axes of privilege and oppression with regard to age, education, class, gender and health. However, as I will discuss in chapter 3, most experience privileges based on their whiteness. Although they experience economic marginalization, moderated by government funds, social services and affordable housing, nearly all identify as white. Beyond determining their place of birth, classifying their racial and ethnographic features was challenging because of how I asked the interview question: "How would you describe your racial, ethnic, or ancestral background?" This question was not designed to fit participants into particular administrative racial or ethnic classifications, but to solicit information about how they understood and situated themselves. Eight of my elder participants described themselves as white, Caucasian, and/or Western European, while the remaining seven identified as Japanese-Canadian, Canadian, Eastern European (Hungarian, Russian, Ukrainian, Polish), and Jewish. Only three of my elder participants were men; this was not surprising given that I saw very few men participating in the House's seniors' programs and the majority of women living in House subsidized units were women. The majority—thirteen out of fifteen—identified as straight or heterosexual, with one elder presenting herself as "heterosexual open" and one identifying as lesbian.

I also interviewed and spent time volunteering with eleven House staff members. At the time of the interviews the House had a total of thirty-four staff, twenty-two of whom were part-time. Just over half (6/11) of staff I interviewed had been with the House for six months or less. Most worked in food programs, volunteer management, community programs, seniors' programs, and seniors' housing—or sometimes a combination of these areas. Three participants held management level positions, including the Executive Director. All eleven staff participants

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presented themselves as women. Over the course of my fieldwork, I saw no staff members at the House who presented themselves as men. Much like the gendered employment experiences of my elder women participants, the staff at the House were working in a highly feminized industry. It is worth noting that the low-pay and status accorded to community service work in the non-profit sector contributes to the cumulative life course inequalities that make elder women more economically vulnerable and dependent on state funding and social services. In other words, trends that shaped the lives of women staff members in their working years are part of the same systemic inequalities that shaped the lives of the women elders at the House. Much like the House elders, the staff I interviewed had spent time in post-secondary educational institutions. Seven held undergraduate degrees, one held a graduate degree, and four had professional degrees[14].

Similar to the elders, the majority of my staff participants identified as white and/or of Western European descent. Seven participants identified as straight or heterosexual, one as "married to a man", and one as anthrosexual/pansexual. I did not have this information for two participants because our interview was cut short before I asked the demographic questions at the end. That some of our interviews were cut short is evidence of the many competing, sometimes unanticipated, demands that staff encountered on a daily basis.

To recruit interview participants, I put up recruitment posters on House bulletin boards and asked a House staff member to forward invitation emails to staff and elder residents. I also held an open session in a House multipurpose space with coffee and snacks and invited House

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[14] Professional degree refers to an applied certification.

residents to learn about the project and answer their questions. Sometimes, during my volunteer work at the House, an elder or staff member asked what I was up to, and we spoke about the project. A small number of participants enrolled in the project through these discussions. Once I conducted the first few interviews, word of mouth about me spread amongst the elders in particular. I would get clusters of friends contacting me for an interview around the same time.

2.2.3   Qualitative interviewing

I conducted twenty-six qualitative interviews between April and August 2015. Fifteen of these interviews were with elders who reside in the House's subsidized seniors housing, and eleven were with House staff. Interviews usually lasted between one and a half to two hours, with my longest interview being four hours. Many of my interviews with elders were longer than with staff, because staff would often have events or appointments scheduled closely together. I gave participants the choice of where they would like to conduct the interview. Most staff chose to conduct it in their office or in a private room at the House. The majority of elders elected to conduct the interview in their own apartment, although a small number invited me to meet them at a local coffee shop. I interviewed each participant once, with the exception of Susan, a resident who first met with me in a coffee shop, but then asked to meet with me again in her apartment so she could show me her artwork and her unit.

In line with my epistemological and ontological assumptions, I employed a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide that I followed loosely during interviews to create space for participants to engage with, interpret and respond to my questions in their own words and in ways that were relevant for them. I approached my participants as 'informants' (Smith, 2005, p.

154-155) who, as they shared their thoughts about themselves and their activities within the context of the House, were also informing the direction of my inquiry by sharing with me their expertise about the ways this institution worked and how they navigated it. This interview structure and my flexible probing during the interviews allowed participants to share with me some of the things that mattered to them, which in turn gave me a new entry point for thinking about how their activities were put together within the House context. However, I remained cognizant that it was not possible for me to fully know "the standpoint of the other person… only into a mediated relationship between us" (Young, 1997, p. 47; Butterwick, 2011, p. 59). My intention in the interviews was to create opportunities for participants to share and produce their work knowledges collaboratively with me. Here "work" is a concept that includes, but extends far beyond, paid employment. I practiced Smith's more generous approach to this term as "anything done by people that takes time and effort, that they mean to do, that is done under definite conditions and with whatever means and tools, and that they may have to think about" (Smith, 2005, p. 151-152). When collaborating with elder and staff informants to draw out their work knowledges, I looked for their use of concrete and experiential language to describe their daily activities, as well as their interpretations of those activities: "how they think about it, how they plan, and how they feel" (p. 154-155). Interviewing allowed me to probe for this type of information and collaborate with my participants as they produced their experience through language and in response to my questions during our interactions.

In people's talk about their activities, and how they felt about them, I am also able to identify some of the ways their work is coordinated. When people shifted from experience-based talk to text-based talk, I paid attention. When an elder moved from speaking about how he or she

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had chosen a program to volunteer with, to speaking about the minimum volunteer hours required of them by the House, I gained insight into broader social relations that their activity was hooked into. As a staff member shifted from discussing an interaction with a participant, to pulling out a piece of paper that listed the survey questions they were required to ask that participant, I learned about the organization of the program and the criteria set out by the program funders. These frequent shifts people made from talking rooted in experience to talking rooted in texts enables me to identify broader social relations coordinating how they did their work.

I do not treat participant accounts as "truths" but as contextually specific productions of experience. Although people often think of experiences as something that has already happened, Smith clarifies that, "experience actually emerges only in the course of its telling, and telling is to particular people at particular times and in particular places" (Smith, 2005, p. 126). Participants presented their knowledge about themselves, their activities and the organization of the House within the somewhat manufactured context of our interviews, but I did not seek to erase or minimize that interview context to overcome bias (Pillow, 2003). Instead, I attempted to consider how this particular context shaped the way their experiences emerge "in language and at the point of speech" which I later transformed into writing through transcription (Smith, 2005, p. 126). In some cases, I can see how the location of our interview shapes what can or cannot be said or be known. When participants invited me to their apartment for our interview, the physical markers of the space, such as the presence of dishes on the counter, allowed the process of making lunch at home instead of eating with the Seniors' Drop-In Lunch to be articulated within the participant's account of daily activities. When participants pointed to their home computer to

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tell me about their plans for the day or week, I could learn about the way they maintained their social activities, such as through email newsletters and online program sign-ups. When I conducted interviews in coffee shops selected by participants, their use of this coffee shop as they navigated the neighbourhood became a part of their account. All of this context, based on the actual time and place of interviews, shaped the data and also became data in itself.

My whiteness might also be a factor in the information people chose to share with me. As I discuss in chapters three and four, many House elders and staff spoke about multiculturalism in a way that assumed whiteness as a neutral and normal default. Would people have spoken based on the same set of assumptions if they were not speaking to a person that they could read as white? My whiteness was also a likely factor in who would chose to speak with me or seek me out for an interview, and what types of issues they thought I might have cared about. For example, Jessica, a staff member who identified as biracial, only shared with me her concerns about racism at the House after I mentioned my interest in intersectional feminism. Furthermore, Susan, a Japanese-Canadian elder at the House, only responded to my interview request after being advised by Jessica that I was safe to speak with. These processes point to the influence that others' perceptions of me had on shaping the data. I did not treat these reactive effects as a problem or challenge to be avoided; rather, I attempted to become aware of some of these influences and used them as a source of data (Clarke, 1975, p.99).

My interactions with certain participants also alerted me to the way some people at the House interpreted my role in relation to their own institutional goals. Some individuals engaged with me as a tool for augmenting their concerns about the House. After being frustrated by staff who they felt were non-responsive, some elders began to see me as a resource, given my

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institutional location. A small number even called or emailed me after our interview to see whether I had ideas about how they could take action on the issues they raised. As a form of reciprocity, I agreed to produce a short report for participants (both elders and staff) that I will disseminate within the House. This report will be based on the theoretical and methodological insights from this dissertation, but will be concise and policy-oriented in order to maximize its applicability and accessibility for members of the House. I came to realize, however, that there was a disconnect between my own academic timeframe and the timeframe that my participants envisioned and saw as relevant. Some seemed to expect that a report would be ready within a few weeks or months. During the interviews I should have been more explicit in outlining the various stages of the project (e.g., interviewing, transcription, data analysis, etc) and the many stages involved with working through a dissertation.

2.2.4 Participant observation

My participant observation was based on volunteering with the House for eight months (from January to September 2015). I attended a new volunteer training session, underwent a background check, and became a weekly volunteer with the Seniors' Drop-In Program held every Tuesday. The House was in need of volunteers for this program at the time and I was asked by the volunteer coordinator to assist. In order to become a volunteer I was required to undergo a criminal record check and commit to a minimum of six months volunteering at the House. The work at the Seniors' Drop-In involved setting up the multipurpose room with tables and festive decorations, preparing the necessary cutlery and dishes, serving and eating food, clearing and cleaning dishes, and any other kitchen tasks that needed to be done on any given

day. All of these tasks also included interaction with staff and elder participants and volunteers, often while we cleaned, sorted, ate, and watched the day's featured entertainment. We worked together to bring each event into being and engaged in discussions about how we did this work. I also attended the Seniors' Advisory Group (SAG) monthly planning meetings and volunteer training sessions, and the occasional special event the House hosted.

I engaged in ethnographic field research to see what people did in House programming. Through informal conversations I was able to learn about how they thought and felt about what they were doing, often as it happened. Participant observation also opened up to me how people actually participated in the events that some of them talked with me about during our interview. Elizabeth, a kitchen staff member, spoke to me during our interview about the strain she felt as she tried to stay within the Seniors' Drop-In program budget when making program decisions. Her work knowledge—her understanding of what she is doing and why—was rooted in the importance of conserving institutional funds and making each food ingredient stretch as far as possible. In spending time with her sorting food donations in the kitchen and in watching her respond to volunteers' food ideas during planning meetings, I could see how she put her budget concerns into action, and, therefore, how she brought this institutional constraint into being in doing the work of program planning. I was also able to see how these decisions shaped the way multicultural meal themes were chosen and delivered, and how, on some occasions, it was the cost of food ingredients that motivated the selection of a particular cultural theme for an event (which I discuss in chapter four).

Additionally, I experienced some elements of programming work myself as a volunteer. My participant observation involved "both being with other people to see how they respond to

events as they happen and experiencing for [my]self these events and the circumstances that give rise to them" (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 2). My own work and my understanding of it came to be structured by House texts, such as training documents and written procedures. I also saw interaction dynamics in the space—who spoke a lot or a little and how the ideas of volunteers were interpreted and engaged with by staff. Observing program-planning meetings helped me learn about the varied ideas proposed by volunteers that were taken up and implemented into programming and the types of ideas that were not. Furthermore, I took directions from staff members, and sometimes took on tasks that staff ran out of time to do, alerting me to staff schedules and needs.

In interacting with staff in this applied setting, I realized just how many different tasks and programs they were working on every single day. I observed staff finishing one program session and getting physically and mentally ready to transition to another. The planning of interviews also became an ethnographic opportunity. Staff often presented their availability to me with reference to other deadlines and times of the month that were going to be 'tight' for them; some even rescheduled at the last minute because of unexpected demands on their time. The staff members that I worked the most closely with made comments to me during the Seniors' Drop-In about how stretched they were. One staff member mentioned that she liked to "vent" with me because I was calm and a good listener, and another noted I was a good "sounding-board". In some ways, my own self-presentation shaped how people acted around me and what information they granted me access to.

However, working side-by-side with staff for several months created a sense of intimacy and camaraderie that was challenging for me to navigate as a researcher. We went through busy

and tense moments together in the course of putting together events, during which staff shared with me their anxieties and stresses. I do not believe they were always speaking to me as a researcher in those moments, but as a community volunteer going through an experience with them. I also think that, despite my explanations early on in my field work that I was researching seniors' programs and housing, the emphasis on aging as an individualized "problem" within dominant discourses, combined with the frequent conflation of sociology with psychology, meant that some staff members did not realize I sought to learn about and from them and the House as much as I endeavored to learn about and from the elders.

El-Or (1997, p.188) argues that intimacy, while cozy, is illusive or at least transitory in a research context. It is deceptive to suggest that friendliness and cooperation in the field addresses the power relations that shape the research process and that imbue me with the authority to write up the data and represent my participants' experiences (Wolf, 1996; Naples, 2003, p. 40). Furthermore, the site I was studying is one I was free to leave, which is not the case for my participants who live and work at the House (Naples, 2003, p. 40). My engagement with standpoint as a method of inquiry addresses some of the issues of objectification and exploitation that shape fieldwork given that the purpose of my work is to produce knowledge that will be useful for the participants themselves by demonstrating how their experiences are coordinated (Smith, 1999). However, this does not mean that the staff will necessarily welcome the connections I draw. Furthermore, and perhaps even more relevant in this context, is that my interpretations of and arguments drawing from staff work knowledges may not be interpreted favourably by upper management. I am, in some cases, highlighting concerns raised by elders about staff, for example. Acknowledging that I am evaluated based on this research within the

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context of academia while staff members may be evaluated based on my findings within the context of their own workplace, I have tried as much as possible to clarify and emphasize that their daily challenges are rooted in funding structures that coordinate yet exist beyond the House itself. My analytical goal of highlighting systemic rather than individual processes will therefore hopefully also address some of the concerns about the power relations I am implicated in in writing up the data and representing staff experience.

2.2.5 Writing fieldnotes

I draw on my own experiential dialogue[15] with others and with myself to transform my surroundings—people, places, conversations, actions, and events—into texts in the form of fieldnotes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995; Smith, 2005). Throughout each event or meeting I stole away a few minutes to write notes in the bathroom. I wrote my fieldnotes, or 'inscriptions,' in a largely intuitive manner (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 8). What I found interesting in the field, and what I perceived was of interest to the people around me, shifted partially in relation to what I learned during my ongoing interviews. Some of my participants were visible minorities who raised questions and concerns about the multicultural programming at the Seniors' Drop-In, which led me to want to understand how their experiences were put together. Because I started volunteering at the Drop-In at the same time that staff and elder volunteers

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[15] In line with Smith (2005, p. 124-25), I draw upon the notion of "experience as dialogue" to highlight the role of speaking, writing, and thinking in processing and producing accounts of experience that are accessible for ethnographic purposes but that provide only indirect access to an actuality. In Smith's words: "Actuality is always more and other than what is spoken, written, or pictured. What becomes data for the ethnographer is always a collaborative product" (2005, p. 125).

implemented the multicultural components, discussions about multicultural themes and events were at the forefront of the meetings I attended. It was this interest in elders' activity that led me to begin reading about "active" aging, at which point I began to question whether my low-income participants were fully represented in third age literature.

In writing my fieldnotes, I did not attempt to capture every aspect of what went on around me (Warren & Karner, 2010). I paid attention to what was said; who said it; what it meant to them; what they were attempting to achieve; whether their speech was rooted in experience or text; whether physical texts were created, circulated, and referred to; and how people responded to one another through body language. I also tried to capture the more mundane details of the program space and how it was organized: what work volunteers were doing, what kinds of decorations were put up, where participants sat for the meal, and so on. Additionally, I recorded contextual factors such as the time of day, the weather, and the room we were in. As such, I worked to write notes that were detailed and that captured the contexts in which people spoke and acted.

2.2.6   Incorporating institutional texts into my analysis

My methodological approach involves tracing and interactively interpreting institutional texts, especially House policy documents and other texts written in official settings, such as program planning meetings, informal texts such as post-it notes, and texts that I produced collaboratively through semi-structured interviews and through my own "data dialogues" that turn fieldnotes into analytical artifacts and arguments. Texts make institutions ethnographically accessible insofar as "texts enter into and organize sequences of actual people's actions [that] has made it

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possible to extend ethnographic approaches into the complex translocal and text-mediated relations that govern contemporary societies" (Griffith & Smith, 2014, p. 10). Texts were all over the surfaces of the house, such as walls and tables. The House itself could be read as a text. Throughout the dissertation I discuss features such as the bulletin boards that lined the walls of the main entrance, the program flyers placed on the table in the "living room," and quotes and other symbols hung on the walls.

I did not seek out texts, but rather took them up as they became visible and relevant to me within the institution. I paid attention to how I and others were called to activate them in text-reader conversations wherein the "reader inserts the text's message into the local setting and the sequence of action into which it is read" (Smith, 2005, p. 105). To do so, I considered the following questions:

- How do I and others become agents of the text?

- What information do I and others fill in from our own experiences?

- What information do I and others need to seek in order to comprehend the text?

- Do I and others need to refer to another text, meeting or place to understand the text?

- Am I and others able to identify who the subjects in the text are?

- Are there verbs connected to people? Are there nominalizations?

- Are broader institutional categories being employed?

I engaged with texts as I encountered them in the House by writing their details into my fieldnotes, often observing how they were drawn upon (and sometimes created) in meetings, and

how they coordinated my own activities as a volunteer, as well as the activities of other volunteers and staff.

I considered the ways texts organized program-planning meetings and how staff employed texts to keep the meetings oriented toward certain institutional goals. Additionally, I considered more informal texts that elders produced during meetings (e.g., questions written on Post-Its) and that elders brought to meetings and events (such as a poem that one volunteer brought to one of the Drop-In Lunches). I also watched who produced texts during meetings (e.g., writing meeting "minutes") and where these texts ended up (including how they were used to coordinate other meetings and program planning at later dates). The pattern that a text moved through and the people it was passed on to (or not) demonstrates how institutional decisions are made and acted upon, and how these decisions are hooked into policies and institutions that are not immediately present. I also noted commonalities between institutional texts around the House and the language that my participants used to produce their experiences during our interviews and our other interactions (for example, the term "participant-led" was frequently written on House documents as well as articulated through participant speech).

2.2.7   Analyzing my interviews and fieldnotes

Due to time constraints, it was not feasible for me to transcribe the interview recordings myself. Instead, I paid sociology undergraduate and graduate students to produce the transcription. I acknowledge that my decision to remove myself from the process of transforming my participants' speech into written form had downsides, particularly given my emphasis on the materiality and coordinating potential of texts. I realize that I am giving up some control over the

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way that the often overlooked but important elements of speech are written down, including laugher, pauses, and silences. To account for these omissions or distortions during analysis, I sometimes returned to sections of transcripts that I identified as important and listened to the associated recording to access both the written and spoken version at the same time.

After reading through the transcripts and fieldnotes several times in conjunction with my ongoing research memos, I engaged in a thematic analysis that was primarily inductive (Harding, 2003). However, as I read through the transcripts and fieldnotes and developed codes, I also identified and read relevant literature that came to partially inform how I saw topics in the data, thus blurring the line between inductive and deductive analysis. My aim in this first stage of analysis was to note and develop codes to identify commonalities in the topics or ideas participants are speaking about, such as "income subsidies," "staff fatigue," "lifelong learning," "value of new experiences" and "multiculturalism". I was generous in highlighting sections of text with the necessary context included from the lines before and after. I used NVivo qualitative data analysis software for this process. I coded my fieldnotes first and my interview transcripts second as I found that my fieldnotes would often guide how I engaged with the transcripts.

Next, I reviewed the codes I developed, deleting and amalgamating some, and noting some of the relationships between them by drawing concept maps. For instance, it was at that point that I began to see connections between the ways elders spoke about the importance of new experiences, learning, youthful aging, and their participation in multicultural activities. I also noted connections between codes such as "staff fatigue" and "staff anxiety." I deleted these codes and replaced them with the new code "work constrains" which allowed me to incorporate a broader set of staff experiences with an eye for their structural roots.

Next, I developed sub-codes within and across the thematic codes. In this second round of coding, I was able to be more analytical by identifying processes participants were engaging in (e.g., "referencing policy document," "rejecting femininity," and "assuming whiteness"). I developed these codes while re-reading Smith (2005), which helped orient my thinking to questions such as "Is my participant drawing on embodied experience or texts in making this statement?" and "What must be occurring within the House in order for this statement to make sense?" I began to form the framework for my dissertation arguments through this second round of coding where I was able to start identifying and connecting my fieldnotes and participants' responses during interviews to the key discourses that were being drawn upon.

When writing up dialogue from my interviews and fieldnotes into the dissertation, I did some minor editing to make the key points clear for the purpose of the analysis. I used the following symbols to denote places where I have modified the text:

- […] = content omitted from sentence
- …. = content deleted between sentences
- … = participant paused while speaking

Furthermore, in presenting quotes I removed certain 'ums' that, although sound quite natural in conversation, may be interpreted to discredit the credibility or competence of the speaker when transcribed in text form. In cases where these "ums" seem significant, such as when they indicated hesitance or confusion, I kept them in and made reference to them in my analysis.

2.3   Ethical considerations

2.3.1   Reciprocity

In taking up this project one of my goals is to ensure there are useful outcomes for the people who act as participants. Throughout the project I consider what I can offer participants "in return for the time and inconvenience of being involved in [this] research" as a form of reciprocity (Maxwell, 2013, p. 94). I engage in a reciprocal relationship (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 1991, p. 9) in two ways: by changing the focus of the research in the field based on what participants tell me about their lives, and by producing an accessible, actionable report specifically for participants based on the findings. In doing so, I aim to generate knowledge that is useful for the actual people in my study (Smith, 1990). I acknowledge, however, that what participants tell me, and how I understand and act on their words is always a mediated, partial, located process (Naples, 2003, p. 39).

Although I was initially interested in elders' sexuality and intimacy, I often came to find that participants had other issues they wanted to discuss with me that seemed to be more salient for their lives. One of the reasons why the focus of this project shifted so substantially was the way I initially framed my interest within core research documents. I made the decision early on in this project to hedge my interest in sexuality in the way I phrased project documents (e.g., Letter of Consent) as well as interview questions. I chose to use the term "interpersonal intimacy" primarily to allow for a broad interpretation of what intimacy might mean for different participants. This decision aligns with my epistemological interest in conducting inductive research that creates spaces for participants to situate their experiences somewhat removed from preexisting academic categories coordinating the literature I had access to. What I did not realize

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at the time, was that "interpersonal intimacy" was read by many participants as such a broad, vague and somewhat academic term that many had little sense of what the project was about. As participants tended to reorient the interviews to issues that seemed more relevant for them, I broadened my focus to an intersectional analysis of gender, race, and class in the third age. This decision was partially ethical, in that I was able to demonstrate reciprocity to participants by listening and responding to the unique ways they answered my questions. It was also methodological in that I considered the standpoint of my informants and allowed their experiences to shape and direct the research.

Some participants engaged with their interview time as an opportunity to voice a variety of concerns that they had about their involvement with the House. The open-ended nature of my interview questions and my flexible probing, combined with my weekly on-site volunteering and interactions through the Seniors' Drop-In Lunch, allowed numerous opportunities for a broad variety of issues to emerge that I did not anticipate (and probably could not have). Given the tight community context in which I conducted this research, what sometimes happened was that participants (and people thinking about participating) spoke to one another before or after their interview, and rumours started to spread about the project. Once one person raised an issue (e.g., racism or the root-top garden), I found that participants in my next few interviews tended to raise similar issues. Some participants mentioned being encouraged by a friend to participate in order to speak about a particular challenge they faced at the House. Many participants, in their decisions about issues to raise regarding their experiences with the House, demonstrated that they saw me positioned as a resource for voicing their concerns. Some called or emailed me in the weeks or months following our interview with suggestions about what could be done, and to

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let me know that they were planning to take action soon. One participant emailed the professors

listed on my consent form in order to request assistance contacting additional people in positions

of power. These participants saw me and my association with UBC as a tool to help them

achieve their goals in relation to the institution. I find these actions to be useful data about how

participants saw me and shaped their narratives for me, as well as how they saw themselves in

relation to the House. The active persistence of some of these elders alerted me to the processes

of silencing that they experienced through established institutional mediums at the House, and in

some cases through their interactions with staff. Although I was not able to address all of the

issues they raised (from heating systems to meal ingredients to building acoustics to scent

allergies), I became curious about the institutional processes for voicing and addressing these

concerns, within the context of power relationships among elders, among staff, and between

elders and staff. Since I conducted interviews at the same time as I volunteered, I found that I

began to become more attuned to (or able to 'see') these power dynamics during my volunteer

shifts as well.

I can also reflect on the interpersonal dynamics that enabled, or even encouraged,

participants to shift focus away from intimacies and sexualities. Working directly with elders has

helped me become more aware of the implicit hierarchies I hold with regard to appropriate

interaction between people based on age. Perceptions of when it is okay to speak, interrupt, and

redirect are socially established and reproduced in different cultural contexts (Anderson &

Leaper, 1998; Mori, 1999; Murata, 1994). Similarly, beliefs about authority based on age differ

by time and place (Sung, 2004). I have become aware of these distinctions through my own

teaching with new first-year international students, some of whom feel entitled to speak or share

their thoughts only once they have fully formulated their idea, or if they are directly asked. Other students cannot get comfortable calling me by my first name, even after I invite them to. My interview experiences for this dissertation exposed some of my own tacit assumptions about age (both my own age and my participants' age) and gender that I have come to see more clearly in hindsight.

The degree to which the interviews shifted focus was due partially to the need I felt to be deferential at the level of moment-by-moment interaction, despite my more general awareness of my institutionally embedded power and privilege as a researcher. Sometimes this meant letting participants speak for longer than I may have if I were speaking with someone my age. Other times this meant that I did not redirect the conversation as assertively or persistently as I could have. On occasion, I felt discomfort when probing or asking questions about intimate relationships that suddenly came to feel immensely personal, and even taboo. Despite my time spent reading sociology of sexualities literature and discussing sexualities concepts in academic contexts, when I was seated in my participants' home I sometimes came to feel that I was violating social norms by asking them questions about sex or sexuality, particularly since they were from another generation. My hesitancy could also be linked to my own implicit perceptions of the asexuality of elders (or perhaps more accurately, the pressure I felt to conform my speaking to a status quo that reaffirms this logic). I also noticed that I was more deferential to the elder men than women. My behavior was both in response to and also a contribution to the production of participants' own gendered behavior. Some elder men, for example, would begin telling me about themselves and their concerns even before I had asked them to sign the consent form or started the recorder. Many elder women, however, paused during their responses and

asked if they were speaking too much, or if they were answering in a relevant way. I always reassured them that there were no relevant or irrelevant answers.

Overall, I made an effort to listen for what was most important and valued by my participants in combination with what I observed through my participant observation. I gradually reorganized my focus and analysis according to a new set of issues connected to discourses of the third age, senior-driven programming, and managerial efficiency. Although this was unexpected and created more difficulties for me, I am confident that this shift has allowed me to produce knowledge that is more relevant to my participants in identifying how their situations are organized, and how they are situated within broader social relations (Smith, 1987). In future projects I will consider being more explicit and forthcoming about some of the topics I am hoping to cover, both in research documents as well as throughout the interview process. This wouldn't necessarily be an attempt to impose them on participants, but to ensure that they had a better sense of my own academic background and initial goals (which I think some of my participants did not). Having said that, this situation created new opportunities for me to pursue, and I embraced these opportunities in line with my methodological orientation. At the same time, however, I would not recommend that other graduate students shift the focus of their doctoral research so drastically. As Smith (2005) emphasizes, all research projects are conducted and written by actual located people. Graduate students must be cautious about the duration of their degree and their ability to support themselves financially. While research that is highly attentive and adaptable to the interests of participants is valid and useful, faculty with more institutional security and funding may be better positioned to pursue this work within its associated timeframes.

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The second and more simple way I am engaging in reciprocity is through writing a concise report for the participants based on my findings. I will write this report informed by my theoretical and methodological approach, but will not explicitly foreground these aspects of the project to the same degree as I do in the dissertation. Given the length of the dissertation, I think it will be more accessible and useful for participants if I write a concise summary of the findings and implications (between ten and twenty pages). Given that there are complex power relationships within the House, I will first circulate the report draft to my elder participants for their feedback. I would like to ensure that they are comfortable with the report and feel that it is accurate before I circulate it to the staff, given that the elders are tenants of housing that the staff manages, and so have particular and vulnerable interests at stake.

2.3.2   Confidentiality

When conducting research in such a small organization, maintaining the confidentiality of participants is crucial and often difficult. At the institutional level, I have changed the name of the Neighbourhood House to "Spruce House"—a pseudonym—and generally just refer to it as 'The House'. Because participants can easily identify one another, I also employ participant pseudonyms and gave participants the option of choosing their own pseudonym during our interview. Additionally, I take steps to further protect participant identities, for example by reporting elders' ages based on decade of birth rather than year of birth. For staff, I report their role in the organization in a general way where possible. For instance, I do not specify exactly how long they have been working at the organization, but instead make statements such as 'this participant began working at the House in the past six months.' I find it challenging to generalize

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certain identifying details while retaining the relevant context and depth. When possible and appropriate, however, I avoid identifying whether particular elders were program participants, program volunteers and/or House residents, thus broadening potential interpretations of 'who said what' for individuals at the House who may read this work. At some points in the dissertation I also use the terms 'visible minority' and 'person of colour' rather than specifying a person's ethnicity or race. Given that there are so few racial minorities at the House, my referencing an individual's particular background would likely single them out. On some occasions I do specify a person's race or ethnicity (as they self-defined it) where it is necessary to fully understand their experiences and concerns. In these cases I considered whether the information I was including about this individual was something they had not yet shared with others staff and elders at the House. If the information was private yet had the potential to identify the speaker, I did not write about it explicitly in the dissertation, but retained its presence more generally as it informed my analytical arguments.

2.3.3 Reflexivity

Feminist qualitative methodologists question and propose alternative ways for conceptualizing and addressing the perceived separation between researchers and those they research (Naples, 2003, p. 38). Wolf (1996, p.2) argues that power relations within research operate in three overlapping dimensions: through ways of writing and representing, through potentially objectifying research processes, and through power differences rooted the social locations of the researcher and her research subjects. Standpoint as a method of inquiry addresses objectifying practices in the processes and purposes of generating knowledge (as I discussed earlier in this

chapter). However, I must still interrogate how my own positioning shapes my thinking about this research and my participants, and how participants may have interpreted my presence and background. Throughout the dissertation I insert myself by discussing my decision-making at various stages of the project. I do so not to overcome or limit 'bias' by 'confessing' in order to retain objectivity and neutrality (Pillow, 2003), but rather to identify how I am complicit in the co-production of knowledge with my participants (Smith, 2005). Research is always generated from somewhere, and in this case my own positionality, assumptions, and theoretical and methodological orientations shape how I produced this work.

My interest in the experiences of elders in an institutional setting was prompted by my own awareness, curiosity, and desire to prepare myself for my parents' transition into old adulthood. I recently became my mother's Power of Attorney and the Executor of her Living Will. These legal statuses bring with them a sense of responsibility and prompt me to contemplate my parents' mortality as well as my own. I anticipate remaining in Vancouver with my parents as they continue to age. I will likely take on primary care-giving duties and be involved in decisions about whether, how, and in what organizational contexts they may receive support. As such, it is useful for me to learn about organizations such as the House that provide programs and housing for elders in Vancouver. In this sense, my interest in the project stems partially from my personal experiences.

I have also observed my parents creating 'new' lives for themselves in their late 60s and early 70s. Both have entered new romantic relationships since their divorce, developed new social circles, cultivated active social lives, limited their engagement with paid employment, exercised regularly, and pursued travel. My mother told me that she feels like a "teenager" again

in light of her new romantic relationship. My father became a vegetarian at sixty-five precisely in order to provide his body with what he sees as the best fuel in order to stay healthy. Having recently turned thirty and taken on the responsibilities of a mortgage and an academic job, I see what could be in store for my post-retirement years and it brings me hope. Witnessing my parents' life transitions alerts me to the ways that some members of the "boomer" generation take up aging. My experiences with my parents inform my own thinking about this project. However, it was only when I began engaging with literature from social gerontology and the sociology of aging that I acquired the language to describe the third age discourse, which I have now come to see as a discourse both enabling and constraining how elders experience their aging. In speaking more with my father about his recent vegetarianism, for example, I can see how this decision is at least partially a response to his internalization of his interactions with medical professionals and the health literature he engages with, through which he is positioned as individually accountable for aging 'successfully'. While this is a decision my father made out of a quest to live fully, it is also one made out of fear of decline stemming from a variety of sources.

In writing about aging in old adulthood, I write about participants' experiences in ways that I appreciate and can engage with as an empathetic listener, a curious scholar, and a daughter to elder parents, but that I do not necessarily fully grasp in an embodied sense. While my body certainly is changing in ways I do not welcome, and although I see people my own age in advertisements selling anti-aging creams, the narratives of age and aging for my generation at this point in our lifecycle are distinct. Nevertheless, I, too, will experience old adulthood (at least I hope to!) and I plan to do so while living in Vancouver (the city I was born in). In this sense, I

am studying a phenomenon that I am removed from, but that will structure my experience in the future, likely also in ways that are generational. Furthermore, drawing on the feminist political economy of aging perspective, I am now better able to see how structured experiences of oppression and privilege cumulate over a lifetime (Estes, 2001). In exploring the gendered aging of my elder participants, I can also see how my own life activities, opportunities and constraints will potentially shape the resources and social networks I have in old age. Given that I have different daily experiences from my participants, however, my goal in this dissertation is to respect their words and actions by positioning them as 'informants' (Smith, 2005). I trust their enormous knowledge about seniors' programs at the House and how these programs are organized. In conducting my analysis and writing up the data I have attempted to stick closely to their words and the context(s) in which they were spoken while situating their activities within the broader discourses and structural conditions they are informed by.

It is also productive to consider not just how I was positioned in relation to my participants, but how they interpreted me. Given that we often discussed multicultural programming, as I noted above my whiteness could have influenced how different participants produced their experience during our interviews. I found that different participants presented vastly different interpretations of how multicultural programming at the House was implemented and how it *should* have been implemented. Sometimes, these different perspectives corresponded to a person's racial or ethnic self-identification, with people who identified as white communicating to me primarily what they saw as positives and benefits of multiculturalism at the House. This difference may have stemmed from their own positioning in relation to multicultural discourses in Canada more generally. Nevertheless, participants' responses were

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also a feature of the co-construction of their experience through our interview. Smith is explicit that "what becomes data for the ethnographer is always a collaborative product" (Smith, 2005, p. 125). In other words, experiences that are to become ethnographically accessible emerge through various forms of dialogue. Although experiences happen in people's everyday activities, the way they are interpreted, categorized, communicated, and attached to meaning through language emerges through the telling or writing of them, which is done in a specific place and time for an actual or intended listener/reader and context. In Smith's words, "experiential writing or speaking orients to the occasion, the speaker's and hearer's interests, the social act in which it engages, and the speech genre that is operative for that occasion" (2005, p. 126). As such, participants' ability to read me as white may have informed what they thought I was interested in and/or what they thought could be said safely and unproblematically within the context of our interview. Furthermore, I found that my participants of colour were hesitant to critique the multicultural program until after we had established rapport and I continued to demonstrate my interest in their perspective. My whiteness may have also influenced who sought me out for an interview; there are still some residents I have not met and who did not contact me at any point[16]. Through this dissertation I attempt to highlight processes of co-creation of experience through my interpretation and presentation of my textual data.

Another issue that requires my reflexivity is my positioning within the House. As an external researcher taking up an additional role as a volunteer, I sometimes found myself pitted between elders and staff. Elders who were concerned about the organization of the House and its

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[16] I interviewed fifteen of thirty-seven elders who reside in the House subsidized housing.

programs shared with me some critical insights they had about staff, sometimes making themselves quite emotionally vulnerable. I felt myself becoming immersed in these interviews and taking up aspects of their affect, even becoming angry with the situation on some occasions. In these moments, I took to writing fieldnotes about the emotions elders shared with me and my own emotional responses as a way to document them but also to work through them productively and to orient them for analytical purposes. In interpreting the sometimes-tense relations between elders and staff, I shifted from placing blame to considering how staff themselves were constrained in their work. It was through this process that I laid the foundations for chapter four, where I consider how staff work was organized within the House, taking into account how limited time and funding orients their daily activities.

Lastly, some participants may have drawn upon and activated the House's institutional categories in responding to my questions, captured by the ways that multiculturalism was written about in program flyers and the House website. Many staff members were new to the House and may have felt a need to establish their legitimacy in relation to the institution rather than air concerns they may have had. It is important to note that work at the House was done in the context of a high rates of staff attrition that appeared to be a feature of the many part-time, grant-based positions. I therefore reminded myself that the way staff spoke about the multicultural components of the Seniors' Drop-In Lunch may be a reflection of their attempts to demonstrate their expertise about the program by replicating the way it was spoken and written about in institutional texts, including my own perhaps. I realized this while reading through the interview transcripts and seeing the commonalities among staff with regard to how they spoke about multiculturalism at the House. If I was to conduct this research again, I would be more cognizant

earlier on of the fact that staff may be performing their expertise during our interviews. I would adjust my questioning and, if possible, hold more than one interview with each staff member to build further rapport.

2.4   Conclusion

In this chapter I have identified the interrelated theoretical and methodological approaches I take up in this dissertation. My commitment to developing this work by drawing on materialist feminist standpoint analysis means that I pay attention to texts in various forms, including those that I co-created with participants. My interest in texts shapes how I think about discourse and power, and the way located individuals bring discourses into being. Following Smith (2005, 1990, 1987) I sought to treat participants as informants who had extensive knowledge about their own daily activities as well as the way the House was organized. I work to show respect for and reciprocity to my participants by ensuring that the knowledge I produce based on their accounts is useful for them in outlining the social relations they were situated within. As such, I conducted this work in the interest of making knowledge *for* people, rather than only for my own career and the expansion of academic management. Having outlined my theoretical and methodological approach, I now turn to presenting my key arguments in the following chapters.

Chapter 3: The third age discourse and multicultural activity

I first made the connection between youthful conceptions of aging and multicultural activity during my interview with Katelyn, one of the women elders residing at the House who initially suggested incorporating multicultural meals and entertainment at the Seniors' Drop-In Program. She explained her motivation for this change as she "wanted to do multiculturalism." Katelyn understood multiculturalism as an activity, as something to be done. This interview prompted me to think about what this activity meant for her and the other elder volunteers and participants. What did they achieve through their involvement with this program? How did they situate themselves within this multicultural activity? What did it mean to them to take up multiculturalism as an action? Through these conversations, I began to consider the connections between elders' activities and House programming, particularly for the elder women who were the majority of program organizers and participants. Although the Seniors' Drop-In Program was a House program that required significant work by staff, I became curious about the work that elder women did in volunteering and participating in this program. As Griffith and Smith (2014, p. 11) caution,

> In those institutional settings where services are provided to clients, we should
> remember that, using the "generous" conception of work, those who are served
> *are also working*; they put in time and energy and are active in the actual local
> settings as they engage with or are caught up in an institutional process. (emphasis
> in the original)

With this point in mind, in this chapter I take up the standpoint of House elders—women in particular—to consider how they thought about and engaged with the multicultural lunches at the Seniors' Drop-In Program.

I begin this chapter by showing how the elders I spoke with at the House drew upon a generational conception of aging, embedded in the professions and industries catering to and producing aging, in a way that responsibilizes seniors to make choices to age in a way that is not 'old.' The third age discourse that they drew upon is largely a departure from the way aging has been conceptualized for past generations. My elder participants overwhelmingly presented this time in their lives as one of new opportunity, stimulation, exploration, flexibility, and freedom. I show the way these elders' conceptions of aging were constrained and enabled based on their income, wealth, gender, and race, as well as their generational access to Canadian social safety net programs. These elders are one of the first generations to benefit from Canada's safety net, including targeted subsidy programs for older adults, many aspects of which were put into place during their lifetime. Many of these government programs did not exist for the generations previous to them, and may not remain as robust for the generations that come after them.

Programs related to income, housing, and healthcare access have created conditions for some of these older adults to experience themselves as thriving and active in ways they deemed fulfilling. However, their small amounts of accumulated wealth and minimal ongoing engagement with regular, paid employment mean that these older adults also navigated fixed, subsidized incomes. As my participants constructed narratives of their life stage and daily activities as productive and satisfying, they did so in ways that differ to some extent from those found in the marketing images and texts targeted toward wealthier members of their age group,

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often oriented around consumption and 'snowbird' and travel lifestyles. Because these elders were on fixed incomes and had minimal funds to spend on non-essentials, their forms of consumption and activity were done in affordable, accessible contexts. At the Seniors' Drop-In Program, elders pay $4.00 per session to consume a meal, to participate in a short aerobics exercise session, and to be entertained by various performers. The elders I spoke with at the House presented themselves as 'active' through their contributions to, participation in, and consumption of local, low-cost opportunities through community events, activities, and interpersonal networks.

Their experiences are gendered in a variety of ways. First, the Seniors' Drop-In Program, the subsidized seniors housing, and the House itself were occupied almost exclusively by women. There were only three men who lived in the seniors housing at the House and only up to three or four men who attended the Seniors' Drop-In with any regularity. That more women are present in these accessible, affordable community programs is likely related to lifetime inequalities leaving women with less income and wealth in retirement (Calasant & King, 2011) and more likely to be single and/or widowed than old men (Gee & Kimball, 1987; Russell, 2007; Spector-Mersel, 2006). Also shaping this situation are gendered discourses about women's responsibility for care work and giving back to the community in informal, unpaid ways. Interestingly, although organized community activities designated for "seniors" are often rejected by old men who prefer to engage in activities designated for "all ages" outside of institutional seniors' facilities (Davidson, Daly & Arber, 2003; Russell, 2007), the women at the House did not seem to hold the same perception. Old women who lived at and came to the House were able to draw upon their activity in this seniors' program using narratives of independence

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and freedom—narratives that elicit versions of aging distinct from those of the fourth age (more often associated with dependence and decline). As I will discuss in chapter 5, the small number of old men at the House did not participate in the Seniors' Drop-In activities in the same way as the women, suggesting that this program was taken up by elders in gendered ways, intersecting with class and race.

One of the activities that elders often discussed, and that I had observed first-hand at the House, was the multicultural meals and entertainment at the Seniors' Drop-In Lunch. In the latter half of this chapter I focus on the multicultural meals in particular. I trace how low-income House elders, most often white women (who constitute the majority of my participants), presented themselves to others and me in relation to the way they spent their time. I argue that many of my elder participants constructed themselves, and conceptions of race and ethnicity, through their House activities. In doing so they drew upon a generational and gendered conception of aging through which they presented themselves as accessing productive, fulfilling stimulation through multicultural programming. In developing this argument, I pay specific attention to the way elders described what 'multiculturalism' is and how they positioned themselves in relation to it, keeping in mind their own racial and ethnic positioning. I suggest that some of these elders understood multicultural programs at the House as a way for them to access 'exotic' experiences in an affordable, local context, thus achieving a version of the third age on a budget.

3.1 The life of their times: Historical foundations for "boomer" aging experiences

As mentioned earlier, the "third age" is a relatively recent way of conceptualizing what is seen to be a new stage of the life cycle during which individuals have reduced responsibilities, such as paid employment and/or family care activities, yet still have sufficient resources and health (Marshall, 2011), which "provide a context for self-fulfillment, freedom, and purposeful engagement" (Weiss & Bass, 2002, p. 29). Within academic discourse as well as media representations and aging professions, the third age is held up as an ideal with a specific set of criteria. In this section of the chapter I show how this ideal emerged throughout the lives of the "boomer" generation, and is hooked into the organization of seniors' programming at the House.

Within mainstream media, one current example of the third age discourse is suggested by the term "zoomer." During my interview with Jane, a House resident in her early 70s, my eyes skimmed over a *ZOOMER Canada* magazine placed on the table where we were seated in her apartment. The cover featured a photo of Jane Fonda with the caption, "The master of reinvention on finding happiness at 77" (*ZOOMER*, 2015). Other than the magazine title, the largest letters on the page read, "Going strong: The science of longevity now. How to heal your brain, renew your body and enrich your spirit". If I were to do that interview again, I would've asked Jane about the magazine. That text, however, did not mean much to me in that moment as I spoke with Jane. When I saw the same issue on display in my mother's home a few weeks later, I began to think about the way old adulthood is portrayed in the institutional texts produced by advertisers, financial advisors, medical professionals, self-help gurus, and even scholars in the social sciences. I realized that in order to explicate how elders do the work of multicultural programming at the House, I would need to trace how their thinking and acting relate to broader

aging discourses that they draw upon and produce in this specific institutional context. These elders spoke about their lives in ways that were distinct from the way my grandparents had spoken about theirs. My grandparents, who were born in the early 1900s and 1910s, were fond of speaking with me about the past. They divulged exciting things they had done and the bonds they had cherished with others. Elders at the House also sometimes spoke about the past, but they did not linger there. They drew on the past primarily as a jumping off point for discussing their future: what they wanted to see and do *next*. My own parents, who have pursued new relationships, social networks, education and travel opportunities in their late 60s and early 70s, also alerted me to shifting idealized conceptions of older adulthood that inform the aging processes of the generation often labeled the "baby boomers." My mother and I have rented blockbuster movies, such as *Something's Gotta Give* (2003) and *It's Complicated* (2009), and the popular show *Grace and Frankie* (2015) on Netflix, all of which feature wealthy white women and men in the pursuit of new life adventures no longer constrained by familial responsibilities and financial considerations that had occupied their earlier adulthood.

The founder of ZoomerMedia, Moses Znaimer, defines "Zoomers" as "The demographic of active people aged 45 plus…. Boomers With Zip! People age 45 plus who enjoy life to the fullest" (Revie, 2014). The term "Zoomer" is situated within the context of the "boomer" generation (which I discuss in more detail below), but is seen to be an elite subculture of older adults who do not accept traditional narratives of aging as a time for slowing down or declining. On the contrary, these are elders with "zip!" who take steps to live "life to the fullest," perhaps more so than at any other point in their lives, given the mass amounts of wealth marketers imagine they have accumulated, and the lack of responsibilities they are believed to be settled

with (Revie, 2014). Zoomer Media was founded in 2008 to create "information, entertainment and experiences uniquely designed to serve the world's largest and most affluent generation—the 45-plus" (Zoomer Media Limited, 2016). The website boasts, "Open a newspaper, turn on the television, read a blog … It's likely you'll find yet another story about the enormous power and influence of the 45-plus population—the people who are literally reinventing aging". The Zoomer Media site claims that it is individual forty-five plus people who are "reinventing" aging. This begs the question of the role of media, industry, and academia in producing this life-stage, and the associated consumer market it claims to only reflect and describe.

In a 2014 Ontario newspaper article entitled, "A Boomer is a Zoomer if they want to be" the author, who is also a "motivational speaker, fitness instructor and entertainer," explains that how one ages is a choice to be made: "Growing old is optional and life is definitely worth the living—Zoom!" (Revie, 2014). Throughout this piece the author positions getting "old" not as a biological fact, but as an unfortunate outcome for people who do not appropriately self-regulate and seek to achieve a new conception of aging associated with active, healthy, social living:

> Zoomer Boomers strive to keep moving, be exhilarated by life, enjoy the moment, seize opportunities, care about their own health and well being…. Zoomers are trend-setting Boomers who are breaking new ground, redefining aging and reinventing retirement. (Revie, 2014)

A recent post on the "Everything Zoomer's" Facebook page, managed by the administrator, is an image of an old white woman with long blond hair and a beach towel walking toward the ocean. The caption, in large blue capital letters, reads, "THIS IS WHAT I SHOULD BE DOING TODAY" (Everything Zoomer, 2016). On the one hand, this is a generic image and a generic

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phrase. Who would not want to go to the beach on any given day? However, when interpreted within the context of the "Zoomer" as a compulsory choice for successful aging, individuals' daily decisions come under greater scrutiny and the verb "should" becomes much more prominent: "This is what I should be doing today" in order to make "growing old … optional" (Revie, 2014). In the article mentioned above, "A Boomer is a Zoomer if they want to be," the author continues on to list the things "Zoomers" do to achieve their "zip":

> Zoomer Boomers possess several longevity traits focused around health and well being. These traits include things like: monitoring health risks; daily exercise including aerobics and neurobics; calculating daily nutritional and caloric needs; cultivating a large social support system; spirituality; positive self-image; sound retirement planning and a passion for living life to the fullest. (Revie, 2014)

Older adults interested in achieving this promised "passion for living life to the fullest" are instructed to cultivate a variety of intentionally structured self-monitoring habits, including employing scientific precision in identifying and managing health challenges and working on a positive-self image through neurobics—mental exercises undertaken to maintain an "active" brain by creating new neural pathways. This advice is echoed through featured articles in the May 2016 *ZOOMER Magazine*, where elders can learn the "6 Steps to Age-Proof Your Body" (Everything Zoomer, 2016).

The Spruce House texts and programming also reproduced versions of these daily habits for elders. Targeted seniors' programs included activities such as walking, exercising, socializing, cooking, and learning new things. Most program descriptions had an emphasis on meeting new people, often while exploring new activities or places. For instance, one program that I was involved in was the Healthy Living Program. This weekly meet-up organized by the

House was described in the program poster as a "weekly walking and healthy snack group" (The House, 2015). The first picture shown on the poster was a smoothie in a tall glass with fresh blueberries on top. The second picture shown was a group of approximately ten elders walking through a forest. The project was funded, in part, by Vancouver Coastal Health, indicating that that House program was tied into the coordinating logic of governmental population health administration systems. The text on the poster noted that participants would learn to make snacks such as, "quick, refreshing and yummy green smoothies" as well as "our own healthy dips" to accompany "fresh vegetables."

House elders also drew upon the third age discourse in how they organized their daily lives through regular activity and health regiments. For example, Kristof, an elder man in his early seventies, explained the high physical and aesthetic standards he held himself to based on his belief that he was not and *should not* yet be "old":

Kristof: I've never contemplated on being old and [a] senior citizen myself so in

that spirit, *I never give up on the idea that I'm still [an] active, younger individual*

and I'd like to believe that everybody else is.

Katherine: How old are you in your mind?

Kristof: In my mind? Maximum forty-five.

Katherine: What is it about forty-five?

Kristof: Just a safe number *when people, they don't claim they're getting old*.

Forty-five[-year-old] people probably celebrate their birthday as "oh I'm mid-age,

mid-life". No, forty-five is just [a] fictional number. I couldn't really—I had to

think of it because if I told you really then you would say, "Oh man, this man is a

dreamer or naïve" because *in my mind, I am at twenty-six. And that's what I expect from me physically, independently, and aesthetically*— although I am very realistic. I know I have no hair. My body is not the same [but] *there's no excuse [for] slowing down* to such an extent that the people are using walkers or cane[s] when they could really recover by yoga [and] physical fitness. [….] *There's values today [that] shouldn't be from the Victorian period* [where] your grandchildren should take care of you. *[I'm a] twenty-first century man*. [my emphasis]

Kristof positioned himself as having the mentality and self-expectations of a forty-five-year-old, or even secretly a twenty-six-year-old. He drew on these numbers because they signify a time in life when individuals "don't claim they're getting old", indicating that he did not want to position himself as someone who was aging or "old". He clarified that although his body is "not the same" as it was in his earlier years, he did not feel that was an acceptable "excuse" for "slowing down". Instead, Kristof held himself to particular physical and aesthetic expectations that allowed him to retain his independence. The contrast he drew between what he "expect[ed]" of himself and what was "realistic" suggests that he actively self-regulated in order to challenge and minimize signs of aging. Kristof characterized his approach to aging (or not aging) as distinct from previous historical periods where people believed "your grandchildren should take care of you". In contrast, he strived to remain active, independent, and youthful—values he felt distinguished him as a "twenty-first century man" rather than a man aging in an earlier time period. However, Kristof and several other elder men at the House limited their engagement with

the Seniors' Drop-In, interpreting it as a feminized and "old" program—a finding I return to in chapter five.

Kristof was not alone in articulating a conception of older adulthood that is distinct from that held by previous generations. It is crucial to situate my participants' understanding of aging within broader generational trends defining aging in new and unique ways. I began by noting the rapidly changing structural conditions that occurred alongside the lifecycle of the 'boomer' generation and that have come to shape their aging in the context of the third age discourse. Individuals born in Canada, the United States, and some countries in Western Europe in the 1940s and early 1950s—the generation commonly identified as the 'boomers'—experienced particular structural shifts post World War II (Gilleard and Higgs, 2002, 2007; Myles, 2005). Although these structural shifts occurred at slightly different times throughout many nations in the Global North, the 1960s are widely seen as a pivotal period that influenced many members of this generation (Gilleard and Higgs, 2002, 2007; Marwick,1998; Owram, 1996; Palaeologu, 2009; Palmer, 2009). The 'boom' within 'baby boomer' has several meanings. One is the massive population growth that occurred between 1945 and 1965. In Canada, 8.2 million babies were born during this time, with an average of 3.7 children per woman (or approximately 412,000 babies per year) (Statistics Canada, 2011). In contrast, only 377,886 babies were born in Canada in 2008 to a population that was twice the size (an average of 1.7 children per woman)[17].

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[17] However, in Japan, the 'boom' had a different, fatal meaning associated with the United States dropping atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, instantly killing 80,000 and 40,000 people respectively, with 100,000 more people dying in the following months from radiation poisoning. As such, the narrative or growth and prosperity following WWII in the West stands in contrast to, and was partially produced by, unimaginable violence. Furthermore, the 'boom' can also be seen as a characterization of the coming threat of a nuclear bomb during the arms race of the Cold War.

Another 'boom' for Western nations, such as Canada, was economic: the changing structural conditions associated with low unemployment rates, increasing domestic expenditure, and greater educational opportunities (Badley et al., 2015, p. 42 – 43; Gilleard & Higgs, 2007, p. 14). It is important to note, however, that the ways members of this generation in Canada were situated in relation to these structural conditions were shaped by race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. Although these societal changes did not influence all members of this generation in the same way, they did create conditions for the production and reproduction of the third age discourse in media, professional, and academic texts. Given the age characteristics of my participants, I focus on the experiences of the older 'baby boomers' (OBB) born between 1945 and 1954 (Badley et al., 2015). Younger 'baby boomers' (YBB) were born between 1955 and 1964 and experienced a different set of structural conditions.

Canadian sociologist John Myles (2005) contrasts the "good lives" of this generation against previous "unlucky" generations, such as people who experienced old age in the 1950s:

> The elderly cohorts of the 1950s were poor because they had poor lives. Born at the close of the 19th Century, their youth was marred by World War I and their working years straddled the Great Depression and World War II. They were poor not only because public retirement plans were ungenerous, and private plans underdeveloped, but also because they were "unlucky" generations. By comparison, today's retirees are relatively affluent mainly because they had good lives. They are the children of high industrialism. Their early careers straddled the booming post-war decades. They generally enjoyed job security and rising real wages over most of their lives, and as a result, accumulated substantial savings

and resources, not just CPP benefits. Compared to their parents, today's retirees,

these children of high industrialism, had "good lives." (Myles, 2005, p. 1)

Through this example, Myles demonstrates the importance not just of one's age, but one's

generation. Although age may structure inequalities at any given time, the notion of generation

allows sociologists to consider how particular experiences structure the aging process for socially

significant groups. Being seventy years old in Canada in 1950 is not the same experience as

being seventy years old in Canada in 2015, given the significant trends these different

generations experienced throughout various stages of their lives, including older age.

Like other scholars of generation, however, in this statement Myles implicitly

conceptualizes generation as a form of social organization that cuts *across* the population,

whereas systems of class, ethnicity, and gender are seen as divisions *between* groups. Gilleard

and Higgs (2007, p. 14) make this distinction explicit in their claim that "the horizontal divisions

within society such as cohort, age group and generation have had considerably less attention paid

to them [by scholars] than the vertical divisions of class, gender and ethnicity." Rather than

focusing on the ways that generation *intersects* with other socially structured locations in

mutually constituting ways, Gilleard and Higgs position generation as somewhat distinct from

these other factors. This divisional rather than intersectional approach is a tension I encounter

when reading intersectionality scholarship in relation to some of the literature on the third age

(for example, see Weiss & Bass, 2002) Through this dissertation I demonstrate how my

participants' experiences fundamentally intersected with age, class, race, and gender, with an

emphasis on how they produced these locations in generational ways in the third age.

As I noted in chapter two, Mannheim (1970/1950, p. 401) argues that the potential for a generational *entelechy,* or a new essence or style, to emerge increases with significant structural changes taking place during the generation's adolescence: "Early impressions tend to coalesce into a *natural view* of the world. All later experiences then tend to receive their meaning from this original" (Mannheim, 1970/1950, p. 389-90). As such, the cultural and economic conditions occurring in the youthful years of any generation may inform their consciousness. However, although all individuals have a generation location by virtue of being born in a particular time and place, a certain set of conditions is required to turn this generation location into a *generation as actuality* through which members develop a sociologically meaningful consciousness (Mannheim, 1970/1950, p. 394). The time and place in which one is born is a necessary but insufficient criterion. The primary condition is rapid structural change, or what Mannheim called the "tempo of change" (p. 400-01), creating a unique set of problems and orientations for a new generation that distinguishes its thinking from previous generations: "We shall therefore speak of a *generation as an actuality* only where a concrete bond is created between members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic destabilization" (p. 395-96). The greater the shifting societal conditions, the more significant the unique generational entelechy developed in response (1970/1950, p. 402). Of course, not all members of a *generation as actuality* will think and respond in the same way to the "historical problems" of their time (p. 396). In fact, there may be profound disagreements and inequalities, for instance, when members of the same generation participate actively in competing social movements. However, what Mannheim finds notable about these disagreements is that they are oriented around the same set of debates or motivating challenges;

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different *generation units* are responding in different ways to the same foundational issues that structured the early years for members of this generation (Mannheim, 1970/1950, p. 396).

Gilleard and Higgs (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007) have written extensively on the ways in which the "boomers" constitute a unique generation. Their work demonstrates that the "tempo of change" (Mannheim, 1970/1950, p. 309) experienced by people born from 1945 to 1955 in Western nations such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, is significant given the fundamental economic and cultural shifts that occurred post-World War II. These rapid changes—shaping the impressionable adolescence of the "boomer" generation—were spurred by economic growth, technological innovation (particularly in communications and health care), mass marketing, expanded consumption patterns, youth-oriented social movements, and the development of government social safety net programs (Badley et al., 2015; Cheung, 2007; Huffman, 2012; Janssen, Dechesne, & Van Knippenberg, 1999; Marwick, 1998; Owram, 1996; Ozanne, 2009; Palmer, 2009; Smith & Clurman, 2007). These are key structural features of the "boomer" generation that took root during their youth and that continue to inform their aging process. The significant changes documented during the 1960s align with Mannheim's criteria for a sociologically significant generation. Building on Mannheim, Higgs and Gilleard (2007, p. 19) encourage scholars to use the framework of 'generation' analytically in order to grasp the unique social location of the "boomers" as shaped not just by "the time of their lives" (i.e., age) but by "the life of their times" (i.e., generation).

The production and circulation of third age texts goes hand in hand with the targeted marketing that has tracked the "boomers" into their current life stage. In the post-war years, leisure and entertainment industries expanded, along with mass communication technologies,

and marketing strategies targeting niches based on life stage. A powerful imperative to consume and distinguish oneself based on taste, lifestyle, and purchasing patterns emerged as the "boomers" entered their youth (Gilleard & Higgs, 2007). The connection the "boomers" experienced between economic prosperity and a growing culture of consumption is one that is particularly relevant to consider in relation to their aging processes.

This discussion, however, needs to be grounded in its ethnic, class, and cultural specificity. Despite the way generation is discussed in a generalizing way in some of the literature I cite, it is important to note that the broader economic upswing in Canada and the associated imperative to consume did not affect all young people in the same way. While women's labour force participation rates began to rise dramatically in the 1960s, labour market earnings for women who worked full-time full-year were approximately 54% of men's earnings (Fortin & Huberman, 2002, p. 3). Given that women who worked full time (still a minority in the 1960s) received just over half of the compensation that men did, and given that wives required a husband's signature to open a bank account until 1964, women's consumption habits remained contingent on their access to (white) men as partners or fathers. It is also incorrect to assume that shrinking inequalities in the 1960s were linear or lasting. While the wage gap between white women and women who identify as visible minorities or Aboriginal began to decrease in the 1970s and early 1980s, it began to grow again in the late 1980s and 1990s (a trend that parallels changes in the wage gap between white men and Aboriginal and visible minority men) (Pendakur, 2002).

To put the post-WWII prosperity narrative into context, consider that 1960 was the first time that Aboriginal Canadians were able to vote without relinquishing their treaty rights and

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status under the Indian Act. I highlight this specific example to clarify that I am not making a claim that all people born in Canada in the 1940s and 1950s experienced cultural and economic shifts during their adolescence in the same way. My interviews with elders at the House focused primarily on their current activities rather than their past activities. My data do not allow me to make an empirical claim about how these elders experienced their youth and the societal changes taking place at the time. It is certainly possible that they did develop into a *generation as actuality* (Mannheim, 1970/1950, p. 394) during adolescence; however, this is not my focus. In order to make these claims I would have had to build questions into my interviews about their living conditions in childhood and adolescence, their consumption patterns, their participation in and perceptions of social movements, and so on. Given this limitation rooted in the way I designed and conducted my qualitative interviews, I am able to confirm that the majority of my elder participants shared a generation location based on being born in the same nation in the same time period (twelve of my fifteen elder participants were born in Canada). I am also able to consider how they talked about what aging in older adulthood meant to them. The way they spoke about aging with me indicated that they shared a particular understanding of the third age rooted in new experiences, personal growth, and unconstrained opportunities (or the perceived ability to overcome constraints). They worked to age in a way that was "not old". I am not able to identify when this way of understanding their lives formed for each of them. However, I refer to historical events in this chapter in order to connect the developments in industries, such as communications and marketing, to the growing capacity for texts of the third age to be produced and circulated by institutionally embedded "experts". Below, I trace cultural and economic events that occurred alongside the lives of the "boomers".

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Given their size, the "boomers" were the target of marketing campaigns throughout their lives, with a notable increase as early as the 1980s as the oldest boomers were nearing middle age:

> Although structured by income, education, ethnicity and gender, a mature market started to reconstruct middle age. A growing number of self help books and an expanding array of anti-ageing products, nutraceuticals and cosmeceuticals "designed" to ward off the signs of old age began appearing in bookshops, healthfood stores and pharmacies (Gilleard and Higgs 2000). Life stage emerged as an increasingly significant source of market segmentation at the time when the participants of post war youth culture were reaching midlife and some members of its advance vanguard already retiring. Making visible this "invisible consumer market", the market was starting to target the over forties/over fifties with a variety of lifestyle products that promised "looking and feeling healthier happier and more beautiful than ever before" (quotations from the September 1982 issue of *Harper's Bazaar*, cited by Friedan 1994). (Gilleard & Higgs, 2007, p. 18-19)

Due to the size of the "boomer" generation, and the expansion of mass communications and consumer culture that accompanied their youth, the advertising industry has followed this generation throughout their lives and has both shaped and reflected their aging process through the promotion of youthful slogans and products targeted to life stage. As Gilleard and Higgs argue above, what was unique about the representation of aging in prominent 1980s marketing was that middle age was presented as a *new beginning* and an *opportunity* to be better "than ever before," in stark contrast to anything associated with being "old". A particular conception of

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successful, youthful aging was presented within dominant media representations as a desirable outcome of individual consumption preferences and lifestyle choices.

Some scholars associate this emphasis on perpetual youthfulness with the legacy of prominent social movements of the 1960s: student protests, Quebecois separatism in Canada, civil rights, the second wave of the women's rights movement, changing sexual mores, and 'Flower Power' counter-cultures—often influenced by U.S. social movements, such as the anti-Vietnam protests (Badley et al., 2015, p. 42 – 43; Ozanne, 2009, p. 133). Gilleard and Higgs (2007, p. 17) posit that these frequently youth-led movements amounted to "disdain and a dislike for all those who had maintained and managed existing society," culminating in a generational rebellion against previous cohorts. Members of the "boomer" generation are seen to have "reinvented" youth culture (Huffman, 2012, p.6) first as a subculture (Brake, 1985) and then commodified within a mass culture characterized by an "unwavering determination to not get old" (Smith and Clurman, 2007, p. 24). It is this notion of "growing younger" that became fundamental to commercialized representations of aging targeted for this sizeable generation later in life (Janssen, Dechesne, & Van Knippenberg, 1999, p. 153).

It is important to note, however, that generational conceptions of agelessness, immortality, hope, and other ways of believing in the possibilities of having a future, are gendered and classed. In the U.S. context, Fine & McClelland (2006) argue that racialized and impoverished young women are denied the ability to imagine their futures, while Warner and Swisher (2015) document that youth of colour are much less likely to believe that they will live to see middle age. For example, the authors note that in the United States, only 50% of the Black youth in their sample believe they will be alive at age thirty-five. Optimistic beliefs about the future can drop

when compounded with immigration status. For instance, only 37.66% of foreign-born Mexican teens in the same study reported believing they would live to age thirty-five.

Various professions and industries have incorporated the third age conception of aging in a way that does not just identify and respond to, but actually *produces* an idealized version of aging that is not "old". Consider the rise of experts and services surrounding seniors' sexuality, for example. Seniors have long been conceptualized as asexual or post-sexual, yet recent scientific developments promoted within the medical and therapeutic industry have reimagined particular versions of youthful, phallocentric, sexual functionality as central to successful, active aging, thus responsibilizing individuals for seeking out appropriate biomedical ("antidecline") interventions (Marshall, 2011, p. 391-93). These interventions are tied to a shifting conception of the life course, which can no longer be understood solely based on the categories of childhood, adulthood, and old age (p. 393-4). On the contrary, individualized choices regarding consumption, work, and leisure mark the third age discourse where "sexiness" becomes an important means of distinguishing oneself as "not old" (Marshall, 2011, p. 393-4). The concept of sexual "health" has developed alongside the medicalization of older people's sexuality more generally over the past fifty years (Marshall, 2011, p. 395). In the nineteenth century, the body was seen to consist of a limited amount of resources for sex, including semen (Hall, 1992). Sexual decline with age was seen to be a natural, unavoidable process. The end of reproductive potential was assumed to come with decrease in sexual activity. However, what was once known as penile "impotence" has become medicalized as "erectile dysfunction". Marshall (2011, p. 396-98) points out that Viagra, which was introduced in 1998, has seen such success that there are attempts to expand its market. Men are now being prescribed Viagra at younger and younger

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ages. Medical researchers are also working to develop similar sexual enhancement products for women.

Scholars approaching the third age from a critical perspective often consider how terms such as "sexual health" and "successful aging" are intertwined with consumption, the medicalization of sexuality, the sexualization of aging, bodily regulation, and heteronormativity (Calasanti and King, 2005; Clarke et al., 2003; Marshall, 2011; Marshall and Katz, 2002). The conflation of sexual function with sexual health, and sexual health with successful aging, has led to what Marshall (2011, p. 392) calls "virility surveillance," where individuals and their care providers enact a form of sexual regulation, in which older people are "encouraged to continually monitor their sexual function, and physicians are encouraged to ask their older patients about their sex lives as a part of routine health checks". As assumptions about sexual functionality for older adults continue to shift within health promotion discourses, expectations of the life course after age fifty-five are also changing, along with particular forms of policing. Emily Wentzell (2006, p. 375) summarizes: "to encourage older individuals' sexuality while demanding that their sexual performance meet universal phallocentric norms is to create a situation in which older people cannot be properly sexual without medical intervention".

Low-intensity policing is not limited to sexuality, however. Expectations about appropriate 'third age' behaviour extend to all potential forms of decline or dependency, and may be connected to anxieties about the 'burden' of financially supporting such a large aging population, in combination with the predominance of neoliberal discourses and declining support for the welfare state (Estes, 2001). Writing out of Ontario, sociologist Stephen Katz (2000, p. 136) suggests that within the context of neoliberal agendas, programs are developed to

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"'empower' older individuals to be active to avoid the stigma and risks of dependency". Katz argues that a long history of gerontological research has problematized aging and made it the subject of various administrative and professional processes dictating compulsory activity for older adults, reminiscent of what Ekerdt (1986, p. 239) deemed the "busy ethic" through which elders morally legitimate their transition to retirement by engaging in leisure pursuits that are "earnest, occupied, and filled with activity". In contrast to this compulsory activity, inactivity is associated with failure, dependence, illness, and isolation, consistent with anxieties surrounding age-based decline:

> As neoliberal antiwelfarist agendas attempt to restructure dependency through the uncritical promotion of positive activity, they also problematize older bodies and lives as dependency prone and "at risk." It is not only the medical and cultural images of an active old age that have become predominant, but also the ways in which all dependent nonlaboring populations—unemployed, disabled, and retired—have become targets of state policies to "empower" and "activate" them. The older social tension between productivity and unproductivity is being replaced with a spectrum of values that spans activity and inactivity. To remain active, as a resource for mobility and choice in later life, is thus a struggle in a society where activity has become a panacea for the political woes of the declining welfare state and its management of so-called risky populations. (Katz, 2000, p. 147)

Elders' choice of activities has become an accountability mechanism through which individuals are seen to make choices as consumers in order to avoid getting 'old' and becoming a drain on resources.

This accountability mechanism was perhaps magnified for some of my participants who lived in subsidized seniors' housing at the House. Some of these elders made connections between their housing and their self-concept. Gladys, a seventy-year-old woman who grew up without significant financial means, explained that even without a lot of money she never before felt that she was 'dependent' until moving into the housing at the House:

> I'm being subsidized. So if you're being subsidized, and yeah I know that
>
> feeling—that I've heard that kind of said of other people. That attitude is out there
>
> and I've always thought, "But you don't know the whole story". You know when
>
> people talk about street people or homeless people or mentally ill people, there is
>
> a lot of lack of understanding of what's going on. But it's the first time that I've
>
> felt that I was on the other side.

Gladys connected this form of subsidy dependence to other forms of risk and judgment associated with street involvement and mental health challenges. The imperative to make "good" choices may be compounded for older adults who feel they are "on the other side", now the recipient of what they perceive to be scrutiny and evaluation.

In a sense, forms of 'activity' were built into the requirements of the House's seniors' housing itself: residents were selected based on their history with community involvement and were expected to volunteer a minimum of five hours per month at the House as a condition of their housing. All volunteers were required to develop an online profile and to track their

volunteer dates, hours, and activities electronically. Tracking volunteer hours allowed the House

to demonstrate to their funders the degree to which they had a community impact. Within this

context it was not surprising that elders at the House stressed narratives of activity. A final factor

to consider regarding elders' presentation of activity was the contingency of their housing on

their ability to live independently. This subsidized housing was only for seniors classified as

'independent'. Should an older adult no longer be deemed fit for this classification, he or she

would have had to move to a different facility.

What is challenging about the structure of the subsidized housing at the House is that

while it fosters active, independent living, these are also prerequisites in order to qualify in the

first place. Given that 'active' aging is itself socially organized so that more marginalized

populations have less access based on factors such as income and health, these groups are also

less likely to be eligible to apply for subsidized seniors Housing at the House. The requirement

that applicants be from or connected to the neighbourhood, while fitting the NH's place-based

mandate, may shape the applicant pool based on those who already have access to substantial

privileges. Given the racial demographics[18] of the neighbourhood, it is not surprising that the

majority of my participants are white. While women are more likely to rely upon social

assistance in old age, the majority women selected for this housing are white, heterosexual, have

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[18] Within approximately a 17 block radius from the House, the largest visible minority resident groups are Chinese (6.2%), Japanese (3.6%), Korean (1.5%), Filipino (1.2%), Southeast Asian (1.1%), West Asian (0.9%), South Asian (0.9%), and mixed race (0,8%) (Statistics Canada, 2011). There are many different languages spoken by individuals who reside in the neighbourhood surrounding the House. Of the total 41,180 residents in the Kitsilano Census Local Area (Statistics Canada, 2011), the largest linguistic groups (based on reported mother tongue) are English (76.3%), French (2.6%), German (1.9%), Chinese (1.7%), Spanish (1.6%), Cantonese (1.3%), Mandarin (1.5%), Greek (1.4%), and Japanese (1%), although there are many other languages reported by smaller numbers of people.

higher levels of education than women of their generation, and have few health conditions that interfere with their everyday life. As the literature I discussed above points out, their main impediment to the imagined third age lifestyle is class position structured by lifetime gendered inequalities such as the wage gap.

The third age is not just a life stage made available to a "lucky" generation (Myles, 2006, p. 1), but also a set of expectations for "successful" aging. As participants presented their volunteering, program participation, and other activities to me during our interviews, they also distinguished themselves as active, productive, and successful in the (anti)aging process. It is subtle but telling that some participants, such as Jane, responded to questions about their sense of self by telling me about the activities they were involved in or plan to be involved in:

Katherine: Are there any characteristics that you view as important to who you are?

Jane: I want to be involved in community affairs, political affairs and animal conservation…I like to make a, make a contribution, you know, take some action…do something. Either become a trip leader or serve on the committee or work in a group.

Jane described how her interest in activities, such as "community affairs", was one of her desirable characteristics. She defined who she was by discussing her activities. Jane *was someone* who liked to "take some action [and] do something." When I asked Jane about her typical day, she talked about how she went about locating activities to take part in:

Katherine: So what's your typical day like?

Jane: Well I keep a calendar on my computer and I look, I get the *Georgia*

Straight every week and I look for stuff going on there and I have a number of

websites that I check. Events at UBC and I'm a member of Nature Vancouver and

the Meet Up groups so I tend to get up and look at my calendar…. I'm on the

senior's hub group at [the House] so I have meetings. I've joined the

communications committee there which is the central roles of the hub …. So I

look at, I have a lot of incoming alerts and emails so I scan every morning.

Having to do everything from my social groups. Finding out what's going on,

what I can attend…. I also have a calendar of things that I want to get up and do. I

play pickle-ball, I play badminton. On the weekends, I'm usually at a Meet Up….

I try to practice every day, the flute, a little bit and I'm kind of an exercise fanatic

so I cycle and swim. If I don't have pickle-ball then I get out on my bike and go to

… play in the squash court or go to the community center here.

Jane shared twelve different activities with me that she pursues in response to my question. She

mentioned many more during the rest of our interview. The way she produced her experience of

her day was oriented entirely around seeking activities and doing activities. Her continuous

naming of activities and hobbies was indicative of the work she was doing to produce herself as

an engaged, active, healthy person for me in the context of the interview.

Activity also emerged as an important component of how elders relate to one another

during the Seniors' Drop-In Program. Conversations over meals at the Drop-In were often

organized around elders sharing stories about what their plans were for the week,or what they did

last week. It did not seem to matter *what* the activity was as much as that the person was "busy,"

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which was taken to be interesting in itself. In the summer months, elders spoke about overlapping activities they chose between. At the end of one meal, I said, "See you next week!" to an older woman as I prepared to get up from the table we sat at. That led her to tell me about the numerous groups she had joined for the summer, and that she might not attend the Drop-In next week because she wanted to go to the seniors' walking group if the weather was nice. Staff sitting with elders during the lunch also asked about activities. "What are you getting up to this week?" was a common question they posed to initiate conversation or keep conversation going. They also updated elders on what programs and events were happening at the House that they could take part in or volunteer at.

When speaking about all of the things they were doing, or wanted to do, elders presented themselves as having a newfound degree of freedom and flexibility to meet new people, learn new things, and make socially beneficial contributions. Part of my inductive, qualitative interview approach was to ask participants about their lives and to listen for how they presented themselves and what was important to them. I usually began interviews by asking questions such as, "How did you spend your time as a teenager", "What have been some important relationships in your life?", "Are there big milestones that you mark your life by?", and "What were the key things that have really mattered to you over the course of your life?" We would then move onto questions about their current and previous living situation, social interactions, and House programs, and staff. Through this process I found that many elders contrasted their current situation from their earlier stages of adulthood. In doing so, they tended to emphasize the constraints they faced in earlier decades, and to minimize the constraints they currently faced and imagined themselves facing in the near future. They ultimately framed their current activities and

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goals as full of new experiences and opportunity—opportunities that they presented as being on their own terms (as opposed to being constrained by the terms of others, which they associated with their recent past).

They tended to explain that they were (or planned to be) engaging in activities now that they were not able to earlier in their adult lives. Some participants identified constraints within the context of their previous marriage, child rearing, or paid employment: all of which are institutions that they were not participating in currently. This was largely the case for my older adult participants since the majority of them currently lived as single occupants in subsidized, one-bedroom housing. Jane, for example, contrasted her current situation with her previous one where she was in an abusive marriage with a husband that influenced and limited her activities and mobility:

> I feel like after I got the divorce, I've sort of blossomed as an individual and I don't…I guess subconsciously I just don't want anybody compressing that again saying ….“I want to do this, you want to do that outside the relationship” you know, "you want to go to these meet ups, and I don't"….I just don't want to be wedged in anymore.

Jane discussed how she felt she cut off from aspects of herself and her interest in meeting up with new people due to compounding family and economic pressures. She described her new commitment no longer to live in a way that was "wedged in" or "compress[ed]." Jane also presented this period in her life as a time for personal growth and for her to pursue goals that she was not able to earlier. Jane spent much of her adult life taking care of her own children and her children's children, and moving frequently based on the employment opportunities of her

husband. Although she held academic positions at multiple universities, Jane repeatedly

sacrificed her career and income in order to support her husband's and in order to take on unpaid

care work for the family. Jane's husband was frequently between jobs, which meant that Jane

and her children spent many years living off a very low income or "living on shoe string" as Jane

described. Now divorced, Jane wanted to take her newfound time to practice her social skills and

acquire stable friendships:

> I feel like my social skills with peers have been kind of atrophying over the years.
>
> I need to umm [join] cycling groups, or hiking groups… perfect those social
>
> skills, but I just feel like I need to. I've never had close friends who wanted to
>
> follow up as I moved from here to there, there to there and around so I am
>
> struggling with getting some lasting social relationships established.

Here Jane's language of 'need' suggests that she was not driven by just the desire to experience

new things, but also by a sense that she should be enhancing herself and her relationships in this

phase of her life.

Similarly, House elder Erica saw herself in a unique position that she had not before

experienced, now divorced and retired from formal paid employment (although sometimes doing

babysitting work in the area):

> In my marriage, it was fine. Everything was fine and everything. Then I started
>
> realizing I was a spiritual person and I was very controlled by my mother and my
>
> husband kind of controlled me. Then all of a sudden I woke up and so then I went
>
> in a different direction. So then...I kind of needed time for myself to become a
>
> person and when it, then it conflicted with working in an organization. Because

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it's just too hard for me to be told what to do when I didn't want to be told what to

do. And I couldn't really express myself because I would have been fired anyway.

Erica described feeling free from her marriage, controlling relationships with her parents, and the

constraints of a workplace where she felt stifled. She interpreted this freedom as an opportunity

to "become a person" on her own terms. She started to dedicate her time to growth through

interactions with new people and practicing spiritual principles:

Well now, I'm immersing myself in people's lives that are different than mine. It

wouldn't be the same as if I had a job, right? And I'm living my spiritual

principles….I'm living it and I'm putting myself in society instead of keeping

myself away from society.

In presenting her new life focus and activities, Erica drew a distinction between the person she

was able to be now and the person she was able to be when she worked fulltime, was in a

controlling marriage, and faced constraining expectations from her mother. Afterward, she felt

she was "putting [her]self in society," by taking active steps to meet and spend time with people

that she saw as distinct from herself, and by practicing her spiritual beliefs to become the person

she wanted to be.

Similar to Joan's and Erica's narratives, Peter, one of three men that live at the House,

reflected on sacrifices he had made earlier in his life prior to his divorce—sacrifices he now

regretted and did not want to make again. Peter described his earlier decision to give up on career

aspirations that he found fulfilling (his desire to teach English Literature and go into acting) in

order to provide financially for his wife and children through various manual labour jobs. Peter

clarified that through these career shifts "I realized that…I had really really seriously betrayed

myself." Living as a single man on a modest subsidized income, Peter explained to me that he tried to only do things he found interesting: debating with his group of male friends (all of whom had different research interests that they discussed), interacting with new people at his part time job, and reading and posting about current affairs in online forums. He described his biweekly friendship group by pointing out each of his friends' particular research interests:

Katherine: What kind of stuff do you guys do?

Peter: We sit around the dim sum offerings at the Seafood Restaurant. They're nice, they're cheap. Four, five of us can eat well for, in um, the split bill is only, you know, $5.50, six bucks, seven bucks…. There's one guy that has a real interest in the failings and corruption of the RCMP. There's another guy that has a great interest in philosophy. Another guy with—interested in science; that's [famous local figure], he's a cartoonist and columnist for the [redacted newspaper]. And various other people as well that come on that have-- And just, most of us we have—Oh, and there's Todd. Todd has an interest in Jungian psychology and also the ins and outs of big finance. And I'm heavy into current affairs, you know…I'm interested in stuff like that.

Peter's vocal excitement in presenting selected snapshots of his friends, and in one case noting their professional accomplishments, suggests that he took pride and satisfaction in being part of this group that he perceived as intellectually interesting. While Peter alluded to his class income in structuring his choices ("four, five of us can east well for… $5.50, six bucks, seven bucks"), he did not position this as a constraint. Instead, he focused on producing a version of himself as

intelligent and capable. He emphasized many times throughout the interview that, "my intellect is the most important thing to me" and that he organized his life around the pursuit of mental stimulation (which he could not do during his earlier adulthood where he had to take on manual labour to support his family). Peter was also negotiating his class position in the details he provided about this activity: he simultaneously noted that he was included in a group of men who he felt were accomplished in their professional and/or intellectual pursuits, and who engaged him in the sophisticated activities of research and debate, yet he also mentioned that the meal was under $10.00 per person. As I will discuss below, the class positioning of this group of elders was unique in relation to dominant third age narratives and required them to negotiate their self-presentation.

Overwhelmingly, when framing their past in relation to their present, my participants discussed some combination of restrictive relationships, overbearing parents, child rearing obligations, work commitments, and financial constraints that they found stifling in previous years. They contrasted these limitations with their current life, which they see as full of enhanced flexibility and opportunity to spend their time pursuing their own personal preferences for the foreseeable future. What was interesting about these narratives, common to many of my elder participants, was the work elders did to present this stage of their life as a time of opportunity (with opportunity meaning different things to different people). For some, this meant opportunity for growth and personal development, for others it meant a chance to pursue hobbies that they could not before, and for others it meant a chance to pursue pleasure. "I can do anything I want" was how Rod, an older man at the Seniors' Drop-In Program, described his plans for the week to me on a Tuesday in March. He started to tell me about the next road trip he was planning, and

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then pulled a marijuana cigarette from his shirt pocket and placed it on the table we were seated at. With anticipation, Rod watched me figure out what it was, and seemed to grow a foot taller at my surprised and slightly embarrassed expression. He explained with excitement that he smoked when he was younger, but now he could "get the good stuff, as much as [he] want[s]" because of a medical prescription. Rod invited me to join him outside to smoke after the meal. Although he was speaking about smoking medical marijuana outside a seniors' event in the middle of pot rich Vancouver, Rod presented the offer as though he had the last ticket for an exclusive, exhilarating event.

What became visible in my interactions with elders was the idealized conception of aging in relation to which they positioned themselves. However, the enthusiasm these elders demonstrated as they discussed their current pursuits toward fulfillment was sometimes accompanied by some degree of anxiety, fear, and pressure. Some elders, for instance, noted just how much time they had to fill, situating their activities as a way of passing time that they would not have otherwise known what to do with. Others mentioned their health and how it was important for their wellbeing that they kept enrolling in social activities and programs, and accepted dinner invitations even when they did not feel like it. Others foregrounded their realization that their years were limited, particularly years where health factors did not significantly limit their activity. Peter showed an acute awareness of how much time he expected to have left: "Here I am, sixty-eight. I've got—You know, my father died when he was eighty-four, so, say, sixty-eight, seventy-eight, uh, fifteen years." Based on his father's life span, Peter calculated his projected remaining time. He was also explicit, however, about how he wanted to embody his remaining years: "I don't want to die like my mother died. To have my mind go

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before my body….Just, you know, leave me my mind. Leave me my ability to read, and my ability to speak. It's very very important to me." Notable in Peter's interview was a lack of fear of death itself, but a preoccupation with *how he would age*. Peter was not concerned about dying as much as about aging in a way that made him "old"; he wanted to live an active, fulfilling life until the day he passed. For Peter, a fulfilling process of aging required the ability to continue thinking and growing mentally. Jane echoed some of Peter's anxiety through her ongoing scheduling of activities, typically with numerous activities planned per day in an attempt to boost her social life.

What my participants described is connected to the emergence of the third age discourse. As I detail below, the third age is a term meant to describe a stage of life that has only emerged within the context of relatively recent historical and structural circumstances. However, it is also a discourse that has productive, compulsory implications for 'successful' aging. As this discourse has been taken up by academic, professional, government and service industries, it has become more and more of an expectation that my participants take up and position themselves in relation to.

3.2 Armchair travel: Accessing the third age on a fixed income

Central to dominant conceptions of the third age are the significant financial resources (both individual and national) needed to create the conditions for an imagined unconstrained conception of aging. Given that access to this idealized version of older adulthood rests largely on material resources, to some extend the third age may be dismissed as a class-based phenomenon of "well off ageing" (Bury, 1995 cited in Gilleard and Higgs, 2002, p. 371).

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However, when considered in relation to cumulative lifetime inequalities structured by interlocking oppressions, the third age becomes knowable as a discursive ideal that some elders have more access to than others, yet that regulates the experiences of a diversity of old adults.

Echoing Myles' (2005, p.1) assertion that there are "lucky" and "unlucky" generations, it is crucial to note that class position has different implications depending on one's generation location. Throughout their lives all of my participants were individuals who sold their labour, some performed skilled and semiskilled work, and others took up sex segregated professional positions in health care, social work, and education. Some of my women participants also engaged in substantial unpaid domestic work for their children and/or previous partners (all of my participants are currently single). What my participants have in common is that they currently engage in no paid employment or minimal paid employment. Some work part-time in jobs that pay close to minimum wage (with some activities, such as babysitting, officially unreported yet disclosed during interviews). They have also accumulated savings and assets that total under $100,000 (or at least were able to present themselves in this manner at the time that they applied for the House senior's residence). They have no control over the means of production and therefore have little to no personal passive income or assets to sell.

However, as boomers, they were the first generation to grow up with the infrastructure for a social safety net in place related to health and economic welfare. As children, they were the first to access medical treatments such as antibiotics and immunizations (Badley et al., 2015, p. 42–43). They were also the first adults to be able to obtain oral contraceptives legally. In their young adulthood, they saw the implementation of universal provincial health care coverage between 1946 and 1961, the old age pension in 1952, the Canada Pension Plan in 1965, and

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Guaranteed Income Supplement payments in 1967. Indeed the "boomers" are the first generation to have entered adulthood with this social safety net as an expectation. To have a small income, minimal savings and/or health challenges as an elder citizen of Canada in 2015 is different than for someone facing those same constraints as an elder citizen of Canada in 1950. Structural conditions are such that aging is no longer necessarily equated with a low standard of living, as has been more often the case in the past. Statistics Canada documents that the number of seniors living below the low-income-cut-off (after tax) in Canada dropped steadily—from approximately 30% to 5%—between 1977 and 2009 (Murphy, Zhang & Dionne, 2012). This decrease is partially attributable to the Canada Pension Plan targeting older adults.

This context for the economic components of aging is crucial for understanding the experiences of my participants. My sample is largely composed of people who came of age during booming post-WWII economic conditions and are highly educated for women of their generation but did not accumulate or retain substantial savings or assets into their later years, largely due to structural gender inequalities organizing work and home, combined with the economic implications of divorce for women. Many of my participants identified themselves as low-income, and indeed participated in means-tested programs and services. Most received monthly Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) payments from BC Housing and all lived in subsidized housing at the House. They also accessed public health care and the Canada Pension Plan. Some with illnesses reported being connected to free or affordable services that they noted made their health concerns more manageable such that they did not interfere with their daily life.

The elders in my sample were low-income but relatively privileged and fortunate in their ability to connect with formal and informal community resource hubs, such as the House Seniors

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Resource Centre (SRC), in the heart of this West side Vancouver neighbourhood. This social and geographical privilege was compounded by their access to social safety net programs that were not as fully developed for previous generations, and may not be as robust for future generations. For members of the boomer generation who are positioned to access and navigate available resources and institutions, class position does not necessarily have the same implications as it does for individuals at other generation locations. Although there are still significant discrepancies *between* older adults with regard to material wealth and access to resources, overall this generation has and continues to experience better economic conditions than some of their predecessors.

Overwhelmingly, my participants reported that, within the context of their particular economic conditions, shaped by generation, class, gender and race, they were living a lifestyle where they had flexibility to make satisfying choices about how they spent their time. However, central to their accounts was their acknowledgment and negotiation of the financial constraints they faced. Given the value placed on new experiences, idealized conceptions of the third age typically include the desire and ability to engage in various forms of travel (Jang & Cai, 2002) – an expectation that my participants demonstrated their familiarity with. In the 1990s, companies, marketing agencies and researchers associated with the travel industry began focusing on elder populations as a key market demographic. Old adults, previously depicted as less mobile within institutional texts, became a focus of research and marketing, even as access to travel (much like other aspects of active and consumption-based ageing) continued to be mediated by mobility, health, education, income, marital status, and rural/urban residency (Dardis, Sobernonferrer & Patro, 1994; Hong, Kim & Lee, 1999; Zimmer, Brayley & Searle, 1995). Research in the journal

Tourism Recreation Research in the late 90s noted the following in relation to the baby boomers: "the present and future potential of older markets is not small by any measure. Many of these seniors will be capable, both financially and physically, of taking holiday trips" (Cleaver, Muller, Ruys and Wei, 1999, p. 5). Canada's *Inspired Senior Living* magazine claims that, "travel is at the top of the list for seniors and the aging baby boomer generation" (2016). Labelled the 'grey' or 'senior' tourist market, old adults are predicted to be the "fastest and largest potential market for the leisure and hospitality industries" (Hyde, 2015, p. 338; Jang, Bai, Hu & Wu, 2009; Le Serre, 2008; Prayag, 2012; Huang & Tsai, 2003). In fact, marketers and the media have re-framed their targeted marketing for the "55 plus" based on notions of enhanced activity, often targeting the 'young' old who are perceived to be more wealthy and youthful (Hyde, 2015; Metz & Underwood, 2005; Moschid, 2009).

Travel was a common dream or expectation articulated by many participants, yet in the same breath they would note that they likely would not be able to travel due to financial limitations. It was common for elders to speak about travel during the Seniors' Drop-In Program. This was sometimes precipitated by travel presentations as the entertainment for some of the lunches. As I have noted, each lunch was accompanied by a short aerobic exercise session and some form of entertainment. Three times during my period of volunteering various community members presented PowerPoint slideshows of their travels around the world. What I noted, however, was that these travel presentations were given by only elder community members, but not by elder residents of the House. I became aware of the implications of a wealth gap between the elders attending the lunches. Community members who lived in the neighbourhood typically seemed to have more disposable income. I started to notice that some elders routinely wore the

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same outfit, while others wore a different outfit and accessories at each lunch. Subtle cues also became evident through conversation. During one lunch, I was eating with a group of older women who were discussing whether it would be useful to have a speaker come in to discuss estate planning. Two women at the table in their early seventies explained that they had already taken care of their estate planning. One of these women noted that she had already secured a living will to ensure that her children would have access to her assets, in addition to being able to make legal and medical decisions on her behalf, before her passing. A third participant at the table, also in her seventies, stated that it was much too early to begin this type of planning. A fourth woman in her mid-seventies, who lived in the House residence but did not participate in an interview with me, stated disinterestedly, and somewhat dismissively, that she didn't think she would need something like that as there wasn't too much to take care of. This comment ended the group discussion. Although to some extent these discussions were about medical decisions, they also concerned wealth and perceptions of the complexity and size of one's estate. I became aware that the House residents, who were required by BC Housing to have an income under $38,000.00 and assets under $100,000.00, were often in social environments at the House where they interacted with other elders from the community who displayed signs of substantial wealth (though not necessarily in liquid form, as was the case for some elders who owned free-standing houses in the neighbourhood).

During conversations about travel over lunch, some of the elders shared their previous travel stories and others shared their future plans. During some of my interviews with House elders, participants acknowledged an expectation that their retirement years were a time for travel, and they simultaneously explained why they would not be travelling. Judy, for example,

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told me that her son would like to see her travel, but that she was not willing to do so since she could not afford the cost and did not want to place financial strain on her loved ones:

I'd like to do those things but never at the cost of my family or my friends, you know. My son would always say, "Do you want to go some place? Do you want to go?" I said, "You know what, when I think about going I don't think about places, I think about people." I don't have any interest in travelling and seeing the pyramids… [I'm] really just people oriented that I…it's really important to me.

Judy negotiated a tension during our interview. She acknowledged wanting to travel and identified how her son appeared to expect her to travel. She also noted that she could not pay for that herself and did not want to be a financial burden. In order to position herself as making active choices, she reoriented the focus from travel to people: "When I think about going I don't think about places, I think about people." Judy also turned her interest in other people into a descriptive character trait: she was "people-oriented".

Throughout our interview Judy described to me her financial situation and need for loans to pay off debt. She walked me through the barriers she faced in getting rid of her debts. To do so, she described a hypothetical situation where she asked for a travel loan from the Bank of Canada. In this imagined scenario, the bank asked for her age, income, and time at present and past addresses. Judy told me that not only would her loan be denied, but the bank staff would also be "still laughing" long after she provided her responses to their questions. Although presented in a lighthearted manner, the way Judy described the bank's imagined interpretation of her social location and resources spoke volumes. Judy was aware that members of her family,

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such as her son, held an image of what her golden years should have been like, yet she also was acutely aware of her inability to achieve this vision due to her limited financial resources and lack of access to institutions that could provide these resources. To navigate this situation, she redefined her own interests from places to people.

An interesting pattern I noted at the Seniors' Drop-in Program and during the interviews was the connection between travel and travel companions. On more than one occasion the Seniors' Drop-in travel presentations were given by straight elder couples who traveled together. Because the majority of my participants lived in House seniors' housing designed with single occupancy in mind, I ended up speaking with many elders who were single. Given that household income is often lower for individuals than couples, and given that women's income is likely to decline after divorce or widowhood (Statistics Canada, 2012), it is not surprising that almost all of the House units were allocated to single women (with the exception of two single men and one male-female couple). Many of the elders I interviewed, who lived alone and/or were not dating, commented that travel would be more feasible if they had a partner who could act as a travel companion and could help supplement some of the costs by sharing accommodations. During my interview with Jane I asked about her interest in a relationship and she responded by talking about wanting someone to travel with through affordable means of transportation and accommodation:

> I would love to have someone to travel with. And I've discovered housesitting
> and umm I do love travelling. Not necessarily romantic partner but just somebody
> who's compatible with travel. Going to new and interesting places and staying
> there for weeks and doing a good job housesitting or, I just don't have the

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financial world at all to just travel and take umm that's why I mentioned

housesitting unless I do things like camping.

Jane clarified that she was not particularly interested in a romantic partner, but would have

valued a travel companion. Her response cannot be understood without paying attention to its

financial undertones. Jane noted that she loved visiting unknown places that were "new" and

"interesting." She was intentional in attempting to meet this goal even when faced with financial

constraints. Jane was prepared to do housesitting, or if necessary, to pursue lower cost options,

such as camping.

Other participants noted that they were interested in travel, but that they strived to meet

their ambitions locally. Gladys mentioned throughout our interview that she had always wanted

to travel through Europe. She said,

It's not even a goal anymore. It's just a dream. Just something that—it was always

kind of in my mind that maybe someday I would do that but I'm not sure that—

that I will be doing that. I think that Vancouver is a wonderful place. Canada is a

wonderful place. There's so many great things to explore here even just going to

different parts of the city here….I like chair travelling. I go to a lot of travel

shows.

Gladys' response is noteworthy in that she reframed her interest in travel as a dream rather than a

tangible goal. Having been raised in a low income environment, and then working in a low

paying, feminized job for the duration of her adult life, Gladys did not feel it was financially

possible to travel on her own, despite her long term interest in doing so. She provided some

indication of the way she managed this discrepancy between her dreams and what was doable.

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She described reorienting her focus toward Vancouver by exploring different parts of the city. Gladys used the term "chair travelling," where she was able to stay in one spot but felt she had been exposed to new and interesting experiences through local events such as travel shows.

As low-income members of the boomer generation, many of my participants demonstrated an awareness of social expectations about what retirement and successful aging should look like. Some participants appeared to respond to these external and internal expectations by redefining retirement. Some responded to the expectations that family and friends held for their "golden years" by reimagining what was important to them. Others strategized ways to travel affordably, such as through road trips, house sitting, and camping. Some turned their attention locally, emphasizing the opportunities to explore new things, sometimes even while remaining in the same chair ("chair travelling"). Consistent about these accounts is that these elders felt some financial constraint in relation to their peers, to beliefs they held about this stage of life, or to the expectations of their social networks. In the next section of this chapter I build on Gladys' notion of "chair travelling" to look at how elders interpreted and experienced multicultural events at the House. I argue that, in navigating their financial constraints, many of my participants sought affordable access to new and interesting experiences through local events and interactions: the accessible exotic. In the next section I show how elders drew upon and position themselves in relation to local events and interactions they described as multicultural.

3.3 The accessible exotic: Doing multiculturalism in the third age

Perhaps just as intriguing as the quest for new, affordable experiences are the *types* of experiences these older adults described. The majority of the older adults I interviewed alluded to this time of their life as an opportunity for continued learning and growing. Many elders framed meeting new people that they perceived to be different from themselves as particularly interesting and rewarding. Several elders mentioned the value they placed on interacting with people from racial or ethnic backgrounds that they perceived to be different from themselves.

Earlier in this chapter I introduced Peter, who described learning and being mentally stimulated as crucial to his daily life. Peter had a circle of men that he met and debated with twice per week. He also had a part-time job at a local entertainment venue. When I asked Peter about his job, he did not emphasize the money he received from this employment, but instead described the "nourishment" he got from his interactions with his coworkers from "all over the world". Remarkable is how Peter emphasized his co-workers as "alive" and "growing"—two descriptions that stand in contrast to his fear of mental decline:

> **Katherine**: Do you have other social activities that you do?
>
> **Peter**: I work [in the entertainment industry], and that gives me a chance to get out. I've always got my social nourishments from work. And [my job] does that…. My friends are there, and they're young people, and they're alive and they're growing and they come from all over the world. There's one from Singapore, there're one from Taiwan, there's one from China, there's one from Mongolia, there's one-- you know, there's one from…. [trails off]

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Peter described the mental stimulation he enjoyed when discussing ideas and experiences with people that he perceived as foreign and interesting. He listed coworkers from a variety of places: Singapore, Taiwan, China, and Mongolia. Toward the end of the response he was not able to name any more geographical areas, but gestured his hand toward me to fill in when he had no more words, perhaps positioning me as another white-looking Canadian, to suggest that I knew what he attempted to refer to: people from places that are different from "us". In any case, it is significant that he placed such value on interacting with people who he perceived to be different from himself in relation to age and nationality.

There is overlap in Peter's response between intellectual engagement, cross-cultural interaction, and youthfulness. He relayed his excitement regarding these interactions on the basis that his coworkers were "alive and … growing" almost in direct contrast to his fear of aging in a way that was "old" (discussed earlier in this chapter). Peter's desire for lifelong intellectual development, in this case through interactions with young people who "come from all over the world," cannot be disconnected from his desire to continue cultivating his intellect for his remaining years. Throughout the interview, Peter continued to make connections between intellectual stimulation and interactions with others he perceived as different from himself:

What makes me want to spend time with somebody? There's an interaction there, there's a meeting of minds, there's a spark of interest, there's an intellectual equality, there's a…[trails off]. Many years ago, I did some tutoring at [the English Center]. And there was a middle-aged Japanese lady who was writing an essay. And that was a lot of fun, interacting with her, and I can discuss, you know,

the Japanese Art, its relation to Zen, and so forth. That was fun. That kind of

thing, that makes me want to spend time with a person.

My question regarding what Peter looked for in people to spend time with was initially designed

to elicit information about intimacy in elders' lives. Just as some elders responded to my

question about romantic relationships by speaking about their desire to travel around the world,

Peter answered by sharing an experience he had discussing Japanese Art and Zen with a

Japanese woman. These elders responded to my attempts to elicit information about intimacy and

sexuality, but they did so in ways I did not anticipate. They routinely talked about new,

stimulating experiences that they could share with others, locally or globally. Peter found a

"spark of interest" at an intellectual level by being able to discuss Japanese culture. At that point,

Peter's phrasing became specific when he stated, "I can discuss…. Japanese Art, its relation to

Zen, and so forth," thereby implicitly positioning himself as knowledgeable about the subject,

and showing his appreciation for the chance to share his expertise with someone whom he

perceived to be interesting given their ethnic background.

House elders of white, Western European descent consistently framed cross-cultural

interactions as fulfilling. If we return to Erica, who was raised in Canada and had German

ancestry, we can see that she connected her newfound freedom to personal growth through

interactions with diverse others:

Well now, I'm immersing myself in people's lives that are different than mine. It

wouldn't be the same as if I had a job, right? And I'm living my spiritual

principles instead of learning more spiritual principles so of course, I'm learning

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still. It's more than I'm living it and I'm putting myself in society instead of

keeping myself away from society.

When I asked her what it meant to be a spiritual person, she said, "To realize that this

person is not what it [*sic*] seems it is. This world is a place of experience." Erica

connected her ability to learn and apply spiritual principles to her ability to interact with

people who were unlike her in some way in order to realize that "this person is not what it

[*sic*] seems." Erica felt that her current life conditions, such as not having a job, were

conducive to this type of exploration and personal development. Her reference to the

world being "a place of experience" emphasized the value she placed on interactions with

others.

Common to these accounts is the desire for lifelong learning, growth, and stimulation,

which these elders pursued through social interaction, sometimes with individuals they perceived

to be different from themselves. These accounts mapped closely onto professional and academic

descriptions of the third age as "a significant period of good health, activity, mobility, and

appetite for new and life-enriching experiences" (Marshall, 2011, p. 393-94, emphasis added).

For these older adults, "life-enriching experiences" (p. 393-94) came through particular types of

informal lifelong learning rooted in social interaction. Conventional conceptions of the purpose

of "learning" presented a unique challenge and opportunity, given that learning in older

adulthood usually takes place in ways that are distinct from those acknowledged within the

organizational structure of the public and post-secondary school system (Laslett, 1989).

Education in the first age (youth to early twenties) is typically associated with socialization and

primary skill development while education in the second age (early twenties to forties) is often connected to vocational interests and training (Williamson, 1997, p. 178).

In contrast, education in the third age is seen to be oriented around narratives of self-realization through quests for meaning. Within the context of an information society, lifelong learning is frequently connected to fears of being perceived as irrelevant, outdated, or lacking in utility (Moody, 1986, p.131)—anxieties that older adults, like Peter, harbour in their quest to remain young (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002, 2007). Third-agers, however, are redefining the potentialities of lifelong learning beyond solely a sense of personal fulfillment and continued social relevance (Laslett, 1989; Williamson, 1997). An active conception of aging includes the notion of making a social contribution, although disconnected from more narrow conceptions of "productivity" rooted in the first and second ages. Williamson (1997) suggests that established life course approaches to lifelong learning have been constructed on the basis of and in relation to ageist conceptions of productivity that equate the most useful learning with age-sequential vocational training. These assumptions "reinforce prevailing myths about retirement and ageing as processes of withdrawal and decline" (Williamson, 1997, p.175). Williamson encourages researchers to acknowledge lifelong learning not just as the search for meaning and relevance, but also to allow for third age education to be connected to the potential for productive societal contributions more broadly defined. Ideals about productivity are typically connected to the belief that both older and younger generations are responsible for enhancing the future for generations to come (Williamson, 1997). This imperative for fulfilling, socially-productive learning experiences in the third age takes on an interesting form when situated within the House

community-building model. Some older adults connected their lifelong learning to their participation in multicultural community events at the House.

Some of the elders at the House that I spoke with depicted multicultural programming and events as a form of informal education rooted in lifelong personal development. Participants who positioned themselves as having white, Caucasian, or Western European heritage and who were born in Canada or Western Europe, were the only ones who took up this way of thinking and speaking. Interestingly, although white elder men and women that I spoke with presented interactions with others perceived as "different" as an opportunity for stimulation and growth, it was primarily women who pursued and formalized these opportunities through the Seniors' Drop-In Program. This multicultural activity is gendered in that it was only women who actively organized multicultural activities in this institutional program m setting specifically labelled for "seniors." Men in the third age have been shown to reject structured activities in contexts such as "seniors" centers, which they associated with oldness, illness and femininity, instead pursuing activities perceived as more independent and youthful (Davidson, Daly & Arber, 2003; Russell, 2007). These designated "old" spaces tended to be equated with the dependence and decline of the fourth age. However, many elder women I spoke with at the House also developed third age narratives of fulfilling, productive activity within this structured "seniors" program context. Some elements of this program are reminiscent of the domestic work that scholars such as Gilleard and Higgs (2000) imagine to be outside of, and even constraining access to, the third age. In addition to the Drop-In lunch activities through which volunteers locate recipes, prepare and cook food, serve food to others, and take part in shared meals, the House has a lot of domestic imagery. Some rooms – such as the "living room," the "crash pad" and the "kitchen"

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are labelled in such a way that they convey images of "home". Furthermore, many of the elder

volunteers actually live at the House, thus blurring the line between the public and the private

that has been so essential to the construction of third age narratives around retirement. That old

women take up third age narratives in a program context more often associated with the fourth

age is an indication of their gendered positioning within the third age. Old men at the House

positioned themselves differently in relation to the program, as I will discuss in chapter five.

The mostly white elder women who planned and participated in the multicultural

programming framed it as a personally positive and socially beneficial source of entertainment—

an enjoyable way to spend time while breaking down stereotypes. In my interview with Katelyn,

for example, an elder who was raised in the neighbourhood and who identified as white, she

explained that she was one of the volunteers who initially helped develop House multicultural

events for older adults at the Seniors' Drop-In. Katelyn saw multiculturalism as something she

liked to "do" at events. She understood these events as an opportunity for learning across cultural

groups where stereotypes may abound. She connected negative judgments between cultural

groups to her upbringing, when she was exposed to beliefs and comments that she now identified

as racist. Interestingly, Katelyn saw her multicultural activities at the House as an extension of

the learning experiences she had as a mature college student:

> I was brought up—I didn't have, I was told that they were not nice people or
>
> whatever. For example, a certain culture was dirty because of the fact that they
>
> smelled and they eat hot food. Well [now I know] it comes out of their pores. This
>
> is what I learned in sociology, actually psychology. I loved it. Anyhow, different
>
> things about people and so on, there are different ways of life and their culture.

Like, why does a woman in, in um Afghanistan, why does she wear a [gestures to

head] a hat or whatever? And why do men have little things on their head, or why

do they wear things? Different things about people and what they do and so forth.

A lot of people take a negative view and they don't understand in that culture. I

would like to see this [learning] in this group [at the House].

Katelyn operationalized multiculturalism as a set of distinctive behaviors or actions, as

something to be *done* that is rooted in personal fulfillment through learning, and that also has a

broader social impact on attitudes and daily practices. The narrative of lifelong learning through

participation in multicultural activities was presented as personally stimulating but also a

contribution to society by challenging harmful beliefs. Like many of my participants, Katelyn's

position was informed by her whiteness. She positioned her own race as neutral, and sought to

learn about the symbols and traditions of others who were "different," asking, "Why do they

wear things?"

Erica, an older adult woman with German heritage, also described multiculturalism as an

action, based largely on a one-directional show and tell model:

Well…I see there's Filipinos, Indians, there's Southeast Asians, Chinese people.

They come for programs and stuff and I think it's an acceptance of their culture

and that they can show us their culture. Like the Chinese people had something

for Chinese New Year….They had a lot of Chinese stuff going on in displays. It

was beautiful. Artwork and stuff.

Much like Katelyn, Erica rooted the active components of multiculturalism in the act of learning

through social interaction based on cultural display and discussion. Noticeable in these

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productions of experience is that the speaker (the old adult) situated herself as the primary

learner or intellectual consumer in the interaction. Racial or ethnic groups considered as

"foreign" to Canada were identified as relevant to learn about by my predominantly white elder

Western European women participants (who simultaneously positioned Western European

cultural norms as the neutral default). The role of the learner/observer/consumer relied on a

racialized "us" and "them" binary. These multicultural activities were framed as socially

beneficial but one-directional in that they broke down the *learners'* racial stereotypes and spread

a culture of "acceptance." The way these participants presented this narrative also served to

make a claim about who they *were* as older adults; as aging individuals learning and growing in

productive ways. Through their choice of activities, these elders distinguished themselves as

informed, relevant, and in a state of growth, rather than decline. In 'doing' multiculturalism, they

are doing a particular version of aging within the third age that was geographically and

economically accessible to them. Given that many of these elder women did not travel abroad,

they took up "chair travelling" through local, affordable events and interactions as the accessible

exotic.

3.4   Positioning white women elders

The ways elders interpreted and took up the multicultural activities at the Seniors' Drop-In

Program were informed by their intersecting social locations. This finding reaffirms the

connections between daily experiences and ways of knowing commonly theorized by researchers

working in the Marxist tradition, such as standpoint scholars (Harding, 2009, p. 194; Hartsock,

1983, Hill Collins, 1986; Smith, 1987, 1974). While elders of colour articulated critiques of the

celebratory multicultural discourse informing the program planning and theme selection, these critiques were not as visible to white elders.

In my interview with Susan, one of the few elders of colour who regularly participated in the Seniors' Drop-in (but not as a volunteer), she explained that the she felt the events were based on "ask[ing] people of colour to sing and dance." Susan perceived that the multicultural-themed lunches were based on a Eurocentric conception of history perpetuated through the choice of theme and entertainment. She noted that the entertainment was presented in an ahistorical, apolitical way that focused on celebrating cultural symbols rather than learning about the histories of actual people within that culture. In reference to the white elders who selected the multicultural themes, she noted, "All you want is for them to entertain you….[but] you have to know their history….They don't want to know it because it hurts." Through the word "hurt," Susan alluded to the discomfort she noticed when people learn about histories of oppression.

Susan had experienced elders at the House creating and maintaining boundaries between what was entertainment and what was uncomfortable. During one seniors' outing to Steveston, Susan was asked by the coordinator at the time to share her family history. Since her family was Japanese-Canadian and was interned in B.C. during WWII, Susan shared some of this history with the group during the trip. Afterward, she received some negative feedback from other elders:

I guess some people felt bad or guilty or whatever. That wasn't my intention….
So somebody…said, "Hey [Susan]! Everyone said the Steveston trip was really wonderful, having coffee and everything, but you ruined the whole trip."

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Susan reported that while some of the elders expected a fun, entertaining outing, she was prepared to discuss often uncomfortable issues about historical events and power relationships that shaped her family and upbringing. Susan was born in Greenwood, BC, the small town where her family was forcibly relocated to from Steveston in 1942, along with 12,000 other Japanese-Canadians. Susan shifted the focus of the seniors' outing from celebration to concrete historical events that took place in Vancouver's Lower Mainland, and therefore "ruined" the event for "everyone". Susan perceived that her elder white peers were primarily interested in activities that were fun and celebratory, but that did not necessarily involve learning about personal experiences and power relations embedded in systemic inequality, or in Susan's term, address anything "political."

Susan's account of her experience lingered in my mind as I sat in on the next Seniors' Advisory Group (SAG) meeting during which the program coordinator proceeded to follow up on a discussion from a previous interaction that I was not part of. She noted that some Drop-In Program participants had asked her about having a multicultural lunch theme based on a past time period. There was no discussion specifying what it meant or could have meant to take up multiculturalism based on a point in time rather than, or in combination with, a particular culture. One older woman suggested the 1950s and the committee seemed excited about this idea. I became more aware of the implicitly neutral status attached to whiteness through the planning of that 1950s themed meal. In the discussion, there was no attempt to specify how the 1950s was to be interpreted (i.e., the 1950s *where?* The 1950s *for whom?*). Although no nation, culture, geographical area, or particular group of people was identified in relation to this decade, the elder women at the planning meeting decided to have burgers and hotdogs (the same meal they

chose to serve on Canada Day) and suggested that everyone could wear hair scrunchies and big

skirts. Without any questions or further discussion, the 1950s theme was modeled on the 1950s

in a white Canadian or American suburb, an interpretation of the '50s reinforced by the notes the

Drop-in coordinator made during the meeting, which she then took to the kitchen staff and

circulated via email to the SAG:

> a. [Sandy] suggested wearing the skirts and ponytails that were usual during the
>
> 50s and have gum balls as part of the decoration in the tables.
>
> b. On the other side, the group discussed some of the next multicultural
>
> celebrations at the drop-in. Egypt, Mexico, Phillipines, [sic] and India were some
>
> of the countries mentioned as well as Sweden and Peru.

These notes are fascinating for the notable contrast they drew between items "a" and "b." Again,

the 1950s location and culture were not specified, but gumballs, skirts, and ponytails were

written down as recommended by one of the elders because they were perceived to be "usual

during the 50s"[19]. These visual cues are reminiscent of the Pink Ladies in the popular movie

Grease (1978) set in a 1950s high school in the United States. Although never discussed, the

default assumptions underlying the planning of this event were apparently so normative they did

not need to be named, in contrast to item "b" which consisted of a variety of non-Western

countries that were not bound by any time period. Interestingly, the coordinator gestured toward

the significant gap between the 1950s event and the other multicultural celebrations, using the

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[19] For counter narratives of the 1940s and 1950s based on butch/femme queer culture, see Nestle, 1987, 1992; Kennedy & Davis, 2014; Ross, 1993; and Chenier, 2004.

term "on the other side" as the transitional language between points "a" and "b," even though these points were discussed in the same conversation by the same people sitting in the same place during the meeting.

The 1950s event seemed to trigger a sense of nostalgia for many of the SAG planners (Coontz, 1992; Maly, Dalmage & Michaels, 2013; Negra, 2002). The event was described in the following way in the promotional flyer: "Remember when… Celebrating the 50's," potentially alluding to the shared conception of Canadian history of the presumably homogenous elders attending the event. At the event, the program coordinator passed out a poem called *Dinner in the Fifties* that was provided to her by one of the participants and that she approved as a staff member and photocopied:

> DINNER IN THE FIFTIES
> Pasta had not been invented. It was macaroni or spaghetti.
> Curry was a surname.
> A take-away was a mathematical problem.
> Pizza? Sounds like a leaning tower somewhere.
> Bananas and oranges only appeared at Christmas time.
> All chips were plain.
> Rice was a milk pudding, and never, ever part of our dinner.
> A Big Mac was what we wore when it was raining.
> Brown bread was something only poor people ate.
> Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking.
> Tea was made in a teapot using tea leaves and never green.
> Cubed sugar was regarded as posh.
> Chickens didn't have fingers in those days.
> None of us had ever heard of yogurt.
> Healthy food consisted of anything edible.
> Cooking outside was called camping.
> Seaweed was not a recognized food.
> 'Kebab' was not even a word, never mind a food.
> Sugar enjoyed a good press in those days, and was regarded as being white gold.

Prunes were medicinal.
Surprisingly muesli was readily available. It was called cattle feed.
Pineapples came in chunks with a tin; we had only seen a picture of a real one.
Water came out of the tap. If someone had suggested bottling it and charging more than gasoline for it they would have become a laughing stock.
The one thing that we never ever had on/at our table in the fifties
    … was elbows, hats, and cell phones!

This poem was written in a way that assumes an experience of the 1950s from an unstated but obviously normative perspective associated with a particular place and point of view (the "our" and "we"). Part of the joke is that insiders would easily recognize the references. The lived experience of Susan and her family, and of the 12,000 Japanese-Canadians who were forcibly moved out of Steveston just three years before 1950, is not knowable or thinkable in this version of history. The author presents food such as seaweed and kebabs as though they did not exist as food for anyone, anywhere until they were "discovered" and written into Eurocentric history. Pasta, curry, pizza, rice, bananas, oranges, sugar, and pineapple all denote imported goods within an expanding global market, thus invoking a racialized colonial history that is very much a structuring principle of 1950s North American society, as well as the now dismantled British Empire. The implicit point of view is also classed: not poor enough to eat brown bread but not necessarily wealthy enough to be "posh."[20] When I consider the choice of poem in relation to the

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[20] When I do an internet search for this "Dinner in the Fifties" poem, I find there is a very similar version titled "Eating in the UK in the Fifties" posted by an author named Yvonne Rossiter (Rossiter, 2013). Not surprisingly, all of these references align with a British imperial writing and reading of Canadian history. The website that houses the poem is called, "Free Time: Our Stories of Leisure Then and Now". The project is funded by Heritage Lottery Fund in the UK.

name of the event, "Remember when…Celebrating the 50's," a dominant version of the history of Canada becomes evident.

This 1950s event was inspired by a belief about who has historically been "in" and "of" Canada, and who is "coming" to Canada. White, middle-class people of Western European descent are assumed to have been "here" in the 1950s, and whose traditions—ways of being, cooking, eating, and knowing—are understood to be the building blocks of Canadian culture (Iacovetta, Korinek, & Epp, 2012; Iacovetta, 2006). In sharing their own version of their heritage, these white elders drew upon an idealized and aspirational picture of white North American middle classes retrospectively produced by mass media. Although there were many other ethnic and cultural groups cooking and eating in 1950s Canada in different ways, their presence was erased in the way this event was organized. Indigenous people did not exist, and newcomers were yet to "come" with "new' traditions. The ability to cultivate and occupy this perspective is shaped by the normativity and privileges of whiteness with roots in colonialism. While these white elders may have faced systemic gendered and classed inequalities, their low-income in retirement was not due to their race. That multiculturalism was seen by these elders as a fun, productive, anti-aging activity cannot be understood without considering their whiteness.

What counts as productive activity is itself racialized (and classed and gendered). White elders at the House only had to think about race when they chose to (McIntosh, 2010). While white elders such as Erica decided to think about race and racism by enrolling in adult education courses or by organizing multicultural activities, racial minority elders such as Susan encountered the impacts of racism on a daily basis. Susan explained that for her, meaningful multicultural activity consisted of anti-racist workshops where discomfort was essential and

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productive for the purpose of social justice. The multicultural activities that white elders take up were celebratory rather than anti-racist, meaning that they focused on symbolic markers of homogenized cultures, often seemingly frozen in time, rather than exploring the organization of systemic racism (and potentially also the way lifetime racial inequalities cumulate in old age) (Rezai-Rashti, 1995; Rezai-Rashti & McCarthy, 2008). Their celebratory approach is not particularly surprising since they were in their early adulthood when Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced the federal policy of multiculturalism, focusing in particular on the preservation and legitimacy of ethnic traditions, festivals and languages.

It became evident through the racialized ways white elders and elders of colour interpreted the multicultural lunches that definitions of productive activity were not neutral, and in fact, could be inadvertently ethnocentric (Ranzijn, 2010). What constitutes a productive social contribution to one person can be perceived as oppressive to another person. At the beginning of the dissertation I introduced Joan, a white women elder from the UK who used the origami cranes from the Japanese-themed Drop-In as part of her dinner table centrepiece. Susan interpreted the Japanese-themed Drop-In in an entirely different way in light of her family's internment history. For Susan, this event could have been an opportunity to discuss this contextualized history in light of its relevance to everyone involved, herself included. However, the Japanese lunch featured a Japanese circus arts performance, literally turning the event into a circus that Susan could not bring herself to attend.

3.5   Conclusion

One of my goals in this chapter is to show how generation location intersects with class, gender and race. I do this by looking at the way the activities of elders at the House are hooked into textually-mediated third age discourses. During our interviews, these elders constructed themselves as aging in a way that was never "old." They did so by situating themselves as active, capable of overcoming constraints, and constantly in the pursuit of opportunities for stimulation, growth and social contribution. One theoretical and empirical contribution of this chapter is to consider how these elders produced idealized conceptions of aging while negotiating fixed incomes. Some of the social science literature presents the third age as a life phase most accessible to those with substantial financial means. Sociologists Weiss and Bass (2002, p.3), for example, describe the third age by noting that "many in these retirement years have available to them pensions and savings adequate to maintain middle income styles of life….[with the] freedom and resources [to] permit them to enter into any of a very wide range of activities. To an extent remarkable outside the realm of the very rich, they fashion lives to suit themselves." This account imagines elders who have amassed enough wealth to live as if they have a middle class income. What I find is that elder residents at the House produced narratives of "freedom" but with a restricted set of "resources." These elders had minimal savings and assets, but instead had access to affordable housing and federal and provincial social support. They "fashion[ed] lives to suit themselves" but not through cruise ship vacations or trips to warmer climates. Instead, they (re)defined who they were, and what mattered to them, through their local interactions and events. One notable way they produced the flexibility and stimulation of the third age without middle class financial means was through "chair travelling": seeking to learn about "new" and

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"unfamiliar" people and their symbols and traditions through the pursuit of local events and accessible activities.

"Chair travelling," however, was gendered and racialized. Although both men and women elders spoke about their interest in interacting with people of different races and ethnicities, it was almost exclusively the women elders who formalized this activity through the Seniors' Drop-In. The women elders at the House are uniquely positioned to be able to embrace "seniors" programming -- the same programming that men elders often associate with the fourth age -- in ways that align with agentic third age narratives. Furthermore, experiences of white privilege enabled these elders to take up multicultural activities in celebratory rather than anti-racists ways, emphasizing cultural symbols over the racialized inequalities that elders of colour at the House faced regularly. These findings demonstrate that discourses of productivity and the third age are experienced and interpreted differently based on social location, and indicate that the voices of diverse elders should be more closely and carefully considered in third age scholarship. These findings also raise questions about the role of House staff in engaging with elders' experiences and needs in developing and implementing programs such as the multicultural lunches.

In the next chapter I turn to the standpoint of House staff to consider how they understood the Seniors' Drop-in Lunch and worked with elder volunteers in a senior-driven programming model.

Chapter 4: Senior-driven programming and the managerial efficiency discourse

Participant-driven programming is a key Neighbourhood House approach. Fundamentally intertwined with the NH place-based mandate, the participant-driven model positions community members and volunteers as knowledgeable individuals with valuable assets to offer. The goal is to develop and deliver programs that are rooted in local community needs articulated by and made accessible to people who live in the area (Sandercock 2009). This emphasis on inclusivity and volunteer contributions is written unto House promotional and policy documents and articulated on the Association of Neigbourhood Houses of BC (ANHBC) website:

> [A Neighbourhood House is] a welcoming place where everyone, all ages,
>
> nationalities and abilities can attend, participate, belong, lead and learn through
>
> programs, services and community building. (ANHBC, 2010)

The House reproduced this text as a quote in their Strategic Plan document (The House, 2016). It is notable in its emphasis on the inclusion of people of all ages, as well as the range of contributions people could expect to make. House staff working with seniors described senior-driven programming by emphasizing the knowledge, skills and social connections that old adults both brought to programming and could further obtain through taking on leadership positions within program planning and implementation. They emphasized that this program model had the potential to promote the development of individuals and the community. They often contrasted the NH approach to that of a community-center which they perceive to be more top-down and

service-oriented. Staff member Paris, while noting that there are exceptions across centres and programs, explained that the focus and goals of NHs are often different from community centres:

> I think their goals are slightly different. They are very focused on health and wellbeing, which is part of … what we do, but it's more about, in the community centres offering services and fitness programs, and not as much focus on the individual and what they're bringing…. That's our main focus, whereas in the community centre I think their main focus is just providing services that people can avail of.

Central to Paris' account is the distinction between providing services and focusing on what unique individuals have to offer as program contributors and leaders.

This difference was articulated in various ways by many staff members. Merie, who felt she was "learning from seniors," emphasized that the learning going on through program development was two-way in that she actively listened to and attempted to center elders' voices. Other staff members saw themselves creating avenues for old adults to feel agentic. Clarissa explained, "they want to feel empowered and they, they are, a lot of them. You want to give them opportunities for them to be empowered". Staff responses often spoke directly to their desire to challenge ageist stereotypes. When I asked Jessica what made her want to work with old adults, she said, "It's a nice thing to feel like you're helping to empower someone who might be considered, you know, being a senior or older aged, just to help them keep their autonomy." Many of these accounts connected elders' involvement with House programs to their ability to age successfully in the face of stereotypes regarding dependency and decline. Joanne, who had experience working in a variety of seniors' support contexts, believed that a "community based"

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approach rooted in empowerment could create the context for elders to "take care of their own wellness." She clarified that, "people who are active, and I don't just mean physically active, socially active and spiritually… age much better." One of Joanne's goals was to "give them that self-esteem and you know "you still have something to offer" and "this is what you can do if you feel like you need to get stronger or healthier."

The senior-driven programming approach offers an interesting infusion of third age ideals in a context not necessarily always associated with the third age. While programs labelled specifically for 'seniors' in an institutional context may often be seen as more suitable for the 'old' old, at the House they are redefined as appropriate for the 'young' old given that elders are expected to exercise creativity and self-expression through their shaping of the programs. Much like elder women at the House explored multicultural activities as a way of engaging in youthful, productive activity, the staff also framed House seniors' programming in a way that aligned with productive aging. The notion of productive aging was developed within gerontology literature partially as a way to reimagine elders not as a drain on state resources, or "net resource sink" (Hinterlong, 2008, p.112), but as individuals who have the skills and interest to make useful social and economic contributions and the capacity for self-management (Estes, 2001; Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong & Sherraden, 2001). This approach positons old adults as "a growing yet largely ignored resource" (Austin, Des Camp, Flux, McClelland & Sieppert, 2005, p. 401).

House staff demonstrated a commitment to developing programs rooted in the capacities and needs of elders in the catchment area, yet it is also crucial to consider the ways participant-driven programming can be informed by, and perhaps complicit in extending, market-driven ideologies informing productive aging. Within contexts of neoliberal governance, exemplified by

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the New Public Management, notions of productive aging can be co-opted by population management agendas intended to reduce government spending while maximizing quantifiable, often short-term, deliverables (Griffith & Smith, 2014). Feminist political economists of ageing have long identified the connections between successful and productive aging models and broader initiatives to reduce health care costs, enlist volunteer labour, and individualize the mediation of risks structured by systemic inequality (Estes, 2001).

It is within this context that I consider how staff were both constrained and enabled in their work with seniors at the House. I argue that their implementation of seniors' programming is constrained by several processes, at both the micro level of everyday interaction as well as the macro level of institutional funding structures. Although staff employed the discourse of senior-driven programming, they were not always able to create opportunities for everyone to contribute and to be meaningfully heard in this process. My fieldnotes record several instances where individuals, whether elder volunteers or elder participants, were cut off, silenced, or dismissed as they attempted to contribute to or provide feedback on the Seniors' Drop-In Program. These kinds of interactions occurred regularly at the Drop-in, both among participants and between staff and volunteers. While the old women I spoke with overwhelmingly affirmed the importance of the senior-led programming model, some elder women of colour also raised concerns about how this process worked.

Despite an institutional commitment to inclusivity, some elders did not feel that they or their ideas were welcomed in House spaces. The default assumption that a program is senior-driven functioned to silence power dynamics regarding how the space was organized and how program-planning interactions were shaped by social inequalities. Staff sought ways to save time

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and money in the work that they did, a type of work knowledge informed by what I will call the "managerial efficiency discourse." This orientation to work means that, despite staff members' desire to make sure all elders' ideas and needs were welcomed in the program planning process, their limited time and attention was more often focused on issues of efficiency rather than inclusion. Within an institutional context where program funding was insufficient and impermanent, and where many positions were part-time or grant-based, staff struggled to manage the competing demands they faced while allotting sufficient time for meaningful engagement with elder volunteers and their ideas.

I encountered some challenging methodological questions in analyzing my data and writing up the findings for this chapter. A minority of participants, both elders and staff, who identified as people of colour, held views about the implementation of the Seniors' Drop-In Program at the House that differed significantly from the views of my other participants (most of whom identified as white). They took up and interpreted the senior-driven discourse in distinct ways. Although these views were only presented to me by a small number of participants, I retained them as a central part of my analysis of the data for this chapter. The small number of participants who identified as racial minorities means that I have less data to work with but does not, in itself, discount the validity or weight of these accounts. In fact, that women of colour had different ways of knowing the Drop-In program is evidence of their experience of disjuncture, meaning that their knowing was subordinated by organizational practices (Smith, 1990, p. 11). It is at this point of disjuncture that it is possible to "identify and challenge the prevailing problems in otherwise unquestioned, taken-for granted, prevailing ways of knowing and acting" (Campbell, 2003, p 17-18). Furthermore, the predominance of white, heterosexual, European-

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descendent elders and staff at the House offers significant information about the environment

and was a factor that shaped the daily activities that people engaged in at the House. Some of the

racial minorities I spoke with felt that they were the only ones raising certain issues at the House,

and that other people were not called upon to acknowledge or encounter these issues due to their

social location and normative status in House spaces. By featuring these minority statements in

my research, although they do not represent the majority of participant accounts, I aim to inquire

into the institutional conditions that led these particular participants to feel silenced, and into the

relations of ruling that appeared to govern the House.

My decision to include these minority voices is informed by my reading of scholars who

argue that the standpoint of people's daily experiences and their positioning within intersecting

systems of power and oppression shape the type of thinking and seeing they will have access to,

and inform how they draw upon discourses within and through particular places (Hartsock, 1983,

Hill Collins, 1986; Smith, 1987, 1974). The different accounts of these participants who

identified themselves as racial minorities therefore suggest a crucial way that social relations at

the House were coordinated. As Smith (2005, p. 158) argues, work knowledge is embedded in

sequences of action with other people through the coordination of work and texts:

> The ontology of institutional ethnography proposes that the differences in
>
> perspective and experience of participants be recognized and taken advantage of
>
> in mapping processes or organization. Indeed, it is indispensable. The experiences
>
> of one informant may include references to other positions or people involved in
>
> the same institutional process… It is useful to imagine these as doors that can be
>
> opened by interviewing someone on the other side whose perspective and

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experience complements (and may correct) the work and talk of the first

informant. (Smith, 2005, p. 158).

In other words, different accounts are an avenue to exploring how an informant's work is

coordinated with the work of others within institutional processes. I, therefore, take up accounts

in relation to one another in an attempt to understand how a given situation is put together.

4.1   "[It's] not for me to put it on, but to support it being done"

It is well documented that people of varying statuses tend to take up more or less space in

conversation and are often perceived and responded to differently by others (for example, see

Hochschild, 1979). These inequalities in interaction take on specific implications in the House

context where many programs, such as the Seniors' Drop-in Program, were intended to be

senior-driven insofar as elder volunteers were called upon to provide input and leadership. On

one of the House walls on the main floor was a passage by Margaret Wheatley (2002, p. 3), an

organizational consultant and writer, that read, "Human conversation is the most ancient and

easiest way to cultivate the conditions for change, personal change, community and

organizational change, planetary change. If we can sit together and talk about what's important

to us, we begin to come alive." This passage hung on the wall as a symbol, a constant visual

reminder of one of the House's ideals: listening and developing programs based on and rooted in

collaborative dialogue. Exchanging ideas through interaction was built deeply into their

community-building model. In many ways this approach has anti-ageist implications in that it

positions volunteers of all ages as contributors to conversations about programming needs and

interests.
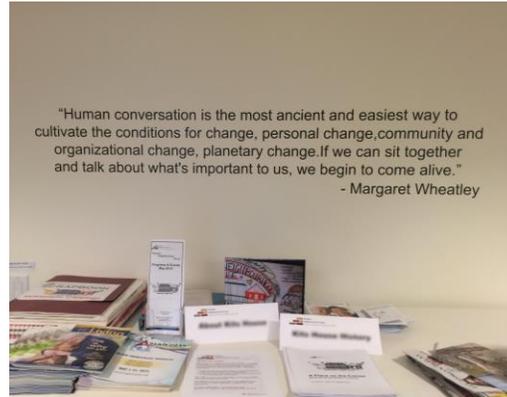
Figure 2. Image of a quote on the House wall with a desk with brochures underneath. Photo taken by the author at the House during fieldwork, April 28, 2015. Quote reprinted from *Turning to one another: Simple conversations to restore hope to the future*, by Margaret Wheatley. Copyright 2002 by Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

The quote and the packed desk visible below it also symbolized a tension within how senior-driven programming was done at the House: the ideal versus the daily work required to bring that ideal into being. Unlike the quote, which was the sole focus on an otherwise empty wall, the desk had many texts on and around it: program flyers, program surveys, and documents describing House history and goals. While Margaret Wheatley's words were prominent for all to see, the documents underneath were not necessarily as celebrated or visible in the everyday operations of the House. The symbolic ideal of a participant-driven environment was both suppressed and spoken within the messiness of everyday activities and coordinating texts within and beyond the House. I started to wonder how certain talk, and certain goals for change, were documented in these texts. How were ideas for a program taken up and written into the monthly House

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programming pamphlet? If everyone spoke, would everyone's ideas be heard and integrated into these official texts, and vice-versa? How were these texts put together? Who put them together?

I did not have to wait long for an opportunity to learn. My interest in elders was well known to the staff by this point in my fieldwork. Emma, the Seniors' Drop-in' Program coordinator (the third coordinator in six months), approached me about being involved with a "Seniors Profiles" project for National Seniors Day. She asked me to write an official text for the House that would be printed for and circulated during National Seniors Day when community members were invited to come to the house to learn about and celebrate seniors' activities and the senior participants and volunteers. I quickly learned that House staff had particular ideas about what kinds of information I should have elicited from seniors and what I should have included in the write up. I was asked to locate and interview elder volunteers and program participants who were active at the House. My task was to turn each interview into a one-page summary that would be compiled in a short book to be displayed at the House. I noticed a tension among the staff in what the short summaries were supposed to be about. Emma initially told me to ask participants about their lives and their achievements, what they were most proud of, what they wanted people to know about them, what their favourite quote was, their hobbies, family, friends, and so on. A few days later, however, Emma informed me that she had been to a planning meeting for the event where she learned more about the purpose of the book. The staff organizers wanted me to specifically highlight House programs in the written summaries. Instead of the initial questions, Emma then advised me to ask the elders about their involvement with the House, what their favourite thing about the House was, and how the House had had an impact on their lives. The first set of questions was about the elders and their lives, and the second set of

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questions, which replace the first, was about the House in relation to the elders. I realized that even though I would be sitting and talking with elders about their experiences, the agenda for the discussion and the points that I would take up and insert into the official account were coordinated by the needs of the institution, in this case, to highlight the impact of the institution itself on people's lives. "Talk[ing] about what's important to us" in this specific situation was an activity done with particular goals in mind that shape the conversation—what will be asked, what will be heard, and what will be written into an official text.

The program planning meetings I attended similarly had predetermined agendas and goals. The Senior's Advisory Group (SAG) was often mentioned by staff as an example of senior-driven programming. The SAG met monthly to plan the themes, meals and entertainment for the Seniors' Drop-In Program. The meetings usually consisted of ten to twelve elder volunteers and the Seniors' Drop-In program coordinator. In my observations of these meetings, perspectives that challenged the way the programming was organized were not often meaningfully heard and suggestions for new ideas were not always supported. I began to consider which types of ideas and feedback were more likely to be taken into account and acted on by other elders and staff.

I attended my first Seniors' Advisory Group (SAG) meeting in February, 2015. Eleven women, including myself, were seated around a circular table. Nine of the women appeared white and two appeared Asian. Most looked to be in their late sixties and seventies, with one woman slightly older. The youngest women at the table were the program coordinator, Emma, who was only a few years older than I and had an accent from the United Kingdom, and myself. The primary purpose of the SAG was to provide feedback and planning input for the weekly

Seniors' Drop-in Program. The day's meeting took place immediately after the first multicultural meal component of the drop-in celebrating Chinese New Year. The kitchen staff and volunteers prepared wonton soup and no formal entertainment occurred, but the lunch coordinator passed out handouts with images and descriptions of each animal sign from the Chinese Zodiac. During the lunch, I was seated at a table with five older white women who appeared to be in their seventies. After glancing briefly and with some excitement at the handouts, three of these women began to discuss their horoscope zodiac signs. One of the women asked me what my horoscope sign was. Just as I was getting ready to respond that I am a Pisces, but was born in the year of the tiger, I was asked by another volunteer to help clear dishes.

At the SAG meeting, we spent about ten minutes speaking about desirable themes and entertainment options for the upcoming multicultural meals. The discussion felt rushed as the coordinator, Emma, had several agenda items to get through before she had to leave to run her next program. Emma led the discussion by asking the SAG members about what kind of entertainment they would like for the upcoming multicultural meals. An interesting conservation ensued as the members and Emma brainstormed and listed off different ethnic groups they would like to have perform. The theme suggestions—based on ethnicities, nations, and continents—did not appear to be representative of the people in the House or the neighbourhood in particular. Ruth, one of the Asian women, seemed pensive right before she stated that she thought they needed "more multiculturalism" and that that day's Drop-in was not quite sufficient. Without pausing, Emma, referring to the Chinese New Year lunch, stated, "That's why we served the Wonton Soup." Ruth paused and clarified that that wasn't what she meant. Ruth then stated that the food "[wasn't] enough", without continuing the thought. Emma then asked about bringing an

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African group in to perform. The other Council members responded positively toward that idea. This enthusiasm was followed by some discussion about bringing in an Eastern European group for an event. Ruth's idea was not picked up by any other members of the SAG and was not revisited during that meeting or any subsequent meetings I attended.

During these moments in the conversation I became aware that I sat amongst an almost exclusively white council, who made choices regarding multicultural entertainment that our brainstorming session seemed to define as anything that was not white or Western European. I was also struck by the interaction between Ruth and Emma. Ruth's attempts to offer a critique or at least a suggestion for the multicultural meals were not supported, nor was she encouraged to develop and share her ideas with the group. Emma's suggestion to bring in an African group seemed to limit Ruth's ability to articulate her thought to the group and have it meaningfully understood and engaged with. While Ruth wanted to pause to discuss *how* the group thought about and implemented multiculturalism, Emma kept the discussion focused on making decisions within the existing event framework so she could begin planning the next Drop-in. The implications of this exchange for the planning of the multicultural lunch were significant given that Ruth was one of the only old women of colour participating in the council, and she was raising a potential point just an hour or so after the Chinese-themed lunch. Given that the SAG was intended to be senior-driven, with the purpose of centering elders' voices in planning the Seniors' Drop-In, it was notable that the ideas of some council members could be easily dislodged or redirected by the coordinator. In this case, a request to reflect on the previous event rather than start organizing the next event went overlooked.

I was also present for times when elders silenced each other in the planning process and staff did not intervene. For example, toward the end of one Seniors' Drop-in, an old white woman volunteer named Stacey expressed concern about how the particular session was going. She explained that she felt overwhelmed by some of the challenges we encountered in serving the food, such as dealing with people who demanded seconds before everyone was served. Stacey asked that all the volunteers in the room take a few minutes to debrief the lunch protocol and come up with strategies for next week. There were five people in the room at the time: one white woman staff member, three white women volunteers (including myself), and one white man volunteer. The women volunteers and staff member agreed to meet to chat in twenty minutes. However, the male volunteer stated that there was "nothing to talk about." He did not ask for more information and he did not explain his own position. I perceived his words and approach to be declarative and dismissive. None of us, including the staff member, said anything in response. When we met in twenty minutes he did not sit down with the group; instead he walked out of the room. The staff member did not do anything to acknowledge the mounting tension.

That was the first time that I had personally felt uncomfortable in an interaction at the House. Not only did I feel that Stacey deserved more respect and attention with regard to the issue she raised, I also felt that if I raised a concern in the future there might be no procedures in place to ensure I would be listened to and engaged with seriously by staff and the other key volunteers. Since the lunch volunteers worked as a team following procedures, some of which were tacitly assumed while others were laid out explicitly, it seemed particularly important for all of the volunteers to participate in this meeting. One goal of the Drop-in Program was to

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empower volunteers, who were encouraged by staff to take ownership of some of the planning and negotiating. Nevertheless, a subtle disagreement between volunteers was not followed by intervention from staff, raising questions about whose role it was to mediate dialogue. Despite the outward commitment to a senior-driven model among staff, power imbalances *among* participants and *between* participants and staff could have had a decisive influence on the planning process and event outcomes.

Another incident took place on the same day that highlights the ability of some of the House staff to respond to not just the social, but also the physical safety of people in the House. During this particular Drop-in Program with complex food components that took extra time to prepare, a male participant (who had paid the four dollar lunch fee) became visibly irate that the food was not ready yet. He began to chastise Candace, one of the old women volunteers. I had not witnessed this type of explicitly confrontational behaviour at the lunch before. The man approached Candace and stood very close to her. He was at least a foot taller and probably 100 pounds heavier. I was fearful that if the situation escalated, the House might want me to respond and I also did not trust that a staff member would respond. I could not see any staff in the lunch room while this occurred. The situation did not end up escalating and no intervention was needed. However, I raised this issue during the "debrief session" that I mentioned above. I asked what we should do if we felt unsafe in a particular situation. Elizabeth, the staff member overseeing the session, said she didn't know the protocol but she would find out.

In this case, the lack of training regarding specific safety procedures was likely related to Elizabeth being relatively new in her position. About half of the staff members that I volunteered with and/or interviewed had been at the House for less than six months. The transitional status of

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some of the House positions appeared to be a feature of this feminized, low-pay, sometimes part-time or project-based, community-oriented service work (Baines, 2004, 2009; Ilcan, Oliver, & O'Conner, 2007, p. 76). As a result, some of the staff who spent large portions of their time interacting directly with community members and volunteers (as opposed to staff who fulfill managerial roles involving more behind the scenes work) appeared likely to leave to seek other employment and might not have stayed in their role long enough to become highly trained and alert to some of the more subtle nuances emerging from their daily interactions.

These incidents and the structural conditions they shed light on raise larger questions about the daily realities of senior-driven programming. House staff articulated a commitment developing programs in consultation with elders. Less attention was paid in ensuring that equitable interactions ensued when people were working together. In these instances, because everyone was officially welcome to attend and volunteer at an event, it was assumed that they would all be able to navigate, participate in, and be heard equally at these events. Lost in the senior-led approach was how certain people were located at various axes in broader structural conditions of power and oppression, and how their interactions with others were informed by these power imbalances. My observations reflect the experiences shared by some of my participants who perceived themselves as marginalized in the space, and were an indication that adopting the ideal of a senior-driven approach was inadequate without also actively identifying, preparing for, and responding to interactions where people felt silenced, intimidated, or even discriminated against. The perception that people at the House championed this participant-driven approach limited the visibility of daily instances that challenged this narrative.

In some cases, problematic interactions, and staff responses to these interactions, intersected with race and perceptions of aging processes. During our interviews, some House elders and staff shared with me examples of behaviour they deemed to be racist. These examples intersected with age-related mental illness, as well as assumptions about the acceptability of lingering racist beliefs held by old adults. For instance, Susan, an older woman resident who identified as Japanese-Canadian, explained during our interview that she felt some of the other old adults at the House treated her friends of colour differently from her white friends:

> This is funny. My friends who are Asian or people of colour…if my white friends come and visit me…nobody asks them anything. My friends of colour come and visit me and they're at the door and they're Asian they'll always say, 'Are you [Susan]'s friend?' And my black friend came to visit me; they asked her if she was a caregiver.

For Susan, the prevalence of whiteness as the status quo at the House was demonstrated through the way her various friends were greeted. The pervasive invisibility of whiteness was evident when "nobody ask[ed]" any questions of Susan's white friends whose presence was deemed normal in the space. Susan began her story by stating that it was "funny," yet her solemn and sometimes frustrated tone, facial expressions, and body language indicates that she connected these experiences to patterns at the House that she took very seriously. When I asked for clarification, Susan joked about one old white woman in particular who routinely questioned her non-white friends as they entered the House: "I call [her] the doorman because she interviews all my friends." Labeling this woman the "doorman," again, allowed Susan to make light of an issue she felt was important and that she mentioned several different times during our four-hour

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interview. Susan explained that for the case of this particular individual, the issue was complicated by her apparent mental health status:

> I'm quite sure she has dementia. She has some kind of mental health issues. And I
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> spoke with [House staff] about it, I told them I didn't like it. They said, 'You
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> know that's [Carol].' I said, 'You know what, I know she has issues, I have
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> issues too but people have to learn manners and protocol and respect.' I said,
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> 'That's not respectful.' They said, 'Well you know, that's how she is.' I didn't
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> like that so I spoke with [Carol], I said, 'It's not respectful, it's not'—and she
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> said, 'Oooh it's not respect[ful], okay I won't do it.' [The House] could've done
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> it. They won't do it because they don't want to hurt—bother.

Here Susan explained that she appreciated that age-related mental health challenges were a factor in Carol's behaviour. However, Susan also felt that it might have still been possible to address her discomfort by identifying specific behaviours that were and were not respectful. In outlining what was and was not respectful behaviour, Susan articulated the importance of naming and enforcing concrete daily practices in maintaining an inclusive environment.

Susan mentioned that she asked for assistance from a House staff member but perceived that this person did not think anything could be done. She took it upon herself to address the issue, but felt that it was something House staff could have and should have assisted with. Here Susan described two competing demands that House staff members must manage. On the one hand, it seemed sensible to her that elders undergoing mental health challenges be granted greater flexibility and understanding. On the other hand, the behaviour of some old adults with dementia, who may lose their sense of context and draw from memories and habits from their

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past, could lead to interactions that elders of colour felt were unacceptable and distinctly not inclusive.

Susan communicated her frustration and disappointment with House staff in her choice of words about their lack of action: "They won't do it because they don't want to hurt—bother." In this statement, Susan first began to explain her perception that House staff were hesitant to act because they did not want to hurt or offend anyone. However, later in the interview, Susan explained that when House staff did not act on her concerns, they were ultimately hurting *her* as well as her guests, and that they themselves valued not being bothered over others being bothered. The default assumption, as understood by Susan, was to keep things the way they were to avoid causing discomfort. It is noteworthy that midway through her thought, Susan paused and changed her wording to state instead that House staff did not want to "bother." With this word, Susan clarified that she felt staff did not see her experiences and concerns as significant. Susan perceived that they did not want to "bother" modifying the environment and others' behaviour based on her experience, even though she herself was uncomfortable in this environment. Having raised a variety of concerns with the House in recent years (often regarding her ability to access and contribute to shared spaces), Susan had found that staff rarely took action that she was satisfied with. "It might offend people" was how Susan described their response to her requests for assistance. She continued, "And I'm always like 'So what am I? Chopped liver?'" Again, Susan felt that her requests, which often required staff action to challenge the status quo, were not meaningfully heard or acted upon.

Race and age also intersect through the assumption that old adults, having been raised as part of a previous generation, harbour lingering racist beliefs. Staff had to make choices about

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the degree to which racist statements were permissible for people of different ages, and what their role was in potentially intervening. Jessica, a new female staff member who identified as biracial, told me about an interaction that made her particularly uncomfortable. In one training session for volunteers, Jessica was in the next room and overheard a group-wide conversation that she felt allowed racist beliefs to be expressed and then tacitly upheld as the status quo:

Jessica: I don't necessarily feel that comfortable sometimes.

Katherine: How so?

Jessica: Um, there have been, like, one instance, [the House was] doing a volunteer orientation [in the next room], and then the person running it said something about [older] people not liking when people of darker skin—or they don't want the darker skinned people or the Black people, they don't want them helping them. And they were having a conversation about that, and one guy said, 'Well, I think it's just normal. My grandparents grew up that way, and that's just the way they are, they don't—you know, they have certain ideas about people with darker skin and that's that' kind of thing. And so that was kind of uncomfortable for me, because, you know, I was sitting in the other room, like, listening to these people talk and I'm thinking, 'Okay, well I'm half White and I'm half Black, and my grandparents, like, they don't—they wouldn't think that way towards me.' So is he saying, like, all people who are older and white are racist, and that's just the way it is? And no one really challenged what he had to say.

As Jessica (re)produced this particular experience during our interview, drawing on her internal monologue and reporting the speech of others, she described a situation in which the explicit

racism of old, white adults was presented, unchallenged, as acceptable by a volunteer. Jessica was concerned that, although a staff member facilitated the session, no staff or other volunteers challenged the assumption that "it's just normal" for old, white adults to retain racist beliefs toward people of colour. A norm was upheld: that white elders were expected or even welcome to hold prejudicial beliefs in their interactions with House volunteers. In Jessica's view, this lack of intervention during training suggested that the volunteers might leave the room feeling that white elders should not be put in positions where they might have to confront or question racist beliefs; they were not to be made uncomfortable. However, this exchange made Jessica uncomfortable. These examples raise questions about what the staff's role is in guiding volunteers' ideas in a participant-driven context.

Elizabeth, one of the Seniors' Drop-in staff, explained her understanding of her role in supporting senior-driven programs in the following way: "[It's] not for me to put it on, but to support it being done." She presented herself as being in the background to provide resources but not to take charge of the direction of the programming itself. Elizabeth described her interpretation of senior-driven programming by talking about the story of Stone Soup, a well-known European folk tale that had been passed down over time. For Elizabeth, the story was about everyone bringing an ingredient—whatever they had on hand and could offer—and putting it in a communal pot to produce a meal together. She liked this story because it represented a diversity of people sharing whatever they had to produce a final product together that they could not create on their own. In this analogy, each elder brought an ingredient (their ideas and efforts) and the pot was provided by the House. After my interview with Elizabeth I researched the story of Stone Soup. I was able to trace it to original publications in France in the eighteenth century

and England in the early nineteen century (Du Noyer, 1720; Moser, 1806), with more recent iterations across Europe. Elizabeth did not note some of the details from these story versions in her account. She focused on a diversity of program participants coming together weekly, each bringing one of the ingredients required to produce a delicious soup together. Her premise was that everyone had something to offer and could work together to create an end product for all to share. The two original story versions that I located, however, present accounts of impoverished travelers desperate for food with only a random stone to offer. In each version the traveler comes upon a town and tricks a townsperson, or a group of townspeople, into providing a bucket, water, fire, and other ingredients that they need in order to make their special stone soup. The traveler provides the special stone and the story ends with all involved sharing the meal. This story, though inspiring in many ways, leaves me wondering about the unexamined and unstated elements in its original version. For instance, why do some people not have enough food in the first place? Why do people need to be tricked into providing others with their resources? Stone Soup is a story in which everyone is welcome to contribute, but leaves little space to consider how people with different degrees of power and status produced the situation in the first place and how they interact once they are all together. Why are some people insiders (villagers) and others outsiders (travelers)? In whose village is the soup being made? Who distributes the soup once it is ready? What if people bring ingredients that others cannot eat? Who oversees the soup making process and has a vision for the final product?

The questions I have about Stone Soup echo the questions I have about the organization of senior-led programming. House spaces and programs were meant to be open to and shaped by all interested elders. However, what often went unarticulated in staff accounts of senior-led

activities was how the work of soliciting, incorporating and resourcing elders' ideas was actually done every day, and on whose terms people met and interacted. The emphasis on centering elders' ideas was a core component of programming, yet in practice sometimes meetings and interactions unfolded in ways that may have produced and maintained programs where some felt that their perspectives and needs were not taken into account.

4.2   The discourse of managerial efficiency

Evidently staff could bolster or silence ideas through a social process that influenced programming development processes and outcomes. I learned that while the role of staff in guiding program-planning discussions was not always clear to staff or to elders, staff were also negotiating institutional demands that shaped how much they were able to invest in these processes. Staff had a set of work obligations built into the structure of their job that limited the amount of time they were able to spend with volunteers and community members in program planning sessions, and that required them to make strategic choices in order to maximize their efficiency. They had to balance their time interacting directly with volunteers along with other duties, such as administration and grant-writing (particularly in cases where their future employment, or the number of hours they will work per week, relied entirely or partially on securing new grants). Staff often described to me their sense of being pulled in multiple directions by competing, and sometimes unexpected, demands on a daily basis. Melanie, a senior staff member at the House, explained the variety of tasks she was responsible for given that the House runs a variety of programs for people of all ages, interests and needs:

My days are pretty non-typical. [laughs] It changes every day. I'm in a position

where I'm overseeing a lot of different programs, so on any given day I would be

generally connecting with the staff that I supervise. I would be having,

potentially, community meetings….I'm a—I have quite a big administrative role,

so I do spend quite a bit of time at the desk doing emails, phone, working on

projects, working on grants, that kind of thing.

I asked Melanie what was her favourite aspect of her job. She said, "Developing new

initiatives or programs that meet a particular community need. So something that's been,

you know, identified as a need in the community. And then being able to kind of work

and look at where we could find resources […] and being able to kind of develop

something from a need to an actual program or initiative." I also wanted to know what

particular types of challenges she came across in her work and she said,

We do a lot. We do a lot. And we work with lots of different populations and in a

variety of different ways….Sometimes the challenges are kind of finding that

balance, so that we're doing the work well, and not burning ourselves out or trying

to take on too much or trying to respond to every need or that kind of thing. So,

you know, about knowing when to say 'yes' and when to say 'yes' slowly or say

'no' to new—'Cause there's new opportunities and new ideas that people have all

the time. And also expectations….So being able to kind of balance those with

being able to do, you know, both the day and the day at work, and also….not

burning ourselves out trying to take on everything, for everybody.

In this portion of our interview, Melanie mentioned the numerous tasks she took on. She described the most enjoyable component of her work as helping to develop programming based on a need that was identified in the community. She directly related working with multiple populations and helping to facilitate their development of programming with her own experiences of burn out. In choosing what to say "yes" or "no" to, and how quickly to pursue various ideas, she also weighed her other tasks and her own energy state. Melanie was upfront about this balance and saw it as a part of the work. What she framed as separate from her own involvement, however, was the initial "community need." When Melanie discussed this need she removed herself and any actors from the process with the use of the passive voice: "So something that's been, you know, identified as a need in the community." In the following sentence she identified how her own work involved putting this need into action: "And then being able to kind of work and look at where we could find resources […] and being able to kind of develop something from a need to an actual program or initiative." Through the use of "then" she temporally separated the need-identification process, which presumably came directly from an imagined community without staff intervention, from the resource-mobilization process. It was only when discussing resource-mobilization that Melanie acknowledged and made visible the actions of herself and other staff as "work." For Melanie, her "work"—the tasks that she did intentionally and that she thought about doing—began once a need already existed.

Clarissa, a more junior staff member who had been at the House for less time than Melanie, also discussed her understanding of her work, and the challenges she faced in trying to create opportunities for meaningful open interaction with people at the House while ensuring she

met her other daily tasks. I asked Clarissa about the frequency of her interactions with House members:

> Until we come out of our little cocoons [offices], um, and are in that space it's difficult to have those opportunities, similar to that is because if we don't, if we're, not sort of, we're not protected of our time, we'll not get anything done, so it's sort of like…being able to find the time for people to build relationships with you…at the same time making sure that you're still getting things you need to get done.
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> So, it's a tough balance that I'm still kind of figuring out.

Notable about these accounts is that Melanie and Clarissa desired to make themselves available for meaningful interactions with members of the House community. However, both had to balance their front-line work with other more behind-the-scenes tasks. Clarissa explicitly limited the amount of time she had for interactions with volunteers and community members. In asserting "we're not protected of our time," she did not say whether she herself was protective of her time. She was saying she was not protect*ed*, suggesting that she located herself and her time in relation to another person or structure. A recurring theme in my interviews with House staff is that everyone had varied tasks, felt that they were often responding and adapting to new and unexpected responsibilities or projects, and did not have enough time to complete all that they needed to.

The new House building and the new programming that had come with it seemed to be factors behind this sense of anxiety. For example, the House had a new daycare that they did not offer in the old building. The Executive Director was also on leave during my fieldwork, so staff might have taken on extra duties that trickled down. However, the funding structure for NHs was

also a factor here. Positions in non-profit community services are typically low paying and the House was no exception. My observation of the various duties and programs each staff member oversaw was that there might have been too few staff doing too much work. Several of the Seniors Programs staff that I spoke with told me that they had not anticipated the multiple roles they would play in the organization at the time they were hired.

Joanne in Seniors' Programs discussed her work experiences with me during our interview. She had not worked for the House very long and was in the process of quitting. When I asked her whether the position turned out to be what she expected, she stated,

> The work load got to the point where I didn't have time to stop and chat with
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> people and I was rushing, rushing all day long so it wasn't good for my wellbeing.
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> I also probably tried to do too much but I guess I could always see how things
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> could be better. But yeah overall, when I suddenly caught my breathe after
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> leaving, and stopped like yeah it was actually really amazing and I learned a lot
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> but it was kind of a whirlwind.

Here, Joanne connected her own wellbeing to the "whirlwind" pace and that lack of time she had to build relationships with community members through casual daily interaction. Although she very much appreciated the job and everything it allowed her to learn, the number and variety of things she needed to complete every day was overwhelming.

House senior management also noted the anxieties that I sensed from staff during our interviews. During my interview with Lynn, the Executive Director, she expressed her awareness of the time challenges staff faced, particularly in relation to administrative work that was oriented around accountability mechanisms structured by funders. However, Lynn felt that that

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was an issue individual staff members had to become better at managing for themselves. Lynn explained that she thought some of the other staff needed to reorient their priorities to ensure they were focused on community development:

It's that whole oh 'I'm too busy, I'm too busy, I'm too busy,' like I have community members who come up and say, 'Well I don't want to talk to your staff because I know they're too busy,' and I'm totally like, 'I don't want to hear that, I don't want to hear anybody say they're too busy. That's something that you're creating for yourself.' But as we move into the community development pieces, this 'too busy' stuff is around paperwork, and sitting in front of the computer, and trying to achieve these, um, quantitative indicators….That's great, and we need to do some of that. But that's not your priority, your priority is to sit down and have conversations with people to figure out how we can use our resources to help people to do what they want to do. That is the primary responsibility of your work, and so, as people kind of understand that a little bit more, it [will become] easy for them to say, 'Oh, it's clear to me what the choice is around how I'm gonna spend my time, because this is what I'm gonna be evaluated on, this is what I'm going to be rewarded for, and this is who we are as an organization' ….There is the sense that, people think I'm busy, I'm working really hard if they see me in front of my computer or I do this really good report, and I'm like I don't really care about, I mean the report is important. But it's ok to just do a good enough report, do your excellent work here, do your good enough work here.

Here, Lynn acknowledged some of the structural constraints that staff encountered in attempting to do the paperwork that ensured quantitative indicators were reported on, such as reporting program statistics. However, she was also constrained in that she was not able to change the structure of the job or to eliminate the need to produce reports to obtain or maintain funding sources. Lynn suggested that staff members dedicate more time to engaging directly with people at the House and learn how to spend less time on some of the behind-the-scenes tasks that she saw as needing to be done, but that could be done at a level that was "good enough" but not necessarily "excellent." She did mention one organizational shift: to reward staff for community development work to help them be "clear in their head" about how to make effective time management choices.

Although Lynn was aware of the need to place higher institutional value on staff "help[ing] people to do what they want to do," Lynn's suggestion to do "good enough" work on "computer" tasks did not fully address or alleviate the constraints faced by staff whose continued employment was grant-dependent. Sharon, one of the staff who hosted the training session for the Seniors' Drop-in volunteers, told me with some anxiety that her employment was contingent on funding availability. When I asked her about the challenges she faces in her work, Sharon explained that she applied for grants on a regular basis in an effort to ensure that she had projects to work on that would continue to provide her with paid hours:

> I'm on a very grant- dependent job position. So my hours just totally fluctuate
> even from, not month-to-month, but between January…like I thought I was going
> to have different hours, which didn't end up happening. But then in March I went
> down in hours, and gained some other places… [I'm still] applying for grants all

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the time. Yesterday getting really bad news about grants, which seems to be

happening every month [laugh]. So I find [what's] very challenging is having this

passion and this vision and all these ideas and just trying to figure out how it's all

going to happen. And feeling that job, not just job insecurity, because I know that

they want to keep me here. They're looking at ways to keep me hired. But [how]

can I get the hours for the projects I want to do and how can we make this

happen? So right now I'm part-time food and part-time seniors' hub project but

ultimately...I'm part time food, but initially I was hired part-time, and then in the

fall I got some additional hours to be full-time, um, and that additional hours is

seniors' [programs].

Sharon explained that she typically would not know her hours for future months until a grant

application came back as successful or unsuccessful. If it was successful then she had to get to

work on the project right away. Between mobilizing quickly based on a successful grant and

continuously applying for new grants, Sharon found it difficult to find a good balance:

When you're on so many grants everything's very project-based and that's just

balancing of everything. Work-life balance as well, and um, I think a challenge

for all community development is being there for your community but also setting

boundaries for yourself and you want to, like, be with people you are serving, but

you also need to be like, 'I actually don't have unlimited time to do that.' Like I

only have a few hours for the project so kind of, like I love having all those

projects but then there's the down side too that you can't put in as much into each

one.

Much like other staff members, Sharon felt a tension between making herself available to the community she served while also ensuring she set and followed some boundaries. She was stretched between her love for her many projects and her inability to invest heavily into each one in a way that would allow her to more meaningfully "be with people."

Another reason why staff such as Sharon were not able to invest as much time into each program and the associated volunteers was the nature of grant-based funding. Most grants offer project-based funds rather than core funds. While project-based grants provide a specific amount of funding for a period of time based on meeting the goals of a new project approved directly by the funder, core funds are more flexible and are designed to ensure an organization can retain its staff while pursuing projects that align with their own mandate and long-term goals. Yan, Lauer, and Riaño-Alcalá (2016) conducted a survey of fifteen NHs in Metro Vancouver and found that only a fraction of their program funding is ongoing. In fact, although 86% of NH programs across Vancouver[21] receive full or partial funding from different levels of government, approximately 60% of this funding lasts for three years or less on renewable or non-renewable terms (Yan, Lauer, & Riaño-Alcalá, 2016, p.6). Furthermore, the majority of program funding from the United Way and other charitable organizations is non-renewable.

Sharon explained the implications and challenges of this grant-based funding structure for the House:

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[21] The House is not a separate legal entity, so it does not publicly report its financials other than in aggregated reports published by the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC (ANHBC).

What we're trying to do at [the House] is not have project[s] just for a grant [but

instead] to tie it into our larger vision. But we always have to think that way when

we are applying for grants: how will this work out when we don't have that grant

money? And what's nice about what we call core funding is just like it guarantees

my position and I can do the projects that we have decided are important.

Sharon pointed to the regulation of non-profits through accountability measures, linked to some

of the paperwork that Lynn associated with "quantitative indicators." This accountability logic

has become increasingly prevalent as neoliberal forms of governance have expanded to the non-

profit sector through the New Public Management (NPM) and trickle down to the ways staff

manage and are oriented to their work (Griffith & Smith, 2014). Although non-profit

organizations require staff and administration to function, funding and donations that are used for

administration and staff pay are seen to be less legitimate and less worthy. Grant-based funding

may be compared to means-tested programs in the social safety net (increasingly common under

neoliberal models of governance designed to minimize costs yet maximize quantifiable

outcomes) (Ilcan, Oliver & O'Conner, 2007; Gill and Scharff, 2011). Grant-based and means-

tested programs each reflect an attempt for the funds provider to retain control over the use of the

funds, and in some cases to surveil the recipient through the requirement to produce quantitative

markers. These neoliberal restructuring efforts are "neither gender-blind nor neutral" (Ilcan,

Oliver, & O'Conner, 2007, p. 76). Those impacted by these policies and funding structures in the

feminized non-profit sector are more likely to be women – the majority of workers and service

recipients in organizations such as NHs (Baines, 2004, 2009). Statistics Canada (2015)

documents that women are twice as likely to work in the non-profit sector of educational services

and more than four and a half times as likely to work in social assistance and health care, where daily practices are being reshaped by cost-saving measures (Ahl, 2013).

Participant-driven processes are often time-consuming and may not conform to the objectives of a time-sensitive call for grant proposals. These features of the funding structure directly shape how elders' ideas and feedback are solicited, heard, and integrated into program planning. Sharon also noted that there were trends in grants that informed the types of projects House staff were able to pursue: "What can be frustrating is always having to frame things for the funders […] and everything has to be new and innovative." The contingency and impermanence of grant-based funding both enabled and constrained the types of projects House staff could propose; in other words, what could become institutionally categorized as a "need" to be addressed through a program. If the House did not already have an established working relationship with a particular group in "need," they would not seek to build new relationships on a project-by-project basis. Sharon noted that Indigenous people live within the House catchment area and was frustrated that she had not been able to develop programming either for the Musqueam First Nation or urban Indigenous folks:

I have brought it up with some of my supervisors, like how can we better reach Aboriginal populations in Vancouver, so both people living on Musqueam reserve which is part of our catchment area and […] urban Indigenous folks that just live out in the community….But we don't want to recolonize anyone and with the way we're funded through grants, it's really hard to start relationships and build projects when you don't know the continuity….How can we bridge gaps, for example [with the] Musqueam, but they don't want people just coming in every

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time there's a grant opportunity to work with them. So it's more like how do we

integrate that into a long-term plan? ….It's hard work because I'll think […] am I

just going back to an ignorant state, where I'm not contributing to […]

relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous folks? But, then I also think

like what could I do right now?

Sharon described her desire to build relationships and projects through the House with the

Musqueam First Nation. Significantly, Sharon had already brought these points to the attention

of multiple supervisors. Her use of the first person plural signifies that she felt her supervisors

were in agreement with her position. However, they faced the challenge of how to engage in

meaningful, long-term work when their projects were dependent on grants. Invoking the

coordinating logic of economic rationality, Sharon demonstrated an acute awareness that

initiating programs with Indigenous people which were likely to be temporary and subject to

trends in available grants could have been irresponsible and harmful. The funding structure that

the House staff worked within constrains their options: new relationships must be built on an

unstable foundation they have little control over. Acknowledging Vancouver's colonial history

and contemporary context, Sharon suggested it might be more responsible to avoid developing

these new relationships under current funding conditions.

Although Sharon felt compelled to contribute to "relationships between non-Indigenous

and Indigenous folks," this desire was overwhelmed by the constraints she experienced at the

House. Sharon's question, "What could I do right now?" highlights her perception that there

were few responsible, long-term options and supports in place for her to work toward building

these bridges. Sharon's experience is crucial to consider given that Indigenous food and

traditions were never a theme for the Seniors' Drop-In lunch and where never mentioned or

discussed at any of the SAG program planning meetings I attended. There also appeared to be

few if any Indigenous elders in the House residence or programs. That funding structures do not

allow for outreach and dialogue between the House and the Musqueam First Nation is

particularly problematic when it is precisely this collaboration that could help make visible the

ethnocentrism embedded in "active" aging models informed by largely Western values of

independence, self-reliance, autonomy and individualism (Ranzjin, 2010). Avenues for making

seniors' programs more culturally inclusive within a colonial context are ultimately blocked by

insecure, impermanent, insufficient funding processes.

Funding structures not only impede possible new programs. In some cases, funding

organizations and regulatory bodies can also influence how programs develop, what they offer,

and the types of quantitative markers that are collected about programming and program

participants. For example, due to the availability of new funding, the House had started offering

a program called "Better at Home." The program was intended for elders who lived on their own

in the community but could use volunteer assistance with certain day-to-day tasks, such as

grocery shopping and transportation to appointments. During my interview with Merie, who

managed this program at the House, she noted the limitations placed on the program by the

outside agencies who made the program possible. I asked her what the range of services the

Better at Home Program provided. She said,

> Just four services. Better at Home is a provincial program, so we have those
>
> parameters that we need to follow, that's been given by the Minister of Health.
>
> And it's managed by the United Way, which is checking on what we do. So we

have housekeeping, transportation, grocery shopping assistance, and the visits, the

volunteer visits. And we can't really change, um—It's strictly non-medical, so

there's no food preparation, no. We could provide some yard work, some small

repairs, things like that, and we're looking at that. But basically that's [the] basket

of services that we are set to offer.

Merie noted more than once that although the program was run out of the House, the services

were pre-determined by the province of BC. She commented throughout the interview on various

additional services that seniors had requested, but she was clear that she had to follow these

provincially-set "parameters" that she "[couldn't] really change," despite the local

neighbourhood context or the unique needs of particular elders who used the program.

Merie also pointed out that the House adopted this new program because the funding for

their previous version of the program, Seniors Links, was not renewed. Vancouver Coastal

Health oversaw Seniors Links, with funding from the Sharon Martin Community Health Fund.

According to Merie, this previous program ran well and the reason for the change was solely

related to funding. Switching programs meant that the House had to change the services they

provide and adjust their criteria for eligible participants. The Seniors Links program had allowed

for a larger catchment area and had permitted the House to deliver services to people over fifty

years old (as opposed to sixty-five years old under the new Better At Home guidelines). This

change in age eligibility is important to note. It may represent the institutionalization of

expectations for the 'young' old to remain independent and self-managing for longer. While the

previous program provided assistance to people as young as fifty, the new provincial program

withholds those services until people are fifteen years older. That this change occurred alongside

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growing conceptions of 'active' aging in the third age suggests that the rhetoric of healthy living may obscure the needs of old adults who do not or cannot conform. This policy shift at the provincial level suggests that the anti-ageist ideals of the third age does not always challenge, and may in fact bolster, the ageism experienced by elders who are not as independent or mobile.

Volunteers were also expected to be able to perform a broader range of tasks for the elders in the previous Seniors Links program, including cleaning, laundry, computer skills assistance, small repairs, minor house painting, and yard work. The tasks volunteers were permitted to perform under Better At Home were more limited. When I asked Merie whether tasks such as yard work were included in the Better At Home program, she explained, "I don't know how this is going to happen. We need to look at risk assessments."

Marie also noted a second layer of coordination beyond the House built into the new program. Using the language of surveillance and accountability, Merie explained that the United Way "check[s] on what we do." Every quarter she had to collect and report specific data that the United Way requested about participants. When I asked about the particular information the United Way requires, Merie clarified that she had to provide participant "living situation, age, gender, ethnicity, languages." Through this regulatory mechanism, Merie had to categorize participants based on particular markers. These markers served to highlight and quantify some aspects of elder adults' social locations while silencing others. For example, notably absent from this list were questions about sexual orientation, while ethnicity and language were seen as significant. Here there is evidence that funding and regulatory bodies not only functioned to orient staff time management and thinking about their work, but they also oriented how the House identified the most important characteristics about its elder volunteers and community

members. These quantitative markers, in this case imposed by the United Way, become even more significant in light of the fact that the House had no programs or services specifically for LGBTQ seniors, or that addressed in any explicit or meaningful way issues of sexuality or intimacy among seniors. Undoubtedly, the markers that were deemed most valuable by regulatory organizations might have continued to be relevant as House staff proposed new programs in the future and responded to what they perceived to be the most imperative community needs.

Evidence of the way funding can both enable and constrain programming can be found in the redevelopment of the House itself. While many ideas were put forward and reflected upon by House staff, volunteers and members of the community through multiple consultations, what was actually doable was largely shaped by the agendas of funding bodies. Lynn, the executive director, described to me the process through which the idea to develop seniors' housing was born:

Katherine: um where did the idea for senior's housing come from? How did that emerge?

Lynn: …When we were strategizing around how we were going to redevelop these buildings, one of our board members, we sat down together and we just kind of looked at you know strategically how could we get this building built and… where the government was at and what they were interested in funding and what was kind of the sexy thing of the moment, and then looked at what our demographic was, and looked at what our skills and expertise were. One of the things that was consistent in all of those areas was… affordable housing for

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seniors, allowing seniors to live independently longer in their own communities,

and we knew that was a need on the West side and we knew we had the skills and

expertize working with seniors. We didn't have the expertise around housing [but]

we knew it was on the government's agenda, so that's how it came to be. It was a

strategic, it just managed to all fit, but if we didn't have the [seniors'] housing

component, the [new NH] building would not have been built. Nobody was

funding daycare at that time, and nobody still, there is nobody who funds

Neighbourhood Houses. So it really hinged on that housing component and

getting people to buy into the whole package.

Lynn explained that the process for moving forward with the House redevelopment required

strategically considering the community demographics and needs and House capacities in

relation to what was "sexy" for external funders. Because elders' independent living was a key

agenda item for the provincial and municipal governments at the time – undoubtedly connected

to the rise of third age discourses within government, industry and academia – Lynn and the

House Board moved forward by building seniors' housing into their plans. In a context where

funding explicitly for NHs is not available, staff must be intentional in pursuing projects that

bring in funding even if they do not necessarily have pre-existing expertise as was the case with

housing. Evidently, funding structures not only influence how much (or how little) time staff

have to meaningfully interact with and listen to the elders in the programs they oversee, but also

what the objectives and quantifiable outputs of those programs are. As I discuss in the next

section, sometimes externally imposed objectives and funding constraints also influence how

staff structure program feedback processes.

4.3   The Seniors' Drop-In: Senior-driven or funding-driven?

Funding structures (and the lack of funding) shaped how elders' ideas for the Seniors' Drop-In Program were solicited, heard, and acted upon by staff. Even though the Seniors' Advisory Group was intended to be in charge of coming up with theme, meal and entertainment ideas, staff sometimes explicitly intervened in and intentionally asserted their involvement in the Drop-in Program planning with respect to food cost, food preparation efficiency, food safety, and event marketing. The institutional need to cut costs and ensure program efficiency within a constrained budget meant that staff sometimes ended up making decisions about lunch themes. For example, on some occasions a particular ethnic group, nation, or holiday theme was selected based on ingredients that the kitchen team had on hand. During the July SAG meeting that I attended, the cook stopped in to alert the group that there was a lot of rice in the kitchen to be cooked. The cook, not the SAG committee, suggested making paella. Two of the older women asked the cook what paella was and the cook explained that it is "rice with tomato and spicy" and that it was a Spanish dish. Three of the older women in the group expressed excitement about this dish and no one else objected. This exchange was sufficient for the coordinator to write down that the multicultural meal would be Spanish-themed. In this case, the decision of the SAG to pursue a Spanish-themed meal and entertainment was largely mediated through the cook's suggestion based on food availability, rather than a discussion about Spanish culture and history.

The use of existing ingredients was part of a larger attempt by the food staff to ensure the multicultural lunches did not go over budget. For many years, the Seniors' Drop-in Program did not have a multicultural meal and consistently produced a meal centered around a soup. The food

staff and volunteers were able to successfully complete this task for less than fifteen dollars per Drop-In Lunch. The multicultural meals presented a challenge because the types of food served needed to be varied, sometimes had never before been made by the staff and volunteers, and typically included several meal components. These factors combined could have led to the need to purchase more expensive ingredients and unforeseen last minute costs.

Staff were also involved with the coordination of entertainment. Although some staff and elders that I spoke with envisioned the entertainment component of the lunches as an organic process where local people of various racial or ethnic backgrounds could share their heritage with the elders at the House, logistical factors sometimes interfered with these good intentions in the organic sharing process. With some multicultural meals being planned month by month, it was often left to the coordinator to identify and contact someone who was available and interested in coming to perform at the lunch at short notice and without compensation. These logistical realities for the selection of entertainment and performers did not necessarily align with perceptions of the program for those not intimately involved with the planning. For example, Sharon, a member of the staff team who was not directly involved in the planning of the Seniors' Drop-in Program, shared with me her perception of how the program themes and entertainment were put together:

> I'm not like super familiar but […] what I understand that they do is that they
> meet, like they have the seniors' advisory committee that meets and they talk
> about what they're going to do about the programming they would like to see. So
> they kind of help decide [and] listen to what people in the group might say. Like,
> 'Oh, I'm from this culture and I'd be happy to present,' which I think is [a] really

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empowering way for people to kind of talk about things that are important to them
and bring that forward.

Sharon identified a perception that many staff and elders at the House had of the multicultural
meals: that it was based on and oriented around a diversity of local elders sharing their
experiences and ideas rooted in their ethnic heritage. She produced this account on the
assumption that it was people within the SAG who were interested in sharing their own culture.
However, she expressed an awareness of the potential limitations of that process given that the
elder volunteers were overwhelmingly white and of Western European descent, yet the meal
themes encompassed a variety of cultures:

Might be interesting to also think about things that are happening but

underrepresented, so, I know that we had a Persian New Year here because we

had a Persian staff member but I'm not sure if we have a lot of Persian seniors

coming. So if we didn't have [that staff member] working here, then like I'm not

sure exactly how that whole conversation came about. But I wonder maybe that

would be something, is going around the community and realizing oh we have a

lot of Persian folks, why don't we have a lot of Persian seniors? And inviting

them in…. It could be a good way to meet these people who are often

underrepresented in our programs. Because […] it seems like we have a lot more

of like the European decent of like white people coming here to programs,

especially to seniors' programs….[But] there are cultural communities near South

Granville, and [we could] reach out to them. So maybe doing more of that here,

bringing them in, and having them, not maybe the time you come is when you

share, but maybe you experience other people sharing, and then you feel like oh

I'm welcome to share my culture as well.

In negotiating the tension between the ethnic backgrounds of those choosing the meal themes and those providing the entertainment, Sharon clarified that the Seniors' Drop-in could be used as a forum for reaching out to elders from cultures who might have been underrepresented in House seniors' programs. Sharon described processes for building meaningful connections between communities by inviting diverse elders to attend the lunch, not immediately as performers, but as participants. She envisioned a process through which the people involved in the program could become more diverse, which would create space for participants to more organically notice they were "welcome to share [their] culture as well." What more often than not occurred at the SAG meetings, however, was a table of mostly white, Western European elders listing possible food options and then working backward to identify some related potential entertainment.

Although some staff members, such as Sharon, had a conception of community-building that took into account some of the politics of underrepresentation, the primary staff intervention occurred around a limited set of issues related to more structural needs for food efficiency and budgeting. With the redesign and rebuilding of the House, there was more space for the lunch and its associated preparations, such as larger upstairs and downstairs kitchens in the building. One of the food staff members explained to me that the House decided to pursue the multicultural meals as a response to volunteer interest, but also in order to increase the number of program participants. The food costs were most manageable for the House if more participants attended the lunch. Each participant paid four dollars per lunch. There were some volunteers and

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staff who were in favour of raising the four dollar fee but the majority, including staff member Elizabeth, wanted to keep this fee stable to ensure the elders could afford to attend. Elizabeth, keen to make sure the program was sustainable, was optimistic that the multicultural meals would bring in more community participants: "Because [it was] something out of the ordinary, celebration, fun, something a little different." Although the initial idea for multicultural lunches came from one of the elder volunteers, it was taken up by House staff through the lens of managing program costs, attendance, and marketing.

The need to be cost-effective also influenced the selection of ingredients that were put into the cultural food cooked on a given day. Elizabeth explained that she and her staff had to be creative in purchasing ingredients to match the classic recipes from particular cultural groups. She noted that, "It's not financially practical to cook what is most common." For instance, the kitchen staff sometimes removed the meat elements from the recipe or selected recipes for which ingredients were "not necessarily expensive."

I became aware of the extent to which the food staff focused on food costs, efficiency, and food safety when I attended a volunteer "Brunch and Planning Session" in May 2015. Texts that staff drew upon and used to structure the course of the meeting helped me identify the social relations that the meeting was hooked into. The meeting invitation read, "Come and enjoy a delicious brunch and social connection with fellow Seniors Drop-in Volunteers. Learn about [House] Goals for Food Programs. Have an opportunity to share your feedback and your ideas for making our Lunch Program even better!" When I read this invitation I first assumed that the session would be an opportunity for volunteers to provide feedback on all aspects of the Drop-in Lunch Program. However, upon arrival, I realized that the focus of the session was intended to

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be much more narrow. The term "Food Programs" used in the invitation was accurate—the goal was to discuss "food preparation efficiency," "food costs," and "food safety regulations." These three headings were written in different coloured markers on three flip charts that the staff had placed around the table. These abstract terms indicated that a goal of the event was to standardize and generalize procedures. For example, "food preparation efficiency" did not have a subject or a verb; it had been turned into a noun. The event agenda document that one of the staff members held in her hand (not provided to participants) stated, "Policy Training on Thursday, May 21st from 10:00–12:30" at the top. Evidently, this event was primarily for the purposes of knowledge dissemination from staff to volunteers, with some opportunities for volunteer feedback on the themes already determined beforehand. As I will discuss below, some of the volunteer feedback addressing program efficiency was immediately adopted in the weeks following this meeting, whereas other volunteer ideas were not followed up with action.

The three staff members put a lot of effort into preparing the training session and brought markers and sticky notes for an activity. Elizabeth brought out two hot quiches that she cooked from scratch, noting that she wanted to show her gratitude to the volunteers. As we ate, staff members Sharon and Elizabeth facilitated a discussion around each of the three themes that they had pre-written on flip charts. As Sharon and Elizabeth stood next to the "efficiency" flip chart and asked for ideas, the volunteers discussed challenges preparing food speedily, transporting it upstairs, and serving it buffet-style to participants. One challenge was that the volunteers were not clearly assigned tasks for transporting and serving food: everyone was responsible for identifying a need and filling it. Through this discussion, and with Elizabeth's support, the volunteers decided to make a list of tasks to help keep the volunteers on track, and to appoint a

rotating task "monitor" to help keep tabs on what had already been done and to delegate remaining duties throughout the lunch. That idea drew notable staff support and action. That session took place on a Thursday. A few volunteers remained behind after the session to brainstorm the list of tasks. By the time I returned to the House for the Tuesday Drop-in Program (just five days later), photocopied task lists sat on a clipboard in the downstairs kitchen and a task monitor was already appointed for the week. This session was an example of how senior-driven programming worked at the House. Although ideas came from elder volunteers, the agenda, guiding discussion questions, and meeting notes were written by staff. Staff were oriented to their work based on a particular set of institutional needs that might not concern participants in the same way; in this case the needs were food efficiency, safety, and cost. Space was not created for issues beyond this scope until the end of the session.

During the last ten minutes of that two and a half hour session, volunteers were invited to write any remaining questions, comments, or issues on the post-its and to place them on the wall. I took this opportunity to mention multiculturalism on my post-it, writing: "How can we create more opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and learning through the multicultural lunches?" I raised this issue because it had been mentioned to me by elders like Susan who was concerned about programming but no longer volunteered with the Drop-In due to frustration and fatigue. There were about five post-its on the wall after the volunteers finished writing. The staff were able to link the four other post-its to the existing three themes and placed them on the flip-charts. They were not sure where to place my multiculturalism post-it and, given that we were coming to the end of the session, said that they would pass it on to the program coordinator to revisit during the next SAG meeting.

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One of the interesting things about that meeting was that the materials (e.g., pre-labeled flip charts) and the timing were organized to orient the meeting around a specific set of food issues. These issues had been pre-identified as significant for the successful functioning of the program and were designed by staff to take up the majority of the time and space. The event invitation stated that volunteers would "have an opportunity to share your feedback and your ideas for making our Lunch Program even better." The volunteers did indeed provide feedback on ideas, but the broader vision for making the program "even better" was already set.

I noted a central tension within participant-driven programming: the degree to which volunteers versus staff set the agenda and mediated its development. This tension is particularly important to note given that discourses of "active" and "productive" ageing often position elders as agentic and unconstrained in pursuing their interests. While the commitment to senior-led programming in combination with time constraints meant that staff sometimes did not intervene or mediate when elders disagreed or silenced one another, staff still guided the process (often in ways not explicitly vocalized to me during interviews) according to funding needs and externally-imposed policies. Staff organization of the Drop-In volunteer training event was coordinated by the managerial efficiency discourse. When staff took up this discourse they worked to organize the programs they ran based on particular outcomes that they were accountable to within the House and beyond the House based on affiliated and governing institutions and policies. The words "food safety" written on the program flip chart hooked the session into the FoodSafe program procedures managed by the BC FoodSafe Secretariat in collaboration with the BC Centre for Disease Control, the BC Regional Health Authorities, the BC Restaurant and Food Services Association and WorkSafe BC (Foodsafe, 2009). The words

"food costs" on the second flip chart connected to the weekly and monthly program budget as well as food donations from food banks and businesses. "Food preparation efficiency," the theme of the third flip chart, enabled staff to solicit and act on suggestions to standardize volunteer activities, such as the photocopied "task-list" and weekly task-monitor. Because each staff member ran numerous programs, often in the same day, standardized procedures that enabled volunteers to self-manage provided staff with more time. If the volunteers were effectively preparing and serving the multicultural lunch, Elizabeth could begin to prep the food she would need for her next program that day.

This tension between volunteer interests and institutional interests, as taken up by staff, was visible on the walls of the House in addition to planning meetings and daily interactions. For example, the main floor women's bathroom, located just past the reception desk and the locked door to staff offices but before the kitchen and living room, featured a picture of a small house and flower petals:

Figure 3. Images of text and pictures on House bathroom stalls. Photo taken by the author at the House during fieldwork, May 17, 2015.

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Just under the house, as if to be its foundation, the word "LOVE" was written in noticeably scribbly, overlapping strokes. This font choice, emulating child-like scribble, is significant because it gestures toward the illusion that someone actually stood in this bathroom and wrote these words using just their hand and a marker. Beginning at the top right of the house a variety of small and large hearts, in the same free hand style, had been placed to suggest that they were floating out of the chimney. This writing and drawing style, although evidently a part of a pre-fabricated computer-generated collage, was reminiscent of graffiti but also of the notes a child might scribble in a notebook. On the far right there was a green silhouette cut-out of a slim woman with long hair in a pony–tail holding a flower and looking up toward the hearts. This image became more and more significant for me each time I entered the women-designated washroom – the only private place I could find to write field notes. It began to represent the tensions I noted between the ideal of participant-driven programming and the actual daily contexts in which programming was brought into being. The free-hand writing appeared as though it may have been done by someone who wandered into the bathroom and decided to make it reflect an improvised idea they had (perhaps an institutionally forbidden one, as suggested by the graffiti style). However, upon closer inspection, these texts and images had obviously been pre-fabricated and placed on the bathroom stall walls. They were ideals decided in a different room at a previous time, and then placed there to appear unique and spontaneous. The "improvised" idea was programmed and regulated. It could literally be reprinted and placed anywhere with its structure intact.

The bulletin boards placed inside the House building also captured this tension. Just to the right of the bathroom stall there was a bulletin board on the wall. The contents of a bulletin board, by definition, are impermanent and elicit various forms of engagement. A bulletin board in a community forum invites those in its presence to act: to read, write down information, rip off phone number tabs, post new content, and reposition items. However, the bulletin boards inside the House were almost exclusively for House programs and services. The one in the women's bathroom featured four rows of House programs and events. All of the items were the same size, featured the House logo, and had been placed in symmetrical, straight lines. This bulletin board usually allowed for only one-way dialogue: the reader took up the existing text but did not contribute new text or rearrange items. The structure of the dialogue had already been established. The bulletin board content was controlled and mediated by House staff. One bulletin board in the main entrance did have two spaces for local work and volunteer opportunities. There did not seem to be spaces for other types of community events or announcements. Outside of the House, beyond the walls of the institution, there was one bulletin board where more community-oriented posters could go. Those bulletin boards symbolically represented the social relations of participant-driven programming. The medium for engagement was fluid but the structure was established and mediated by staff.

These tensions between the ideal of participant-driven programming and the daily practices through which the ideal was implemented had implications for how events and programs were envisioned and developed and how feedback was heard and integrated. While House staff most often articulated their role to be supporting volunteer initiatives, that way of framing their involvement could overshadow the extent of staff direction that I witnessed.

Furthermore, as I note above, volunteer ideas that fit within existing House and staff frameworks were perhaps the most likely to be taken up. Ideas that were "out of step" with and potentially challenged relations at the House were, such as those put forward by Susan, tended to be overlooked, suggesting that the knowing of more marginalized elders was being subordinated through moments of disjuncture (Smith, 1990, p. 11). In the previous paragraphs I describe the significant response that the volunteers received when they suggested creating a list of tasks and a task monitor for volunteer duties for the Seniors' Drop-in. Within a few days their suggestions were put into action. However, the post-it that I wrote about multiculturalism never again resurfaced as far as I know. Two staff members at the volunteer training session told me they would pass on my post-it to the coordinator and that it would be discussed by the SAG committee at the next meeting. I attended the next SAG meeting shortly after that brunch. The post-it was not discussed and the question on the post-it was not raised. Another volunteer who was at the brunch and expected some follow-up asked the coordinator directly about the post-its. The coordinator said she had not been told that there were any remaining items from this meeting but that she would check with Paris, a more senior staff member.

4.4   Conclusion: Senior-driven programming in the third age

In this chapter I trace how the Seniors' Drop-In Program was organized through various interactions, meetings, and texts at the House. By considering the behind-the-scenes work that staff did to implement this program, I show how they took up the complementary and contradictory textually-mediated discourses of senior-driven programming and managerial efficiency. While on the one hand senior-driven programming is motivated by a desire to

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develop programs based on the needs, interest and capacities of local elders, this programming model has the potential to overlap with – and in some cases to further – market-driven ideologies shaping "productive" aging within neoliberal government population management agendas designed to minimize federal, provincial and municipal spending ("outputs") and maximize elder "inputs" (Estes, 2001; Komp, 2011).

Within this context, I consider how staff were enabled and constrained in their work by the House's reliance on temporary, often non-renewable, grant-based funding. Due to their multiple, competing responsibilities, staff had limited time to engage in front-facing work with elder volunteers. They tended to orient planning meetings around achieving pre-established institutional needs, while sometimes privileging elders' ideas that fit within them. Meaningful, inclusive consultation with elder volunteers takes a substantial amount of time and often does not conform to the timeline for grant applications. Ultimately the way staff approached and shaped program planning was informed by particular institutional constraints that could displace or transform potential volunteer suggestions and discussions, particularly those of racial minority elders. Furthermore, funding limited the ability of staff to ethically reach out to minority elders who were less represented at the House, such as the Musqueam First Nation, thus perpetuating the invisibility of the ethnocentrism embedded in Western, individualistic "active" aging models.

Through my documentation of the competing dynamics shaping interactions between staff and elder volunteers, I also address an empirical research gap in the NH literature identified by Yan et al. (2016, p. 4): "despite the emphasis on volunteers' participation in its operation, it is not clear how volunteers are involved in the day-to-day decision-making process except at the board of director level." I suggest that researchers must consider how elders' involvement in

daily decisions is hooked into social relations within and beyond the House. In the next chapter I return to the standpoint of elders to consider another layer shaping the organization of the Seniors' Drop-In: the feminization of House spaces and programs.

Chapter 5: "It's not quite as energetic as the Grouse Grind I do": Elder men and seniors programming

> *The dictate to age successfully by remaining active is both ageist and ignorant of the lives of the working classes. Spurred by the new anti-aging industry, the promotional images of the "active elder" are bound by gender, race, class, and sexuality [and] assume a sort of "active" lifestyle available only to a select group: men whose race and class make them most likely to be able to afford it.*
> — Calasanti & King, 2005, p. 6

I noticed an absence of elder men during my interviews and observations at the House. For instance, there were no men on the SAG committee that made decisions about the Seniors' Drop-In Program. Furthermore, only three to four men regularly attended the Drop-in out of the twenty-five to thirty-five weekly participants and only three men lived in the fifteen-unit seniors' residence attached to the House. At first, this may seem unproblematic. It is common knowledge that women live longer than men. However, beliefs about the ratio of men to women in older adulthood tend to be skewed. In one study, for example, sociology students in England greatly underestimated the number of older men in the country when asked to approximate the statistical ratio between men and women of retirement age (Fennell & Davidson, 2003). Within the West Side neighbourhood were the House is located, 43% of adults over sixty-five are men, a much larger percentage than I saw at the House. Although the percentage of men residing in the area decreases with age (men only constitute 35.6% of West side elders eighty and older), even this number does not align with men's representation at the House (Statistics Canada, 2011).

The tendency to overlook the presence of older men (in comparison to older women) is connected to the perception that aging, particularly within the fourth age, is a "women's issue" given that women are more likely to experience old "old" age and to face systemic, gendered

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inequalities when they do (Hearn, 1995, p. 101). These challenges include having access to fewer resources, being less likely to have a partner to assist with health issues, and being more likely to be institutionalized (Gee & Kimball, 1987; Russell, 2007; Spector-Mersel, 2006). Although early sociologists working in the structural functionalist tradition constructed the "problem" of old age around compulsory retirement, and therefore centered men's experiences of aging around the loss of the "work role" (see Parsons, 1942), these analyses overlooked that "men… are gendered subjects" (McDaniel, 2003, p. 327), often taking an essentialist and cisnormative approach equating sex with an assumed natural, binary gender (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016; Spade, 2011). Concerns about women's well-being in older adulthood became the focus of academic literature from the 1970s to the 1990s, particularly in the context of growing feminist gerontology scholarship emphasizing structured dependence and cumulative inequalities. More recently, third age research focuses on the construction of elders as "ageless" consumers, including the extensive bodily regulation regimes targeted toward older men (Calasanti and King, 2007; Joseph, 2012; Katz & Marshall, 2003; Laz, 2003; Liechty, Dahlstrom, Sveinson, Son & Rossow-Kimball, 2014; Marshall, 2012; Marshall & Katz, 2002; Slevin, 2008).

In this chapter I emphasize the standpoint of mostly white elder men in relation to that of elder women and staff at the House by asking how they thought about and engaged (or not) with the Seniors' Drop-in. In chapters three and four I traced the discursive coordination of the experiences of House program staff and elder volunteers involved with the Drop-in. However, the silences and absences through which this program was put together could be just as significant and telling. Therefore, in this chapter I draw upon both ethnographic data and interviews to show how the men I spoke with and observed actively avoided participation in all

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or some Drop-in program components. The small number of elder men who did participate

positioned themselves in relation to the program and other volunteers in particular limited ways.

Key to the men's restricted involvement was their perception that seniors' programs at

the House were too "feminine" (Renold, 2004, p. 252) and their conflation of femininity with

weakness, old age and more marginalized masculinities (Connell, 1995, 1998; Meadows and

Davidson, 2006). As these men defined themselves in contrast to this feminized space, they

performed their aging masculinity in a way that was dominant, youthful, capable, and virulent.

Through this chapter I demonstrate how the feminization of House programs and spaces was a

dynamic process through which elder men performed aging and masculinity together as they

drew upon the third age discourse. Toward the end of the chapter I consider how staff and other

elders interpreted men's lack of participation in the Drop-In. I note how they articulated reasons

for this gender difference in ways that had the potential to both bolster and upend essentialist

logics of masculinity and femininity.

5.1   Doing Age

In light of my parents' divorce, I have been spending time with each of them on their own and

getting to know them in new ways. I sometime have dinner with my father who has been sharing

with me stories from his own childhood. I am struck by the degree to which he sees himself

aging in ways that are distinct from how his parents aged. During one of our dinners my father

told me about the Sunday outings he and his parents went on when he was about ten years old in

the mid 1950s. His parents were in their 50s at the time. My father explained that they would

drive to a park an hour from their home, pull out folding chairs, and fall asleep while he was left

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to entertain himself in the grass. He described his childhood as "boring," noting that his parents were too old and tired to regularly engage him in ways he found stimulating. My dad noted that he tried to do the opposite in raising my brother and me by frequently taking us on interesting outings. I jokingly pointed out that my dad was in his forties when I was born, making him just as old as his parents were while raising him. He clarified that although they were the same age, *being fifty* did not mean the same thing for his parents as it does for him. He went on to note that even at seventy years old (he turned seventy in January and is still an avid swimmer, hiker and sailor) he is still more active than his parents were at fifty. Through this story, my father presented age not as a biological imperative, but as a social act. Indeed, the meanings attached to age, much like the meanings attached to gender, were shaped by context, social expectations and daily interactions.

To make sense of age and aging as social accomplishments, I turn to literature on gender as a performance (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Feminist sociologists and queer theorists have developed ways of understanding gender, not as a consequence of biological sex, but as a social process that people "do" or "perform." West and Zimmerman (1987, p. 128) present a social constructionist framework for conceptualizing gender as something that people "do" routinely in everyday interactions and perceptions (rather than something people *are*). Judith Butler (1990) draws primarily from a post-structuralist framework to suggest that gender is not only produced through interaction, but through discourse (with discourse encompassing a wide variety of practices and texts). Thinking and acting are constrained within established discursive options, often accompanied by a variety of accountability sanctions for perceived failures. Building on the work of Laz (2003), who conceptualizes age as an embodied

accomplishment, I argue that my older men participants performed both their gender and their age in intersecting ways through their involvement with and occasional rejection of House seniors' activities.

The connections between masculinity and aging have been largely overlooked within the sociology of gender (Spector-Mersel, 2006). For example, in writing about masculinities, renowned scholar Raewyn Connell (1995, 1998) complicates the "doing gender" approach by theorizing manifold versions of masculinity that are embedded in larger aspects of social structure and that change over time (1995, p. 67, 82). Conceptualizing masculinities as ongoing configurations of practice, Connell identifies hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized masculinities in a relationship with one another as well as femininity. Hegemonic masculinity represents the most culturally valued masculine form at a given time and place. An individual's social location and resources affect the access to and intelligibility of these various masculinities. Noticeably absent from Connell's work is meaningful engagement with intersections of age and ageing, despite Connell's careful attention to intersections between class, race, sexuality, and nationality in outlining the multiplicity of masculinity. My work is, therefore, intersectional in that I examine experiences and performances of masculine aging. I suggest that my participants did their aging and their gender together; these processes cannot be disconnected. Rather, they can only be understood as they inform one another (Denis, 2008, p. 681; Hill Collins, 1986, p.14-15).

While elder men's performances of aging masculinity must be situated within the actual time and places that they acted at the House, it is also crucial to connect their activities to the broader masculinity discourses that they drew upon. Elder men can encounter unique challenges

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as they reduce or terminate their involvement with paid employment (Liechty & Genor, 2013) and as they interpret their bodies through narratives of impending decline that they simultaneously resist (Genoe & Singleton, 2006; Marshall & Katz, 2002; Meadows & Davidson, 2006). Idealized forms of hegemonic masculinity contradict conceptions of aging that conflate older adulthood with forms of decline and dependence. Spector-Mersel (2006, p. 73) argues "while in relation to early and middle adulthood we find clear models of dignified masculinity, these become vague, even non-existent, when referring to later life. Capitalist societies do not provide clear final phases for their exalted masculinity stories." Dominant forms of masculinity that individuals take up through their lives are already implicitly "aged" in that they are oriented around idealized, youthful, embodied forms of power (Liechty & Genoe, 2013; Meadows & Davidson, 2006; Spector-Mersel, 2006) connected to strength, control, reliability, and capability (Kimmell, 1994, p. 441). Power and control, two characteristics embedded within dominant Western masculinity discourses, are equated with vigorous energy and physicality (Gross & Blundo, 2005) exemplified through youthful domains including sport and the workforce (Spector-Mersel, 2006).

Although some elder men may retain forms of power through the accumulation of wealth, as well as the possibility of continuing mental (rather than physical) labour within the knowledge and service economies (Hearn, 1995, p. 101), aging often remains associated with fears of increasing dependence (on others and on the state) and decreasing competence. Old men are thus positioned in complex ways in relation to the dominant discourses of masculinity that organize social life. Doing masculinity in old age is a contradictory process, particularly for the elder men at the House, most of whom were dependent on social programs for their housing and the

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majority of their income. The challenges of terminating paid employment may be particularly pronounced for elder men who do not have company pensions and who do not have passive income or assets to rely upon. As they attempt to retain their privileged status as white, straight, men (Connell, 1995; Spector-Mersel, 2006), they also negotiate ageist assumptions granting older individuals lower status and diminished relevance.

One way in which idealized versions of masculinity and aging intersect is through the third age discourse that responsibilizes individuals to make choices and adopt habits to age in ways that are not "old" (see Calasanti and King, 2007). The third age is conceptualized as distinct from the responsibilities of middle age, typically seen as associated with paid employment and family responsibilities (Weiss & Bass, 2002, p. 3). It is also distinct from the fourth age, which is associated with physical and mental decline. In contrast, the third age is idealized as a time for freedom, flexibility, personal growth, and continued health. Many of the professional and academic discourses focusing on old men in the third age prioritize men's bodily regulation. Fitness and diet routines are a primary way that elder men are positioned to manage their bodies (Laz, 2003; Liechty, Dahlstrom, Sveinson, Son & Rossow-Kimball, 2014) in order to achieve dominant portrayals of youthful manhood (Slevin, 2008). In one qualitative study with elder Caribbean-Canadian men who play and/or watch cricket, the author found that these men engage in alcohol consumption rituals at cricket events to conceal evidence of bodily weakness as they seek to display forms of hegemonic masculinity (Joseph, 2012).

The medicalization of old men's bodies, particularly with regard to sexual function (defined in limited, heteronormative and cisnormative ways), is also the focus of a growing scholarship on men in the third age (Marshall & Katz, 2002). Calasanti and King (2007) found

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that anti-aging ads in the United States present older manhood as a time for individuals to make consumption choices in order to maintain idealized and essentialized "male" hormone-levels, sexual performance (defined based on erection) and to delay signs of aging, which were associated with men's bodies becoming more "feminine" (with regard to hormone levels and passive sexual function). In these anti-aging ads, women "serve as foils—examples of what not to be but what to seduce and conquer instead" (Calasanti & King, 2007, p. 367). The theme of elder masculinity being positioned as distinct from and superior to femininity as well as more marginalized masculinities (Meadows & Davidson, 2006; Renold, 2004) is one that I take up in this chapter. I do so by looking at how elder men at the House both participated in and rejected seniors' activities that they deemed to be too "feminine," and, therefore, "weak" and "old."

At the House, I was in a unique position to see how elder men managed and performed their aging through their participation (or lack of participation) in the organized social activities designated for "seniors." Recent research from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia suggests that elder men are less likely than elder women to participate in seniors' group activities (Davidson, Daly & Arber, 2003; Liechty, 2013; Russell, 2007; Williamson, 2000). Russell (2007) conducted interviews with eleven elder men in Eastern Sydney, Australia about their perceptions of seniors' activities organized by the Eastern Sydney Health Service. The men he interviewed felt there was an absence of activity options linked to "traditional male interest" such as sports, fishing, and carpentry (2007, p. 182). These elders also reported enjoying activities that granted them more independence and flexibility, rather than those that were scheduled. Interestingly, elder men have also been shown to prefer activities not specifically labeled as being for "seniors" (Davidson, Daly & Arber, 2003; Russell, 2007).

During their semi-structured interviews with eighty-five elder men in south-east England, Davidson, Daly and Arber (2003, p.85) found that elder men perceived senior-specific activities as more suitable for "old women," and that they only imagined participating in these activities when they were "too old" or "too sick" to do otherwise. I interpret this finding as an indication of how elder masculinity is performed as a rejection of that which is rendered "feminine" or as representing "marginalized" masculinity and, *therefore,* as "weak" and "old." However, the authors Davidson et al. (2003) do not to interrogate gender as a performance in their article. Instead, they propose ways to modify the delivery of scheduled social activities in order to maximize men's participation and therefore their health outcomes in older adulthood, thus reifying certain essentialized gender differences.

I connect, more directly, men's rejection of and strategic limited participation in seniors' activities to their *performance* of their gender and age. As sociologist Russell (2007, p. 178) points out, "there has been remarkably little systemic examination of how older women and men 'do' gender in their everyday lives." As such, I do not seek to make claims about what is "healthy" or "appropriate" for old men, but instead aim to identify and explicate social processes through which aging masculinity is *produced.* I avoid engaging with men's lack of participation as a fact to be acted upon by institutional policy shifts, but instead take it up as an entry point to understand how social relations are coordinated at the House. At the House, I was in a unique position to be able to speak with the elder, mostly white men and to observe how they positioned themselves in their interactions with women elders and staff. I am, therefore, able to consider not just how these men perform aging masculinity during our interviews, but also how they do so as they navigate activities at the House on a daily basis. Overwhelmingly, these elder men—either

low-income residents of the subsidized seniors' housing or higher income property owners living in the area—positioned themselves as distinctly non-feminine. They did so in this context by controlling and limiting *which activities* they participated in, and *how* they took up these activities. Many defined the House as a feminine space, and positioned themselves as volunteers rather than participants. They did not present themselves as recipients or beneficiaries of the House's social programs, but as helping to organize and implement these services for others. Rejecting femininity and feminized activity was a way they performed their aging in a way that was not "old," yet that had roots not only within discourses of sexism but homophobia as well (particular insofar as gay and queer masculinities tend to be seen as inferior).

5.2   Men doing masculine aging at the House

Noticeable about the demographics of House staff members and of participants in the seniors' programming was the large number of women. To some extent, the prominence of women staff at the House was a feature of the historically gendered and low-pay work associated with local community-building and social support programs. Many staff and old adult participants perceived House spaces to be feminized in the sense that there were more women than men that organized and participated in the space, but also feminized through the belief that activities and ways of relating deemed feminine were privileged. For some people, the large number of women was seen as a positive feature of the House. Some staff members, such as Ailsa, enjoyed the atmosphere that they saw as the outcome of this women's space: "I've never worked anywhere where we were all women. It's a different energy, and it's…gentle. It's nice." Ailsa acknowledged

working almost exclusively with women created what she perceived to be a unique environment that she appreciated.

I was also able to speak with and observe six old men at the House (five of whom were white), including the only three men who participated in the Seniors' Drop-in Program on a somewhat regular basis. These elder men articulated their awareness of the House environment with its high numbers of women. Peter, for example, noted the high number of women staff, and suggested that this created an environment where a uniquely feminine way of operating dominated. I asked him why he thought there were more women and he answered,

> I don't know. Maybe, maybe women are more—Well, the administration is
> women. They understand one another. And maybe there's the feeling, that nobody
> talks about, that women are more people-oriented and it'd be smoother sailing
> with a lot of women. I don't know. But accidentally on purpose there ends up
> being more women here.

Peter noted that there were more women in House programs and housing, and felt that that was connected to the high number of women working at the House. Drawing on essentializing conceptions of gender, he suggested that, in comparison to men, women are more "people-oriented" and, therefore, are better able to work in a community-oriented environment, such as the House. As a self-described "loner" living in this environment, Peter compared himself and his interaction style to an over-stimulated koala bear:

> I'm just sort of, uh, you know, say 'hi' in the hallway and that's about it.…You
> know I read about the koala bears in Australia. They're having problems with the
> koalas, problems breeding them, because the tourists do so much cuddling of the

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koalas that it gives, you know, they got cuddled too much and they don't want to

have sex anymore! That was like me….forced interaction with people that I really

don't—you know, especially one of them, kind of a vapid motormouth. And I just,

[laughs] you know, get me out of here.

Peter, as one of only three men who lived in the House's seniors' residence, did not appear to

place a lot of value on interacting with his women neighbours whom he perceived to be much

more social than he was. He saw some of the events and programs as a form of "forced

interaction" that he would have preferred to escape from. Peter implied that this feminized

environment was emasculating in the sense that it decreased his male sexual desire so much so

that he compared himself to a captive koala who didn't "want to have sex anymore!" Like other

elder men I discuss below, he sought to remove and separate himself from House activities he

perceived to be feminized.

Other elder men felt that having an environment with so many women affects how

decisions were made. Stan, who was a resident of the House's seniors' housing, perceived that

his ideas for the rooftop garden were not looked upon favourably by the gardening committee.

He wanted to put a small greenhouse in the garden but had been unsuccessful so far. Stan noted

that his plan was not supported by members of the committee, most of whom were women. In

trying to make sense of why the committee did not support his idea, he alluded to proprietary

ideas related to gender as one of the explanations:

People you know, they reject things because, I don't know, because it was my

idea not theirs […] especially [with] all woman in the garden committee. [It] is [a]

majority of women.

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Stan suggested that the women on the committee were not interested in his plans because they

did not come up with them themselves. He felt outnumbered by women who had the majority of

the decision-making power and who he perceived supported one another more than they

supported him. In positioning himself as separate from the women on the committee, Stan

echoed Peter's comment about the women staff at the House: "They understand one another."

After continued frustrations, Stan no longer attended committee meetings. Both Peter and Stan

perceived that House environments were dominated by women, and, therefore, limited their own

participation in this environment.

In addition to identifying and distancing themselves from an environment they saw as

feminized, elder men also talked about activities at the House in gendered ways. Peter directly

made a connection between his willingness to participate in an activity and the gender of the

people engaging in the activity:

> I'm not much of a joiner. I'm not much of a clubber. I really have to make myself
>
> do that, and the—one of the *ladies* here—it's mostly *ladies* here—One of the
>
> *ladies* wanted to get together a game night, where we get together for board
>
> games and whatever, and I-- what do I play? Oh, I can play chess. I'm a terrible
>
> player, terrible player. And I have no interest in becoming a good player; I just
>
> love the romance of the game. Makes it fun to just play chess *by yourself*, because
>
> the pieces kind of pretty much move themselves and you get a lot of thrills, 'Oh,
>
> that's a surprise!' But, yeah, *not much of a games man*. I got together with them
>
> one night and they started doing puzzles and I thought 'Puzzles. Okay, I'm not—
>
> *I'm not ready for puzzles though*.' [laughs] It's weird. At one point my

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granddaughters were into puzzles and I [thought], 'Puzzles? Wow.' That, um—

My interests are very, very particular. I suppose I'm a pretty *smart boy*. I always

have been, and a lot of people just don't have the interests that I have. Science and

current affairs and the CIA and stuff. [my emphasis]

In describing games nights in relation to his own abilities and interests, Peter drew on

assumptions about leisure activities to distinguish himself from the "ladies." Through his

repeated references to himself as a "smart boy" who was a "loner" and, therefore, not a "games

man" or "a joiner," Peter removed himself from and defined himself in contrast to the realm of

feminized social activities engaged in by "ladies" at the House and his "granddaughters" alike,

noting the uniqueness of his "very particular" tastes that seemed to centre around the male-

dominated social spheres of "science and current affairs." Peter constructed a hierarchy of

activities based on level of difficulty, with science and politics at the top. In contrast, feminized

activities—seen as less intellectually demanding, and, therefore, inferior and undesirable—are

placed lower on the hierarchy.

This gendered hierarchy of activity intersected with and took on meaning for the men I

spoke with in the context of their aging. Feminine spaces and activities were associated with

weakness, and, therefore, represented mental and/or physical decline. Although Peter was willing

to engage with chess (a typically male-dominated game) as an individual, non-interactive

activity, he saw group puzzles as something he was "not ready for." As I discuss in chapter three,

Peter was fearful of aging in a way that was "old." He explained to me during our interview that

he was happy to die if the aneurism he had been diagnosed with ruptures (what he called his

"ticket to ride") rather than live without maintaining his level of intellect. For Peter, socializing

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over puzzles represented not just a women's activity, but also an activity for "old" people—a life stage he did not associate with himself.

Peter established his youthful aging in part through his descriptions of his romantic interests. At various points in our interview Peter mentioned his own heterosexual interest in younger women, clarifying that he felt most of the women who frequented the House were too old for him: "I find myself, when I'm attracted to a woman, it's often because, well, they're too young for me. But then, because my taste in women is kind of fixated [laughs] and I'm kind of a perpetual kid myself." Peter suggested that his sexual tastes were fixated in time; fixated on him still seeing himself as a younger man ("forty-five-ish") attracted to women in this younger age range. By rejecting activities and company that he perceived to be "old" and feminized, he asserted his ability to maintain his heterosexual, masculine prowess rooted in his active maintenance of a spry intellect. Peter's performance of heterosexual competence through a desire for younger women parallels research findings documenting that across the life span, heterosexual men were more likely to seek younger women who they deemed physically attractive while women expressed greater interest in older men with higher status (Sears-Roberts & Mendelsohn, 2009).

I should note that the context in which experiences are spoken shapes how the experience is put together (Smith, 2005, p. 125). For example, in their interviews with older Canadian men, Stephenson, Wolfe, Coughlan, and Koehn (1999) found that their participants produced more career-oriented accounts of their lives when speaking with a researcher who was a man, and presented themselves as more family-oriented when interacting with women researchers. My participants' perceptions of me as a young woman that they could read as heterosexual and

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paying undivided attention to them during the interview certainly shaped the way they responded and presented themselves to me. I found that some of the older men participants performed versions of dominant masculinity for me, or perhaps more so for themselves in relation to me, during our interviews by establishing themselves as capable, relevant, and overtly heterosexual. Peter, for example, mentioned to me, unprompted, that his ex-wife told him he was an excellent lover. This performance also extended to intellectual virility for other interviewees. Some of the men I spoke with, upon learning of my university status, began outlining their own intellectual interests and abilities, sometimes so aggressively that it was difficult for me to contribute to, interject, or reorient the conversation. In short, my presence as the interviewer may have shaped some of these participants' responses to my questions as well as their own self-presentations, bringing out particular masculine performances. However, in my interviewing, observations and data analysis my primary concern is not to identify the components shaping the interview process in order to eliminate bias. Rather, I treated the way that elder men produced accounts of themselves in relation to me as a source of data about the performative nature of masculine aging.

Kristof, another elder white man in residence at the House, also distanced himself from the activities planned by the women residents. During our interview, he commented on the attempts by some of the women to organize social activities: "Some people get together and [do] crossword puzzles or g[o] out for a walk. It's not a great incentive or—for me it's most like *slowing down* and taking up time—taking time off from life w[ith] so many other things to do." Much like Peter, Kristof associated these types of social events with "slowing down" and "taking up time"—sentiments reflecting Kristof's understanding of his own aging and the value and

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appropriate use of his remaining time. He did not see himself as "slowing down" to do crossword puzzles in an organized social setting, but instead as actively taking up the many things he wanted to do with his time outside of the House on his own terms. Kristof explained that he did not think of himself as

> Being old and [a] senior citizen […] I never give up on the idea that I'm still [an] active, younger individual and I'd like to believe that everybody else is….In my mind, I am at twenty-six. And that's what I expect from me physically, independently and aesthetically.

Kristof presented himself as striving for the physical ability, independence, and visual appeal of a man in his mid twenties. He dedicated his time to pursuits that he found mentally stimulating and creative, such as his art. Kristof based his self-identity on his productive activities, so much so that he gave me one of his small paintings to remember him by. He also chose to focus on activities that kept him feeling agile and looking attractive, such as yoga and swimming. As we have already seen, he held himself to a high standard of activity and expected others to do the same: "There's no excuse to slowing down to such an extent that the people are using walkers or [a] cane when they could really recover by yoga [and] physical fitness." For Kristof, "slowing down" took on a distinctively embodied meaning; he saw board games as not just slow in pace and mental stimulation, but also physically slow and, therefore, aging the body through lack of movement.

Other elder men also rejected certain activities because they did not see them as a good use of their time. During one Seniors' Drop-in I observed how Rod, a resident of a local housing co-op and a retired travel tour guide, responded when an elder woman invited him to work on a

puzzle. This interaction occurred when I was seated at a lunch table speaking with Tammy, an older woman who had just finished telling me she was bipolar and, with no family or friends in the area, came to the House to chat with people as one of her primary avenues for social interaction. She asked if I knew where she could get supplies to make a poster. Tammy wanted to promote her new collaborative project: a large, complex puzzle that would remain in the House's publicly-accessible common room and that all would be invited to work on. In the middle of our conversation, Rod sat down across from us and asked what the poster would be for. Tammy started to explain, with some enthusiasm, that she was inviting everyone to work on an elaborate puzzle with her. Before she could finish her sentence Rod stated that he had no interest in doing puzzles given that he might only have a decade or so of time left. He began to explain to us how he preferred to use his time reading, travelling, and being outside. After a few minutes of Rod speaking, Tammy stated that puzzles were not for everyone, but that they were one of her favourite hobbies. Rod did not acknowledge that statement and continued to talk about his favourite pastimes. By interrupting, dismissing, and redirecting our conversation from Tammy's interest in puzzles to Rod's interest in other activities, Rod communicated that his time and interests were more valuable. His comment about only having a "decade" left also indicated that he had done the same mental equation as Peter and Kristof: he cherished his remaining time and wanted to use it as effectively as possible, based on his own criteria for determining what activities were the most valid.

Through these interactions I began to see a pattern emerge in how these elder men presented themselves. They consistently interpreted and labeled certain activities—such as puzzles, board games, and crosswords—as too feminine, too slow, and too easy, and therefore

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distanced themselves from these activities. Their interpretation of these activities was connected to the perceived characteristics of these activities—indoors, scheduled, interaction-oriented, and minimally challenging (both intellectually and physically)—as well as with the people who most often engaged with them at the House—older women. These elder men's rejection of the activities, as well as their narration of this rejection to me during our interviews, was performative. In describing the more valuable things they had to do, they made a claim about who they were and how they were aging (or *not aging*). "I'm not ready for puzzles" was how Peter verbalized his opposition to this feminized activity, indicating that he associated this way of spending time (or "taking time off from life" in Kristof's words) with an older stage of the aging process that he did not yet associate with himself. It is noteworthy that Kristof imagined himself as twenty-six and Peter thought of himself as forty-five. They equated participation in "feminine" activities with giving up on their efforts to remain intellectually and physically stimulated and stimulating. If they spent their time playing board games with groups of elder women they would have had to reimagine who they were. They would have been giving into old age instead of using their limited remaining time to age in ways that were not "old." Within this context, a binary oppositional hierarchy was created between masculinity and femininity, and in rejecting feminized pastimes, these elder men also rejected the mental or physical decline associated with aging processes. As Connell (1995, p. 44) explains, "Masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, which have meaning in relation to each other." These men's performances of aging masculinity relied on the construction of elder masculinity as distinct from and superior to elder femininity; they were doing elder masculinity by *not doing* elder femininity.

Furthermore, these performances shored up hegemonic masculinity in relation to subordinate and marginalized masculinities that may be feminized, racialized, queer, trans* or dis/abled. The social construction and stereotyping these elder men engaged in is reminiscent of the othering processes characteristic of Said's (1994) concept of Orientalism. As these elder men drew upon binary hierarches of masculine and feminine, and of hegemonic and marginalized masculinity they also reintrenched divisions between the third age and fourth age (or the "young" old and the "old" old), independence and dependence, productivity and unproductivity, and culture and nature (van Dyk, 2016).

In tracing how elder men positioned themselves in relation to elder femininity and alternative masculinities, I find it helpful to reread Pascoe's articulation of the "fag" position negotiated by contemporary adolescent boys in the United States (2005, p. 332). Pascoe finds that becoming a "fag" is rooted in masculinity policing against the constant threat of "failing at the masculine task of competence, heterosexual prowess and strength or...revealing weakness or femininity" (Pascoe, 2005, p. 330). Much like how adolescent boys constantly reaffirm their rejection of the "fag" position like a "hot potato" (2005, p. 330), the "old woman" is an "abject" position (Butler, 1993, p. 3) through which elder men at the House regulated their own masculinity, in this case intersecting with their performance of age and aging. As these elder men worked to maintain the dynamic, competent, desirable elements of themselves that they idealized from their earlier decades, they constantly rejected the possibility of aging like an "old woman." The production of competent elder masculinity necessitates "the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings," meaning deeply dreaded "'uninhabitable' zones of social life" that must be routinely cast out (Butler, 1993, p. 3) in order to shore up the intelligible older masculine

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subject. Through their daily negotiations of activities assessed according to an implicit hierarchy of challenge and productivity, these elder men rejected this "abject" position through interaction. They constructed the "old woman" in terms of how old women were believed to spend their time (and more generally in terms of how they were perceived to age in feminine ways that embraced weakness and incompetence). This abject position represents a "constitutive outside" (Butler, 1993, p. 3)—a realm of an unacceptably gendered, aged subject to be rejected. The constant and inevitable possibility of becoming "old"—meaning the loss of competence and therefore the embrace of feminine weakness—is a threat perceived to exist outside of the subject, yet which is also already "inside" the subject as the basis against which the subject is produced. The "old woman" constantly threatens to develop within elder men as they age and therefore serves as a "threatening specter" (Butler, 1993, p.3) of an unsuccessful, unknowable masculinity. It both threatens and constitutes elder masculinity and requires ongoing, daily rejection.

The elder men I discuss above explicitly rejected participation in the realm of feminized activities; they did not attend scheduled "games nights" at the House and they rarely participated in the House's seniors' programs such as the Drop-in. However, I also spoke with and observed elder men who *did* participate in these activities at the House. I found that even as they participated, they did so in ways that distinguished themselves from the women participants around them. In some cases, elder men attended a seniors' program but only took part in certain activities during a session. For example, the small number of elder men at the Seniors' Drop-in routinely refused to participate in the exercise portion of the entertainment. Every week at the Drop-in a fifteen-minute period before lunch was dedicated to exercise. Most often Rose, an older woman who was highly active in House programs and who lived in a House seniors'

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residence, led some light aerobic exercises. Rose lived with multiple sclerosis and typically led the exercises on the stage at the front of the room while sitting in a chair. Rose had a mobile chair that she rode to the front of the room, at which point she transferred to a House chair. In our discussions, Rose shared with me that her own medical condition allowed her to create exercises that were more effective and tailored to old adults because of her experiential understanding of the importance of low impact movements.

During one lunch, as the song *Cecilia* started to play, Rose began to clap her hands and smiled widely as she beckoned everyone in the room to join her in aerobics. The room was filled with about thirty-five to forty people, the majority of whom were elder white women sitting around circular tables in groups of six to eight. Every single woman in the room, including the staff and volunteers (including me), began to follow Rose's movements. Some women remained seated while others stood in place to make larger movements. I was positioned at the back left of the room (by the upstairs kitchen) as I circled my wrists, rolled my shoulders, and began the arm exercises. These upbeat, active, uninterrupted minutes were one of my favourite parts of my weekly volunteer shift. From my vantage point I was able to watch the only four elder men in the room respond to Rose's repeated invitations and encouragement for all to join in. Frank, a white elder in his early seventies (and the only man volunteer), walked out of the room quickly (much like he walked out of the room when Stacey, a fellow volunteer, asked to have a volunteer meeting, as I document in chapter four). Another elder man walked slowly from his table to the side of the room, where he leaned against the ledge below the window and did not move. The other two men in the room stayed seated at their tables and observed but did not follow any of Rose's movements. One of these elder men was the House's Seniors' tai chi instructor, Chris.

Even though Chris volunteered his time leading tai chi every week for a group of elders (usually women), he would not take part in that day's exercise as a participant (only in his own sessions as a coach). The significance of these men's actions was foregrounded for me by how catchy and grabbing I found the song *Cecilia* (as sung by Simon and Garfunkel). It was difficult for my body *not* to move in some way when I heard this song (even if my head just bobbed to the rhythm). The men in the room did not clap, or tap, or bob. Their heads and limbs were still.

As I did the lunch dishes downstairs with Frank about an hour later, I recalled that he left the room for the exercise portion of the lunch. I mentioned how much I enjoyed doing Rose's exercises. In response he stated, "It's not quite as energetic as the Grouse Grind I do." Frank did not explicitly refer to the gendered nature of the low-impact aerobics, led by an elder woman and participated in entirely by women. However, this statement alerted me to a hierarchy that Frank perceived between various types of activity, seemingly ranked by level of difficulty and/or expertise. The Grouse Grind is a well-known Vancouver hike that is notorious for how challenging it is. In only 2.9 kilometres hikers tackle a 853 metre elevation gain. The North Vancouver Fire and Rescue team responds to approximately eighty rescues on the trail per year (Slaughter, 2013). Four people have died there since 1999, including one older man who collapsed in July 2016 (Zeidler, 2016). Two of the four deaths were caused by heart attacks, making the hike particularly precarious for old adults. The Grouse Grind is outdoors, physically demanding, risky, unscheduled, and can be undertaken alone. It is also an activity that people of all ages do; it is not labeled for "seniors" in particular. In contrast to anything "old," this hike appeals to youthful notions of bodily vitality and stamina. At the beginning of the hiking trail is an ad by lululemon, an athletics apparel company, that reads, "Legs, you got this!" This ad

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speaks to the reputation of the hike as one that is challenging and, therefore, relies on individual strength and persistence. All of these Grouse Grind characteristics stand in stark contrast to the seniors' light aerobics, which was a regularly scheduled group activity specifically for "seniors" that took place indoors for less than fifteen minutes and was designed to have minimal bodily impact.

It is important to note that Frank was always a volunteer and never a participant at the Seniors' Drop-in, as well as at the many other programs he was involved with at the House. Having recently retired from a high-status government career in an engineering sector, Frank was somewhat distinct from the elder men who lived at the House. He owned a free-standing home in the highly unaffordable neighbourhood the House was situated in, indicating that he occupied a different class position than the elders who resided in subsidized seniors' housing. Interestingly, Frank treated his volunteering at the House like a nine-to-five job. He arrived around the same time every morning and stayed almost all day, five days a week (Monday to Friday). Frank had developed expertise in how House programs worked. He liked to fix problems on his own as they arose, performing competence and decision-making as though his volunteer work was an extension of his career. When faced with a clogged sink on one occasion, and an overflowing toilet on the other, Frank did not take up my suggestions to seek staff help. Instead, he quickly located the necessary tools in the areas of the House where he knew they were kept, and he fixed the problems himself.

Frank routinely alerted me and the other women volunteers to his proficiency in gendered ways. For instance, every Tuesday we spent about thirty minutes cleaning dishes standing side by side over a double sink in the kitchen. Even though Frank only started volunteering a few

weeks before I did, he trained me and the other new women volunteers on how to do dishes. He regularly came up with more efficient ways for the volunteers to complete the dishwashing and sterilizing process. It often meant washing dishes in a certain order that he dictated to us on each particular day (e.g., cups first, then plates, then cutlery) in order to ensure we maximized space in the sterilizing machine that we then loaded the dishes into. I wore rubber gloves when washing dishes since my skin tends to dry and crack from the heat and soap. Frank commented on my gloves almost every week, noting with a smile how "delicate" my hands are in comparison to his that do not "need" gloves. Every time the sterilizer "beeped" to signal completion, Frank opened up the sterilizer door right away and took the dish tray out with his bare hands, despite my protests that the tray was too hot to be handled and that the steam had not yet dissipated (thus fogging up my glasses). Frank routinely dismissed my concerns (and those of the other women in the kitchen), noting that he liked to keep an efficient pace and that he had built up a "resistance" to the high temperature. When I was on sterilizer duty, Frank sometimes overruled my own timing and took the dishes out himself before I was ready. Even when Frank was doing the same activity as I and the other women volunteers (dishes in this case), he distinguished himself and his abilities from us in these subtle ways. He also managed his presence in the women-only space by jokingly asking if he was interrupting "lady talk" when he walked in the kitchen.

Although there were no formal distinctions between volunteers, Frank took steps to position himself as a leader in the group. He routinely demonstrated his competence and expertise by studying the dishwashing process and advising the women volunteers on how to best complete it, sometimes even interjecting and completing the task himself if he felt we were

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too slow. As Davidson et al. (2003, p. 84) argue in relation to older men's choice of activities, "Being useful conflates with the masculine imperative of work, routine and profitable use of time." Through his emphasis on efficiency and his habit of pointing out differences between how he and the other women work, Frank performed aging masculinity in ways that established and maintained his competence as he transitioned into retirement and found himself navigating an environment composed primarily of women (in contrast to the male-dominated field of engineering that he worked in). Frank's gendered aging performance also ties into dominant masculinity discourses (Genoe & Singleton, 2006) emphasizing "the importance of work, maintenance of physical strength, and the rejection of characteristics considered feminine" (Liechty & Genoe, 2013, p. 441). Frank demonstrated his own work ethic and physical prowess precisely by acting to distinguish himself from the women around him. Even as he engaged in feminized volunteer activities, Frank did so in a distinctly non-feminine way.

This positioning as a 'leader' or 'coach' was also taken up by two other elder men at the House. When I asked Kristof about his interest in joining the House's seniors' programs, he responded that he did not see himself participating in these programs. Instead, he imagined himself possibly acting as an instructor disseminating knowledge to others, noting, "I would [be] happy to coach beginner yoga or introduction to art." Through this subtle shift in focus, Kristof established himself not as a learner or group member, but as an expert whose role was to coach or lead others. Kristof presented himself as comfortable in entering these feminized spaces primarily as a volunteer who initiated and led the activity, rather than as a participant receiving instruction. This response echoed the actions of Chris, the seniors' tai chi instructor, who was able to enter an environment of older women as a coach, but did not take part in Rose's light

aerobics as a participant. Overwhelmingly, these elder men navigated feminized environments and activities, as well as their interactions with women in these spaces, by distinguishing themselves from the old women who they perceived are there primarily as participants. As these elder men work to achieve youthful, hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995), they do so by positioning themselves as distinct form and superior to the women around them – a practice that is not only sexist but that also shores up homophobia by confining the bounds of acceptable masculinity.

5.3   Women elders and staff making sense of men's (lack of) participation

In identifying the ways that elder men performed their masculinity by limiting or modifying their involvement in House activities, I also became curious about the ways that that behaviour was interpreted by others at the House. Men's lack of participation in House activities, despite its performative nature rooted in dominant masculinity discourses, can be interpreted in essentializing ways. For example, Williamson (2000, p. 56) found that old adults attending University of the Third Age (U3A) programs in Southwestern Sydney make sense of the small number of men participants based on the notion that "men and women retire differently because they *are basically different* and do different things"[my emphasis]. Did elder women and staff at the House also explain men's limited participation based on the essentialist logic that elder men and women "are basically different"?

Connell (1995, p. 68) suggests that essentialist and positivist interpretations of masculinity are frequently drawn upon to make sense of perceived gender differences. Essentialist logic posits that masculinity is a direct outcome of core, universal sex differences.

This logic is often used to bolster heteronormativity and cisnormativity, both of which work in conjunction and rely upon the assumed linear, binary connections between sex assignment, gender identity, gender presentation, and sexual orientation, with cisnormativity relying upon alignment between the former three criteria in particular (Butler, 1990; Frohard-Dourlent, 2016, p. 5, 14; Spade, 2011).

Connell dismisses essentialist accounts, noting "claims about a universal basis of masculinity tell us more about the ethos of the claimant than about anything else" (1995, p. 69). In other words, beliefs about inherent "maleness" speak to the ways that the believer sees and experiences the world. Positivist logic is more empirically driven but can reaffirm the same essentialist thinking. Positivist claims rely upon the empirical recording of men's activities, which become the basis for defining what is "masculine." However, Connell clarifies that "to list what men and women do requires that people be already sorted in the categories 'men' and 'women,'" thus demonstrating that positivist procedure relies upon the very classifications "that are supposedly under investigation" (1995, p. 69). Rather than seeking to examine how these binary classifications are produced, individuals who take up positivist logic often produce empirical evidence that reaffirms these same classifications.

I was positioned in my fieldwork at the House to be able to speak not only with older men themselves, but also with the women staff and elders that they interacted with. I was also able to see how women staff and elders responded to elder men in spaces and programs where they were the only men present. What I found was that these women elders and staff draw upon their own observations of men's lack of participation in ways that bolstered essentialist conceptions of gender. They did so by drawing on beliefs about inherent gender differences that

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paralleled the rigid gender binaries and hierarchies characteristic of the 1940s and 1950s – the decades the "boomers" were born (Baillargeon, 2006). They suggested that men were less social than women and, therefore, more likely to take up activities that were physical and task-oriented rather than interactive. However, in making sense of and speaking about men at the House, some of these elders and staff simultaneously created space to challenge this essentialist logic by pointing to historical events, such as war, that have shaped older men and women in particular ways.

The expressed belief that women were more visible at the House *because* they were more social than men was widespread among the women staff and elders that I spoke with. For example, I asked Melanie, a senior staff member, about male residents' participation in residence social activities. She explained that although all senior residents were selected based on their community-oriented commitments, she felt that what community involvement meant and looked like differed depending on the person:

Katherine: Were you involved in recruitment [of residents], and if so, what kind of people were you looking for?

Melanie: […] Do you want to be involved in the community? Do you want to, you know, be involved with your neighbours? Do you want to—Those were the key areas. I think that perhaps, this is speculative, but that perhaps *what that means for one person isn't the same for another*. I mean, I've heard a number of comments around how the men never come. There's two, three men. Three men. Three men that live here. That they're never—they're not getting involved in, like, games night. But perhaps that's not how they want to [get] involved [laughs] with

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comm—Or they're involved in other ways. Because I could see that. Because we

have, like, our knitting group, and we have other groups that are, you know,

chatty events, that I could see appealing to women more than they would

men. [my emphasis]

Melanie classified some types of events as involving a high level of interpersonal interaction, or

what she labeled "chatty." She felt that these types of events based primarily on relating to other

people were not desirable to old men in comparison to old women. Melanie went on to explain

that although she was aware she was stereotyping, there was some truth to certain gendered

assumptions:

It's kind of gender norm based, but I think there's also, like, *a reason why there is*

the stereotype that women will be fine just connecting and chatting over coffee,

whereas men need to be *doing something* and then they can have conversations.

But it's like, they *have to be building*—I mean, to be *super gender stereotypical*,

but like, they have to be building a bench or something, but then they can-- they

actually have conversations. [my emphasis]

Melanie clarified that men could be social, but it was typically as an unintended outcome of

some form of physically demanding work ("building a bench or something") with other people.

Events that were explicitly social in nature (rather than oriented around the completion of a

tangible goal) were seen as more appropriate for women. Of course, what counted as "doing

something" was already gendered. Melanie referred to the knitting group above, where the

participants (all women) create hats, scarves, socks, and sweaters to donate to homeless shelters.

However, she classified this group as primarily about the *process* of interaction rather than the final product produced (despite the tangible outcome).

Women elders also repeated the notion of distinctly gendered ways of relating to activities and to other people. Erica, for instance, described participating in the House cooking class for seniors:

Men are so different than women. Even with the cooking. This one guy, I…we took the cooking course with. He's doing the cooking and there's another man here, he's really helpful around the community. And he was cooking with us. And they just wanted to "get the job done!" We're not there just to get the job done, they were just doing all the work. We were there to, you know, work together, learn something, interact and um yeah, work together. So men just want to get the job done I think […] I don't know why they're there.

Through her reflections on her experiences cooking with men at the House, Erica found that she and her woman friend in the class were prioritizing the collaborative working process and interactions, whereas the men seemed to prioritize the goal of achieving the end result. She noted that they were "just doing all the work" in order to "get the job done!" rather than being there to "learn something [and] interact."

The majority of participants attributed the different rates and types of participation that they observed between men and women to inherent gender differences. This reasoning tends to reaffirm binary gender distinctions rooted in biology and psychology. However, there were a minority of participants, both staff and elders, who noted these differences but explained them through individuals' life experiences and structural conditions. Some mentioned the unequal

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distribution of wealth between elder men and women, noting that elder women were more likely to be in need of low income housing and access to affordable activities through the House. Others took a demographic approach, noting that due to differences in life expectancy, there were simply fewer elder men in the area. During our interview, I asked staff member Ailsa what she thought the elder men did with their time. Her explanation centered around men's generational experiences with war:

> They go to the Legion….Because, yeah, if you go to a bar…And I'm not—I'm certainly not saying all older men, but most of them are going to be men….It's a—I guess *it's a little sexist*. Men will have more of a tendency to go for a drink, hang with other men, talk rough. [laughs] And women will have more of a tendency to [ask], 'What can I do?' 'How can I give back?' Right? 'What can I put into it?' instead of take out of it. And I'm not saying men are bad people…. But, I think in general, that's just sort of like men are less likely to go for therapy or, you know. That's a hard decision for them. 'Cause in some ways, I guess they feel like it's an admission of a weakness or something, and I think the men that are coming up now, younger generations, will be less likely to feel that way. But certainly, you know, if you're in your…somewhere between your sixties and eighties […] you were brought up to be tough, you know, don't cry. Like, all the boys that came home from the war and don't ever talk about it again, bury it, and then move on with life. […] It's a big effect, to send a young boy into a war zone and then tell him to come home and shut up and carry on. Pull your socks up and go. [my emphasis]

Ailsa highlighted a variety of factors associated with the construction of particular masculinity norms. She began by noting that men tended to be less community-oriented in that their objective at the Legion as not to "give back" to others (which she associated more with women) but instead to "drink" and "talk rough." However, she clarified that the construction of masculinity in past generations raised expectations about toughness, often associated with preparing boys for war and silencing the challenging transitions they experience later in life. Ailsa connected performances of aging masculinity to social and historical context: younger generations of men will not age in the same way because they have not been through the same experiences. Indeed, fundamental shifts structuring gender for the "baby boomers" include the second and third waves of the women's movement, changing sexual norms and access to legal oral contraception, civil rights protests, gradually decreasing family sizes (Statistics Canada, 2015), the development of household technologies reducing the labour-intensive nature of domestic work, women's increasing labour force participation rates (Guppy & Luongo, 2015), and the expansion of mass marketing through which their generation became targeted as a key market segment (Badley et al., 2015, p. 42 – 43; Janssen, Dechesne, & Van Knippenberg, 1999; Korinek, 2000; Marwick, 1998; Owram, 1997; Ozanne, 2009, p. 133; Palmer, 2009; Smith & Clurman, 2007).

Ailsa's analysis of the construction of generational masculinity through war highlighted the social and historical context that produced the situations that played out at the House. These understandings enabled participants to articulate responses that had the potential to reinforce, as well as disrupt, rigid conceptions of gender. Ailsa, for example, concluded that insofar as gendered behaviour is connected to socialization more than biology, such behaviour will continue to change over time: "I think the men that are coming up now, younger generations,

will be less likely to feel that way [regarding weakness and emotion]." Other staff tended to hold binary, homogenized gender differences as the primary cause (rather than the outcome) of the social forces that produce these programming situations. When participants articulated the essentialist interpretations of gendered programming patterns discussed above, their responses typically led to reductionist conclusions about what it means to *be* a man or a woman (rather than what it means to *act* in masculine or feminine ways). Erica, for instance, finished her reflection on her cooking class experience with an expression of resignation about men's involvement: "I don't know why they're there." Through her resignation, she positioned the men in her class as inherently incapable of interacting with the women in the class in a way that was not task-oriented.

It is worth noting that staff reflected on the degree to which they made assumptions about gender in their interview responses. As they produced accounts of their experience for me, they also hedged their interpretations. For example, Melanie described her ideas as "super gender-stereotypical" and Ailsa identified some of her own comments as "a little sexist." Once they acknowledged their own discomfort with their response, and their awareness that it was not appropriate to make these types of claims, they both continued making their case about gender differences. This discursive move suggests they made a tacit distinction between what was appropriate to say or think and how things actually were. Peter also alluded to this discrepancy between what was "true" and what was appropriate to say out loud at the House in an exchange from our interview that I introduce earlier in this chapter. As Peter told me about his assessment that women were naturally better suited to work at the House because they were more "people-oriented," he described this essentialist sentiment as "the feeling that nobody talks about." The

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hedges and contradictions embedded in these comments are significant in the context of the House where "diversity," "inclusion," and "welcoming" were inscribed as core values in official texts (Statement of Diversity, 2013). Within this institutional context where inclusion was valued, it could become difficult to voice beliefs that may be interpreted as non-inclusive. As staff commented on elder men's behaviour that they perceived to be rooted in gender differences (whether inherent or socialized), they did not have the language to make sense of these differences in ways they were satisfied with. They acknowledged that their own position was "sexist" or "stereotypical," which they saw as inappropriate, yet they were unable to fully resolve this tension.

Many participants had a gendered framework in mind to explain men's absence or limited participation in House seniors' programs. However, they also had to account for the small number of men who *did* participate in these programs, and who, therefore, potentially took on the social role of the "old woman." Staff interpreted older men's involvement in these programs in ways that still naturalized differences between elder men and women, and maintained seniors' programs as elder women's spaces. Because the typical older man was not seen to find these feminized activities desirable, staff remarked that men who did attend usually had higher than average social skills, or had been prescribed social activity by their doctor to avoid isolation as they aged. They highlighted the unique situations and characteristics of these men instead of considering that they may have just enjoyed these activities. One staff member suggested that older men came to the House in order to "meet women" precisely *because it is a women's space*. Staff member Ailsa noted how unusual she found it to see two men participating in the Seniors' Art program. Their presence was so unexpected that she found it humorous: "I

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kind of joked to them, 'Are you guys really interested in the art, or are you just here to meet women?' [laughs]." In this case, in order to make men's presence in this feminized activity intelligible, Ailsa vocalized the threat of failed, unknowable masculinity ("Are you guys really interested in the art?") and found a way to resolve it ("or are you just here to meet women?"). Elder men can be seen engaging in this activity without embodying the "abject" position (Butler, 1993, p.3) of the "old woman," but only if they successfully demonstrate heterosexual prowess (therefore ensuring the heteronormative logic connecting sex, gender and sexual orientation in particular, limited ways is shored up) (Butler, 1990, p. 208 n.6). This is the same Seniors' Art class that elder resident Kristof considered taking part in. However, the only way he could imagine himself doing so was as an "instructor" rather than a participant: "I would [be] happy to coach […] introduction to art." In all cases, the men who entered these programs did so by strategically positioning themselves differently from the elder women participants. It seemed staff too made sense of elder men's involvement by explaining their presence in ways that retained distinctions between elder masculinity and elder femininity, sometimes positioning them as opposite and complementary. In making sense of men's involvement (and lack of involvement) in House seniors' programs, staff reaffirmed a gender binary and ultimately upheld a limited, idealized form of masculinity. As elder men performed aging masculinity by rejecting or repositioning themselves in relation to seniors' programs, this social accomplishment served to reaffirm and reproduce the feminized status of the House and its seniors' activities.

5.4   Conclusion

In this chapter I argue that elder men "do" aging masculinity and thus suggest that age and gender are performative and intersecting. My participants' actions and experiential accounts indicate that these performances are embedded within relations of power, with femininity and "old age" being (re)produced by these elder men as inferior. My elder men participants conflated and rejected oldness and femininity together as they presented themselves as capable, independent, and youthful through their choice of House activities and their strategic positioning within the activities they did take up. I also engaged with the accounts of staff and women elders who interacted with and observed elder men in House programs. These participants most often attributed gendered patterns in seniors' program participation to essentialized gender differences. They did so even as they acknowledged that the stereotypes they drew upon were unacceptable to articulate out loud. There was a tension between what some elders and staff thought and what they felt was appropriate to say within the House environment that they knew was intended to be inclusive, welcoming, and diverse. Ultimately, in successfully accomplishing particular performances of aging masculinity, these elder men (re)produce and (re)affirm the gendered logic and hierarchies that made it difficult for them to participate in House seniors' programs while retaining their masculine competence. To conclude, I want to return to the criteria of standpoint scholars regarding how knowledge claims are to be assessed. I suggest that this chapter has the potential to meet the criteria of "accura[cy]," "justifiab[ility]" and "political useful[ness]" as summarized by Harding (2009, p. 195). With regard to accuracy, I have carefully documented the speaking and acting of my participants in detail in their activities at the House. My ability to move back and forth between our interview texts and my fieldnotes also

enables me to reaffirm that what I saw happening aligned with what participants told me during interviews, and vice versa.

The focus of this chapter is largely in response to my participants, both men and women, who mentioned and wondered about men's lack of involvement in House programs during our interviews. House staff in particular were curious about how gendered patterns at the House kept occurring, given their stated interest in catering to the needs and interests of older men as well as older women. This work may be useful for staff interested in thinking about how these gendered trends connected to the power relations and hierarchies that informed how elder men performed aging masculinity. I noted earlier in this chapter that some staff experienced a tension in their ability to discuss gender stereotypes within the inclusive, diverse context of the House. The framing of elder masculinity as something that individuals "do" rather than "are" may be one way of speaking about this issue that some staff may find useful given their positioning within the House. Elder men at the House may be curious to learn about the way their age group has been targeted as a market by various professionals that create idealized expectations for older adulthood. This knowledge has the potential to dispel some of the power of this marketing for elders. Some elder men may also be interested in the way their own actions contribute to reproducing the House as a feminize space, although I am keen to learn what they think about this finding. My assessment may become clearer when I produce a brief report for my participants and solicit their feedback.

From a political perspective, the research in this chapter has implications for how elders' gendered participation patterns are interpreted and discussed by researchers, Neighbourhood House staff, and individuals in charge of seniors' programs at other types of organizations. One

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approach, described by Davidson et al. (2003), is for individuals managing elders' programs to reify essentializing gender differences by creating programs that cater to potential participants based on a binary conception of gender (e.g., carpentry for the elder men and knitting for the elder women). My work in this chapter puts this approach into question and has the potential to contribute to a different type of dialogue where age, gender, and their intersections can be conceived of as ongoing processes that are mediated and potentially transformed by organizations.

Chapter 6: Diverse, intersectional experiences of the third age: Contributions, recommendations, and future directions

In this dissertation I have worked from the standpoints of elders and staff at the House to consider how the Seniors' Drop-In Program is experienced and coordinated. In the following paragraphs I review my key arguments and discuss their implications for the literature, prior to discussing policy recommendations and future research directions.

6.1 Centring feminist gerontology and the sociology of gender in third age scholarship

One of my goals in making these arguments has been to draw upon and centre feminist gerontology—particularly from its sources in socialist feminist, feminist political economy, and feminist material-discursive approaches—in studying the third age. Social gerontology has a long history of feminist scholarship yet these frameworks have not always been integrated into mainstream work, particularly in earlier decades when gender was taken for granted as an asocial phenomenon while the experiences of privileged men were implicitly utilized as the basis for theorizing that was assumed to be "neutral" (Calasanti, 1993; Kolb, 2014). Earlier attempts at incorporating gender followed the "add women and stir" formula where gender was treated as a stable, binary variable to be controlled for rather than as a relational and structured social process (Calasanti, 2004, 2009). "Gender" was equated with "women" and women were positioned as the "other" (Arber & Ginn, 1995; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Krekula, 2007; McMullin, 1995). Centring the experiences of women—including poor women, women of colour, queer women, trans* women and women with dis/abilities—requires not only making

women the subject of theories, but also exploring feminist epistemologies and ontologies. It is challenging to rebuild knowledge deemed problematic while retaining the same methods and assumptions for knowledge production that were initially employed. My use of standpoint as a method of inquiry builds on the work of socialist feminists of aging and the sociology of gender to generate knowledge rooted in, accountable to and useful for the actual located elders at Spruce House (Hill Collins, 1986, 1990; Hartsock, 1983; Smith, 1990, 1999, 2005).

Dominant voices within third age literature have tended to take theoretical, macro level approaches supported by demographic trends and quantitative indicators of consumption patterns (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, 2005; Gilleard, Higgs, Hyde, Wiggins & Blane, 2005; Chatzitheochari & Arber, 2011). Although qualitative studies of the third age are emerging, more inductive work is needed (see Cooper & Thomas, 2002; Rossen, Knafl & Flood, 2008). Drawing on standpoint epistemology and materialist ontology, I document how white women elders on fixed incomes take up productive and successful aging at the House through activities such as "chair travelling," through which they position themselves as learning, interacting, and making socially useful contributions within the Seniors' Drop-In Program. I also show how this form of activity is not seen as productive by some elder women of colour at the House, suggesting that the meaning of useful contribution—what political economists call third ager "outputs" or "productive activities" (Komp, 2011, p.55)—can be contested. This finding builds not only on arguments that *access* to "active" aging is enabled and constrained by interlocking systems of oppression and privilege that individuals experience over their lifetime (Calasanti & King, 2011; Estes, 2001; Holstein, 2011), but that what *constitutes* "productive" activity in particular contexts is itself based on a set of assumptions that are often classed, racialized, gendered and

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ethnocentric. As Ranzjin (2010) argues, conceptions of meaningful aging often differ for elders socialized in Western traditions versus Aboriginal elders in ways that implicate prescriptive "active" aging programs and services in processes of colonization.

I was able to generate these inductive insights by drawing on the work of feminist scholars of colour who developed the frameworks of intersectionality and interlocking systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 2005, 1990). Yet, much work in the sociology of gender that incorporates an intersectional approach does not take age, aging, and generation into consideration (Hill Collins, 1990; Lawrence, 2003; McCall, 2001; although see Calasanti & Slevin. 2001 for an exception). I emphasize how House elders were not only situated within interlocking systems of privilege and oppression, but that they viewed the world and engaged in meaning-making regarding "active" aging in fundamentally intersectional ways (Estes, 2001). This approach is in contrast to previous models of additive oppression, such as the double jeopardy thesis that dominated political economy of aging research in previous decades (Dowd Bengtson, 1978; Ovrebo & Minkler, 1993). By emphasizing structured interactions between privilege and oppression, intersectionality also complicates and extends feminist political economy arguments that focused on the structural creation of vulnerability and dependency through cumulative disadvantage (Brown, 1995; Estes, 2006, p. 85; Kolb, 2014, p. 82; Orloff, 1993).

That a majority of residents at the House are women speaks to the persistent lifetime inequalities that structure which social groups will end up relying upon subsidized housing, means-tested government funding, and social programs in old age. The more equitable distribution of wealth between younger and older adults in Canada and other nations in the

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global North is indeed a defining feature of the third age that mediates the impacts of systemic gendered, racialized and classed inequalities shaping the lives of the "baby boomer" generation. Had the low-income, mostly women, House elders entered old age in previous decades they may not have had access to such robust social programs. Nevertheless, my elder participants are also privileged in that they had the health and history of community engagement that enabled them to qualify for this independent, community-oriented housing. The residents that were selected by House staff had already demonstrated their capacity for "productive" and "successful" aging. Elders who were not present at the House, who may not have the mobility and health to access House programs, and who would not meet the House resident criteria may be falling through the cracks of these social services. These elders are erased by dominant third age literature even more so than my participants. Overall this dissertation demonstrates that, although generational commonalities and the structural conditions producing them are significant, it is equally if not more crucial to highlight persistent, systemic, intersecting inequalities *within* generations. I therefore argue that scholars who study the third age without prioritizing social inequality in their analyses (see for example Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, 2005) may be downplaying the structural inequalities that have indeed informed the lifetimes of the "baby boomer" generation and that continue to shape their access to and meaning-making regarding what "productive" and "successful" aging look like.

My findings also raise questions about the validity and contributions of third age research that does not take into account the political implications of academic scholarship and that continues to centre the privileged experiences of the (imagined, implicitly male) majority over

those of more marginalized elders. It is those most marginalized in the third age who are most in need of accountable, grounded theorizing based on their voices, interests and experiences:

> The individualistic and privileged standpoint from which the "new gerontology" originates cannot account for the people unable to meet day-to-day expenses. The postmodern and the productive self are both totalizing narratives that speak from and to the center and not the margins. Successful aging shares this problem. To age "successfully" demands much of us throughout our lives, much of which is beyond our control. We can stop smoking but we cannot escape poverty. Proponents who see aging through a lens of privilege thus falsely assume that living these versions of a good old age is available to all by dint of our private efforts. (Holstein, 2011, p. 233)

As Holstein notes, interpretations of the third age that emphasize agency over constraint may perpetuate the belief that elders are individually responsible for overcoming systemic barriers mediating their access to "successful" and "productive" aging. Literature on the third age brings "successful" and "productive" aging into generational perspective by highlighting national conditions and demographic trends, often in individualizing ways that minimize structural barriers limiting elders' access to these idealized forms of aging. The dominant emphasis on the plentiful national conditions experienced by the "baby boomers" further erases the visibility and impact of persistent systemic inequalities. By drawing on the ruling relations as a framework for thinking about the third age as a textually-mediated discourse, I draw attention to the objectifying processes of management within corporate capitalism, directly implicating third age

scholarship, government "active" aging initiatives, and anti-ageing services marketed to the 55 plus.

Conceptualizing the third age as a textually-mediated discourse hooked into discourses of "successful" and "productive" aging creates a framework for considering the ways actual elders engage with and take up these discourses in contextualized ways. I build upon the sociology of gender, queer theory, and feminist discursive gerontology to suggest that elders at the House "do" gender and aging together (Laz, 2003). While elders' presence and involvement at the House is structured by gendered lifetime inequalities, gender is also performed on a daily basis (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). By thinking about social expectations of aging captured by the third age discourse, I show that elders at the House were not necessarily taking up daily activities based upon their biological age classification, but based on how they perceived that they *should* be aging. Mannheim's notion of "generation location" is useful in understanding how aging expectations are put together historically. By considering "generation location," scholars are able to highlight the structural conditions shaping the life course and consciousness of a group of people born and/or living in the same nation in the same time period. Of course, not all individuals will be positioned to experience these structural conditions in the same way.

Elder women at the House were able to construct meaningful narratives of the third age within a non-profit community space that was seen by elder men at the House as highly feminized. These elder men sought to position themselves as distinct from and superior to these spaces and the elder women that they associated with the vulnerability and decline of the fourth age. For these men, doing masculine aging was a relational process through which they

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constantly defined themselves against what they were not (yet feared they may become): the abject position of the "old woman" (Butler, 1993, p. 3). These men "did" masculine aging "productively" by positioning themselves as contributors to programs but rarely as participants. Although there were not many other men at the Seniors' Drop-In for the elder men in attendance to engage with, the abject positon of the "old woman" also extends to more marginalized masculinities, such as those that are racialized, feminized, queer, trans*, and dis/abled. Just as third age scholarship can perpetuate the stigma of dependent, non-productive aging, the men at the House constantly rejected the characteristics of the fourth age associated with femininity and marginalized masculinities.

Through this dissertation I also show how elders "do" gender and age within the context of participant-driven programming organized by House staff. This work highlights commonalities between senior-driven programming and "productive" aging models. While programs designated for "seniors" do not necessarily resonate with discourses of idealized aging for the "young" old, House seniors' programs were spoken and written about in ways that emphasized elders' capacities and contributions. Taking up a feminist political economy of aging perspective allowed me to raise questions about how ideas and program planning processes for the Seniors' Drop-In are hooked into broader discourses of "productive" and "successful" aging (Estes, 2001). Through this lens, senior-led programming can be seen to some degree as an extension of market ideologies invoking self-managing third-agers to provide useful cost-saving outputs, such as volunteer labour. Furthermore, by highlighting the funding conditions within which staff take up the discourse of "managerial efficiency," I demonstrate how the Seniors' Drop-In is driven by the ideas of some elders over others. Staff tended to record and act upon

suggestions that enabled them to meet pre-determined program outcomes as opposed to feedback

that questioned the multicultural components of the program and that may have required

lengthier dialogue and a change in practices. That elder women of colour were more likely to

identify problematic elements in how multiculturalism was being done speaks to the connections

between daily experiences and ways of knowing (Hill Collins, 1986, 1990; Smith, 2005), and

highlights the importance of including marginalized voices in program planning meetings, and

within "productive" aging initiatives more generally.

6.2   Directions for future research

6.2.1   Interview modifications

If I were to do this project again, I would modify my approach to in-depth interviewing to

prompt my participants to share some additional information. As I noted in chapter two where I

discussed my theoretical and methodological frameworks, I was able to situate the majority of

my participants as experiencing a common generation location, and a shared conception of

aging, but was not able to empirically identify the extent to which participants may or may not

have shared a common generational entelechy emerging from their adolescent experiences. As

Mannheim outlined, people acquire a shared generation location by virtue of being born in a

particular time and place alongside other individuals. However, not all generations become a

"generation as actuality" (Mannheim, 1970/1950, p. 395-96), meaning that the individuals in the

generation are exposed to shifting societal conditions in their adolescence that lead them to

develop a distinct consciousness from members of other generations (what Mannheim called a

generational entelechy) (1970/1950, p. 402). Although I was able to empirically identify that my

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participants shared a distinct approach to aging informed by the third age discourse, I did not

organize the interviews to be able to elicit detailed accounts of their formative years.

As Mannheim argued, it is the formative years that are most influential in establishing a

generational entelechy. Therefore, although it is likely that my participants had some common

experiences in relation to structural and cultural shifts that occurred during their adolescence, I

cannot empirically confirm or deny this possibility.

In order to learn more about their generational experiences in the formative years of their

life, I would ask participants more direct questions about their childhood and adolescence,

including their consumption patterns, including popular media, and interpretations of prominent

social movements from the 1950s and 60s, such as student protests, civil rights, the second wave

of the women's movement, the sexual revolution, Quebecois separatism, and 'Flower Power'

counter-cultures (Badley et al., 2015, p. 42 – 43; Owram, 1997; Ozanne, 2009, p. 133). I would

also be more precise in probing about any places they moved to during their adolescence, as well

as the areas that they lived in within particular regions. For instance, whether an individual grew

up in a rural or urban area could influence their positioning in relation to social changes

occurring in Canadian society. To understand how my participants and their families were

influenced by the economic upswing after WWII, I would likely also pose questions about their

housing, education, employment and parents' employment. I may also pose more questions

about their experiences in recent decades to identify details of their transition from the second to

third age.

A second modification would be to explore how participants engage directly with House

texts as a component of the research process. In combination with the interview questions I

would like to be able to document the way participants interpret and engage with House texts, such as program brochures, promotional flyers, staff reminders, and so on. This would allow me to more directly observe and document the way they enter into text-reader conversations with these particular institutional texts. For instance, I might provide participants with the program posters for the Senior's Drop-In Lunch or for the English Conversation Circles and ask them to highlight sections or to discuss what stands out to them. I could also ask them about whether and how they might modify the program poster or create a new one. Another option would be to walk with participants through the House throughout their day, based on the way that they access and navigate it. This could allow me to see how they engage with particular House spaces and the associated texts. For example, I could learn about the entrance and exit they take, the bulletin boards they stop at (if any), the flyers they may or may not pick up from the reception desk, their interactions with others in the halls, and so on. This form of shadowing would enable me to learn even more about what my participants do within the House, and when and how they do it.

6.2.2   Timing: A limited window into the House

I began my fieldwork at the House at the same time as the multicultural components of the Seniors' Drop-in Program were being launched for the first time. This meant that I was able to see how staff and elders talked about why and how this new program component was necessary. However, this also meant that I witnessed its first iterations and growing pains. Many of the issues that I raised in this dissertation were just emerging at the House within this program context. It would be useful to revisit this program in the coming years to see if and how it has changed, including whether volunteer feedback has been incorporated. As I noted above, at the

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same time that the multicultural lunches were implemented, the House executive director began a sabbatical which did not end until after I concluded my fieldwork. Some of my findings about staff workload and their sense of being overwhelmed could be connected to the timing of my research and the unusual circumstances. If members of the House management were taking on some of the director's tasks, then they may have had less time to engage in their regular responsibilities. As I mentioned earlier in the dissertation, staff at the House were also still adjusting to moving into the recently expanded House facilities, and taking on the larger number of programs that the new building could accommodate. If future researchers returned to the House a few years from now they may find that staff workload has shifted, although I anticipate that the prominence of grant-based project funding will likely still constrain how staff work.

6.2.3   Research with more marginalized elders

My elder participants, though low-income, still experienced substantial privileges. They were physically located within a Neighbourhood House which meant that had access to affordable social programs within steps of their front door. They had also already been screened by staff and classified as "independent" and "community-oriented." Only two of my participants had health issues that affected their daily life. Essentially, they had many of the social and environment supports in place to take up discourses of productive and successful aging. Future research on the third age could consider the activities and meaning-making of elders who have less access to government programs and social services, who have persistent health problems, and who are located between other axes of privilege and oppression, including queer elders,

trans* elders, refugee elders and Coast Salish elders who may have different ideals about meaningful aging.

6.3   Recommendations

The empirical findings and theoretical implications of this research allow me to provide some applied recommendations. I do so as an attempt to ensure the findings I generate can be useful for the people who took the time and effort to participate in the project. These recommendations also serve as the first iterative framework for the concise report I will produce for my participants.

6.3.1   Shifting funding structures

My analysis is not intended to be dismissive of the senior-driven framework, but instead to identify ways that this type of programming can be structured and supported so as to meaningfully give elders more control over their own lives as they design programs, services and resources that will be reflective of their needs and desires and more useful for them. For seniors' programs to be more fundamentally rooted in and adaptable to the experiences and needs of a variety of elders, a shift in House funding is needed. The cycles and stipulations of grants are one way in which the discourse of the New Public Management enters and coordinates House programs and staff work orientations. Grants enable top-down priorities hooked into the objectifying capitalist ruling relations to inform program objectives and quantifiable outcomes.

The House funding from government and/or non-profit sources would not need to increase as much as it would need to be structured in ways that were more secure, permanent, and ongoing. House staff could engage with and incorporate the ideas of elders more meaningfully and thoroughly if they knew which funds they could rely on in the future, if they had more flexibility to outline program objectives and outputs, if they were not compelled to continuously (re)secure their own employment through grant-writing, and if they had more time to dedicate to front-facing work. Overall, a shift in control over the direction and dissemination of funds – with greater value placed upon the essential role of core funds – would enhance the ability of staff to implement place-based Neighbourhood House approaches. My findings reaffirm and provide contextualized evidence of the need for various levels of government in Canada to "consider more flexible and supportive funding models that can enhance the capacity of place-based community organizations, like NHs, to better serve the needs of local communities" (Yan et al., 2016, p. 12).

6.3.2   Transparency and training regarding senior-driven programming

While a change in the structure of funding is the most essential and impactful recommendation emerging from this work, it is also beyond the control of the House. The House could, however, engage in dialogue to identify and formalize potential ways of pursuing senior-driven programming. First, House staff and elders may consider engaging in collaborative brainstorming about what senior-drive programming means and should involve. The discussions may include outlining the intended role of staff, whether as a guide, facilitator, resource or something else. Staff and elders could also develop recommendations for staff intervention in

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cases of disagreements, disrespect or dismissive behaviour between volunteers, within the

context of House safety procedures that need to be clarified and made more broadly known.

The House could also increase and diversity staff training regarding senior-led, place-

based and inclusive, accessible programming models, and ensure staff go through as much

training as possible early on in their employment with the House. This training may better

prepare staff to address some of the challenging situations that I witnessed at the House. Many of

the staff I interviewed, who had been at the House for less than a year, reported receiving little

training, although staff that had been with the House longer reported receiving considerably

more (and more valued) training, including an anti-oppression workshop. It may be the case that,

given the cost of externally facilitated training sessions, the House only conducts them

sporadically. One solution would be to hire a staff member who is able to lead training, or to

have staff members build on their own expertise in order to lead workshops for one another.

Elders and community volunteers may also be a resource for training. Susan, for example,

identified as a feminist activist and had experience leading a variety of workshops. When I asked

Jessica, a staff member who identified as biracial, whether there was any additional training she

would like to have for House staff, she responded that, "Maybe having the training from people

who—like, more diversity of the people who are doing the training, maybe would give a

different perspective." Indeed, workshops facilitated by individuals from social locations that

differ from that of staff members may better prepare new staff to consider seniors' programs

from multiple perspectives, or at least better position them to engage with the concerns of

volunteers and participants about this programming. Given the overwhelming erasure of

Indigenous people and history within the multicultural lunch theme selection, a workshop on

Vancouver's colonial past and present for staff and volunteers would also be useful and could potentially provide additional context within which to interpret the vision of the Settlement Housing Movement.

6.3.3 Incorporating diverse elders' perspectives regarding multicultural programs and activities

One of the issues participants raised was that multicultural Seniors' Drop-In lunch themes did not always emerge from the actual national or ethnic histories of program participant or volunteers. Instead, a rather racially homogeneous committee of elders would brainstorm themes and then the program coordinator would seek out a relevant individual or group to provide entertainment. This finding suggests that meaningful multicultural programming may more organically emerge if a greater diversity of individuals were involved with the program and could offer to share aspects of their history through their involvement. Here, I draw upon an idea proposed by staff member Sharon, who suggested that staff reach out to and invite groups who were underrepresented at the House yet who fell within the House catchment area. Having a greater diversity of program participants and volunteers would potentially allow for themes to be chosen in a way that was rooted in lived experience and that reflected the demographics of the neighbourhood. Furthermore, it would diversify the voices who could contribute to defining what multiculturalism and productive aging mean and involve, thus potentially contributing to future iterations of the program.

However, these discussions would need to occur in ways that ensure everyone could contribute. One option would be to have several different mediums of communication

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throughout meetings. Individual reflection and writing, small group discussion, and large group discussion may help ensure that people who think and communicate in different ways could still express themselves and be heard. Having staff who speak multiple languages involved with the program would also be useful for these meetings. Lastly, building in time to address participant-generated ideas and scheduling extra time for meetings in case volunteers raise unexpected issues would allow for these issues to be more fully explored. However, the issue of staff time is one that is directly connected to the funding structures and sources the House relies upon.

In addition to enhancing the diversity of elders who participate in and volunteer with the Seniors' Drop-in Program, it is also important to ensure that staff at all levels are reflective of the diversity of the neighbourhood with regard to ethnicity, language, and immigration experiences (Yan et al., 2016). My methodological approach assumes that ways of knowing are connected to daily experiences structured through intersecting axes of power and oppression (Harding, 2009; Hartsock, 1983; Hill Collins, 1990; Smith, 1974). Given that it was only staff and elders of colour who raised concerns about the organization of the multicultural Drop-In lunches, it appears that understandings of multiculturalism at the House were informed by individuals' experiences shaped by social location. Increasing the diversity of staff members has the potential to increase the variety of perspectives and ways of knowing that staff bring to their programming work and their interactions with volunteers and participants. If any staff members involved with the development and implementation of the multicultural lunches had been racial minorities, the program itself may have been developed based on a different set of assumptions about race, ethnicity and productive aging.

6.3.4 Continuing to address and minimize the impact of persistent lifetime inequalities

It is also important to acknowledge what is working particularly well at the House. Estes (2001) asks whether the "aging industry" – the expansion of services catering to old adults – benefits elders as much as it serves to promote the development of a captive market and expansion of the service industry. Estes argues that many seniors' services, "divert resources and attention from other factors that have a greater influence on determining the experience and quality of life of older persons – an adequate income and a safe and secure physical environment, among others" (Estes, 2001, p. 40). She contrasts government spending on programs and services for elders, often based on an "empowerment" model, with the potential use of those funds to more directly alleviate poverty, provide safe and accessible housing, and to meet other daily needs. While programs such as the Seniors' Drop-In can enhance elders' experiences of learning, interacting and making socially meaningful contributions in ways that enhance quality of life, the third age is not only about activity, leisure and consumption. An elder's ability to make choices about how they will spend their time is predicated on their daily material conditions.

I argue throughout this dissertation that lifetime inequalities structured by privilege and oppression have shaped and continue to shape the lives of the "baby boomer" generation, and must be centred in understandings of the third age. By developing and managing subsidized seniors' residences in the heart of Vancouver's prohibitive real-estate and rental markets, the House is directly using funds to create conditions that increase residents' income and safety, and therefore their ability to maintain their well-being and make a broader range of decisions about how they will spend their time. It is the House's combination of affordable housing and social activity programs that makes their work so powerful within the context of the third age. It is this

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combination, as well as government pensions and subsidies, that allowed the elder residents at the House to describe their current life stage using terms such as "freedom" and "flexibility" even as they acknowledged and navigated constraints. I suggest that, notwithstanding the problematic funding structures shaping social relations at the House, the House development of both affordable Housing and social programs is a useful model for minimizing the impact of systemic lifetime inequalities that may have been further exacerbated in other contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Interview guide (House staff)

History with the House

1. How did you come to work at the House?

2. Tell me about your typical day at work.

3. What is your favourite thing about your work?

4. What kinds of challenges do you encounter?

5. What has been one of your greatest successes in your role at the House?

6. What kinds of interactions do you have with seniors at the House?

7. Do you work with other staff members? How?

8. What kinds of skills do you need to succeed in your role? (Or do House staff members need to succeed more generally?)

9. Have you worked with seniors in other jobs?

    a. What was that like?

Programs

10. What kinds of programs are you involved in at the House?

11. If you had to pick, what would be your favourite program?

12. What program do you think most seniors prefer?

13. Do you think you are more similar or more different to other staff in the way that you approach working with seniors?

14. What is the most complicated part of working with seniors?

Training & Support

15. What kind of training does the House provide for staff?

16. Is there any other training you would be interested in doing?

17. Imagine that the House had unlimited resources, money, supplies, and so on, what are three things you would ask for to help support you in your work?

18. What kinds of things have you learned from working here?

Senior's Housing

19. How did the House senior's housing come to be built?

20. Why do you think the House decided to expand into seniors housing?

21. Were you involved in this project?

22. What kinds of benefits do you think seniors experience from living connected to the House?

23. What kinds of support and services are available for the seniors in residence?

24. What kinds of challenges or surprises have there been with this seniors' housing?

25. Does your position overlap with the seniors housing?

26. How are seniors selected to live at the House?

Perceptions of Senior's Needs

27. What kinds of needs do the different seniors have at the House?

28. What kind of things have seniors asked of you or other staff to accommodate them?

    a. What was your reaction to these requests?

29. How does theHouse accommodate different needs?

30. How do seniors like to spend their time when they come to the House?

31. How does the House decide what seniors programs to offer?

32. Are there any social groups within the older adults? Are there patterns in who people
    spend time with?

33. Are there any older couples at the House?

34. What would you say is the racial or ethnic diversity of the seniors that are involved with
    the House?

35. Does the House accommodate seniors' religious needs/affiliations?

36. Have you noticed any gender patterns in terms of who participates in the programs?

37. Approximately how many gay or lesbian seniors live at the House?

38. Approximately how many gay or lesbian seniors participate in the programs you are part
    of?

39. Do you know if anyone who uses House services identifies as transgender?

Personal background/Demographic Info

40. Where did you grow up?

41. What year were you born?

42. How would you describe your racial, ethnic, or ancestral background?

43. What is the highest degree that you have?

44. Any religious affiliation?

45. How do you identify your gender?

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46. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

47. Are there any other characteristics that you view as an important part of who you are?

Wrapping Up

48. Is there anything you'd like to share that I didn't ask you about?

49. Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for contributing to this research!

Appendix B - Interview guide (elders)

Personal background

1. Where did you grow up?

    a. What was your childhood like?

2. What year were you born?

3. How did you like to spend your time as a teenager?

4. What have been some important relationships in your life?

5. Are there big milestones that you mark your life by? (education, work, relationships, children?) What were the key things have really mattered to you over the course of your life?

Current Living Situation

1. How did you come to live at the House?

2. What did you expect before you moved in?

3. How do you like living here?

    a. In what ways does it meet your expectations?

    b. In what ways is it different than what you were expecting?

4. What kinds of interactions do you have with your neighbours?

Previous living situation

5. Where were you living before you came to the House?

   a. Were you living on your own, or with partner or children?

6. What was your typical day like while you were living there?

7. How did you spend your time when you lived there?

   a. What kinds of activities did you participate in?

   b. Who would you spend time with?

Social Interactions & Interpersonal Intimacy

8. Now that you are living at the House, how do you like to spend your time?

9. How would you compare living at the House with where you were living before?

10. What places do you like to spend time in?

11. Is there anything you would like to do with your time that you're not already doing?

12. Who do you like to spend your time with?

   a. Friends? Family? Partner? Community groups? Pets? Other?

   b. What does family (or friendship) mean to you?

13. What makes you want to spend time with someone?

14. How can you tell that you are meaningfully connecting with someone?

15. What does intimacy mean to you?

16. If you won an all-expenses paid vacation and were allowed to bring three people for free, who might you bring?

17. If you had to pick two relationships that have been significant for you throughout your life, what would they be? You could choose a friend, a family member, a partner, etc.

18. Thinking about your life so far, has it turned out how you thought it would?

House Programs & Staff

19. What programs at the House do you participate in?

    a. Which program do you prefer?

20. Who do you spend time with at the House?

21. What kinds of interactions do you have with House staff?

22. What is your favourite thing about the House?

23. If you could change anything about the House, what would you change?

Demographic questions

24. What is the highest degree that you have?

25. How would you describe your racial, ethnic, or ancestral background?

26. What is your relationship status?

27. How do you identify your gender?

28. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

29. Are there any other characteristics that you view as an important part of who you are?

Wrapping Up

30. Is there anything you'd like to share that I didn't ask you about?

31. Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for contributing to this research!

Appendix C - Recruitment letter (staff)

Department of Sociology
6303 N.W. Marine Drive
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1
Tel: 604-822-2878
Fax: 604-822-6161
www.soci.ubc.ca

UBC a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Seeking participants
The Interpersonal Intimacy Needs of Older Adults at a Vancouver Neighbourhood House

Dear House staff member,

I am contacting you about a research project that I am undertaking about the interpersonal needs of older adults at the House. I am working under the supervision of Professor Thomas Kemple.

In order to complete my project, I am hoping to interview all the staff at the House. The interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes and can be done at a time and place that is convenient for you.

The purpose of this study is to explore seniors' interpersonal needs within the context of the neighbourhood house and the community more broadly. This will allow me to report on how neighbourhood houses contribute to seniors' well-being, and to identify additional sources of support that could be beneficial. You are being asked to participate because you work at the House.

If you are interested in participating in this project, or for more information, please contact me by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or by email at [redacted]. If any other staff at the House might be interested in participating in this project, please invite them to contact me as well. Finally, my supervisor, Dr. Thomas Kemple [redacted] is happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Lyon

Appendix D - Recruitment letter (elders)

Department of Sociology
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UBC a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Seeking participants

The Interpersonal Intimacy Needs of Older Adults at a Vancouver Neighbourhood House

Dear House residents,

My name is Katherine Lyon and I am a PhD Candidate conducting research about the interpersonal needs of older adults living at the House. I am working under the supervision of Professor Thomas Kemple. I am contacting you to ask if you would be interested in helping with the research by participating in the project.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of older adults who live at the House. This research will focus on seniors' interpersonal needs within the context of the neighbourhood house and the community more broadly. This will allow me to report on how neighbourhood houses contribute to seniors' well-being, and to identify additional sources of support that could be beneficial. You are being asked to participate because you live at the House and/or you participate in House programs.

In order to complete my project, I am hoping to interview all the adults who live at the House. The interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes and can be done at a time and place that is convenient for you.

If you are interested in participating in this project, or for more information, please contact me by phone XXX-XXX-XXXX or by email at [redacted]. If any of your neighbours at the House might be interested in participating in this project, please invite them to contact me as well. Finally, my supervisor, Professor Thomas Kemple [redacted] is happy to answer any questions you might have. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Lyon

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UBC

a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Seeking participants:

The Interpersonal Intimacy Needs of Older Adults at a Vancouver Neighbourhood House

My name is Katherine Lyon and I am a PhD Candidate conducting research about the interpersonal needs of older adults living at the House. I am working under the supervision of Professor Thomas Kemple..

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of older adults who live at the House. This research will focus on seniors' interpersonal needs within the context of the neighbourhood house and the community more broadly. This will allow me to report on how neighbourhood houses contribute to seniors' well-being, and to identify additional sources of support that could be beneficial.

In order to complete my project, I am hoping to interview all House residents. The interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes and can be done at a time any place that is convenient for you.

If you are interested in participating in this project, or for more information, please contact me by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or by email at [redacted]. My supervisor, Professor Thomas Kemple [redacted] is also happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you!