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# Constructing ‘Otherness’ in the neighbourhood: que(e)rying older adults’ experiences of and talk about socio-cultural change

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## Abstract

Drawing from 108 qualitative interviews with 38 participants from an ethnographic study investigating older adults’ experiences of inclusion and exclusion in two increasingly socio-economically diverse neighbourhoods, this paper employs a queer approach to identify how older adults construct and narrate socio-cultural change in the neighbourhood, as well as complicate simplistic binary understandings of older adults invoked in ageing-in-place literature. Drawing on neoliberal, heteronormative and racialised discourses, older adult participants engaged in practices of ‘Othering’ to narrate who did and did not belong in the neighbourhood. Participants referenced three primary non-residents when narrating change in their neighbourhoods: the homeless resident, the temporary resident and the racialised resident. Participants generally ‘Othered’ these three types of ‘residents’ as non-(re)productive, *i.e.* as not contributing to the social fabric of the neighbourhood in normatively valued ways. However, even as participants engaged in practices of ‘Othering’, a form of exercising power, it was evident that some ‘Othered’ figures disproportionately affected older adults’ sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods. We found that shifting socio-cultural dynamics related to class, race and age, especially as they relate to the temporary resident, posed the biggest challenges to older adults’ feelings of belonging, and relationships, to place. Our findings indicate that an inundation of moneyed people and unconventional living arrangements can inadvertently threaten older adults’ social spaces and networks, as well as further bound their possibilities for meeting the neoliberal and heteronormative expectations of ‘successful ageing’ by working against older adults’ continued social participation and connectedness. In turn, this paper considers the ways in which older adults are exclusionary *and* excluded subjects.

**Keywords:** ageing; neighbourhoods; socio-cultural change; ‘Othering’; social exclusion; social inclusion; queer approach

## Introduction

Research on the intersections of ageing and environments, particularly cities and neighbourhoods, often focuses on how older adults are excluded or included, disabled or supported, by the social and physical features of their environment in relation to urban deprivation (Scharf *et al.*, 2003; Buffel *et al.*, 2013), gentrification (Burns *et al.*, 2012; Buffel and Phillipson, 2019; Torres, 2020), displacement/relocation (Keene and Ruel, 2013), globalisation (Phillipson, 2006, 2007, 2012), fear of crime (De Donder *et al.*, 2005; Walker and Hiller, 2007; Dahlberg, 2020), cultural heterogeneity (Burns *et al.*, 2012) and urban planning decisions (Ottoni *et al.*, 2016). Often grounded in the work of Lawton and Nahemow (1973), Rowles (1980, 1983) and Wahl and Weisman (2003), this inter-disciplinary body of scholarship emerged from a desire to understand how environments shape older adults' everyday lives and how disadvantage materialises in later life. However, increasingly, scholarship has employed a bi-directional approach that attends not only to how older adults are *shaped by* their neighbourhoods, but also how they *shape* neighbourhoods (Hand *et al.*, 2020). In their scoping review of social exclusion and inclusion literature, Walsh *et al.* (2017) identify both the centrality of social inclusion and exclusion (with attention to key features related to relativity, agency, dynamism and multi-dimensionality) within literature addressing the intersections of older adults and environments *and* point to a greater need to attend to the varied and complex positionalities of older adults. Not simply 'aged', the social identifications, locations and positionalities of older adults are multiple (*e.g.* race, socio-economic status, gender, sexuality and ability). Given such varied positionalities, older adults can be conceptualised as both victims *and* agents of exclusion. In contrast, social inclusion and exclusion literature can, perhaps unintentionally, reproduce a monolithic image of older adults as intrinsically passive and vulnerable subjects – as solely excluded.

Despite calls from critical gerontologists to expand and nuance conceptual frameworks used to explore ageing, place and identity (Pain and Hopkins, 2007; Ziegler, 2012; Andrews *et al.*, 2013; Torres, 2015; Zubair and Norris, 2015), a paucity of research examines the relational dynamics of place and older adults' experiences of inclusion and exclusion. As Ziegler (2012) observes, 'the interactions between people and place are rarely theorised in a way which would advance understanding of the relational processes involved' (Ziegler, 2012: 1298). Following Ziegler's (2012) intersectional study, and consistent with the call of Walsh *et al.* (2017) to attend to multiple positionalities, we advocate for a relational understanding of place that is attentive to the 'spatially situated and identity based relational practices ... which constitute, sustain or inhibit social relationships and thus influence social participation in later life' (Ziegler, 2012: 1297). Indeed, an analysis that recognises the intersections of later life (Slevin and Calasanti, 2006; McMullin and Curtis, 2016), namely the ways in which older adults can be simultaneously oppressed *and* oppressive, disadvantaged *and* privileged, excluded *and* exclusive, is crucial for exploring older adults' experiences of and talk about their neighbourhoods. To this end, our analysis seeks to identify normative discourses, and complicate or 'queer' structured binary oppositions that figure older adults as either simply excluded *or* included subjects.

Reporting findings from a larger study that aimed to explore how older adults experience inclusion and exclusion in the neighbourhood, this paper considers the ways in which older adults negotiate race, class, gender, and age relations in two socio-economically diverse neighbourhoods that are currently undergoing significant socio-cultural change in a mid-sized Canadian city. By drawing on a queer approach, this paper contributes knowledge to the fields of environmental gerontology and critical gerontology in two significant ways. First, this paper critically explores in depth the ways in which older adults experience and talk about socio-cultural change in their neighbourhood, *i.e.* the ways participants draw from discourse to construct and convey their lived experiences (Bamberg, 2005). Second, through its application of a queer theoretical lens, this paper contributes an innovative lens to the discipline of environmental gerontology and to discussions of ageing and place more generally, one which disrupts binary oppositions and explicitly considers normative discourses tied to social positions.

### Theoretical framework: que(e)rying difference

We employ a queer approach to explore how older adults draw from normative discourses pertaining to class, gender, sexuality, and race to construct and convey their lived experiences of difference or social change at the level of the neighbourhoods. Queer criticism, an anti-disciplinary field of investigation that ‘takes on varied shapes, risks, ambitions, and ambivalences in various contexts’ (Berlant and Warner, 1995: 344), emerged from a desire for a different form of engagement with operations of power and oppression, especially as they relate to questions of sex, gender, sexuality, family and identity (Foucault, 1980; Rubin, 1984; Butler, 1990; Sedgwick, 1990). Queer criticism is distinctly concerned with the examination and deconstruction of fixed binaries and identity categories (*see* Chan *et al.*, 2019), and the interrogation and disruption of heteronormativity, a term coined by Warner (1991) to describe a web of norms that are made to seem natural, including heterosexuality, reproduction and the nuclear family.

A queer perspective, rather than focusing on gender and sexuality alone, ‘has the effect of pointing out a wide field of normalization’ (Warner, 1991: 16), including questions of race, class and nation (Cohen, 1997; Luibhéid, 2004; Ahmed, 2006; Puar, 2007). For example, Cohen (1997) and Luibhéid (2004) make clear that heteronormativity and the regulation of gender and sexuality are not only relevant for women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) communities, but also racialised and immigrant minorities whose sexual practices and family arrangements are also routinely rendered ‘Other’ via heteronormative, racialised and xenophobic discourses. ‘Othering’ refers to the practice of establishing boundaries between the Self and Other and thus depends on processes of categorisation – the creation of distinctions between ‘us’ *versus* ‘them’. Ahmed takes the logic of ‘Othering’ one step further, arguing that when bodies fail (or refuse) to gather around, orient towards or remain in line with normative (and thus valued) ways of being in the world, including straight, white, colonial and capitalist logics, this ‘nonalignment produces a queer effect’ (Ahmed, 2006: 83). Broadly speaking, queer approaches thus enable an investigation of norms, and do not necessarily privilege sexuality ‘or a single perspective of consciousness’ as their analytical frame (Cohen, 1997: 440).

Recently, queer theoretical perspectives, especially those concerned with the normative organisation of time, place and the lifespan (see Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 2005; Muñoz, 2009; Freeman, 2010), have started to make their way into critical scholarship on the lifecourse, ageing and older adults (Jones, 2011; Sandberg and Marshall, 2017; Marshall, 2018; Chazan, 2019; Changfoot *et al.*, 2022; King, 2022). For example, Sandberg and Marshall (2017) have illustrated a need to 'queer' or complicate popular, academic and policy narratives of successful ageing (Rowe and Kahn, 1997, 1998), which they argue privilege an image of moneyed, physically and mentally fit, heterosexually coupled grandparents. Sandberg and Marshall's critical interrogation of the ways in which normative logics, including compulsory heteronormativity, able-bodiedness and able-mindedness, undergird expectations for later life, has inspired an emergent body of critical age scholarship that investigates the implications of various spatial, racial and temporal normativities, including white supremacy, colonial-normativity and chrononormativity, for conceptualisations of ageing and later life (Harvie, 2018; Chazan, 2019; Changfoot *et al.*, 2022; King, 2022). Despite queer theory's potential for interpreting older adults' stories (see Sandberg and Marshall, 2017; Changfoot *et al.*, 2022; King, 2022), this thinking has not yet been extended to questions of place, age and older adults' narratives of belonging to and estrangement from neighbourhoods. Moreover, though queer geographies scholarship has made clear that processes of normalisation, including the 'workings of sexual normativities and nonnormativities' (Oswin, 2008: 96), are not immaterial to place (Bell and Valentine, 1995; Browne, 2006; Hubbard *et al.*, 2015; Seitz and Oswin, 2017), these discussions have rarely, if at all, included considerations of age. As Hughes (2006: 58) argues of the 'considerable potential in applying queer ideas to the social sciences including social gerontology', a queer perspective 'can be used not to just critique, but also help transform the expression of older people's citizenship, challenging restrictive definitions of old age'. Indeed, a queer theoretical approach is well situated to explore and interpret the talk and experiences of older adults because it enables an examination of the power-laden dynamics of language and discourse; denaturalises taken-for-granted identities; identifies norms and processes of normalisation; and rejects reductive binaries that flatten experience as either/or. Ultimately, a queer lens can help identify the ways in which older adults participate in normative discourses, and thus complicate simplistic binary oppositions that position older adults as either simply included or excluded, self or 'Other'.

## Design and methods

### *The study's two neighbourhoods*

This research was conducted in two neighbourhoods in a mid-sized Canadian city. These neighbourhoods were specifically chosen because they had sizeable populations of older adults of various socio-economic backgrounds, and were experiencing socio-cultural change, enabling consideration of dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion.

Neighbourhood A is primarily a residential area comprised of both historic and new single-detached homes. It straddles a business corridor that was, prior to the

1980s, a vibrant and bustling commercial and social anchor for the neighbourhood and city. Since the 1990s, concerted efforts have been made to revitalise the commercial and residential areas of the neighbourhood, working against a broader stigmatising identity as a site of 'social problems'. As a core neighbourhood it is often described as a 'village', and is largely characterised by industrial, working-class origins. The commercial corridor includes several second-hand shops, as well as a handful of independent, trendy and 'ethnic' (*i.e.* non-white) restaurants and cafes. Notably, the commercial corridor also consists of several social services, including soup kitchens, emergency shelters, transitional housing, harm reduction programmes, mental health services and Indigenous-centred programming. Recently, the neighbourhood has experienced a rise in housing developments, including the construction of high-rise apartments, and is increasingly perceived by residents and non-residents as gentrifying.

Encompassing a handful of smaller neighbourhoods, Neighbourhood B spans a larger area than Neighbourhood A. The neighbourhood is mainly characterised by its main commercial and transit corridor, which is notable for its areas of 'vice' (*e.g.* adult entertainment stores, sex work economies and extended-stay motels), strip malls, car dealerships and a box-store mall. On the edge of the city, Neighbourhood B borders a highway and services small neighbouring towns. The neighbourhood is mostly comprised of single-detached, wartime houses, and a mixture of grid-like and curvilinear streets typical to subdivisions. Neighbourhood B has experienced significant developments in industrial, residential and commercial expansion in the last century. For instance, a post-secondary institution was built in the area in the second half of the 20th century, attracting further developments in, and different populations to, the neighbourhood. Moreover, the neighbourhood's commercial anchor has been converted from a small suburban mall to a box-store format within the last decade.

### **Recruitment and participants**

Upon receiving ethical approval from the University of Western Ontario, participants were recruited through advertisements in local places that service older adult populations (*e.g.* local senior and community centres), and in various neighbourhood shops (*e.g.* pharmacies, convenience and grocery stores, health centres and public libraries). Individuals were eligible to participate if they had lived in one of the target neighbourhoods for at least one year, were 65 years of age or older, were not engaged in full-time paid employment, were able to converse in English, and were able to access the community on their own or with assistance.

Thirty-eight people participated in the study: 21 from Neighbourhood A (three of whom identified with and participated in the neighbourhood but lived just north of it and one who lived near the border of the two study neighbourhoods and considered herself part of both) and 17 from Neighbourhood B. On the whole, as illustrated in [Table 1](#), participants in Neighbourhood A had lower incomes and were less likely to be coupled than participants in Neighbourhood B. While many participants owned houses, participants in Neighbourhood A were more likely than participants in Neighbourhood B to live in other types of dwellings.

**Table 1.** Participant characteristics

ID <sup>1</sup>	Age	Gender	Yearly household income (Can \$)	Partnered	Dwelling	Years in neighbourhood
A1	65–69	Woman	<40,000	No	Senior’s apartment	20+
A2	70–79	Woman	40,000–79,000	No	House	20+
A3	70–79	Woman	<40,000	Yes	House	20+
A4	70–79	Woman	<40,000	No	House	20+
A5	65–69	Man	<40,000	No	House	11–19
A6	70–79	Woman	<40,000	No	Senior’s apartment	≤10
A7	65–69	Woman	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	11–19
A8	65–69	Woman	<40,000	No	Senior’s apartment	≤10
A9	70–79	Man	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	20+
A10	80–89		<40,000	No	Senior’s apartment	≤10
A11	65–69	Woman	<40,000	No	House	20+
A12	70–79	Woman	<40,000	No	Senior’s apartment	≤10
A13	70–79	Woman	40,000–79,000	No	House	≤10
A14	65–69	Woman	40,000–79,000	No	House	20+
A15	70–79	Man	<40,000	No	Apartment	11–19
A16	70–79	Woman	<40,000	No	Apartment	≤10
A17	65–69	Woman	<40,000	No	House	≤10
A18	65–69	Man	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	20+
A19	65–69	Woman	No answer	Yes	House	20+
A20	65–69	Man	No answer	Yes	House	20+

A21	65–69	Woman	<40,000	Yes	Apartment	11–19
B1	65–69	Woman	<40,000	Yes	House	20+
B2	70–79	Man	<40,000	Yes	House	20+
B3	70–79	Woman	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	20+
B4	70–79	Woman	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	20+
B5	65–69	Woman	<40,000	No	Senior's apartment	≤10
B6	70–79	Woman	<40,000	Yes	House	11–19
B7	80–89	Man	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	20+
B8	70–79	Man	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	11–19
B9	65–69	Woman	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	20+
B10	65–69	Woman	<40,000	No	House	20+
B11	70–79	Woman	<40,000	Yes	House	20+
B12	65–69	Man	<40,000	No	Other	11–19
B13	65–69	Woman	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	20+
B14	70–79	Man	<40,000	Yes	House	≤10
B15	65–69	Woman	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	20+
B16	65–69	Man	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	20+
B17	65–69	Man	40,000–79,000	Yes	House	11–19

Note: 1. Refers to Neighbourhood A or B and participant number.

Only a handful of participants' accounts reflected experiences of racialisation and immigrant status, and there were no Indigenous-identifying participants. Most participants variously self-identified as 'Canadian', 'white', 'Caucasian', 'we the north', 'White Protestant' and/or of 'European-descent'. Given the study sample's ethnic and racial composition, it seems critically pertinent to note that the study's findings predominantly reflect the attitudes and opinions of white-settler Canadians about social change in the neighbourhood.

### **Data collection**

This paper draws from data collected for a larger ethnographic study that sought to identify how older adults experience inclusion and exclusion related to mobility, social engagement and participation in community activities in their neighbourhoods. After providing written, informed consent, participants were invited to participate in three of the following qualitative and participatory geospatial methods: a narrative interview, geospatial logging activities and an interview, and either a photo elicitation interview or a go-along interview. We engaged in a process of obtaining ongoing verbal consent, asking if participants wished to continue with each type of data collection. In addition, to recognise participants' contributions and their time, each was offered a Can \$20 gift card of their choosing for each data collection session in which they took part. All participants (N = 38) completed the narrative interview. Following Riessman's (2007) guidelines, the narrative interview consisted of open-ended prompts that elicited participants' narratives about their experiences of social connectedness and isolation, inclusion and exclusion, in their neighbourhoods, such as 'Tell me your story of what it is like to live in your neighbourhood including the places you go, the things you do, and the people you see.' The second method, which most participants completed (N = 36), involved logging the spatial-temporal activities of participants over a four-day period with the use of a global positioning system (GPS) device and an activity diary (Shoval *et al.*, 2010) whereby participants recorded where they went, what they did and with whom they interacted. Following tracking, participants engaged in a semi-structured interview which used maps and activity diaries to 'capture the complex processes enacted between person and place', knowledge that cannot necessarily be obtained through traditional interview methods alone (Hand *et al.*, 2018: e49). Finally, to accommodate a range of mobility levels among older adults, participants were invited to participate in either a photo elicitation interview (Van Hees *et al.*, 2017), where participants engaged in a semi-structured interview that utilised photographs taken by participants of meaningful neighbourhood places, or a go-along interview (Curl *et al.*, 2018), where a researcher accompanied participants to a local destination of their choosing. Attending to the physical and social environment, the researcher conducted an informal interview as well as participant observation along the participant's journey. Most participants (N = 34) engaged in either the photo elicitation interview (N = 17) or go-along interview (N = 17).

The interviews were conducted primarily by JM and took place from December 2018 to November 2019. Seated interviews took place in participants' homes or in a quiet public setting of their choosing (*e.g.* library or university campus). The interviews ranged approximately from 60 to 90 minutes in length. Each interview was

audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim through a transcription service. JM took detailed observation notes about the participant, the interview setting, the participant's engagement with the physical and social environment, and the route taken on the go-along. All data were securely stored at the University of Western Ontario, and prior to analysis, transcripts and other materials were anonymised to protect privacy.

## Analysis

The current analysis incorporates all data forms, excluding the materials that were generated by participants for the purpose of prompting, eliciting and contextualising participants' interview responses during the mapping interview and the photo elicitation interview (e.g. travel diaries, maps and photographs). KS conducted the initial coding of the interview transcripts and created summaries for each participant. Collectively, we read and took notes on most of the transcripts, and we discussed all the summaries to familiarise ourselves with the data and begin to develop findings. At this point, it became apparent that *how* older adults experienced, constructed and talked about *change in the neighbourhood*, specifically shifting socio-cultural change, was an important finding.

For this paper, we specifically employed critical narrative approaches to analyse interview transcripts with a focus on change in the neighbourhood (Earthy and Cronin, 2008), and to investigate the interplay between lived experience and discourse (Bamberg, 2005). Our analysis focused on the ways in which older adult residents talked about socio-cultural change that challenged their individual sense of belonging, safety and security in their neighbourhood. After reading through the transcripts and observation notes several times together as a group, JM took the lead role in analysis, drawing on queer theory to deconstruct how older adults spoke about difference in the neighbourhood, and to identify how subject positions constructed as 'Other' were interrelated with older adult participants' experiences of un/belonging. JM coded and categorised the data using descriptive codes that came directly from the phrases used by participants (e.g. 'the right people' and 'better classes of people') as well as interpretative codes that developed from her analysis (e.g. 'perceiving children as valuable members of the neighbourhood'). Descriptive codes were eventually replaced with more interpretative codes that incorporated the theoretical concepts of salient critical scholarship. For instance, 'the right people' was replaced with 'devaluing socio-economic and ethno-racial diversity in the neighbourhood'. Codes were subject to systematic and iterative review and discussion by the co-authors, and informed the development of the three subject positions described in the findings.

## Findings

Older adults talked about socio-cultural changes in their neighbourhoods by referencing three central figures: the homeless resident, the temporary resident and the racialised resident. These constructed figures had serious material implications for older adult participants' lived experiences of place, especially their sense of security in, and thus movement throughout, the neighbourhood. In

the presentation of data, we distinguish participants by neighbourhood (A or B) and a number.

### **Theme 1: The homeless resident**

The socio-cultural change most often cited by participants was that of the increasingly visible *homeless resident* who was generally discussed in relation to Neighbourhood A by residents from both neighbourhoods. Participants constructed this figure as illegitimate, unruly and problematic. For example, A14 talked about the ‘Greyhound Solution’ to frame her discussion of homelessness in the neighbourhood: ‘a lot of the small towns, they literally give them a Greyhound ticket to come to [city’s name]’. Implicit in her narrative is the notion that the homeless ‘resident’, though living in the neighbourhood, does not actually belong in the neighbourhood. In addition to constructing the homeless resident as an outsider, participants frequently characterised the homeless resident as unsightly, burdensome and as demonstrating a lack of regard for how public spaces ‘should’ be used. Shared public spaces, such as sidewalks, benches and playground equipment, were characterised as sites of conflict between older adult participants and the homeless resident. For example, A6 described a group of idle residents as ‘entitled’ because they were consuming alcohol while occupying a bench near her home. Suggesting she had a different understanding of how public space should be used, A6 said, ‘the thing that drives me nuts is they just don’t care what you tell them, they’re just going to stay and do what they want to do’. A10 described encountering tensions with the homeless ‘resident’ whom she routinely framed as the source of her neighbourhood’s negative reputation:

the thing that they say is, ‘We were here first’, that’s the conception. The homeless were here before we moved in, so if you make a big stink about it that’s about all you hear.

Most significantly, older adults framed the homeless resident as a safety issue. When asked how homelessness affected their experience of the neighbourhood, several participants, especially older adult women, explained that it contributed to how, where and when they moved around their neighbourhoods, a gendered finding consistent with other studies (Scharf *et al.*, 2003; De Donder *et al.*, 2005; Dahlberg, 2020). Some participants described taking alternative routes or different modes of transportation to avoid the perceived threats of being approached (e.g. asked for change or a cigarette) and/or assaulted (e.g. verbally or physically) by homeless residents. A6 said, ‘I don’t walk to the corner store, which is half a block away, at night. I’ll take the car. It’s that bad.’ Other participants explained that they avoided particular places simply because they did not want to see homelessness. As A5 explained, he avoided the main corridor ‘because of all the rubbydubs and drug activity and just, you know, the ick factor’. Moreover, social problems in the neighbourhood, such as substance use, were described as contributing to when participants felt safe to walk around their neighbourhood. A8 explained:

I try not to go out at night because of the addictions and stuff, especially – like in the summer when it’s warmer and it’s nicer out ... you know, but it makes you a little uneasy, a little uncomfortable to go.

A7 described feeling more vulnerable to attack in the night:

What I'm afraid of is somebody grabbing my dogs or what I'm afraid of is at night when you really can't see what's going on. That really concerns me because I won't know it.

In contrast, A14 repeated across interviews that she intentionally and defiantly occupied stigmatised and stigmatising areas in the neighbourhood to challenge her neighbourhood's reputation: 'I purposely walk down [the main corridor] just to show other people that it's okay, I mean you don't have to be worried.' Hand *et al.* (2020: 574) found that older adults can 'potentially act to include or exclude others' by 'being present or not being present' in their neighbourhoods. By being visible as an older, white woman in a locality dominated by 'strange behaviour' (e.g. loitering, shouting and sleeping in public spaces), A14 was intent on signalling to others that her neighbourhood was safe.

Other participants, especially older adults with chronic physical disabilities, explained how the routes they took were negatively affected by the debris and hazards produced by homeless residents, characterising the homeless resident as both an obstacle to older adults' mobility, but also as a subject who does not care for the neighbourhood. A participant who uses a mobility aid explained:

I've had no trouble with the homeless people. Actually, it's just the mess that they leave. If they would be a little more co-operative of other people and put their garbage in the garbage ... I have a scooter and I have to dodge a lot of the garbage that's on the sidewalk ... Sometimes I can't dodge it ... and then I get home, [and] I have to clean my wheels off before I can come into the building ... I'm 87, it's hard to bend down to clean them off and it's just not fair to us. (A10)

In another instance, a participant with partial vision loss expressed feeling as though she was able to go anywhere in the neighbourhood but had to be cautious about hazards she associated with homeless residents: 'I look down for needles because there's needles there a lot, you know, and I step on them' (A17).

Contrastingly, some participants, generally white older adult men, claimed that homeless residents did not shape the routes they took in their neighbourhoods. Instead, this grouping of participants frequently invoked the supposed threats posed to more 'vulnerable' populations (e.g. children, women and old/er 'frail' adults) to explore safety concerns. Moreover, 'strategies of control', used by participants to offset feelings of vulnerability when moving through the neighbourhood, were included within this set of statements (Buffel *et al.*, 2013). A15 said that he has neither 'felt in danger' in his neighbourhood nor perceived the main corridor as 'foreign territory', but acknowledged that he must be alert or possess what he refers to as 'street proofing tricks', asserting, 'I never lollygag, I walk purposefully. I'm not nosy. I don't gawk. At night I would stay on the street side away from recessed doors or alleyways.' Indeed, A15 later recalled and demonstrated these 'street proofing tricks' when he and the lead author encountered rowdy behaviour during the go-along interview: 'this is the kind of situation where I walk across the street. I don't want to get into any fights. I don't want to get socked'. Other participants

described the necessity for similar states of heightened vigilance while being in the neighbourhood. A6 cautioned, 'you just have to be on your guard'. She explained, 'I walk with my keys between my fingers, like a good little girl. And I wouldn't hesitate to use them, but I don't think I'm very strong anymore.' Participants described being most wary of the homeless resident when walking near or through their neighbourhood's alleys. A8 explained, 'at night, [the alley is] really scary. It's really unnerving to walk though there, and people are always leaving garbage, just – you never know who's going to go though there'. Similarly, B13, a participant who resides in Neighbourhood B yet spends a significant amount of time in Neighbourhood A, said:

I have to make sure that there's nobody sleeping in the alley. So, I can see all the way down and then I also have to be aware once you're in the alley. It's like a long rectangular box. But once I step into that corridor, I have a building on the one side and the fence on the other; I'm trapped. So, I have to have my wits about me that there's nobody coming in behind me.

In these ways, older adults constructed the homeless resident as a problem, an 'Other' who was unable or unwilling to align with normative expectations and thus produced queer or strange behaviours, affects and effects that restricted older residents' use of neighbourhood space.

It was common for participants to conflate homelessness with those who were deemed non-normative in their behaviour. 'Homeless' was frequently deployed by participants to describe a wide array of socially stigmatised populations in Neighbourhood A, including Indigenous peoples, people with untreated mental illnesses, social assistance recipients, people who engage in sex work, and people who use drugs, social services and/or transitional housing. This was best demonstrated by A14 who joined the study with an apparent interest in expressing her opposition to Neighbourhood A's plans for more affordable housing, an effort she positioned as an attempt to address or reduce homelessness in the neighbourhood. Across interviews, A14 suggested that the residents who would occupy these rentals were primarily recipients of ODSP (disability-related social assistance) and that 'there weren't families' being accepted to these accommodations. Indeed, the homeless subject has traditionally been narrowly articulated in policy as 'alone, having no familial or social network upon which they can rely for assistance and support. And they exist outside the conservative national "social core", the family' (Del Casino *et al.*, 2008: 193–194). In reference to this imagined new resident, A14 said:

With everybody being on ODSP there is just not much that they're going to be able to spend in the neighbourhood. You know, they just don't have the money. And as I said there won't be any children so it's just one group of people, they're all adults, single adults you know, who are suffering from mental illness.

Implicit in her appeal and framing of the resident as multiply stigmatised and thus stigmatising, is the notion that the homeless resident is non-(re)productive, that is, both unproductive (*i.e.* unemployed and unable to spend) and non-reproductive (*i.e.* without children). In this way, the homeless 'resident' was framed as incapable

of 'growing' the neighbourhood through dynamics related to consumption, reproduction and labour, and thus cast as unhelpful, unwanted, strange – not like 'us'. 'Homeless' thus often functioned as a shorthand for un(re)productive or 'queer' behaviour in the neighbourhood.

In addition to positioning the homeless resident as an 'un(re)productive' resident, participants also constructed the homeless resident as a subject who detracts from the economic productivity of neighbourhood businesses. Participants invoked capitalist logics of productivity to justify the 'Othering' of the 'homeless resident' figure. The spike in homelessness and social service provision in Neighbourhood A was often perceived to be stalling or disrupting the neighbourhood's economic recovery. As articulated by A1, 'who's going to come to a hair salon if people are parked out front doing drugs and screaming at the top of their lungs?' Indeed, participants frequently spoke of the challenges neighbourhood businesses faced by rising rates of visible homelessness. For example, A10 explained:

there were two of them with their carts and their junk in [the] doorway. Who's going to want to go in the coffee shop? ... Before you know it, they're closed up; they're not making any business.

In these ways, the homeless 'resident' was conceptualised as both un(re)productive and disruptive to productivity, and thus cast as an undesirable queer outsider.

Finally, participants not only problematised the 'Other', but also sought to mark out the possibility of inclusion of this subject as a 'legitimate' resident through valued forms of labour and production. In more sympathetic discussions of the homeless 'resident', participants constructed this figure as simply an idle resident who would prosper if given something to do. For example, A13 offered this solution:

they [homeless residents] need to have some help and something to do to be proud of, even if it's just picking up garbage ... that's where it starts for them to be looking for another job and being able to do something, not just [getting] handouts so that they go and put it into drugs.

The comment reflects neoliberal rationalities, characterised by the values of individualism, self-reliance, lifestyle maximisation, engagement and activity, especially economically 'useful' activity (Laliberte Rudman, 2006, 2015; Grande, 2018): those who are homeless and/or dependent on social assistance are idle and/or engaging in non-normative and unproductive activities (*e.g.* using substances), and that only labour and work (*i.e.* economically useful activity) will grant them personal and social escape from their stigmatised position. In other words, the condition of being homeless and its attendant consequences (*not* 'do[ing] something') are constructed as an individual rather than a structural problem that can be ameliorated through work (Klodawsky *et al.*, 2006). At the same time, discourses of productivity were also invoked to humanise homeless residents:

in a way they [homeless residents] work hard, they work harder than you and me just staying afloat. But, on the other hand, they certainly don't make things better for the businesses. (A15)

Although more sympathetic, such responses continue to frame the homeless resident in relation to work and productivity, individualising homelessness and precarity.

### **Theme 2: The temporary resident**

The second socio-cultural change cited by participants in both neighbourhoods was that of *the temporary resident*, including *the young professional* and *the renter* who were perceived to lack a long-term investment in the wellbeing of the neighbourhood, and occupied unconventional kinship structures that challenged the neighbourhoods' heteronormative, gendered and classed family values. The young professional, frequently conceptualised as unattached and without children (and thus out of line with, or 'queered' by, reproductive heteronormative expectations), was described as a polite yet anti-social homeowner. The renter was mostly constructed as a threat to the neighbourhood and was centrally discussed in relation to two subject positions: *the post-secondary student* who was always conceived of as a young person and was described as busy and neglecting home maintenance duties; and the '*unruly*' renter who was frequently described as engaging in illegal and disorderly activity, namely drug-related incidents, family violence and/or sex work. The young professional was more often discussed within the context of active gentrification in Neighbourhood A, whereas the post-secondary student was mainly explored in reference to Neighbourhood B, a neighbourhood that contains a post-secondary institution. Participants from either neighbourhood generally did not describe renters, specifically the unruly renter, as wanted, desirable or valuable residents. Notably, almost all the participants who talked about renters negatively were themselves homeowners or previous homeowners. Participants problematised all three figures as disruptive to community cohesion generally and to older adults' social interactions particularly.

Participants described the developing demographic trend of the young professional within the context of gentrification in Neighbourhood A. Gentrification refers to 'the process by which higher economic classes come to dominate residential and commercial uses in an urban area' (Torres, 2020: 2). While some participants understood gentrification as a positive development for the neighbourhood because it increased safety, property values and amenities, others voiced concern about its implications for the socio-economic fabric of the neighbourhood, especially as it might contribute to, or exacerbate, a perceived problematic lack of children and families in the neighbourhood. A3 spoke frankly and at length about her aversion to the trend:

the economic structure of [Neighbourhood A] has really changed. This used to be a place where you buy your starter house and then you move on to the suburbs ... And now it seems like the people that they're pulling in, that can afford the ... houses, are going to be a different culture.

A3 approached shifting socio-economic dynamics with caution, questioning, 'Well, who wants a community of young professionals? You know, you want people that have kids. You want old people. You want the whole community, right?' The young professional resident with their 'different culture' was characterised as unwilling or

unable to (re)produce the norm of the working/middle-class, nuclear family and thus as threatening (or queering) traditional social dynamics in the neighbourhood. Unlike the 'original' residents, the young professional threatens to *grow* the neighbourhood in an abnormal manner (*i.e.* buying homes to flip and turn profit), rather than through (hetero)normative ways (*i.e.* buying homes to create and raise traditional, nuclear families). Similarly, A7 also indicated that Neighbourhood A's shifting dynamics were challenging normative ways of being in the neighbourhood (*i.e.* coupled and working towards creating and raising a family): 'single people buying homes isn't something that you're really used to ... it is actually just single people moving into the neighbourhood and a different age group totally'. A7 framed the development of childless, young and single residents in the neighbourhood as an issue for her social interactions. A7 explained that her neighbours are 'friendly', but that opportunities to socialise casually with them were limited because they preferred to 'sit in the backyard', a change that conflicted with Neighbourhood A's front-porch culture.

As A3's and A7's comments indicate, these newer residents with their aberrant kinship structures (*i.e.* single and childless) were often constructed in opposition to the original working-class, family-oriented culture of Neighbourhood A. For example, some participants reported that the development of a handful of trendy cafes, restaurants and speciality food stores (*e.g.* organic, vegan, fair trade and 'ethnic') in Neighbourhood A was indicative of this more moneyed and younger resident who could take advantage of the neighbourhood's shifting housing market. While some participants spoke approvingly of these new sites, others received them with suspicion and unease. Described by participants as 'fancy funny restaurant[s]' (A8) and 'boutique-y places that are quite expensive' (A5), these sites were generally characterised as incongruent with the needs of Neighbourhood A's residents who were commonly perceived to be 'everyday or old-fashioned families' (A15), and who were implied to be the neighbourhood's 'original' (*i.e.* long-term) and 'regular' (*i.e.* white, working-class) residents. Some long-time residents described missing and desperately wanting 'just a regular restaurant' (A8) or even a fast-food restaurant. A15 showed the lead author a recently opened craft distillery and when asked if such a place was an important part of the neighbourhood, he responded, 'No. What's important about it is that it's *not important*. Like many places that we may have run into that have a trendiness quality to them.' Trendy (*i.e.* non-essential) neighbourhood spaces, which were often associated with younger, single and childless newcomers assumed to have the disposable income to patronise such non-essential spaces, were described as replacing essential neighbourhood resources.

Central to participants' descriptions of change in Neighbourhood A is the assumption that young professionals and single homeowners, a different class and age of resident, are without conventional kinship and social structures; rather, they are uncoupled and non-reproductive, and thus assumed to be unproductive residents for the neighbourhood. Invoking pronatalist and heteronormative values and discourses that idealise and normalise the reproduction of children, the nuclear family and the family line (Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 2005; Turnbull *et al.*, 2017; Hadley, 2018), or what Ahmed (2006: 125) identifies as the social pressure and obligation to 'follow the line', participant statements imply that young professionals will contribute to the neighbourhood's social dynamics in unvalued ways. However,

such statements also demonstrate older adults' feelings of dislocation and a sense of a loss of community along lines of class, age and kinship structure.

Participants also constructed residents that rented, including the *post-secondary student* and the *'unruly' renter*, as uninvested in the growth and care of the neighbourhood. In Neighbourhood B primarily, students were described as untidy, unconcerned regarding property and occasionally unruly, especially regarding student celebrations (e.g. homecoming). Participants justified the 'Othering' of students by invoking instances of their failure to comply with neoliberal rationalities, which emphasise individual responsibility (and thus valued lifestyle choices that minimise dependency on the state), economic rationality and entrepreneurship as moral obligations of good citizenship (Laliberte Rudman, 2006, 2015); namely the expectation that neighbours *should be* invested in optimising the economic value of property. Student residents did not, A21 maintained, 'cut the grass. And ... I was always brought up that you were proud of what you had, you always looked after your property, cutting [the] grass once a week'. In another instance, when asked what he would change about his neighbourhood, B17 said he wanted student neighbours to be more 'house-proud' 'because there are some townhouses and some student housing where it's just not as nicely kept up as what they could be doing'. Moreover, students were viewed, like young professionals and single homeowners, as relatively polite but unsociable. B13 described her social interactions with her student neighbours as amicable but as lacking in sociability experienced in the past, asserting:

they're always pleasant, they're polite, that's just kind of a social thing. 'Hey, how are you?' Like very, like that. It used to be that we had a group of people that got together at Christmas, we would always like have a small house party.

B5 also viewed her neighbourhood as less friendly than it had been in the past and attributed the loss of friendliness to increased student population:

Now this neighbourhood [has] a lot of students. There are still individual houses, but people who bought them are using them as student rentals ... I don't like to use the term unfriendly; it's not as 'open' as it was when we were growing up. You knew your neighbours and you could borrow things from them.

Social interactions with student residents were constructed as superficial and lacking. Students' social habits, however, were often framed as generational, and were largely forgivable since they were preoccupied with the 'right' activities (*i.e.* education and/or work):

I can understand they're more in a rush. You know, they have their own lives and they're just not as comfortable talking to people. Maybe it's just our upbringing of that era that we grew up in. (A21)

Importantly, though framed as not caring for the neighbourhood, students were constructed favourably in relation to the 'unruly' renter who was presented as busy and unsociable in a manner that could not be excused.

Rental properties were described as attracting ‘a different type of person into the neighbourhood’ (A7). In Neighbourhood A, participants were almost always referring to house rentals, whereas in Neighbourhood B, participants were referring to town-house rentals and subsidised housing, which were characterised by B14 as ‘more crowded’, ‘disturbing’ and visited regularly by ‘a lot of police cars’. Participants in both neighbourhoods associated rental properties with ‘drug addicts and prostitutes’ (B3), frequent ‘turnover’ (B13), ‘families that were rather a little on the rough side so to speak’ (A2) and ‘problematic landlords that really used the property for income only’ (A18). Participants characterised the renter as an unsavoury figure that threatened to upend the nuclear family and family values. This type of resident was constructed as universally unwanted, as is evident in the following statement:

In terms of the neighbourhood changing ... it’s not that people have been displaced, other than ... you know, people, [like] drug dealers, that any neighbourhood would not want in a neighbourhood. (A18)

In addition to framing this subject as criminal, participants also described the ‘unruly’ renter as a recipient of social assistance. In this way, participants largely framed the ‘unruly’ renter as the underserving poor, as those who do not deserve assistance because they engage in morally condemnable behaviour, and thus invoked neoliberal and capitalist logics of productivity to ‘Other’ the ‘unruly’ renter. For example, B12, who held strong working-class values, proposed that more co-operative housing was needed in his neighbourhood and maintained that individuals who were struggling financially simply needed something to own and care for. Co-operative housing would be successful because, B12 insisted:

people will look after it because a lot of [the city’s] housing places ... have been run down because people don’t care, it’s not theirs. But if they had to help work and keep it looking nice and so forth, they’d ... feel like ownership and I think when people feel ownership they look after things and keep things good.

Renters, he implied, do not care for the neighbourhood’s appearance in the same ways owners do. However, even dutiful and co-operative renters were constructed as problematic because they were perceived as ‘separate from the surrounding community’ (A15):

Renters just aren’t as friendly as the owners. It’s just like, we rent here and that’s it. (A11)

Their lifestyle’s a little different. They’re not grounded in the community. I think they know they’re not going to be here for a long time so you might see different activities going on in the house, maybe parties, maybe more of noise. (B16)

Implicit in participants’ statements about who does and does not belong to the neighbourhood, is the notion that a good neighbour is one who has lived or is committed to staying in the neighbourhood for a long time, and is grounded in (rather than disruptive to) the heteronormative lifecourse and reproduction of the nuclear family (*i.e.* coupledom, marriage and childrearing); and the renter with their abnormal and

unproductive ways (e.g. engaging in sex work and/or recreational substance use, receiving government assistance and partying), which were constructed primarily as threatening to the (re)production of children and family, and thus the growth and success of the neighbourhood, is decidedly not a *valued* (or *valuable*) resident.

At the same time, even if participants generally indicated a dislike of renters, they sometimes cited the recent development of high-rise apartment buildings in Neighbourhood A as a sign of progress and hope for the neighbourhood. Generally conceptualised as a positive yet complicated indicator of the neighbourhood's economic growth, high-rise apartments were described as attracting new residents, sometimes described as 'better' or 'nicer' people, to the neighbourhood. Participants described the high-rises as populated by students, especially 'South Asian students' (A15), 'Millennials' (A9) and 'richer people' (B12). Though generally met with approval by study participants, the cluster of high-rises was routinely regarded as a place that older adults could not afford to live. Essentially, high-rises were perceived to be instrumental to the economic growth of the neighbourhood and attracting a better type of renter, but many older adult participants, especially those who were themselves renters, were critical about who these buildings were meant to serve, raising concerns related to class dynamics and gentrification.

Previous studies about shifting social compositions have consistently reported on older adults' sense of social disconnection from, and feelings of instability with, rental properties and high population turnover (Walker and Hiller, 2007; Galčanová and Sýkorová, 2015). For instance, one study found that older adult participants experienced 'a feeling of losing control and the perception of a threat from "strangers"' (Galčanová and Sýkorová, 2015: 1214). Our study revealed that *specific* strangers or 'Others' were more threatening to older adults' sense of belonging to, and control within, the neighbourhood. The unruly resident, though disruptive, largely did not challenge older adult participants' sense of belonging to their localities. In contrast, the young professional and the post-secondary student renter were described as changing the social dynamics of the neighbourhood in ways that were inescapably alienating for older adults, given how their ideals of a 'good' neighbourhood were predicated on heteronormative, working-class assumptions.

### **Theme 3: The racialised resident**

The third type of socio-cultural change problematised by participants was the visibility of ethno-racial diversity in both neighbourhoods, exemplified by the figure of the racialised resident. Some participants spoke approvingly of increasing rates of ethno-racial diversity in the neighbourhood. For B16, the increasing visibility of 'new Canadians' was a positive indicator that the neighbourhood was becoming 'a little more liberal'. B16 also ascribed change in his neighbourhood, such as the construction of different artistic and cultural venues, to the influence of 'new Canadians'. Similarly, A18 described this diversity as making his neighbourhood more 'colourful', a characteristic he spoke approvingly of:

colourful in the sense that you see people of different backgrounds, different nationalities ... we fall in different socio-economic classes. It has kind of a flavour to it; that is, it's not homogeneous. We have characters in the neighbourhood.

B3 framed her ethno-racially diverse neighbourhood as harmonious: ‘We have ... a lot of ethnical [*sic*] people on the street and we just all get along very well.’

However, participants in Neighbourhoods A and B also constructed this shifting social composition as contributing to experiences of unease, unfamiliarity and alienation. Some participants invoked racialised discourses of ‘immigrantness’ that define ‘what is foreign, culturally different, less-developed, more traditional and less-modern’ (Torres, 2006: 1350) to validate their problematisation of ethno-racial diversity in the neighbourhood. One participant in particular demonstrated deep-seated fears about cultural difference and racialised residents. When asked about how he felt he belonged to his neighbourhood, A20 described feeling concerned about the proximity of strange (*i.e.* non-white) ways of being in the neighbourhood, such as the gendered and racialised expectations of those deemed to be from the ‘Mid-East’:

I kind of think ... he’s not wearing the type of garb that he’d be wearing in his home country, but he expects his wife to be dressed in those kinds of things.

A20’s comments invoke racialised discourses, such as the ‘imperiled Muslim woman’ and by extension the supposed threat Muslim men are assumed to pose to the West and gender equality (Razak, 2008). Here, ‘Others’ are racialised through their spatial association ‘with the “other side of the world”’ and thus ‘come to *embody distance*’, a phenomenological orientation (rather than physical attribute) that is aslant to, or misaligned with, the presumed and unmarked whiteness of Western places, including Western neighbourhoods (Ahmed, 2006: 121). A20 also spoke about the potential dangers associated with being near such ‘Otherness’:

There’s an African family who moved in and I guess in that culture you have maybe four or five families, that could be related or whatnot, move into the same place. So, it makes for a lot more kids, a lot more ... you know ... different things that are happening in the neighbourhood. I know that ... our councillor, was saying that there are people using propane barbecues to cook in apartments and whatnot. So ... and in their society, killing a goat and having it right there is something that certain cultures might bring in that would be different than what we are used to.

Changing neighbourhood dynamics has been reported as a site of exclusion for older adults (Burns *et al.*, 2012; Temelová and Slezáková, 2014); A20’s statements, however, are particularly instructive because they indicate that the root source of concern for at least some older adults might be the fear of difference and the threat its proximity poses to their own normative (*i.e.* white and Western) ways of being in the neighbourhood (*i.e.* ‘progressive’ notions of gender equality, one white, nuclear family unit per household, ‘modern’ industrial livestock production, *etc.*). A20’s heteronormative statements about cultural, racial, religious and ethnic difference indicate that his ‘social insideness’ (Rowles, 1983) to the neighbourhood is becoming increasingly challenged by different garb, customs and kinship structures of ethno-racially diverse populations moving into the neighbourhood. They also reflect studies that demonstrate that racialised and immigrant families, with their

extended family structures, 'queer' or disrupt the white, settler-colonial, male-led, nuclear, heterosexual family unit (Cohen, 1997; Luibhéid, 2004; Battle and Ashley, 2008; Tallbear, 2018). In another instance, A9 problematised ethno-racial diversity in the neighbourhood by linking crime directly to immigration:

Participant: It [change in the neighbourhood], I think, seems to be positive. And, I know people have to live somewhere. But, in most cases, I think, I can say all – [what ] do you call them, immigrants? Or, people that come from different countries – I think, for the most part, 99 per cent of them want a job and earn their own living, you know. It's the other ones, the 1 per cent that make it bad for the others, you know, so, but.

Interviewer: You've experienced something like that in your neighbourhood?

Participant: Oh, probably. I know a few years ago there was a kid selling whatever he was selling. He'd bike up to the corner and meet his clients.

These examples of strong normative evaluations of racialised and immigrant neighbours, including neighbouring children, also make clear that, while children are generally perceived as valued members of the neighbourhood, this value is racialised and classed (Muñoz, 2009; Tallbear, 2018). In other words, only particular children (*i.e.* white and middle-to-upper class) are perceived as desirable residents. Such comments invoke racialised, neoliberal, settler-colonial discourses about population growth in Western nations, specifically competing framings of immigrant and Indigenous populations' (re)productivity as simultaneously being a threat to, and solution for, population growth (Roberts and Mahtani, 2010; Tallbear, 2018). Though participants from both neighbourhoods largely framed a decline in (white, middle-class) children in their neighbourhood as concerning, the rhetorical framings outlined above insidiously convey that an increase in Middle Eastern, African and/or immigrant children in the neighbourhood is a problem or at the very least strange.

Participants characterised residents of different cultures, languages and countries of origin as affecting their opportunities for meaningful social engagement in the community. This was evident, for example, in the following statements below:

We do have neighbours that stay to themselves. Like I know them and I talk to them, but they don't walk their dog, and they don't really relate to this community. They're from [Central America] and I think a lot of times they go to their group of people to be entertained or whatever. (A7)

There's been more Hispanic people moving in, which is fine. I mean, some of them are lovely people. We're getting a real mix but, again, there's a language barrier. So, I mean, you can't even really have discussions with people like that. (A6)

Some participants also attributed negative consequences to an increase in ethno-racial diversity in the neighbourhood. For instance, B1 ascribed a perceived decline in respect for senior citizens in her neighbourhood to 'mixed cultures', a 'problem' she framed through nostalgic feelings for a 'lost community' or 'past community',

imagery that not only invokes a romanticised white, colonial past (and present), but also traditional family values predicated on the heterosexual, two-parent model (Phillipson, 2007; Buffel *et al.*, 2013; Galčanová and Sýkorová, 2015). Other studies (Walker and Hiller, 2007; Van Dijk *et al.*, 2015) have also noted that language and cultural barriers can hinder social participation for older adults. For instance, one study found that older adults preferred ‘a neighbourhood with people to whom they can relate’, and ‘objected most to an immigrant-majority neighbourhood’ because ‘the language barrier and immigrants’ values and habits alienate[d] these participants’ (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2015: 1783). Consistent with this scholarship, the narratives of older adult participants in our study indicated that increasing rates of ethno-racial diversity challenged their sense of belonging within the neighbourhood; however, while older adult participants might have experienced language and cultural barriers, a queer perspective that is attentive to familial, sexual and gendered normativities and non-normativities reveals that *how* they constructed and narrated the racialised resident as problematic for the neighbourhood was predicated on white and Western, heteronormative values and norms, which were often framed as threatened, vanishing and/or lost.

## Discussion

Although participants stressed the importance of their attachment to their various localities, it was clear from their narratives that they were also experiencing forms of subtle and explicit un-belonging and were increasingly feeling like outsiders. Older adult participants in the study engaged in boundary marking talk (*e.g.* us/them) inflected by neoliberal, heteronormative and racialised expectations to negotiate these feelings. In particular, older adults engaged in ‘Othering’ practices to distinguish themselves from ‘non-ideal’ residents commonly characterised in public and dominant discourse as unproductive, undeserving, dependent and non-reproductive (or too reproductive in the case of socio-economically disadvantaged and/or racialised populations). Within heteronormative and capitalist societies, the value of a person (as well as their lifecourse) is determined by their ability to produce, *i.e.* to reproduce children (*i.e.* not too few or too many) and produce (rather than extract) capital (Halberstam, 2005; Freeman, 2010; Sandberg, 2013; Sandberg and Marshall, 2017). The queer figures reproduced by our participants defy these neoliberal, heteronormative expectations: the idle (*i.e.* unproductive) *homeless resident* who takes from rather than contributes to the neighbourhood; the *temporary resident* who either does not invest in the neighbourhood or does not reproduce children or community for the neighbourhood; and the racialised resident who perhaps reproduces ‘too much’ and introduces different, non-traditional or ‘strange’ ways of being into the neighbourhood.

However, older adults also experience similar treatment in Western public discourse whereby they are commonly framed as inactive, costly and burdensome non-contributors (Gee and Gutman, 2000; Rozanova, 2006, 2010; Lundgren and Ljuslinder, 2012; Meisner, 2021). Not unlike the homeless, temporary and/or racialised resident, older adults, especially those who supposedly ‘choose’ not to age successfully, are also discursively constructed as those who fail to live up to heteronormative and neoliberal ideals (Rozanova, 2006, 2010; Port, 2012; Harvie,

2018). In public discourse, older adults are constructed as entitled and undeserving recipients of social assistance, unfit homeowners unable to optimise or even maintain the properties that they are ageing out of, and as occupying problematised or non-normative *lifestyles* and living situations, including widowhood, singledom and 'living apart together' (LAT) relationships – an emergent form of kinship or family developing among older adult Canadians (Funk and Kobayashi, 2016). Also, given that 'the old', past their reproductive and productive years, 'are often, like queers, figured by the cultural imagination as being outside of mainstream temporalities and standing in the way of, rather than contributing to, the promise of the future' (Port, 2012: 3), the older adults in the current study may be attempting to demonstrate their distance from, rather than likeness to, these figures. As Beagan *et al.* (2015: 79) explore in their critical discussion of 'Othering', or boundary marking, 'those who feel shame in occupying a stigmatised social position ... must work hard to assert their worth and dignity against those in a similar position, to assert their virtue in comparison with the less-virtuous masses'.

The 'Othering' practices of older adults make sense within the context and negotiation of binary discourses of later life in the 21st century: decline and successful/positive ageing (Sandberg, 2013). Indeed, 'Othering' through narrative may be a powerful means through which to defy and distance oneself from the socio-cultural expectation for older adults to participate in the decline narrative, 'characterised by non-productivity and increasing passivity and dependency' (Sandberg, 2013: 14); and reposition oneself as a 'positive' ageing citizen, a later-life subjectivity that delays the material realities of ageing by remaining able-bodied, able-minded and financially independent, and enacting normative heterosexuality (Laliberte Rudman, 2006, 2015; Laliberte Rudman and Molke, 2009; Gilleard and Higgs, 2011; Sandberg and Marshall, 2017; Marshall, 2018; Pack *et al.*, 2019). Given the two competing discourses of decline and successful ageing, as well as the unavoidable spectre of the fourth age, it is perhaps unsurprising that older adults engaged in 'Othering' practices to distinguish themselves from other 'non-ideal' residents characterised in the cultural imagination as un(re)productive, undeserving and dependent. In the interviews for our study, older adult participants who were struggling with socio-cultural change within their neighbourhoods, as well as personal age-associated changes to their bodies, minds, homes and relationships, invoked heteronormative, neoliberal and racialised discourses that justified their 'Othering' of non-ideal residents. Moreover, talk about racialised and immigrant neighbours introducing different or 'strange' kinship dynamics (*i.e.* references to many non-white children and/or multiple families co-habiting together in the neighbourhood) evoked dominant racialised discourses that propound fearful and racist logics related to population growth and a shrinking white population (Roberts and Mahtani, 2010). Within their narratives, as within broader heteronormative and neoliberal discourses, which queer of colour, Indigenous and critical race scholars have demonstrated are inseparable from settler colonial and racialised discourses (Ahmed, 2006; Puar, 2007; Razak, 2008; Roberts and Mahtani, 2010; Grande, 2018; Tallbear, 2018; Chazan, 2019; Changfoot *et al.*, 2022), participants invoked notions of individual autonomy, capitalist logics of productivity, reproduction and the white, heteronormative nuclear family to discuss other residents and by extension their place within the neighbourhood.

Participants aligned themselves with ways of being considered emblematic of belonging to desirable and ideal citizenship. By invoking neoliberal, heteronormative and racialised values to problematise the homeless, temporary and racialised resident, older adults engaged in a process of reaffirming their status of belonging. In doing so, participants enacted an ideal ageing identity as one who invests in, makes productive contributions to and cares for the neighbourhood – an ideal, rather than burdensome, resident.

But even as participants engaged in practices of ‘Othering’, a form of exercising power, it was evident that some ‘Othered’ figures disproportionately affected older adults’ sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods. Although older adults spoke about the homeless resident and the ‘unruly’ renter most disparagingly, shifting socio-cultural dynamics related to class, race and age posed the biggest challenges to older adults’ feelings of belonging, and relationships, to place. Unlike the homeless resident, who could be avoided or worked around (although this was more challenging for participants who used assistive devices such as scooters and walkers), the young single professional was constructed by participants as capable of marshalling power to change the neighbourhood in ways that could not be easily circumnavigated by older adult residents. For example, participants who had resided in the neighbourhood as children or from childhood onwards lamented the displacement of fast-food chains and family-oriented diners. Indirect ‘neighbourhood resource displacement’, a symptom of gentrifying neighbourhoods, can contribute to a sense of feeling ‘out of place’, disconnected or unwelcome for lower-income residents (Davidson and Lees, 2010) and older adult residents (Torres, 2020). Torres (2020) found that gentrifying neighbourhoods pose a threat to the social ties of older adults who ‘grapple with the practical and emotional consequences of a changing retail landscape, which include indirect displacement from commercial gentrification’ (Torres, 2020: 2). ‘The influx of younger, wealthier residents and visitors’, Torres (2020) maintains, indirectly produced the displacement of older adult ‘patrons from more modest neighbourhood spaces they used for socializing’ (Torres, 2020: 16). Consistent with this literature, older adult participants’ narratives from our study indicate that a different socio-economic class of people with different family structures are moving into these neighbourhoods, especially Neighbourhood A, and are unintentionally reshaping the social landscape beyond the control of older adult residents, and in ways that challenge heteronormative and neoliberal expectations. As our findings indicate, an inundation of more moneyed people and unconventional living arrangements (*e.g.* single and childless) can inadvertently threaten older adults’ social spaces and networks, as well as further bound their possibilities for meeting the neoliberal and heteronormative expectations of ‘successful ageing’ by working against older adults’ continued social participation and connectedness. These findings confirm a need for more scholarship that explores and centres the concerns of older adults experiencing the effects of gentrifying neighbourhoods.

Further, our findings indicate that older adults’ ‘Othering’ practices, which evinced power and belonging *as well as* increasing marginalisation and unbelonging, can complicate or ‘queer’ simplistic binaries that are routinely invoked in ageing-in-place scholarship and policy, such as included/excluded, belonging/unbelonging and successful/unsuccessful. The experiences and narratives of

predominately straight, white ethnic, settler-Canadian older adults in the present study defy easy categorisation as 'either/or', and instead indicate a need for more queer analyses that acknowledge 'both/and' perspectives to complicate and expand limited and limiting notions of older adults, especially under-researched communities such as 2SLGBTQ+, racialised and Indigenous older adults.

Finally, by exploring older adult participants' complicated experiences of and talk about socio-cultural change in the neighbourhood, and their relationship to heteronormative, neoliberal and racialised discourses, the authors do not intend to reinforce other harmful binaries that older adults regularly navigate, such as traditionalist/progressive, or reproduce what critical age scholars call 'age chauvinism' (Gullette, 2004: 46) or 'adversarial ageism', whereby 'old people are the enemy' (Harvie, 2018: 332). Following Harvie, we maintain that age-war rhetoric that naturalises generational difference and establishes an age hierarchy is itself a normative discourse that 'distract[s] attention from the real sources of contemporary insecurity and inequality: neoliberal capitalist ideologies, structures and policies which prioritise the success of individuals and corporations over the welfare of society' (Harvie, 2018: 333), among other interrelated oppressive systems, including heteronormativity, white supremacy and settler colonialism (Gullette, 2004; Grande, 2018; Chazan, 2019; Changfoot *et al.*, 2022). Instead, by analysing older adult participants' experiences and stories through a queer lens, we can explore the complex nature of older adults' social identities and experiences within the context of their changing localities, and challenge reductive binary understandings of older adults as either included *or* excluded.

### Limitations

The findings of this study are overwhelmingly limited to the experiences of white-settler Canadians. The experiences of and talk about socio-cultural change in neighbourhoods for non-white and Indigenous individuals may differ from those presented here. For instance, Indigenous informants may place more emphasis on the effects of ongoing colonisation and racialisation when discussing their sense of un/belonging to the neighbourhood. To this end, future research that explores the effects of changing neighbourhoods and gentrification for older adults also needs to be more diverse, accounting for how some older adults might experience cultural dispossession in addition to direct and indirect gentrification.

### Conclusion

Older adults experience dynamics of exclusion and inclusion in their everyday lives. They also reproduce dynamics of exclusion and inclusion in how they talk about socio-cultural change in the neighbourhood. This study contributes an innovative, critical perspective to researching older adults' experiences of place, age and identity. A queer theoretical approach to understanding older adults' sense of belonging aims to interrogate critically how older adults position themselves in relation to, for example, homelessness, gentrification and racial diversity. This approach adds to the literature by situating older adults' talk within normative discourses that exercise power over 'queer', *i.e.* non-normative, subjectivities such as those who are

unemployed or who are childless or have ‘too many’ children. The study thus also recognises older adults as both excluded *and* exclusionary subjects capable of occupying multiple positions of disadvantage and privilege. Ultimately, a queer theoretical approach can challenge binary understandings of later life as a time of decline or success, exclusion or inclusion, belonging or unbelonging, and help researchers challenge dominant constructions of older adults as apolitical, passive and powerless.

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