

# Age-Friendly Rural Communities: Conceptualizing 'Best-Fit'\*

Norah Keating and Jacquie Eales  
Department of Human Ecology, University of Alberta

Judith E. Phillips  
Centre for Innovative Ageing, Swansea University

---

## RÉSUMÉ

La littérature sur les communautés amies des aînés est axé principalement sur un modèle de vieillissement en un milieu urbain, en omettant ainsi de refléter la diversité des communautés rurales. Dans cet article, nous abordons cette lacune en se concentrant sur la notion de la communauté dans un contexte rural et en demandant ce qui crée une bonne adaptation entre les personnes âgées et leur environnement. Cela se fait grâce à (1) comptes autobiographiques et biographiques de deux environnements géographiques très différents de subsistance: les communautés bucoliques et contournées, et à (b) l'analyse des besoins et des ressources différents des deux groupes de personnes: les personnes âgées marginalisées et actives qui vivent dans ces deux communautés rurales différentes. Nous affirmons que la définition originale de 2007 de l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé (OMS), de "amie des aînés" doit être repensée pour tenir compte des besoins et ressources explicitement différents de la communauté, pour être plus inclusive ainsi que plus interactive et dynamique en intégrant les changements qui sont survenus au fil du temps chez les personnes et les lieux.

## ABSTRACT

The literature on age-friendly communities is predominantly focused on a model of urban aging, thereby failing to reflect the diversity of rural communities. In this article, we address that gap by focusing on the concept of community in a rural context and asking what makes a good fit between older people and their environment. We do this through (a) autobiographical and biographical accounts of two very different geographical living environments: *bucolic* and *bypassed* communities; and through (b) analysis of the different needs and resources of two groups of people: *marginalized* and *community-active* older adults, who live in those two different rural communities. We argue that the original 2007 World Health Organization definition of age friendly should be reconceptualized to explicitly accommodate different community needs and resources, to be more inclusive as well as more interactive and dynamic, incorporating changes that have occurred over time in people and place.

---

\* The authors gratefully acknowledge the joint funding received from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (grant CIHR CUK 94355, Connectivity of Older Adults in Rural Communities: Health in Context) and the UK New Dynamics of Ageing Programme (RES-353-25-0011, Grey and Pleasant Land?: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of the Connectivity of Older People in Rural Civic Society), as part of the Canada-UK Aging Initiative, which facilitated the transnational collaboration needed to write this article. The data were collected as part of a program of research funded by Veterans Affairs Canada (PWGSC Contract #51019-017032/001/HAL, Caring Contexts of Rural Seniors).

Manuscript received: / manuscrit reçu : 15/08/12

Manuscript accepted: / manuscrit accepté : 15/02/13

**Mots clés :** vieillissement, communauté amie des aînés, diversité de la communauté, l'ajustement de la personne à l'environnement, communautés rurales

**Keywords:** aging, age-friendly community, community diversity, person-environment fit, rural communities

Correspondence and requests for offprints should be sent to / La correspondance et les demandes de tirés-à-part doivent être adressées:

Norah Keating, Ph.D.  
Department of Human Ecology  
3-02 Human Ecology Building  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB T6G 2N1  
(norah.keating@ualberta.ca)

## Introduction

The age-friendly cities movement has gained remarkable traction since its launch by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2006. The report of the WHO-led consultations in cities around the world (WHO, 2007) provided guidance in creating services and amenities – such as public transportation and access to health and social services – that would help cities achieve age-friendly status (WHO, 2009). The report defined an age-friendly city as one that encourages active aging by “optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age” (p. 5). A central feature of the report is a checklist of age-friendly community features that is practical, accessible, and attractive to communities that wish to make a difference in the lives of their older residents.

In response to this growing grassroots phenomenon, researchers have begun to address the notion of *age-friendly* through the development of conceptual models that incorporate assumptions about the relative importance of key community features and contexts (Menec, Means, Keating, Parkhurst, & Eales, 2011; Phillipson, 2011; Walsh, O’Shea, Scharf, & Murray, 2012). Researchers have argued that understanding what makes a community age-friendly requires taking into account several factors: (a) diversity among both older persons and communities; (b) change over time in people and in place; and (c) the complexities of the connections between older people and their communities. This fledgling conceptual work has the potential to provide a platform from which to test the efficacy of age-friendly interventions and to inform policy and practice across a wide range of communities.

This paper is set within this second wave of the age-friendly movement. We build on these recent conceptualizations, using the ecological construct of “person-environment fit” as a metaphor for age-friendly (Menec et al., 2011). Viewing *age-friendly* as a measure of *goodness of fit* between communities and their older residents provides a platform for examining what community resources and needs might be most compatible with which groups of older residents. It moves the focus away from somewhat static evaluations of whether communities have a set of requisite features towards an examination of what opportunities they afford and to whom (Buffel, Phillipson, & Scharf, 2012). Rural settings, such as those in this study, can be regarded as both supportive and inhospitable places to grow old (Keating & Phillips, 2008).

### Why Age-Friendly Rural Communities?

The original approach taken by The World Health Organization 2007 to making communities more supportive

to their older residents began with a set of focus groups in more than 30 cities worldwide. Older persons, caregivers of older persons, and representatives of service organizations were asked to identify those factors that make urban environments “age-friendly”. In the project report, eight characteristics of cities were identified as important in making cities age-friendly (WHO, 2007): outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; civic participation and employment; communication and information; and community support and health services.

It was at the urging of Canadian policy makers and researchers that rural communities became part of the age-friendly movement. Population aging has particular relevance to rural areas. In a number of developed countries, the population is aging faster in rural than in urban areas. In Europe, the proportion of older people in rural areas is higher than in urban areas, especially among the newest European Union members where more than half of the population is rural (Burholt & Dobbs, 2012). Almost one in four residents of rural Canada (23%) is older than age 65, a proportion much higher than the national average of 13 per cent (Turcotte & Schellenburg, 2007).

Using the same methodology and checklist as in the age-friendly cities program, researchers collected information in 10 rural and remote communities across Canada, ranging in size from 600 to approximately 5,000 residents (Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors, n.d.). Similar to the cities projects, these researchers found that elements of physical and social contexts were important to participants. Yet, the examples were specific to rural settings. Physical environment issues included prompt snow removal and adequate parking spaces for personal vehicles. Social connections were viewed as strong – fostered through physical recreation or sports-related activities, church events, and community dinners. The “gossip mill” was the main mode of communication about community events and activities.

The Canadian age-friendly project was a good starting point for enhancing our understanding of rural people in rural places. *Age-friendly* has been regarded as a useful direction in the policy discourse on aging and specifically on how to meet the service needs of older people (Lui, Everingham, Warburton, Cuthill, & Bartlett, 2009), encourage active aging and aging in place, and address debates about the best places in which to grow old (Buffel et al., 2012). Buffel et al. (2012) stated that “the value of this approach has yet to be properly assessed in the context of the complexities and contradictions that beset modern cities, especially those that arise from accelerated global social and economic

change" (p. 2). Given the preponderance of older people in rural areas, we believe that there is a similar need to examine the diversity and complexity of rural communities and to further conceptualize age-friendly in rural contexts.

### *Conceptualizing Age-Friendly Rural Communities*

The age-friendly movement has drawn attention to *community* as a context for aging well. This focus is important because so much of the day-to-day experience of aging occurs within neighbourhoods and communities (Phillipson, Bernard, Phillips, & Ogg, 2000). Yet within the age-friendly discourse to date, communities have been positioned primarily as the purveyors of services and supports to meet the needs of older residents. Researchers have challenged this approach as being insufficiently nuanced to accommodate the considerable variation in needs and resources of communities as well as those of older persons (Golant, 2004; Wahl & Lang, 2004). This approach also has deflected attention from issues that are particularly relevant to rural communities such as their ability to engage in and sustain age-friendly activities.

Turning our attention to better understanding the situation of rural communities in the age-friendly discourse seems timely given concern about the viability of many rural communities. It brings into focus a rather fundamental question: Is expecting rural communities to commit resources to create positive environments for older residents a futile endeavor? Much of the extant literature in Europe and North America would suggest that the answer is yes (see, for example, Giarchi, 2006; Scharf & Bartlam, 2008; Shucksmith, 2003; Walsh, O'Shea, & Scharf, 2012).

A prevalent view of rural communities is that they are *bypassed*: isolated, service-poor, and economically depressed (Joseph & Cloutier-Fisher, 2005). They must confront issues related to being located long distances from larger centres, low population density, harsh climates, and low economic productivity (Cloutier-Fisher & Kobayashi, 2009; Hanlon & Halseth, 2005; Skinner, Yantzi, & Rosenberg, 2009). A substantial body of research attests to the difficulties faced by such communities in providing health and social services (Davenport, Rathwell, & Rosenberg, 2005; Houle, Salmoni, Pong, Laflamme, & Viverais-Dresler, 2001). These difficulties are exacerbated by the impact of reduced government commitments and public policy support for those rural communities already struggling with declining population numbers and provisioning capacity (Dwyer & Hardill, 2011; Hanlon, Clasby, Halseth, & Pow, 2007; Joseph & Skinner, 2012). There is concern that out-migration of younger people seeking employment in urban areas, along with volunteer shortages, will place

further pressure on informal systems that cannot compensate for lack of formal services for older people (Alcock, Angus, Diem, Gallagher, & Medves, 2002; Moore & Pacey, 2004). Over time, resources in these communities have decreased.

A second common view of rural communities is that they are *bucolic*: having considerable resources and assets including their natural beauty, slow-paced lifestyle, and culture of supportiveness (Brown & Glasgow, 2008; Keating & Eales, 2011). These bucolic communities attract recent retirees in search of pristine environmental features and climates conducive to their enjoyment (Brown & Glasgow, 2008; Glorioso & Moss, 2007). Such communities are believed to compensate for a lack of formal services through, such things as contributions of older residents that buttress service deficits and lack of public infrastructures and which provide opportunities for active aging (Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2009). For example, Rozanova, Dosman, and de Jong Gierveld (2008) found that older adults living in rural areas spent more hours volunteering in communities that had higher proportions of older adults, more highly educated residents, and growing populations, characteristics typical of retirement communities. Volunteer community organizations such as Meals on Wheels and volunteer driver programs augment support to older adults where access to services is limited (Philip, Gilbert, Mauthner, & Phimister, 2003). Over time, resources in these communities have increased with population growth and the in-migration of retirees who contribute to the local economy.

These views of rural diversity do not encompass the full range of variation in rural community characteristics. Canada has almost 3,000 rural communities that vary in population size and density, distance from service centres, employment opportunities, and proportion of the population over age 65 (Keating & Eales, 2011; Keating, Swindle, & Fletcher, 2011). However, these views do illustrate the appropriateness of including rural community resources and needs in age-friendly analyses.

### *Theorizing 'Best Fit' between Communities and Older Persons*

The WHO (2007) age-friendly approach falls within the classic approach to conceptualizing relationships between people and environments (Lawton, 1980). Within it, "the person is defined in terms of a set of competencies and the environment is defined in terms of demands" (Iwarsson, 2005, p. 327). The assumption is that if there is incongruence between personal needs on one hand and resources and environmental affordances on the other, the well-being of older people suffers (Peace, Wahl, Mollenkopf, & Oswald, 2007).



This approach is an example of what Johnson (2008) called a person-context model that focuses on particular environmental characteristics that are seen as either risk or favourable factors for developing particular outcomes in individuals with particular characteristics. In the current age-friendly model, a community “adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities” (WHO, 2007, p. 1).

The explicit addition of community needs and resources in this paper provides a conceptualization of person-environment fit that considers the diversity of rural communities as well as of older people, allowing for an examination of how interfaces between them are conducive to a positive outcome for both. This reconceptualization is motivated by the sense of urgency by social-policy makers to do a better job of bringing communities into the age-friendly discourse given massive changes affecting them (Phillipson, 2011). Walsh, O’Shea, Scharf, and Murray (2012) argued this point in relation to rural communities dealing with “patterns of rural decline, increased personal mobility, changes in family structure and interpersonal relationships, fluctuations in the global and local economy, outward and inward migration flows” (pp. 1-2). They conclude that as a result of these changes, “the nature of rural living has fundamentally changed for rural-dwelling older people” (p. 1).

Given the considerable changes in rural communities over time, a temporal dimension warrants inclusion in the age-friendly model. Theorists have called for such additions to the person-environment model, which lacks investigation into the processes within the environment that will affect the quality and fluidity of fit (Iwarsson, 2005; Johnson, 2008). Community history can provide context for current community needs and resources and the likelihood that it will engage in what Scharf, Liddle, Bartlam, Bernard, and Sim (2012) referred to as the need to have strategic continuous processes of improvement to create and maintain an age-friendly setting.

In the empirical section of this article, we undertake an initial examination of these proposed refinements to the age-friendly conceptualization. To do so, we draw on case studies of two rural communities in Canada representing the aforementioned *bypassed* and *bucolic* communities; and a subset of diverse, rural older people drawn from profiles of older rural adults developed in earlier publications (for detail on the development of profiles of diverse older adults, see Keating & Eales, 2011).

## Methods

Data for this article were drawn from a mixed methods study of rural communities in Canada (Keating & Eales,

2011). A subset of these data based on two rural communities was used to illustrate the nature of “fit” between rural communities and the older people residing in them. Each had fewer than 3,000 residents and had a higher than provincial average proportion of adults aged 65 and older. Case communities differed in distance from a larger urban center, population stability, labour force characteristics, income, and level of community supportiveness to older adults.

Community descriptions were developed from archival materials (Bowles, Beesley, & Johnston, 1994; Brown, 2002) and from the 2001 Census of Canada community profiles (Statistics Canada, 2002). Archival materials were used to provide historic context and descriptions of changes in community characteristics and resources over time. Census data provided information on population size, age distribution, gender distribution, education, and income. Together, they contributed to the development of community biographies. Community autobiographies also were developed to the extent that data allowed. They illustrate residents’ views of the predominant characteristics of their communities. These autobiographies were drawn from interviews we conducted with community members, described below.

Data collection with community residents occurred over a 14-month period. During this period, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 106 older adults, family members, volunteers, service providers, and local policy makers (e.g., mayors). Respondents were asked, “What makes a rural community a good place to grow old?” Participants also were asked about older adults’ relationships with family and friends, engagement in their community, and access to services. Near the end of the data collection period, three community consultations were held in each community to elicit feedback on preliminary findings. We invited participants who, based on knowledge gained in earlier interviewing, we knew to be familiar with older adults and/or community issues locally, were articulate, and confident enough to participate in a group discussion. The 33 key community members who participated in the small group consultations were older adults, volunteers with seniors’ organizations, or representatives of a range of community services such as health, church ministerial, retail grocery, and law enforcement services. The participants first validated our understanding of four different groups of older adults and then, through these groups, discussed the ways in which their community supports different groups of older adults.

We contrasted two groups of older rural adults to exemplify the diversity element of the best-fit model of age-friendly rural communities: community-active older adults and marginalized older adults.

*Community-active* older adults have large social networks and are engaged in their communities in a wide range of formal and informal activities. Their extensive social participation contributes to the diversification of their broad social networks. They derive significant satisfaction from contributing to their community, and they have resources such as health, energy, skills, or money that allow them to do so. In comparison, *marginalized* older adults have limited social connections to people in their community other than family members. They seem to lack personal agency, relying heavily on others to initiate social participation. Modest or limited income permeates their everyday lives, constraining their choices and levels of community engagement.

We developed profiles on the basis of clusters of characteristics of these older persons that defined a particular group. The profiles were based on personal resources, interactions with people, and level of and approach to community engagement (see Eales, Keefe, & Keating, 2008 and Keating & Eales, 2011 for a full description of the development of typologies of rural older adults). In combination, these methodologies allowed us to test the usefulness of framing age-friendly as a fit for rural communities and their older residents across time.

Verbatim transcripts were imported into QSR International's NVivo 9.2 qualitative data analysis software to support the organization, coding, and analysis of data. Transcripts were coded by community (we used the pseudonyms *Robertsville*, located in the lakes district of central Ontario, and *Borough Bay* which is in the maritime region of Nova Scotia) and by older-adult group (*community-active* or *marginalized*). Data were analyzed using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), focusing on respondents' perceptions of Robertsville and Borough Bay, and the fit (or lack thereof) experienced by them. Through a continuous, iterative, and comparative process (Patton, 2002), three comparisons were made: (1) community-active and marginalized older adults living in the same community; (2) community-active older adults living in Robertsville and Borough Bay; and (3) marginalized older adults living in these two communities. As analysis proceeded, additional codes were added that were grounded in the data and that reflected general patterns within each of these key comparisons. Memos were written and discussed among the co-authors, noting the relevance of how community autobiographies changed across time and the interplay between community context and individuals' experiences of person-environment fit.

## Results

Results are presented in two sections: profiles of the two case communities that provide an illustration of

their diversity; and data on the fit between communities and older residents.

### *The Communities*

The two case communities included a retirement community in central Canada, and a seasonal maritime community on the east coast. They represent diversity among rural communities in resources as well as contexts for older adults.

Robertsville,<sup>1</sup> is located in central Ontario's lakes district. The area provides attractive places for recreation, tourism, and summer cottages, activities which are prominent parts of social life and important to the local economy. The village is situated at the intersection of two lakes where a lock permits pleasure boats to navigate the waterways. The village is 156 km from a large city of 4.6 million people. Distances to other service centres are relatively short (32–52 km). While tourism is the most visible part of the economy in the immediate area, jobs in the manufacturing and service industries are within commuting distance. Agriculture continues to play a small but important role in the local economy. Residential construction has expanded continuously since the 1960s, following the development of modern water and sewer service. Robertsville is known as one of Canada's primary retirement communities (Bowles et al., 1994).

Table 1 provides information on population-level characteristics of Robertsville (the *bucolic* community). The community has grown substantially over 40 years; more than 25 per cent of residents have moved to the community in the previous five years. It has a high proportion of older people (41%) and relatively low unemployment rate and proportion of households living below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO). Median household income exceeds \$40,000. Most of the population (42.1%) has some post-secondary education or degree. Government transfers account for a higher proportion of income (26.6%) than the provincial average of 9.8 per cent, perhaps reflecting the high proportion of older people and those with seasonal or part-time employment.

Residents held no single vision of Robertsville; some of them talked about the thriving nature of the community.

It's a quiet sort of a town; it's growing in leaps and bounds. The number of people from the city are coming up here, and they want a quieter lifestyle, and they like to get away from the traffic, and the problems of the urban areas.... For seniors it's an excellent place to retire to. [7B\_SR\_tr]

I have about a 150 volunteers [with Meals-on-Wheels]. [24B\_SR\_tr].

**Table 1: Selected characteristics of case study rural communities**

Characteristic	Robertsville	Borough Bay
	Population & population history	
2001	2,854	1,529
1991	2,562	1,634
1961	1,210	1,834
1921	1,095	2,161
Population change 1961 to 2001 (%)	57.6	-19.9
Lived in the same community 5 years ago (%)	74.7 <sup>a</sup>	84.8
	Population characteristics	
Percent of population 65 and older (%)	41.0	23.2
Median age of population (years)	59.7	44.0
Population 15 years and older with some post-secondary education (%)	42.1 <sup>a</sup>	43.5
Population aged 20–64 years with college or university certificate, diploma, or degree (%)	31.6	29.4
Proportion of persons 15 years and older reporting unpaid assistance to adults 65 and older (%)	17.5	10.8
	Labour force	
Workers with income employed part-time or part-year (%)	55.1	62.3
Unemployment rate <sup>b</sup> (%)	6.8	17.2
	Income	
Median annual household income	\$40,544	\$25,886
Government transfers as percent of income (%) [Provincial average of government transfers as percent of income (%)]	26.6 [9.8]	35.9 [16.1]
Incidence of low income in private households (%)	14.4 <sup>a</sup>	31.4
Incidence of low income among unattached individuals (%)	26.6 <sup>a</sup>	35.9

**Source: Census of Canada 1921, 1961, 1991, 1996, and 2001**

**Statistics Canada (2001) Community Profiles**

<sup>a</sup> Because Robertsville (a pseudonym) was amalgamated in January 2001 with other neighbouring municipalities in Ontario to form a city, some data were not reported separately for Robertsville in the 2001 Census. In Table 1, Robertsville data from the 1996 Census are reported for the following variables: lived at same address 5 years ago, proportion of the population 15 years and older with some post-secondary education, and incidence of low income in population in private households and among unattached individuals.

<sup>b</sup> *Unemployment rate* refers to the percentage of those who are not working but actively looking for work divided by the labour force (the population 15 years of age and older who are working or looking for work) in the week (Sunday to Saturday) prior to Census Day (May 15, 2001).

Others viewed changes as creating difficulties for long-term residents and as changing the social milieu of the community. This second view suggests that bucolic communities may have different benefits for residents.

It was so comfortable for them [longtime residents]. They knew everybody. You walk down the street, and everybody knows everybody. All that has changed. So, aside from their circle, they're not as comfortable in this village as they would have been either. [39B\_CC\_tr]

The whole face of the village has changed. When we came, there were a number of older families who had been here forever who were the power base. And that has dissipated now with all of the people that moved in. [21B\_SRs\_tr]

Borough Bay, Nova Scotia (the *bypassed* community), is located in a maritime region with a history of European settlement beginning in the 1600s. Through much of its history, the economy was based on lumber mills that supported ship building and coal mining industries.

During the days of wooden sailing ships, Borough Bay was an important Atlantic port from which lumber and coal were shipped to many destinations and through which other goods were imported. Through the closing of coal mines, the exhaustion of timber supplies, and the shift away from wooden sailing ships, Borough Bay has had decreased economic opportunities (Brown, 2002) and declining population. Currently, tourism is the predominant economy based on the area's scenic beauty and interesting historical sites. Forest industries continue on a reduced scale. There is some agriculture, particularly the intensive management and processing of wild blueberries. However, many of these industries operate either part-year or part-time. The village is at a distance from the nearest metropolitan area (186 km away) and from other service centres (55–94 km).

Table 1 provides information on population-level characteristics of Borough Bay. The population has declined 20 per cent over 40 years, although the majority of

residents (84.8%) have lived in the community for five years or more. The proportion of the population over age 65 is 23.2 per cent. Labour force and employment statistics provide a picture of a community that is struggling economically. More than 60 per cent of employment-age people work part-year or part-time; 17.2 per cent are unemployed. The median household income is \$25,886 with 31.4 per cent of households living below Statistics Canada's LICO. Government transfers are a higher proportion of income (35.9%) than the provincial average of 16.1 per cent, perhaps a reflection of the high proportion of those who are unemployed or marginally employed and those who are over age 65.

Residents of Borough Bay corroborated the community biography of decline and privation.

No bus, no train, no nothing ... one of these days the tide won't come in. [50P\_CC\_tr]

I would like to get younger people into the town, which would generate more taxes to make the money available to do things for the seniors. That would be mine [my wish] with my magic wand. [51P\_CC\_tr]

I think if this out-migration continues, I've heard rumours two or three times that we could well revert to a village. Borough Bay was a village. If we do, we're in trouble because of lower tax base, difference in policing, probably snow removal, garbage collection, all that gear. [50P\_CC\_tr]

### *The Fit between Older Adults and Communities*

Results of our analyses of the interfaces between older adults and their communities illustrate differences in the goodness of fit between them. Here we provide data to support the main findings for community-active older adults, and for marginalized older adults, in the bucolic and bypassed communities. Beginning each section, we summarize the goodness of fit for the particular group of older persons and for a particular community.

#### *Community-Active Older Adults in a Bucolic Community*

Community-active older adults in the bucolic community of Robertsville evidenced a good fit with their wish to have an active, engaged retirement and community features that supported this wish. In turn, the community benefited from these older adults' financial resources, consumer spending, and contribution to arts and culture. In addition, community-active older adults were very positive about the amenities of the area and the opportunities for engagement. They were attracted to the beauty and recreational opportunities afforded by the setting.

They are people who are here to play. You know, I've worked hard, so I could retire early ... You can play at anything here. If anybody says that there's nothing to do around here, they are blind, deaf, and dumb. [40B\_CC\_tr]

We loved the area. Boating's what started us ... [25B\_SR\_tr]

I don't have to be satisfied with just belonging to the Legion. I'm a Mason, I can join the Lions Club, I can go to a seniors club – you know. There's plenty for me to do. [18B\_SR\_tr]

Community-active older adults found many volunteer opportunities in Robertsville and no pressure to do more than they wanted. They experienced benefits from feeling they were helping to make life a bit better for others and took comfort in knowing that they were building social capital to draw on later in life if needed.

We have the perfect village for volunteers. People retire here at 50 or 55, have all kinds of time, and are willing. [39B\_CC\_tr]

We never go and ask somebody to be a volunteer. When we get our volunteers, we put it in the church bulletins, and we put it in the little paper, the town paper, and we'll say "if you wish to volunteer, wish to make this or do that, or if you have vegetables in your garden, call me". And that's how we get our help, it's people that want to do something, and they're not afraid to say no. They don't have to [volunteer]. They don't call unless they want to [help]. [28B\_SR\_tr]

I'm being treated for cancer right now myself ... I have to go to [a city 56 km away or city 227 km away] for treatment. But I drove for cancer for years, and now, cancer's driving me so I don't have to drive. [5B\_SR\_tr]

Although local services met most of their needs, residents were willing (and able) to travel for goods and services that were not available in the village.

Robertsville has just about everything that anybody would require in terms of facilities, shopping, supplies, etc. We've got two very good hardware stores. Because every small town has got one, we've got a good LCBO [liquor store] and a good beer store. There are a number of very good restaurants, shops which will sell most anything that you require, so other than the big-box stores, there's no real reason for anybody to go outside. [39B\_CC\_tr]

I shop everywhere. Um, grocery shopping: I'd say 95% done right here in Robertsville, they have 2 grocery stores.... If I want something special, I may have to go out of town to get it. Something unique, or if you're going for a big-ticket item, obviously you're going to go comparison shopping. [7B\_SR\_tr]



From the community perspective, the town derived considerable benefits from the involvement of these older people. Their knowledge and skill, volunteer activity, financial resources, and consumer spending contributed to community economic well-being.

They come with such wonderful expertise, often from their working careers. So they bring many gifts to this community. [3B\_SP\_tr]

The seniors building over there, they're the ones who built it. They're the ones who are renovating it. They just put in a new stove and new kitchen and all this, and they're the ones who are doing the work. I mean, it's just amazing what these people have done. [13B\_SR\_tr]

Marine 10 [an upscale housing development aimed at affluent retirees], has had a great effect on this village because people are coming from, a lot from the city who have had a great deal of experience and great interest in the arts and in literature and poetry and all of that kind of thing, so I think that that has had an effect on the village and opened lots and lots of [opportunities]. [21B\_SR\_tr]

The mayor acknowledged the boost to the local economy:

The more development, the more assessment. Correct? Well, the more assessment, the more tax revenue that the municipality will have in the future to work with the government and, hopefully, other private individuals to accommodate the need. [42B\_PM\_tr]

These data provide evidence of an excellent fit for both community-active older adults and for the Robertsville community – the best example of all of the older adult-community interfaces.

### *Community-Active Adults in a Bypassed Community*

Community-active older adults in Borough Bay appeared to have a more difficult time creating and sustaining a fit within their community. Like their counterparts in Robertsville, they were actively involved in their communities. But the tone of their discussions about their engagement reflected an urgency not seen among Robertsville residents.

Volunteer activities developed in response to a high level of community need. People worked hard and made donations where they could and did their best to help. While community-active people in Robertsville talked about what the town had to offer, in Borough Bay they talked about what the town needed.

I'm a people's person. I have compassion, a lot of compassion. No one would ever know the work that I do in the community with people that are hungry that I go to, people that want something.

My phone is busy, wanting to know things and where people are and things like that. I sort of have the patience to hunt up everything and to answer them. [51P\_CC\_tr]

You've got to have volunteers; if you don't have volunteers ... The town can't do it all. And not only if the town can't do it all, but in order for the village to survive, you've got to have people to volunteer. You've got to, you've got to. [14P\_SR\_tr]

There's hardly a time during our meetings, our regular meetings at the Legion, there's not a request for a donation, to a certain organization or group to help the town. There's always people asking for help, and I think the Legion has been outstanding to give money to the community. Maybe a hundred dollars, maybe two hundred dollars [to someone in need], or maybe someone that lost their house in a fire. [14P\_SR\_tr]

You know, it is a small community and there's not a lot of money coming in to the churches and it's difficult to keep them up. But they do work together to raise money to help each other. [20P\_SR\_tr]

Community-active older adults in Borough Bay expressed concern about not having the energy or financial resources to meet all of the needs. They worried about who would take over from them when they could no longer do so.

There are people in this town that I've often slipped the odd \$20 to – and I don't have a lot of \$20s to slip – because I want to, not because someone says you have to; but because I want to. But there are too many people, and I don't have enough \$20s. [50P\_CC\_tr]

But here, there just aren't enough other people to volunteer. [47P\_SRs\_fn]

We work for our churches, and we work for our Legion, we work for our Lions Club. [13P\_SR\_tr]

Borough Bay reaped considerable benefit from the dedication of these older residents. Older adults filled gaps in infrastructure through direct service and through fundraising to provide for other community activities. They hired and shopped locally where possible. There was a willingness to accept the limited services the community had to offer and a strong sense of obligation and commitment to support their community.

Because of your involvement in various organizations with the church and things like that, I think that fills in a lot of that gap [in community services]. [2P\_PM\_tr]

And I think seniors do a lot of work behind the scenes that we don't hear about. Helping each other. And they put on sales and church sales. That's mostly seniors who do that, the church sales. And they put on suppers – again, that's the seniors.



So they really contribute greatly to the community as well as being helped themselves. [20P\_SRs\_tr]

The community also benefitted from the accepting attitude of older residents towards limitations in community services.

Yes, I'd love to see more stores here and so forth, but I mean that's a problem that will solve itself. They come and go. Stores close; stores open. [41P\_SR\_tr]

I guess we like the fact that there are not a lot of stores around here. I mean, it's got the basics. Sometimes I get in the mood to just go to a mall or something, but I don't because it's not that convenient. It's not really a big thing in my life. One thing we find a little frustrating is that some services for working on our house, like electricians, plumbing, people like that, are hard to get ... But we still like it here. [47P\_SRs\_tr]

### *Marginalized Older Adults in a Bucolic Community*

Whereas community-active seniors in Robertsville experienced a good fit between their needs and resources, in general, marginalized older adults did not. Many long-term residents were newly marginalized from sharp increases in cost of living resulting from the economic boom. Others with limited social connections were dependent on fragile support systems. There was neither a good nor poor fit for the Robertsville community in relation to these residents. For the most part, the community's focus was elsewhere.

Marginalized older adults found it difficult to manage financially in the face of increases in costs of housing and other services.

It's expensive. We're living here because we had the property. We've had it for a while ... We're on a very limited pension, and we thought when we retired, we were going to be fine, but then the taxes have almost doubled here in the last 4 or 5 years, and it's really tight. [14B\_SRs\_tr]

The biggest increase in clients at the food bank are seniors. [21B\_SRs\_tr]

There are probably a dozen of those guys [marginalized older adults] in town. No pensions. No benefits. So in some cases they've inherited their parents' home, but we have seen in one case at least where they couldn't afford to keep their home – because if you're living on OAS [Old Age Security] with no Canada Pension, no other [financial resources], just with your savings, you can't maintain a home, you know, with water bills that are \$200 on the horizon. [39B\_CC\_tr]

We don't do too much of it [shopping] here in Robertsville because we find the stores are too expensive here ... It's cheaper to drive to [city 52 km

away], and it's a little further, of course, but you've got all the stores. [14B\_SRs\_tr]

Say, 35 or 40 years ago, we could walk in, just for instance, and buy something affordable on the main street. There were two or three choices. Now the merchants are catering to the majority, so it's difficult to find something. There may be one store in Robertsville that has affordable women's clothing ... I think that the businesses work on the principle "make hay while the sun shines". [39B\_CC\_tr]

The fit for the Robertsville community with its marginalized residents was not ideal. The community had set priorities for community investment on housing and other infrastructure for affluent retirees. There was awareness of the needs of marginalized older residents, but no action as yet. For the most part, the community benefitted little from the presence of these residents since many looked elsewhere for more affordable services. An exception involved those who moved into the town during the winter, living in modest rental accommodation for tourists that was mostly vacant in winter.

In the winter we have regular tenants that come in from their cottages, from their homes in the country or whatever and rent those apartments until it's time to rent them to tourists again ... because their places out of town are not plowed out ... [and] there are some that just don't have heat. [39B\_CC\_tr]

We're not perfect ... I mean, people are thinking ahead, but things take time to build. It could not be maybe for 20 years before all the resources are at hand in this community to look after everybody. [39B\_CC\_tr]

The mayor commented:

There's been a proposal I'm sure you're aware of – [for] the provincial government to increase affordable housing. I'm encouraging council that we need to get on side with this. We need more housing for low-income people, and many of them are seniors. [42B\_PM\_tr]

### *Marginalized Older Adults in a Bypassed Community*

Perhaps somewhat surprising was our finding that marginalized older adults in Borough Bay, a bypassed community, experienced a relatively good fit between their needs and community resources compared to marginalized older adults in the more affluent Robertsville. Marginalized older adults had a sense of camaraderie in Borough Bay that came from a shared history of deprivation and relative improvement in liveability. Residents acknowledged the contributions of their community in looking after those who were disenfranchised, for example, by providing them with affordable housing. The community benefitted from a

strong sense of cohesion and a culture of helpfulness as well as from the modest contributions of marginalized members who shopped locally and remained in the community.

We have more than 50 senior citizen units in this small community ... that's amazing for a population of 1,600! ... It's affordable housing because a lot of the people up there are people who haven't a lot of income, possibly just welfare, old-age pensions, or maybe small pensions. They [administration] take – I think it's a quarter, 25%. So it's a percentage of their income. [6P\_SR\_tr]

I think Borough Bay offers a great deal to the seniors because many of these seniors today grew up in the Depression years when there was absolutely nothing and they had so little ... And so for many of them ... they feel they have a wonderful life ... because for the first time in their lives, they have enough money coming in, and they have their pensions, and they have nice little units to live in, and everything is taken care of by others. [20P\_SR\_tr]

There was a sense that individuals, businesses, and organizations are caring and generous, supporting and preserving the dignity of those less fortunate.

I am a widow of a veteran. The Legion, if I was living in my own home, and I ran out of oil, they would give me a tank of oil without any questions asked. The Lions Club will help you with glasses. The Legion will help with medicine. [13P\_SR\_tr]

[Interviewer: Is it a good place to grow old for everybody?] Yeah, I would think so, certainly for the "fringe" people I would say so, yeah. There are some alcoholics. They kind of get looked after. If they're drunk under the tree, somebody looks after them, you know? [6P\_SR\_tr]

I can think of people that have gone to the nursing home here. They've been involved, their whole life in the community and their church in the community. They're out there. People just visit them. They've known them forever, you know. [6P\_SR\_tr]

The Borough Bay pharmacist noted that he let people run a tab to help them manage their meagre incomes.

We have people paying their bills at the end of the month when the cheques come out or buying their prescriptions at the end of the month. The end of the month is always busier for us just because that's when the cheques come in. [49P\_CC\_tr]

Borough Bay was a community in decline but it benefitted from the fierce loyalty and support of many of its marginalized older residents who were grateful for the support they received and were committed to remaining there. Yet, it was vulnerable to the press of continuous out-migration of young people, erosion of its tax

base, and pressures from natural disasters such as floods and fires. The fit for this community was precarious at best.

I think most (older) people would rather give up their left eye than leave town, quite frankly. [50P\_CC\_tr]

Borough Bay is a senior town. We got no youngsters here. There's nothing here for youngsters in any case. Once they get old enough, they leave town. [51P\_CC\_tr]

From field notes, the interviewer wrote about one study participant: "Borough Bay is her hometown where she was born and she has family there, but she felt that there is no hope for people who live on a limited income and their house floods."

## Discussion

Our findings provide support for the argument that age-friendly can best be understood by focusing on diversity in communities and among older adults; by understanding what makes for a good fit for each; and by assuming that fit is not static given that communities change as do people. There is a need to move from a static concept of what constitutes age-friendly to an approach that incorporates place, people, and time.

Rural community data presented here give a picture of two distinct sets of community resources and needs. The Borough Bay story of decline is consistent across census data, community histories, and community autobiographies. Robertsville's newly created retirement community has two sides: an economically vibrant place that benefits from the economic and cultural contributions of retirement in-migrants, and an indifferent place that reaps little benefit from its long-term residents. These data provide an indication of community needs and resources, an important contributor to the quality of "fit" for the two communities and for their older-adult residents.

Analyses at the interface of communities and its older adults highlight two main issues. The first is that people with similar characteristics and needs experienced a good fit in one community, but a poor fit in another. Community-active older people had similarly high levels of engagement in and commitment to both Borough Bay and Robertsville communities. Yet in Borough Bay, there was a sense of urgency related to the needs of others and of the community itself. Those in Robertsville made substantial contributions, but moved there "to play". Similar differences were apparent with marginalized people who seemed best supported in Borough Bay where there were others like them and in which the community story was one of sharing limited resources in the face of long-term deprivation.

The second issue is that communities themselves benefitted differently from their community-active and marginalized residents within the context of available community resources. Robertsville gained significantly from the influx of retirees who augmented the local economy and also volunteered their considerable skills. Community decisions related to supporting these older adults meant that others became marginalized because of increased costs associated with a booming local economy. The previously supportive community became a poor fit with their limited financial resources. The Borough Bay community's sustainability was dependent in great measure on the strong commitment of its community-active older residents.

Knowledge of community history provides some insight into the ways in which the two case communities benefitted from and contributed to the quality of life of their older residents. Borough Bay had settled into its sense of being bypassed, but also determined to endure despite very limited resources. In contrast, Robertsville had not yet developed a way to incorporate its new persona as a bucolic retirement community with its previous one of providing a good place to grow old for residents of modest means. Based on these findings, and with a brief re-examination of the WHO conceptualization of age-friendly, we propose a revised definition.

*Active aging* is a term integral to the definition of age-friendly, implying agency on the part of older adults in terms of "continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs", and on the part of communities to adapt "structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities" (WHO, 2013, p.1). Our findings illustrate that some older people and some rural communities (i.e., community-active people in Robertsville) represent this ideal. However, marginalized older people are not active participants and require the protection, security, and care implied by the idea of active aging. Yet some communities have neither the resources nor inclination to adapt its structures and services. Still, the most disengaged people in resource-poor Borough Bay were included and taken care of while, in adapting its structure and services, Robertsville exacerbated marginalization.

The WHO definition implies that if communities do a good job of providing needed resources, people will be able to age (well) in place. This article adds to this notion in two ways. The history of Robertsville illustrates how a changing place can exclude long-term residents while at the same time attracting those for whom aging in a new place is a preference. Borough Bay's long decline means that its ability to provide resources is increasingly tentative so that young people leave while

older people stay. Peace, Holland, and Kellaher (2011) argued that over time, people's attachments to particular locations are compromised by declining competence or by changes in the environment. While they speak of "option recognition", our data would suggest that some older persons have few options, staying in an impoverished location because of fierce loyalty or in a community that is moving away from meeting their needs.

We believe that Wahl and Lang's (2004) idea of social-physical places over time (SPOT) has merit in this context. It combines the physical and social with a developmental perspective, highlighting that "places are dynamic and change over time as people age" (p. 17). Thus, the age-friendly concept must be considered a process rather than an end point.

To acknowledge these points, policies aimed at age-friendly communities need to be much more attentive to the nuances of both community and individual needs. A range of interventions that can respond to the diversity and inequalities of place and people are required if age-friendly communities are to develop and be sustainable within a rural context. There is no one ideal model to suit all community contexts. For example, municipal councils in communities such as Robertsville might require developers to invest in affordable housing to prevent marginalization of longstanding residents. Communities with modest fiscal and infrastructure resources might acknowledge the loyalty of their older residents through finding ways to acknowledge their contributions. Citizenship awards and recognition ceremonies or vouchers for coffee at local restaurants are examples.

Policy makers need a much more sustained and wider approach, strengthening the resources that communities have – social, cultural, economic, and environmental – to meet the needs of diverse groups of older people. Moreover, policy makers must be mindful of the well-established fact that communities do not exist in isolation but are part of a wider geographical milieu, connected to other communities in a hierarchy of service centres and catchment areas where transport networks provide or constrain opportunities for social, cultural, economic, and political participation. Size and density of an area along with distance and accessibility are critical factors in how communities and their members influence each other. Communities have dynamic and fluid boundaries and change elsewhere can have a profound impact on the lives of older people in surrounding communities (Haggett, Cliff, & Frey, 1977).

Geography remains important to the age-friendly concept (Gilliard, Higgs, & Rees-Jones, 2011), and as this article has demonstrated, can be either a resource or an impediment in later life. An "interactive model"



(Buffel, 2012, p. 15) of connections between older people and their physical and social environments is in keeping with the fluidity of older people's lives. Given that the purpose of this article is to bring *community* into the age-friendly discourse, we did not collect personal biographies of aging. In future, such biographies would make a useful addition to our understanding of how residents' views of their life course could add to the conceptualization of age-friendly.

We have argued that the current definition of age-friendly would benefit from a more explicit inclusion of community needs and resources and from a dynamic approach that incorporates change over time in people and place. Thus, we propose a revised definition based on our theorizing and findings: *An age-friendly community strives to find the best fit between the various needs and resources of older residents and those of the community. Age-friendly is dynamic, addressing changes over time in people and place.*

## Conclusion

Golant (2004) questioned whether the place in which one grows old matters and whether it matters more for some groups of older people than for others. We have argued the importance of distinguishing which groups of older people have the best experiences in which type of rural communities. This study goes to the heart of what rurality is – both the natural setting (including its ecological features) and the connectedness of communities need exploration if we are to understand what communities need from, and can provide to, their older residents and how these may change over time.

The case communities and groups of older adults that we studied are not meant to position rural communities between two extremes or to over-simplify the variety of older rural adults. Rather, they provide a beginning point for further exploration of both the diversity of location and of older adults. This is potentially a more robust way of moving forward the age-friendly concept. As our populations become more diverse and communities change over time, policy making will need to consider who are the vulnerable groups of older adults and which are the most vulnerable communities.

## Note

<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms were given to case communities.

## References

Alcock, D., Angus, D., Diem, E., Gallagher, E., & Medves, J. (2002). Home care or long-term care facility: Factors that influence the decision. *Home Health Care Services Quarterly*, 21(2), 35–48.

- Bowles, R. T., Beesley, K. B., & Johnston, C. (1994). *Retiree migrants to a small Ontario community: Service utilization, social participation, and community attitudes*. Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
- Brown, R. (2002). *Historic Cumberland County South: Land of promise*. Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada: Nimbus Publishing.
- Brown, D. L., & Glasgow, N. (2008). *Rural retirement migration*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Buffel, T. (2012). *Experiences of place and neighbourhood in later life: Developing age friendly communities*. Brussels: VUB Press.
- Buffel, T., Phillipson, C., & Scharf, T. (2012). Ageing in urban environments: Developing 'age-friendly' cities. *Critical Social Policy*, 32(4), 597–617. doi: 10.1177/0261018311430457.
- Burholt, V., & Dobbs, C. (2012). Research on rural ageing: Where have we got to and where are we going in Europe? *Journal of Rural Studies*, 28(4), 432–446. doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2012.01.009.
- Cloutier-Fisher, D., & Harvey, J. (2009). Home beyond the house: Experiences of place in an evolving retirement community. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 29(2), 246–255.
- Cloutier-Fisher, D., & Kobayashi, K. (2009). Examining social isolation by gender and geography: Conceptual and operational challenges using population health data in Canada. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 16(2), 181–199.
- Davenport, J., Rathwell, T. A., & Rosenberg, M. W. (2005). Service provision for seniors: Challenges for communities in Atlantic Canada. *Longwoods Review*, 3(3), 9–16.
- Dwyer, P., & Hardill, I. (2011). Promoting social inclusion? The impact of village services on the lives of older people living in rural England. *Ageing and Society*, 31(2), 243–264.
- Eales, J., Keefe, J., & Keating, N. (2008). Age-friendly rural communities. In Keating, N. (Ed.), *Rural ageing: A good place to grow old?* (pp. 109–120). Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors. (n.d.). *Age-friendly rural and remote communities: A guide*. Retrieved 3 September 2013 from [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/alt-formats/pdf/publications/public/healthy-sante/age\\_friendly\\_rural/AFRRC\\_en.pdf](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/alt-formats/pdf/publications/public/healthy-sante/age_friendly_rural/AFRRC_en.pdf).
- Giarchi, G. (2006). Older people "on the edge" in the countryside of Europe. *Social Policy and Administration*, 40(6), 705–721.
- Gilliard, C., Higgs, P., & Rees-Jones, I. (2011). *Community and connectivity in the 3rd age: From fixity to fluidity*. Paper presented at the Gerontological Society of America annual conference, Boston, MA.
- Glorioso, R., & Moss, L. A. (2007). Amenity migration to mountain regions: Current knowledge and a strategic construct for sustainable management. *Social Change*, 37(1), 137–161.



- Golant, S. (2004). The urban-rural distinction in gerontology: An update of research. In Wahl, H-W., Scheidt, R., & Windley, P., (Eds.), *Annual review of gerontology and geriatrics: Focus on ageing in context: Socio-physical environments*, Vol. 23 (pp. 280–319). New York: Springer.
- Haggett, P., Cliff, A., & Frey, A. (1977). *Locational models*. London: Arnold.
- Hanlon, N., Clasby, R., Halseth, G., & Pow, V. (2007). The place embeddedness of social care: Restructuring work and welfare in Mackenzie, BC. *Health & Place*, 13(2), 466–481.
- Hanlon, N., & Halseth, G. (2005). The greying of resource communities in northern British Columbia: Implications for health care delivery in already-underserved communities. *The Canadian Geographer*, 49(1), 1–24.
- Houle, L., Salmoni, A., Pong, R., Laflamme, S., & Viverais-Dresler, G. (2001). Predictors of family physician use among older residents of Ontario and an analysis of the Andersen-Newman behavior model. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 20(2), 233–250.
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288.
- Iwarsson, S. (2005). A long-term perspective on person-environment fit and ADL dependence among older Swedish adults. *The Gerontologist*, 45(3), 327–336.
- Johnson, E. (2008). Ecological systems and complexity theory: Toward an alternative model of accountability in education. *Complicity, An International Journal of Complexity and Education*, 5(1), 1–10.
- Joseph, A. E., & Cloutier-Fisher, D. (2005). Ageing in rural communities: Vulnerable people in vulnerable places. In Andrews, G. & Phillips, D. R. (Eds.), *Ageing and place: Perspectives, policy and practice* (pp. 133–155). London: Routledge Studies in Human Geography.
- Joseph, A. E., & Skinner, M. (2012). Volunteerism as a mediator of the experience of growing old in evolving rural spaces and changing rural places. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 28(4), 380–388. doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2012.01.007.
- Keating, N., & Eales, J. (2011). Diversity among older adults in rural Canada: Health in context. In Kulig, J. & Williams, A. (Eds.), *Rural health: A Canadian perspective* (pp. 427–446). Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.
- Keating, N., & Phillips, J. E. (2008). A critical human ecology perspective on rural ageing. In Keating, N. (Ed.), *Rural ageing: A good place to grow old?* (pp. 1–10). Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Keating, N., Swindle, J., & Fletcher, S. (2011). Aging in rural Canada: A retrospective and review. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 30(3), 323–338.
- Lawton, M. P. (1980). *Environment and aging*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishers.
- Lui, C-W., Everingham, J-A., Warburton, J., Cuthill, M., & Bartlett, H. (2009). What makes a community age-friendly: A review of international literature. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 28(3), 116–122.
- Menec, V., Means, R., Keating, N., Parkhurst, G., & Eales, J. (2011). Conceptualizing age-friendly communities. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 30(3), 479–493.
- Moore, E. G., & Pacey, M. A. (2004). Geographic dimensions of aging in Canada, 1991–2001. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 23(1 Suppl), S5–S21.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Peace, S., Wahl, H-W., Mollenkopf, H., & Oswald, F. (2007). Environment and ageing. In Bond, J., Peace, S., Dittman-Kohli, F., & Westerhof, G. (Eds.), *Ageing in society* (pp. 209–234). New York: Sage.
- Peace, S., Holland, C., & Kellaher, L. (2011). Option recognition in later life: Variations in ageing in place. *Ageing and Society*, 31(5), 734–757.
- Philip, L. J., Gilbert, A., Mauthner, N., & Phimister, E. (2003). *Scoping study of older people in rural Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Central Research Unit.
- Phillipson, C., Bernard, M., Phillips, J., & Ogg, J. (2000). *The family and community life of older people*. London: Routledge.
- Phillipson, C. (2011). Developing age-friendly communities: New approaches to growing old in urban environments. In Settersten, R. & Angel, J. (Eds.), *Handbook of sociology of aging* (pp. 279–297). New York: Springer.
- Rozanova, J., Dosman, D., & de Jong Gierveld, J. (2008). Participation in rural contexts: Community matters. In Keating, N. (Ed.), *Rural ageing: A good place to grow old?* (pp. 75–86). Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Scharf, T., & Bartlam, B. (2008). Ageing and social exclusion in rural communities. In Keating, N. (Ed.), *Rural ageing: A good place to grow old?* (pp. 97–108). Bristol, UK: The Policy Press.
- Scharf, T., Liddle, J., Bartlam, B., Bernard, M., & Sim, J. (2012). How age-friendly are purpose-built retirement communities? Towards a conceptual and empirical understanding of age-friendliness [Abstract]. Proceedings of the British Society of Gerontology 41st Annual Conference, Keele University, Keele, UK, 69. Retrieved from [https://www.keele-conferencemanagement.com/KEELE/media/uploaded/EVKEELE/event\\_47/Full%20Abstract%20Document%20for%20Website.pdf](https://www.keele-conferencemanagement.com/KEELE/media/uploaded/EVKEELE/event_47/Full%20Abstract%20Document%20for%20Website.pdf).
- Shucksmith, M. (2003). *Social exclusion in rural areas: A review of recent research*. London: Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- Skinner, M. W., Yantzi, N. M., & Rosenberg, N. W. (2009). Neither rain nor hail nor sleet nor snow: Provider perspectives on the challenges of weather for home and community care. *Social Science & Medicine*, 68, 682–688.

- Statistics Canada. (2002). *2001 community profiles*. Retrieved July 27, 2012, from <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=93F0053X>.
- Turcotte, M., & Schellenburg, G. (2007). *A portrait of seniors in Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-519-x/89-519-x2006001-eng.pdf>.
- Wahl, H-W., & Lang, F. (2004). Ageing in context across the adult life course: Integrating physical and social environmental research perspectives. In Wahl, H.-W., Scheidt, R., & Windley, P. (Eds.) *Annual review of gerontology and geriatrics: Focus on ageing in context: Socio-physical environments*, Vol. 23 (pp. 1–34). New York: Springer.
- Walsh, K., O'Shea, E., & Scharf, T. (2012). *Social exclusion and ageing in diverse rural communities: Findings of a cross-border study in Ireland and Northern Ireland*. Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, National University of Ireland Galway. ISBN: 978-1-908358-03-5.
- Walsh, K., O'Shea, E., Scharf, T., & Murray, M. (2012). Ageing in changing community contexts: Cross-border perspectives from rural Ireland and Northern Ireland. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 28(4), 347–357. doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2012.01.012.
- World Health Organization. (2007). *Global age-friendly cities: A guide*. Retrieved 23 May 2012 from [http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf).
- World Health Organization. (2009). *WHO Global network of age-friendly cities*. Retrieved 22 May 2012 from <http://www.who.int/ageing/Brochure-EnglishAFC9.pdf>.
- World Health Organization. (2013). *What is "active ageing"?* Retrieved September 3, 2013, from: [http://www.who.int/ageing/active\\_ageing/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/ageing/active_ageing/en/index.html).