The Experience of Older Gay Men Living in Non-Metropolitan British Columbia

by

Robert Mark Savage

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Royal Roads University
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Supervisor: Dr. Brian de Vries
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COMMITTEE APPROVAL

The members of Robert Mark Savage's Dissertation Committee certify that they have read the dissertation titled *The Experience of Older Gay Men Living in Non-Metropolitan British Columbia* and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Social Sciences:

Dr. Gloria Gutman [signature on file]

Dr. matthew heinz [signature on file]

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to Royal Roads University. The dissertation supervisor confirms to have read this dissertation and recommends that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirements:

Dr. Brian de Vries [signature on file]

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the experience of non-metropolitan aging among 30 older self-identified gay men in Kelowna, the Southern Interior, Powell River, the Duncan-Nanaimo corridor, and on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia. A review of the literature revealed that little is known about the aging experience of older gay men in non-metropolitan regions. This qualitative study collected narrative details from participants including their life stories, their patterns of migration and related issues to better understand the experiences of living and aging in non-metropolitan locations. The primary data collection method was a semi-structured interview conducted with each participant in their own home and lasting approximately two hours in length. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent thematic analysis. A secondary method was used concomitantly with the interviews whereby participants were encouraged to use participated generated images (photos taken for the purpose of our interview and/or photos selected from personal albums) to highlight some part of their life story and/or some component of their non-metropolitan life. The analysis uncovered four themes: the life story lines of gay men, migration factors, rewards and challenges of non-metropolitan aging. Results suggest that older gay men share many migration factors, rewards and challenges of non-metropolitan aging with their peers in the heterosexual population - an important finding in itself. Key additional findings included: both positive and negative appraisals of local non-metropolitan LGBT organizations, a sense that gay community in non-metropolitan regions differs from the gay community in urban settings, and a description of social networks that differ from the social networks of their urban dwelling gay counterparts. The discussion of these key findings suggests that the lives of older gay men could be optimized

with the further development and improvement of LGBTQ organizations and community in their respective regions.

Keywords: Gay, LGBT, aging, non-metropolitan, Canada, rural

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Like those of other industrialized nations, Canada's population is aging and it is projected that the number of individuals age 65 and over will grow from 13% of the population in 2006 to an estimated 22.8% by 2030 (Statistics Canada, 2014; Wister, 2005). Concomitantly, there will be an increase in the number of older lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in the coming years (Orel, 2014). While it is common to conduct research on the entire cohort of individuals falling under the umbrella term LGBT, in terms of sexual minorities, this study is limited to the study of gay men. The rationale for this limitation comes in part from a recommendation by the Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Issues Group (2011), noting that 'L', 'G', 'B', and 'T' are distinct groups each with their own individual needs and concerns. For example, lesbian, gay and bisexual are terms related to sexual orientation whereas trans people are identified based upon their gender identity and presentation. Further, "combining lesbians and gay men under a single rubric…obscures gender differences in the experiences of homosexual people" (p. 12). As will be elaborated in the literature review, research on gay men has been conducted in both urban and rural settings; however, the bulk of this non-metropolitan research is focused on younger cohorts, thus leaving a gap in our knowledge regarding aging concerns amongst the older members of this community living in these regions.

Rural and non-metropolitan aging research merits special attention because, from the primarily heterosexual-based population research, we know that those aging in these areas have lower incomes, less education, lack of adequate housing, less access to transportation and health services (Herold et al., 2002; Sylvestre, Christopher, & Snyder, 2006); report poorer mental and physical health status (Crowther, Scogin, Johnson, & Norton, 2010); have higher prevalence of

functional disability, increased sedentary lifestyle, less use of preventative care (Frost, et al., 2010; Kumar, Acanfora, Hagan, & Kalache, 2001); more chronic illness compared to urban seniors (Artnak, McGraw, & Stanley, 2011; Bascu et al., 2012); and are at risk of decreasing social networks and increased social isolation (Havens, Hall, Sylvestre, & Jivan, 2004; Tang & Lee, 2011). I refer to the previous research as *primarily heterosexual population* research because much of the research emerges from census data and/or randomized samples. As such, it is likely that only a small percentage of respondents in these samples were LGBT; Statistics Canada (2015) for example reports that only 1.7% of the population identifies as homosexual while Bozinoff (2012) suggests a higher number at 5.3%. Given this set of conditions, I was driven to explore how older gay men are faring in these regions. My concern stemmed from research reporting that in comparison to heterosexual men and women, older gay men experience increased loneliness, poorer mental health, more lifetime suicide attempts, increased likelihood to smoke or drink alcohol excessively and a higher degree of chronic conditions such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and cardiovascular disease (D'Augelli & Grossman, 2001; Emlet, Fredriksen-Goldsen, & Kim, 2013; Fredriksen-Goldsen & Muraco, 2010; Russ et al., 2012). As such, it appears possible that gay men aging in these non-metropolitan spaces may be faced with a potentially magnified set of challenges as they grow older (D'Augelli & Hart, 1987; Kramer, 1995).

The purpose of this study was aimed at addressing this gap in the literature by exploring the experience of living and aging in rural, small town and small city non-metropolitan regions in British Columbia by older gay men. I refer to rural and small towns as living outside the commuting zone of metropolitan centres with populations of 10,000 or less (du Plessis, Beshiri,

Bollman, & Clemenson, 2001) and non-metropolitan as populations less than 130,000 (Morandini, Blaszczynski, Dar-Nimrod, & Ross, 2015) including rural and small-town regions. The literature review provides context for the research and is followed by a description of the methodology, the findings, and the discussion which closes by highlighting the strengths and limitations of this research and providing recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

While there has been an increase in aging research concerned with gay men, much of this has been conducted in urban settings (Maynard, 2004) with little attention paid to the experiences of these men in rural, small town, and non-metropolitan communities. To confirm this, I identified literature for review using the EBSCO Host online referencing system and the "select all" function which resulted in a search of 80+ databases (See Appendix A). I employed the following search terms to locate potential materials: *gay, bisexual, lgbt, glbt, homosexual, queer* and *aging, aged, older,* and *rural, non-metropolitan.* To ensure I captured articles that included but were not restricted to older adults I also combined *gay, bisexual, lgbt, glbt, homosexual, queer* with *rural, non-metropolitan.* The Royal Roads University catalogue was also searched with the same terms using a tool called SUMMON. Lastly, I reviewed reference sections of articles to locate items that may not have appeared in my searches. This search resulted in a preliminary list of 88 peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, books, reports and relevant dissertations. Only two items, an article by Rowan, Guinta, Grudowski, & Anderson (2013) and a dissertation by Trentham (2010) focused exclusively on gay men (aged 60+ years) and aging in non-metropolitan locales. The sample sizes were very small, 1 and 3 respectively.

The rationale for employing a 60+ years of age cut-off is informed by World Health Organization criteria (WHO, 2015) and it is connected to my conceptual framework, where I wished to focus my research on men who spent a large portion of their lives in a historical period that was especially hostile toward homosexuals (Orel & Fruhauf, 2015). The paper by Rowan et al. (2013) is a case study of a well-adjusted U.S. dwelling 80-year old gay man (whom the authors have termed an outlier) whose life satisfaction is attributed to an extensive support

network that includes family, friends (including heterosexual couples), and intimate relationships. Similarly, Trentham's (2010) doctoral thesis examines the lives of three gay men in Alberta aged 73, 74, and 78 who have arrived in late life with positive identities (albeit only two of the three felt comfortable identifying as gay). Interestingly, the findings from these two small studies are in contrast to a concern that older gay men may be subject to a magnified set of aging challenges. This however was not problematic given that this dissertation explores the experiences (both positive and negative) these men encounter and it includes a much larger sample. Further, my conceptual framework which is discussed in the next section, combines life course perspective and minority stress, and examines pathways to both negative outcomes derived from stressors as well as resiliency (Fredriksen-Goldsen, Kim, Bryan, Shiu, & Emlet, 2017) and positive marginality (de Vries, 2015; Elder, 1994; Meyer, 2003).

The literature search resulted in the two studies just described concerned exclusively with gay men 60+ years of age and several studies which came close to meeting my criteria by defining an older cohort in terms of a different age range (45-64 years for example). Additionally, the non-metropolitan literature concerned with gay men *in general* included samples with large age ranges such as 18-68 years, and by examining the means and standard deviations of the ages reported in the articles reviewed, I would estimate that much of what we know about gay non-metropolitan life has been derived from samples in which the bulk of the participants are aged 25-45 years. Nevertheless, themes emerging from articles in both of these categories (aging in a gay context and general literature) inform my own study.

Aging in a gay context

I envision that the differing ways in which one may define an *older* gay cohort stems back to the manner in which the concept has evolved through time. On the one hand, there

existed the idea that gay men experience accelerated aging and "view themselves older at a time when heterosexual men do not" (Schope, 2005, p. 25). Such a statement was supported in early research by Friend (1980) who reported that most gay men described themselves as old even though most of his respondents were under the age of 60 years (M= 48.15 years, age range 32-76 years). On the other hand, a more contemporary view suggests there is no concrete evidence that gay men feel old earlier than heterosexual men (Berger & Kelly, 2002). Interestingly, new research and thought suggests the contrary, that gay men may in fact be better prepared to meet the challenges of aging because of the coping skills they have learned as members of a sexual minority (Berger & Kelly, 2002; Meyer, Ouellette, Haile, & MacFarlane, 2011). In spite of the evolution of this concept over time, the varying definitions continue to have an effect on how "old age" is defined in the literature on gay men, and LGBT persons in general. Having briefly commented on why older gay populations may be characterized using various age ranges, I turn now to themes emerging from research on these slightly younger cohorts living in non-metropolitan regions.

To begin, the articles published in conjunction with the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme in the U.K. (Fenge, Jones, & Read, 2010; Fenge & Jones, 2012; Jones et al., 2013) with a sample of gay men and lesbians aged 55+ (N=7), proved to be informative. In this research, the participants expressed the need to negotiate acceptance in rural areas and were careful regarding to whom they disclosed their sexual orientation. Interestingly, in spite of the positive self-concept reported earlier in Rowen at al., (2013) and Trentham (2010), the men in these studies also commented on concealment of one's sexual identity and the notion that disclosure was reserved for only those who could be trusted. Participants in the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme project were also found to move in and out of rural settings over the life

course. This is in contrast to the stereotypical image of members of the LGBT community, and gay men in particular, being part of a unidirectional migration that flows from countryside to large metropolitan centers (Annes & Redlin, 2012a; Herring, 2007). Other themes from Fenge & colleagues (2010) research included concerns about feeling isolated, shrinking support networks, and lack of service provision. Similar themes were also found in King & Dabelko-Schoeny's (2009) study concerned with rural aging in place (N=20) conducted with an LGBT sample described as 40+ years of age, from 13 states. In this research, the five main themes that emerged were transportation difficulties, lack of choices for care, fear of medical debts, isolation, and lack of social support.

One comprehensive project that operationalized LGBT aging as 45+ years was the *Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Aging in Maine Community Needs Assessment* (Gugliucci et al., 2013). This research involved a statewide survey with over 200 respondents and a subset who participated in focus group sessions. The findings reported in Gugliucci et al. (2013) provided some contrast to the themes mentioned thus far. For example, 77 percent of this sample did not feel or have concerns about isolation and two thirds of the respondents reported living openly as GLBT persons in their community. This is in contrast to participants in Fenge, Jones, & Read (2010), Rowen at al. (2013) and Trentham (2010) all of whom mentioned that disclosure of sexual identity was something to be approached with caution. The contrast in these findings is likely due in part to geographic location, with Fenge, Jones, & Read's (2010) study based in the United Kingdom, Rowen at al. (2013) in the midwestern United States and Trentham (2010) in rural Alberta, Canada.

In these studies that I've categorized as 'aging in a gay context' a fairly wide spectrum of themes, occasionally in contrast with one another have emerged, concerned with transportation,

availability of care, isolation, social support, and disclosure of sexual identity framed within the parameters of non-metropolitan aging challenges. I'll turn now to a discussion of themes from the literature concerned with life in non-metropolitan spaces among gay men and LGBT of all ages.

Literature on non-metropolitan life for gay men of all ages

In this section I examine research literature on gay men of all ages who live in rural, small town and non-metropolitan spaces. It may be argued that the direct relevance of this research is limited due to differences between cohorts; however, given that I will be employing a narrative gerontology methodology in my own research, the themes emerging from this broader literature provide an informative lens through which to understand the life stories, and the experiences described by men in this dissertation. In this section I compare and contrast the studies I have reviewed under five overarching thematic headings that resonated with me during my analysis of these articles: concealment/negotiating identities; migration factors and patterns; identities shaped by non-metropolitan spaces; sexual health; and support networks and the LGBT community.

Concealment/negotiating identities. In the broader literature concerned with the entire spectrum of the LGBT community, it is commonplace to find discussion regarding concealment of one's sexual identity (Herdt & de Vries, 2004; Orel & Fruhauf, 2015) and it is a key component in Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Model where it is associated with stigma. When narrowing down the topic to gay men living in non-metropolitan spaces, a sub-theme regarding effeminophobia and the masculine/feminine dichotomy emerged as a factor in the context of concealment. Effeminophobia is a somewhat loaded term that requires unpacking. In contrast to homophobia (the fear and hatred of homosexuals) "effeminophobia [refers to a]…fear of

effeminacy" (Richardson, 2009, p.526). Making this distinction allows us a greater understanding of how some gay men can hold prejudices toward other gay men based on the presence of feminine behaviors (Richardson, 2009, 2018). Entangled in this discussion is misogyny and the assumption that masculinity is superior to femininity, thereby suggesting the term is more of a devaluing of effeminacy (Branfam, 2018). Hale and Ojeda, (2018) consider such prejudice (i.e., effeminophobia) to dispel the myth that the oppressed (already marginalized gay men) cannot oppress, in this case effeminate gay men.

This masculine/feminine dichotomy is particularly relevant in rural and non-metropolitan spaces where the expectation of adherence to social norms (e.g., a dominant hetero-centered masculinity) appears to be stronger than in urban settings (Annis & Redlin, 2012a; Chapple, Kippax, & Smith, 1998; Cody & Welch,1997; D'Augelli, & Hart, 1987; Foster, 1998; Fuss, 2018; Kramer, 1995; Powell, 2016; Whittier, 1998; Williams, Bowen, & Horvath, 2005). The impact of these social norms has an enormous impact on the day-to-day experience of gay men living in these areas. To illustrate the perceived importance of maintaining a masculine personality consider the following select quotes: "not flaunting it" (Trentham, 2010, p. 176); "no one will bother you if you're not flamboyant" (Whittier, 1998, p. 61); and "the most consistent mentioned behavior that men believed would attract violence was 'acting gay'" (Williams et al., 2005, p. 50). One alternative to not acting gay is concealment, a concept also discussed in terms of guardedness and negotiating identities, and it is highlighted in much of the literature (Annis & Redlin 2012a; 2012b; Baker, 2016; Boulden, 2001; D'Augelli, & Hart, 1987; Fisher, Irwin, & Coleman, 2014; Fuss, 2018; Hughes, 2008; Jones et al., 2013; Kennedy, 2010; Lee & Quam, 2013; Morandini et al., 2013; Rowan et al., 2013; Swank, Fahs, & Frost, 2012; 2013; Whittier, 1998). Interestingly, 'acting gay' was associated with feminine behaviors in many studies and

men who tended to be more masculine were also portrayed as more closeted (Boulden, 2001; Foster, 1998; Hughes, 2008; Kramer, 1995; Millar, 1998). In some cases, connecting feminine to being out and masculine to being closeted were found to fuel a discord among gay men in these non-metropolitan communities (Annis & Redlin, 2012a; Schweighofer, 2016; Swank et al., 2013; Whittier, 1998). In fact, Whittier's (1998) study is appropriately titled *Social conflict among "gay" men in a small(er) Southern Town* and is focused primarily upon the division between 'butch' gays (masculine/closeted) and the 'nellie' gays (feminine-acting/out) in a southeastern U.S. town that is only fictionally named to protect the identities of the participants.

Given that the theme of concealment and negotiating identity is one that permeates the literature, I suspected it would be discussed by participants in my research. The manner in which this plays out in later life has not been fully explored and this research sheds some light upon this phenomenon.

Migration factors and patterns. Annis and Redlin (2012b) report that much of the existing literature describes a unidirectional movement among gay men from the country to the city. The city is often described as a gay mecca where non-urban gay men can enjoy freedom in regard to their sexual identities (Annis & Redlin 2012b; Baker, 2016; Binnie, 1995; Kazyak, 2011; Kennedy, 2010; Kramer, 1995; Lewis, 2015; Preston & D'Augelli, 2013; Weston, 1995). Cities are described as places where one can maintain anonymity and this is seen as a draw to both the rural gay man who wishes to conceal his identity (Annes & Redlin, 2012a; Cody & Welch, 1997; Jones, Fenge et al., 2013; Kennedy, 2010; Knopp, 1995; Lewis, 2015; Millar, 1998; Morandini et al., 2015) and the one who wishes to escape country life where neighbours typically know each other's business (Baker, 2016; Boulden, 2001; Morandini et al., 2015; Preston & D'Augelli, 2013). Interestingly, this knowledge of one's business extends beyond

neighbours and into sexual healthcare. Several studies report rural and small town participants' saying they would travel out of their own communities for services such as HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing because they did not trust their confidentiality with physicians and/or want their sexual orientation to be revealed by being seen in the waiting room at a clinic (Lewis, 2015; Preston & D'Augelli, 2013; Williams et al., 2005). The positive portrayal of the city as a gay mecca is therefore a combination of both push (leaving rural) and pull (attraction of the city) factors.

In contrast, there also exist a number of push/pull factors where gay men remain in or migrate/return to the countryside to experience the *rural idyll* (Bell, 2000; Bell, & Valentine, 1995a; Boulden, 2001; Fenge, & Jones, 2012; Gagnesjö, 2014; Gorman-Murray, Waitt, & Gibson, 2012; Schweighofer, 2016; Soderling, 2016). From the push perspective, drawbacks of city life include: it being "superficial, giving too much emphasis on short-lived sexual encounters and physical appearance such as clothing and haircuts" (Annis & Redlin, 2012b, p. 65); "plac(ing) more emphasis on youth" (Kennedy, 2010, p. 1071); and the general "stress of a city" (Oswald & Culton, 2003, p. 74). On a note relating back to the masculine/feminine dichotomy a participant in Annis & Redlin (2012b) is quoted as saying "the city 'makes you' effeminate, and being an effeminate gay man is something unacceptable in (my) eyes" (p. 66). In this case the city not only provides a push factor but a sense of repulsion. From a pull perspective rural living offers: "solid friendship and family relationships" (Oswald & Culton, 2003, p. 76); the potential for "relationships (that are) long and deeper" (Cody & Welch, 1997, p. 61); and "time to be able to meditate and commune with nature" (Kennedy, 2010).

In addition, and again relating back to the masculine/feminine dichotomy, the gay men in Annis & Redlin (2012b) emphasize the masculine and heterosexual nature of rural space and

consider it preferential to less masculine city spaces. Reflecting upon the findings from the papers in this review and Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Model, the two main concealment strategies among rural men are compartmentalization and 'blending in' to the masculine rural landscape (Cody & Welch, 1997; D'Augelli, & Hart, 1987; Fenge & Jones, 2012; Kennedy, 2010; Smith, 1998; Williams et al., 2005). Morandini et al. (2015) found men in rural and remote areas report higher levels of internalized homophobia and speculate that this is related to the emphasis placed upon traditional notions of masculinity in rural areas.

Identities shaped by non-metropolitan spaces. The discussion of the masculine/feminine dichotomy and rural-urban migration factors provides a segue into how the identities of gay men may be shaped by spatial location, and it attests to the interconnectedness among the themes. Most important to note is that non-metropolitan spaces are wrought with sanctions, perceived to be more so than urban areas (Cram, 2016; Morandini et al., 2015) for behaviors that do not align with the dominant masculine hetero-centric norms (Powell, 2016; Whittier, 1998). These sanctions can range from physical acts to psychosocial behaviors. These include, for example, property damage (Swank et al., 2012), violence (Cram, 2016; Preston & D'Augelli, 2013; Sundstrand, 2013; Williams et al., 2005) and other acts of discrimination (Coleman, Irwin, Wilson, & Miller, 2014; Kirkey, & Forsyth, 2001; Lindhorst, 1998; Smith, 1998; Soderling, 2016; Swank et al., 2013). Such discrimination can also come from within the gay community and be directed toward HIV positive men (Hubach et al., 2015). Sanctions also come from within families in cases where gay men who have grown up in rural communities felt that 'coming out' had the potential to harm the reputation of the entire family in these closed communities (Preston & D'Augelli, 2013). The narratives from men in two books *Out our way: Gay and lesbian life in the country* (Riordin, 1996) and *Farm boys: Lives of gay men from the*

rural Midwest (Fellows, 1996) very much confirm the important role that family life plays in the lives of these men. Kennedy (2010) and Bell & Valentine (1995b) identify differences between transplanters (those who lived most of their life outside the rural context) and natives (those who grew up in rural areas); the latter tend to be far more responsive to the expectations of their local communities than the former. Findings reported by Swank et al. (2012) suggest factors such as those described above (the presence of sanctions and different family expectations) may be associated with a greater prevalence of minority stress in rural and small towns compared to their urban counterparts.

Sexual health. Taking into account the sanctions described in the previous section, it is not entirely surprising that non-metropolitan dwelling men who have sex with men (MSM) tend to engage in higher risk sexual behaviors and test for HIV and STI's less often (Bowen, Williams, & Horvath, 2004; D'Augelli, Preston, Cain, & Schulze, 2007; Lewis, 2015; Mancoske, 1998; Preston & D'Augelli, 2013; Preston, D' Augelli, Kassab, & Starks, 2007; Rosenburger, Schick, Schnarrs, Novak, & Reece, 2014; Schnarrs et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2005). Less testing appears to be connected with concealment of sexual identity where respondents felt they could not trust their confidentiality with service providers. Perhaps rightly so as described in Preston & D'Augelli (2013) - "my family doctor in the area here actually disclosed my having HIV to a well-known local preacher, so then people found out in my church because the minister told members of the church. And then I found out that people knew" (p. 29). Sexual risk taking appears to be connected with two factors, compartmentalization where participants report 'letting loose' when they visit unfamiliar settings such as cities (Lewis, 2015; Williams et al., 2005), and stigma where sexual risk taking is indirectly related to lower self-esteem and internalized homophobia (Preston et al., 2007).

Support networks and the LGBT community. Researchers frequently point out the lack of an LGBT community in rural areas (Annis & Redlin, 2012a; Bell, & Valentine, 1995a; Cody & Welch, 1997; Kennedy 2010; Rosenberger et al., 2014). Minority stress processes such as concealment and internalized homophobia (Meyer, 2003) which appear to be intensified in rural areas (Morandini et al., 2015) no doubt contribute to the sense that there is a lack of community. It appears important to consider the recruitment strategies employed in these research projects. Many studies recruited participants through existing networks and these included gay or gay-affirmative newsletters (Cody & Welch, 1997), University of Wyoming's LGBT Association (Leedy & Connelly, 2008), a gay and lesbian newspaper (Kennedy, 2010), and gay bars, gay social groups, pride festivals & dances (Preston & D'Augelli, 2013), all potentially considered 'characteristics' of an LGBT community. Thus, while it is likely true that there is less of an LGBT community in non-metropolitan areas compared to urban centres, many of the participants in these studies did in fact participate in the LGBT community to some degree. As such, there appears to be a disconnect in regard to how non-metropolitan gay men perceive and engage with their respective albeit small, LGBT communities.

In summary, by employing a narrative gerontology methodology and thereby having participants frame the experiences of non-metropolitan aging within the context of their own life stories, this research explores how these five themes (concealment/negotiating identities; migration factors and patterns; identities shaped by non-metropolitan spaces; sexual health; and support networks and the LGBT community) present themselves in the narratives and lived experiences of non-metropolitan British Columbian gay men.

Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is a set of interrelated concepts that guides one's research (Borgatti,

1999). This research is guided by the life-course perspective (Elder, 1994), and the minority stress model (Meyer, 1995, 2003).

The life-course perspective. The life course perspective can be summed up parsimoniously by stating that the events of your life and how you have reacted to them help shape the person you are today. The nuances of the life-course perspective, presented in four dimensions (historical effect, linked lives, timing of lives, and human agency) are useful in helping us to understand the lives of gay men. For example, the *historical effect* means that year of birth differentiates a particular cohort from other cohorts in terms of socialization experiences (Elder, 1994). The historical effect is particularly salient for older gay men today because this cohort grew up in a period that was hostile towards homosexuality. Orel and Fruhauf (2015) have compiled a comprehensive list of historical events that have shaped this cohort's lives. Some of these events include: having one's sexuality defined as a mental illness by the American Psychological Association until 1973; watching Anita Bryant run the anti-gay "Save our Children" campaign in 1977; and living through the unknown period in the AIDS crisis where in 1981 the disease was referred to as GRID (gay-related infectious disease) and was considered to be a self-inflicted. Specific to Canada, homosexuality was not decriminalized in Canada until 1969 (CBC News, 2012), and even so, an anti-gay climate persisted, exemplified by events such as Montreal gay bar raids in 1977 (CBC, 1978) and the Toronto bathhouse raids in 1981 (CBC, 1981) where 146 and 286 gay men were arrested respectively. The Toronto bathhouse raids were one of the largest mass arrests in Canadian history (The Guardian, 2016).

Another dimension and one considered key by Elder (1994) is the principle of *linked lives;* this refers to the interaction with one's social world, family, friends, and co-workers over the life course. Family life for today's older gay man may have been tumultuous where

disclosure of sexual orientation could result in a severing of ties to one's traditional family (Genke, 2004; Preston & D'Augelli, 2013) and disturbed relationships in the community (and beyond). As such older gay men often rely upon friends (and typically other marginalized and often gay and lesbian others) in time of need and support, typically characterized as fictive kin or families of choice (Heaphy, Yip & Thompson, 2004; Hrostowski, 2013; Muraco, 2006; Shippy, Cantor, & Brennan, 2004). This principle is certainly relevant for older gay men living in non-metropolitan spaces where the potential for isolation may be greater than in urban regions.

A third dimension in the life-course perspective is concerned with the *timing of lives*, and this refers to the incidence, sequence and expectation of certain events in one's life based upon age. For example, in the dominant heteronormative population, depending upon age cohort, there exist expectations of when one is to begin a career, enter into marriage, and begin having children (Soderling, 2016). Research suggests, that deviating from these norms may reduce social support opportunities and invite social disapproval (Rook, Catalano, & Dooley 1989). This is an important factor in the day-to-day lives of gay men because this sense of timing, or lack thereof, may impact the tension between one's sense of belonging and sense of alienation (Myrdahl, 2016).

Lastly, the dimension of *human agency,* revolves around the impact that individual decision making has upon the life trajectories (Elder, 1994). These choices are influenced by the social context in which they have taken place, and this was a useful lens through which to reflect upon the lives of the gay men in this study who made life decisions in a dramatically different social milieu. One such decision particularly relevant in the lives of older gay men is the decision to enter into a heterosexual marriage and avoid *coming out* as a gay man until later in life (Herdt, Beeler, & Rawls, 1997).

This last example attests to the interrelationship among the four domains in the life-course perspective. Here, envision an older gay man (member of a particular cohort), subject to heteronormative societal pressures (historical effect), in an effort to conform, marries a woman (adhering to the expected heterosexual timing of lives), delays coming out as a gay man till later life, where he is subject to disruption of his traditional family (linked lives); all these decisions married together through human agency. This fictional example represents a 'story' and the life course perspective lens provides a framework to understand how a lifetime of decisions impacts the present day experience of non-metropolitan life.

Minority stress. Meyer (1995) describes minority stress as the psychosocial stress that results from one's minority status. Meyer's (2003) model is adapted to gay populations and is based upon the premise that gay people, like those in other minorities are subject to chronic stress that is stigma-related (1995). Meyer's (2003) model differentiates between general, distal, and proximal stressors. General stressors are those described that may affect all people at some time or another in their lives. Distal minority stress processes refer to those that manifest in the environment directly related to sexual orientation such as discrimination and violence. The distal minority stress processes and one's recognition of being a member of and identifying as a sexual minority provide a pathway to the proximal minority stressors. These include expectations of rejection, concealment of one's identity, and internalized homophobia. Each of these concepts is connected to the development of stigma in the minority group member. This is further differentiated into *enacted stigma* (referring to explicit behavior, for example a homophobic slur), *felt stigma* (referring to adaptive behaviors taken to avoid anticipated acts of discrimination, such as concealing one's identity), and *internalized stigma* (which has been

described as accepting society's view of one's group as legitimate) (de Vries, 2015; Meyer, 2003).

My original plan was to incorporate the life-course perspective (Elder, 1994), minority stress (Meyer, 2003), and resilience theory (Green, Galambos, & Lee, 2004) into a conceptual framework to inform my research. Upon reflection I chose not to include resilience theory separately in my theoretical framework because Meyer's (2003) minority stress model adequately accounts for this concept. For example, where it was described earlier that accepting one's minority identity provides a pathway to proximal minority stress processes, another pathway is provided in the model where accepting this identify results in a sense of strength and leads to positive marginality (de Vries, 2015). Several studies reported that in adult sexual minority men and women the experience of stigma was related to the adoption of a positive orientation toward their marginalized identities (Halpin & Allen, 2004; Gagnesjö, 2014; Meyer et al., 2011; Shih, 2004).

Blending these two models/perspectives into a conceptual framework is well suited to this study, where aging possesses an inevitable connection to the storied nature of the life course. Further, these stories of non-metropolitan aging can be framed within the pathways of stigma and positive marginality.

Research question

The literature review provided evidence of a gap in regard to research concerned exclusively with gay men who are members of an older cohort (60+ years of age). It further provided a context (concealment/negotiating identities; migration factors and patterns; identities shaped by non-metropolitan spaces; sexual health; and support networks and the LGBT

community) highlighting what it is like for a gay man to live in a non-metropolitan space. This process of review, has resulted in the development of the following broad research question:

1) *How do older gay men, as members of a sexual minority, in the context of a particular life course, perceive and describe themselves and their lived experience of aging in non-metropolitan locales?*

Chapter 3: Methodology

Methodology may be described as the philosophical basis for the study method which in turn may be described as the technique for data collection (Wellington, Bathmaker, Hunt, McCullough, & Sikes, 2005). A methodology must be informed by a particular paradigm (Scotland, 2012; Sefotho, 2015), which is a distinct set of concepts describing the ontology and epistemology of a given approach (Scotland, 2012). I have adopted the interpretive paradigm (Levers, 2013; Scotland, 2012; Sefotho, 2015) as an overarching approach and selected a narrative gerontology methodology (Kenyon, Clark, & de Vries, 2001) for my research. Simply, "'[g]erontology' is the study of aging in all its aspects, and 'narrative' is a story or account of events told by the narrator" (Birren, 2001, p. vii). While narrative methodologies have the potential to be incorporated into research from multiple (positivistic/critical/interpretive) perspectives (Åstedt-Kurki, & Heikkinen, 1994; Oliver, 1998; Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012; Stanley & Temple, 2012), in this section I will describe the ontology and epistemology connected to my own iteration of this methodology. I conclude with a discussion of why it was suitable to the study of older gay men.

Ontology is a philosophical concept concerned with *being* and the nature of reality, and the ontological position associated with the interpretive paradigm is relativism (Crotty, 1998; Scotland, 2012). Our realities are considered to be mediated by our senses and are subjective and constructed differently from person to person (Levers, 2013; Scotland, 2012). The interpretive paradigm is non-positivist because there is no objective *truth* to be discovered and researchers are merely afforded access to multiple realities found in society (Perry, Bratman, & Fischer, 2010; Sefotho, 2015). In terms of ontology, I view narratives as non-dualistic; a non-dualistic

ontology asserts that the person and the world are viewed *in relation* to each other (Fuenmayor, 1991). Additionally, a dualist ontology asserts that the world and the person are separate. From a narrative perspective, this means that the only world we can communicate about is the world that is *experienced* (Smith, 1974). These features are in contrast to a positivist paradigm, where the epistemological position asserts that a definitive and objective truth can be derived from the research process.

Kenyon & Randall (2001) have outlined five basic assumptions associated with narrative gerontology:

> The first assumption is that storytelling is a fundamental aspect of being human. Second, lives as stories are made up of both facticity and possibility, which means that, in principle, human lives are open to change. The third assumption is that, from a narrative point of view, the meaning and nature of time are connected to our lives as stories. Fourth, our lives seen as stories involve four interrelated dimensions, which include, on one hand, our personal story, and on the other hand, the larger story that we live within. Finally, the fifth assumption is that, as fundamentally interpersonal beings, we are, paradoxically, creating our personal story in a context that is larger than our individual selves, namely, the larger story just mentioned. (p. 4).

The assumptions as described tie in neatly with the conceptual framework adopted for this study. For example, the second assumption, facticity (Kenyon & Randall, 2001) which refers to the outside aspects (social and structural dimensions, or in the case of this research the lived experience) of one's story, is connected conceptually to Elder's (1994) historical effect and the differing circumstances felt by varying cohorts**.** The 'possibility' to which Kenyon & Randall (2001) refer, is connected to Elder's (1994) idea of human agency. The manner in which gay

men react and manage stigma is associated with minority stress (Meyer, 2003). The third assumption regarding time is conceptually related to the life course perspective as a whole as is the idea that our personal stories are created in a larger context. Combined, there is much connection to my research question where possibility and human agency frame the stories I collected from gay men aging in non-metropolitan spaces at this particular stage in the life course.

Epistemology refers to a theory of knowledge and assumptions that are concerned with how knowledge is created, acquired and communicated (Perry et al., 2010; Scotland, 2012). The epistemology associated with the interpretive paradigm is subjectivism, where it is conceptualized that the world *out there* does not exist independently of our knowledge (e.g., our experiences, perceptions, interpretations) of the world (Demirdirek, 2010; Scotland, 2012). Considering my ontological and epistemological assumptions, a narrative gerontology methodology fit in well with this research, where in asking older gay men to describe the experience of non-metropolitan aging, I was in essence collecting a set of multiple realities (their narratives) to be further examined. Further, this methodology ties into a personal goal of my research which was to proceed with a sense of service to the community of older gay men I was studying. It is important to keep in mind that the voices of older members of the LGBT community have been silenced and have at times been described as invisible (Escobar, 2015; Kosciw, & Diaz, 2008; Mule, & Smith, 2014; Price, 2005). In providing these older gay men with a *voice* (Corbin & Morse, 2003) I took steps, albeit small ones, toward ending this silence. The benefits of qualitative interviewing (my method to collect the narratives and provide a voice to participants) to the interviewee included a sense of purpose, empowerment and self-healing (Hutchinson, Wilson, & Wilson, 1994). Overall, a narrative methodology was well suited to my

research on multiple levels and aligns well with my ontological and epistemological assumptions as well as my choice of methods.

Methods

Having chosen a narrative gerontology methodology, the options for data collection methods were numerous and included participant observation, diaries and letters, documentation, interviews, artifacts and photos (Petty et al., 2012). In this section I describe my two core methods, semi-structured interviews and participant generated image (PGI) collection and discuss how they connect back to the philosophical assumptions described in my methodology.

There are a variety of interview styles available to researchers. These range from the unstructured Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) (Fenge & Jones, 2012) on one end of the spectrum to the structured interview (Bryman & Teevan, 2005) on the other. Fenge & Jones (2012) used BNIM and commenced interviews with participants in their study by asking "Tell me the story of your life" (p. 306). In this method, they assert that follow-up questions can only be based upon what the interviewee has already said and must be phrased using the interviewee's own words. The stated purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that the researcher proceeds through the interview assuming the posture of active listener versus expert. At the other end of the spectrum, the structured interview is one in which all participants are asked exactly the same questions in the same order by the interviewer (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). The space between these extremes is occupied by a veritable plethora of approaches.

I am most comfortable referring to my center-spectrum method as the semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview may be described as an interview in which a list of specific questions is to be covered while maintaining a certain level of flexibility regarding how the interview will proceed (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). These questions addressed the intent of the

study: to describe and interpret the experiences of non-metropolitan aging among older gay men. However, in using the semi-structured interview, I was free to alter the wording of the questions and also craft unique follow-up and/or probing questions (Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Turner, 2010) which assisted me in maintaining the focus of capturing participant narratives within a storytelling style. This method is in concert with epistemological assumptions where I am seeking to access the meanings and interpretations regarding how a given participant experiences the world. I incorporated the use of an interview guide (See Appendix B) into my research to ensure I collected data relevant to my research questions. Before moving on to a discussion of my use of PGI collection, I will further elaborate on how the semi-structured interview aligns with my choice of a narrative gerontology methodology.

It is important to recognize that my research question had the potential to be viewed by participants in a *technical* sense, one that could have resulted in the collection of surface level, dry and clinical *answers.* This may be akin to what Polkinghorne (1995) has described as synchronic data, where participants provide categorical answers to researcher's questions. In contrast, I was seeking to interpret and understand the experiences (both positive and negative) as they are uniquely experienced by older gay men. People find meaning in their lives by way of the stories they tell (Bruner, 1999) and a narrative approach allowed me greater access in regard to the experience of aging in a non-metropolitan locale. To achieve this goal and avoid clinical answers I asked the men in my study "how did you, as a gay man, come to live here; and can you describe your experiences, both positive and negative, of aging in this home and in this community." This presentation of the research personalized the questions and facilitated the opportunity for participants to describe their experiences in terms of a story.

The second method I used in my research was the collection of participant-generated images (photos taken specifically for this research by participants and/or supplied from participant albums) a method that I felt would compliment the semi-structured interviews and align with my methodology. I had been inspired to use photos by Collier (1957) who reflected how interviewing is susceptible to diminishing returns because "an interview can empty the outer mind of its more absorbing preoccupations, so that it may require time for new feelings to gather" (p. 853). In the research described, Collier (1957) found that when researchers supplied participants with photos (a term he called photo elicitation), this opened doors to memories and resulted in second interviews (which were previously poorer) now being as good as the first. Rather than interviewing participants twice, I used a modification of Collier's method (with participants supplying the images) to ensure that the first interview was as comprehensive and full as possible. My modification of this technique was not original, in fact it naturally evolved from Collier's use of researcher supplied photos and PGI collection dates back to the early 1970's (Balomenou & Garrod, 2015). The PGI's collected can be analyzed independently and they can also be used as prompts in interview research (Liamputtong, 2006; O'Reilly, 2008; Pink, 2013). As prompts, Snyder and Kane (1990) express the value of this technique noting its purpose is to "evoke thoughts, reactions, and feelings from individuals about some aspect of social life" (p. 256). Further, Schwartz (1989) argues the use of photographs helps to make the interview process more personal. My goal in using PGI's in this research was to stimulate a reflective process in participants. To achieve this, I asked my participants prior to the interviews to assemble six to eight images (either by taking new photos or finding photos in existing albums) that capture what they perceive to be their unique experience of non-metropolitan aging. The rationale for limiting them to six to eight photos was to encourage reflection in the days

leading up to the interview. Amos and colleagues (2012) also report that "limiting the number of photographs participants can take may help them to think more about what they want to capture" (p. 12). Thus, part of my rationale for incorporating PGI's was to enhance the storytelling nature I was seeking in the interviews I had with my participants. Unfortunately, this component of my method did not work as planned on two fronts.

First, on multiple occasions I arrived at the interview to hear from participants that they forgot to assemble pictures to include in their story. Given that my research funds were limited (the project is self-funded) and my research took place at multiple sites, I did not have the luxury of asking participants to re-schedule the interview and had to proceed without the use of photos. After this had occurred on more than one occasion, I decided to prepare a set of photos as a backup plan and ended up using the technique of photo elicitation (photos prepared and supplied by the researcher) with a number of participants who had forgotten to prepare their own photos prior to the interviews. Interestingly, after the presentation of my prepared photoset, many participants felt compelled to follow-up and sent me photos with captions via email after the interview was completed. The second front where the PGI's did not work out as planned was regarding the effectiveness of the method. Here I found that instead of taking the conversation to a deeper level as expected, when photos were presented by participants who had prepared PGI's or had viewed my prepared photoset the conversations returned to a surface level.

As a qualitative narrative researcher working within the interpretive paradigm, my interviews and the participant narratives must be viewed as interpretations of the social world (Noblit & Hare, 2011). Ontologically, incorporating a relativist stance, I consider the narratives collected to be subjective and constructed differently from person to person (Levers, 2013; Scotland, 2012). Epistemologically, given that as researcher I am subjectively interpreting what I

hear and record, I acknowledge that the product of the interviews is one co-constructed (Pring, 2000) between me as researcher and my participants.

Sample and Recruitment

Little is known about the lives of older gay men aging in non-metropolitan communities. As such, this study may be considered exploratory and I therefore sought as much variation as possible in my sample. Qualitative sampling includes purposive, theoretical, convenience, and snowball sampling (Petty et al., 2012). My sampling criteria represents a blend of these techniques and are related to my recruitment strategy. First, on a general level I purposively designed this research as a multi-site project with the goal of obtaining maximum variation in mind. Second, and in line with this initial goal, I sought out participants that are of differing ages, ethnicities, education levels, and marital/relationship statuses. Third, I endeavored to seek out, where possible, the voices of more closeted members of the gay community. Participation in the study was originally limited to gay men 60 years of age and over; however, I made one exception in Powell River where I had some initial difficulty recruiting participants into the study. Here, I admitted a 59-year old into the study, and this decision proved fruitful as his participation assisted me in recruiting additional participants in that region. The rationale for the 60 years of age cut-off connects back to my conceptual framework, where I noted I was interested in the experiences of the cohort of gay men who have lived through a historical period that was particularly hostile toward LGBT people.

The size of the sample was determined using the concept of theoretical saturation. This means that I continued sampling and analyzing data until a point where the themes emerging became repetitive and little new knowledge was obtained by increasing the sample size (Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2003). Predicting sample size when using theoretical saturation as a

guideline is somewhat counter to the concept; however, I originally envisioned that I would collect data from 20-23 participants. This range was determined after reviewing Mason's (2010) study of sample size and theoretical saturation in 560 Ph.D. dissertations. In this study results were tabled under 26 different approaches, and from this table I felt 'life history' best matched my own research. Thirty-five life history dissertations met the inclusion criteria for Mason's (2010) study and the number of participants ranged from 1-62 with a mean of 23. Given the large range, I felt there was a possibility that the mean could be skewed, so I examined the table further and incorporated the mode (21 participants) and the median (20 participants) into the estimate I originally provided. As it turned out I recruited and interviewed a total of 30 participants.

On one level, my sample may be described as a convenience or availability sample because recruitment took place via connections I had forged with gatekeepers to LGBT communities on Salt Spring Island, the Duncan/Nanaimo corridor, Powell River and Kelowna. These sites ranged in size with populations from 10,234 on Salt Spring, 4,932 in Duncan, 83,810 in Nanaimo, 13,160 in Powell River, and 127,400 in Kelowna (BC Stats, 2011). This population range is in keeping with the literature on younger cohorts of LGBT people where it is reported that simply living outside of a major urban center is enough to alter the day-to-day experience (for example, increased concealment, fear of victimization and less sense of an LGBT community) of these individuals (Morandini et al., 2015; Schweighofer, 2016; Sullivan, 2009; Whittier, 1998).

The sites chosen are all 45 or more minutes away from Victoria or Vancouver, British Columbia's two largest metropolitan centres. This first level recruitment took place with the gatekeepers (LGBT groups and organizations) in each of these communities providing me with

introductions to potential participants. The introductions provided me with the opportunity to describe the study and recruit participants. The second level of recruitment took place by way of snowball sampling. The initial participants recruited provided me with introductions to others they felt may be interested in participating (Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2003). It was at this level, where in gaining a level of trust with existing research participants, I was able to obtain referrals to some closeted gay men in these communities. All participants completed an informed consent form and a participant profile (see Appendices C and D). Data were collected between March and October 2017.

Data analysis

I analyzed both the narratives (transcripts of the semi-structured interviews) and the PGI's separately. In this section details of the transcript analysis will be followed with an account of how the PGI's were examined.

Transcript analysis. There is debate over what constitutes a narrative and in this research I am aligning with researchers such as McCance, McKenna, & Boore (2001) who consider interview transcripts to be narratives. This is in contrast to others who focus on narratives only as events configured through time by means of a plot (Polkinghorne, 1995).

There are two approaches to analyzing narrative data, the paradigmatic analysis of narrative and narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995). The paradigmatic method is deductive where the stories collected are viewed as data and the transcripts coded for themes that cut across the stories, characters, and settings resulting in knowledge about general concepts (Oliver, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1995). In this method the development of themes are influenced by both theory and existing literature. According to Overcash (2003) it is this systematic analysis of themes that differentiates narrative research from journalism or creative writing. In contrast, narrative

analysis is inductive where transcripts are coded and themes emerge from the data without the influence of existing theory and literature. Additionally, this method of analysis pays increased attention to the setting (physical environment, sociocultural features of the environment, and temporal location), characters, and seeks to discover plot where the "integration of various events, happenings, and actions of human life (are) woven into a thematic whole" (Oliver, 1998, p. 253). It is not necessary to treat these two approaches as mutually exclusive (de Vries, personal communication, June 30, 2016), and I incorporated a blended approach (McCance et al., 2001).

On the one hand, using the paradigmatic method, development of themes were influenced by theory (life course perspective and minority stress) and existing literature. That is, I did not necessarily look for evidence of previous literature and/or the theories, but I was clearly aware of both and as such the influence was exerted. Here, I explored how the following themes: concealment/negotiating identities; migration factors and patterns; identities shaped by non-metropolitan spaces; sexual health; and support networks and the LGBT community, played out in the lives of gay men in their non-metropolitan spaces. On the other hand, I blended an inductive component into my analysis, so that themes were allowed to emerge from the data, without the limitations imposed by the existing themes mentioned above.

To accomplish these tasks interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, meaning I indicated where emotional aspects such as laughter, crying, and raised emphatic voices occurred (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). The text was read in its entirety several times to gain familiarity with the text as a whole (Petty et al., 2012). The data were manually coded and labels were given to sentences, phrases, and paragraphs of interest. The coding is considered manual given that I did not use software such as Nvivo that is specifically designed for

qualitative data analysis. The rationale for this decision was based upon my own preference to use Microsoft Word to sort and arrange data.

The first step in data analysis, the text of interest mentioned above was copied from the original transcript and pasted into a new master document along with its coded label. The second step in analyzing the data was to sort these coded passages further and group them into a smaller number of themes (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002; Petty et al., 2012). In coding the data, where there was potential for overlap among codes, the decision regarding how to characterize a quoted section of text was typically based upon the tense the participant used in the context of the research interview. Using Microsoft Word, a separate document with its own window was created for each theme and selected text (with its pseudonym identifier) was copied from the master document and pasted into the appropriate thematic document. As mentioned previously the naming of these themes was influenced by, but not limited to, knowledge derived from my conceptual framework and existing literature. It is important to note here that this research was iterative, meaning I moved back and forth between data analysis and data collection over the life of the project. Each new interview contributed to the development of the themes cumulatively across all interviews.

Traditional checks on reliability and validity are not in line with the interpretive epistemology I have chosen as an overarching paradigm. For example, interjudge reliability, where a second researcher codes the data, is an objective epistemology and part of the positivistic research tradition and thus according to Sandbergh (2005) not suitable for this type of research. Similarly, some researchers feel it is not appropriate to have the participant validate statements made during the interview because the same individual can express different perceptions of the same phenomenon when asked different questions, or when in a different

situation (Martin & Pong, 2005). While these concerns may be appropriate, consistent with other qualitative research and offering another perspective on the data, a second person read through the transcripts (my supervisor). We coded the first few transcripts together and discussed what we were coding and why, to a point where we felt comfortable with our interpretations of the text. I felt there was value in having a second person check the existing codes for 'reasonableness.' In addition to this process, I felt it was valuable to conduct 'member checking' and had 12 of the participants review their selected quotes where they appeared in the findings chapter to assess if these quotes appropriately reflected their viewpoints (Yilmaz, 2013). To maintain a connection to the interpretive paradigm; however, I confirm that such checking was not undertaken to reify an absolute truth in the data, but rather to increase the sense that the co-creation of these interpretive findings with my participants are trustworthy. Simply, "one view of the world cannot confirm another, in Glifford Geertz's evocative phrase, it can 'thicken' it" (Bruner, 2004, p. 702). In the discussion section, I compare and contrast how the themes that have emerged from this research compare to other non-metropolitan research derived from primarily heterosexual population samples (e.g. research that been conducted on census data and/or with large randomized samples).

Participant generated image (PGI) analysis. To analyze the photos generated in my research, I initially planned to use Drew and Guillemin's (2014) three-stage framework of interpretive engagement; however, in consultation with my supervisor we chose an analysis that may be described as a modified version *informed* by Drew and Guillemin. The first stage of the framework, "participant interpretation of the image" (p.60), was followed closely and I highlighted text from the transcripts where the participant had discussed and interpreted the image. The PGI's and text were assembled into a master Powerpoint document. I used member

checking in this stage to corroborate the accuracy of the text I had attached to these images. The second stage in the framework "involves close examination and documenting of images, their content, and their accompanying participant explanations…(which) in turn facilitates the establishment of themes and development of connections between (these) themes" (p. 60). Analytic questions included but were not limited to: what is being shown; what are the components of the image; how are they cropped in the photo; to where is one's eye drawn; and is there more than one possible way to interpret the image? (Rose, 2012, cited in Drew & Guillemin, 2014). The third stage in the framework is to examine the data in terms of how they relate back to the conceptual framework that has been applied to the project (Drew & Guillemin, 2014). In these latter two stages, while we closely examined the images as per the method, we found that we started to refer to our work more simply as a *qualitative content analysis* of the photos. As such, in the findings section we refer to the analysis of the PGI's under this single heading.

Ethical considerations

This research was conducted under the guidelines set out by the Royal Roads University Academic Council (2011). The interpretative paradigm was a potentially intimate one (Scotland, 2012), and this was particularly relevant given my use of semi-structured interviews and PGI's (Brace-Govan, 2007). By intimacy, Howe & Moses (1999) note such methods have the potential to discover secrets and lies and as a result maintenance of participant privacy and informed consent was approached with greater caution than may be the case with other methods. This point was particularly salient given I sought out some participants who were not active members of the LGBT community and/or were more closeted in terms of their sexuality. All participants were given the traditional protection of confidentiality with the use of pseudonyms maintained

throughout the research process. During the recruitment phase some potential participants raised concerns that even with a pseudonym, in their small communities they might still be able to be identified. To address this concern, early in the project I chose to allow research participants the option of identifying their location as the fictional "Anytown, BC" and three participants opted for this choice. Lastly, because PGI's have the potential to reveal location and identity, I designed my photo release form in a manner whereby participants were able to classify the usage of the photos they provided. For example, participants designated some of the photos provided as free to publish whereas others were provided under the condition they would only be discussed with my supervisory committee. By providing this option on the photo release I was able to collect a set of photos that was deeply meaningful to participants.

A second ethical concern of mine pertained to the concept of othering and its potential role in the creation of stigma. In this research it was important for me to be careful not to conceptualize my discourse around aging, a natural and inevitable process as a problem (Crampton, 2009; Sixsmith, 2013). Simply, when we label individuals as other (Goffman, 1963; Riggens, 1993), in this case as older human beings, our discourse provides a contrast to those who are perceived as normal and this can lead to stigma and discrimination (Parker & Aggleton, 2003). My research was doubly sensitive in this regard because I also needed to be sensitive to the heterosexual/homosexual binary that has already produced a sense of othering in the population of gay men I wished to explore (Sedgwick, 1990; Oswin, 2008; Valocchi, 2005; Wilchins, 2014). My strategy to alleviate the potential for othering was displayed in my choice of research question where I chose to explore and pay equal attention to both the positive and negative experiences older gay men face aging in non-metropolitan communities. Additionally, by combining semi-structured interviews with PGI's, I provided participants with an opportunity

to tell me their *story* of living and aging in a non-metropolitan space, a process that is said to inherently possesses therapeutic benefits (Chelf, Deshler, Hillman, & Durazo-Arvizu, 2000; Haigh, & Hardy, 2011).

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the research interviews and participant generated image (PGI) collection. The characteristics of the sample will be described first and include: demographics; sexual identity and relationship status; living arrangements; employment and education; and health. This is followed by findings from the interview data which are organized into four overarching themes: the life stories of gay men; migration factors; rewards; and challenges, each with a series of categories and codes. Where applicable, PGI's (not including participant identifiers to protect confidentiality, though some participants consented to the use of their faces in photos) and the photos used in the elicitation process will be displayed to further illustrate the themes emerging from the participant interviews. The chapter concludes with a summary of the PGI's collected and a content analysis of the images.

Sample Characteristics

Demographics. A total of 30 men participated in the research project. The interviews took place between March and October of 2017. The mean age was 71.6 years (S.D. 7.4 years) and their ages ranged from 59 to 89 years. In terms of distribution, 15 men were aged 59-69, 10 aged 70-79, and five participants were in their 80's. In terms of race/ethnicity, the sample was 97% white with one participant indicating he was First Nations. All participants were from British Columbia; 11 participants (37%) resided on Salt Spring Island, seven (23%) lived in the Duncan to Nanaimo corridor, five (17%) were from Kelowna, three (10%) were from Powell River, one (3%) was from the Southern Interior, and three (10%) chose to protect their identity further by choosing the option to be from the fictional "Anytown" BC.

Sexual Identity and Relationship Status. Twenty-four men (80%) in the sample identified as gay, three (10%) identified as queer, one (3%) as homosexual, one as bisexual (3%), and one (3%) as other. The vast majority, 22 participants (73%) were partnered. Twelve (40%) were legally married to their same-sex partner and 10 (33%) were in common law relationships. Four participants (13%) reported they were single and two (7%) categorized their status as widowed from a male partner. One participant indicated he had friends with benefits (FWB - a term used by three participants) relationships with three men. Another participant who wished to fully indicate his relationship status, reported he was in a common law relationship in addition to having FWB partners.

Living Arrangements. Twenty-two (73%) participants lived in a detached house, four (13%) lived in a townhome and an additional four (13%) lived in an apartment. Most participants (93%) owned their homes while two participants (7%) rented. The participants had spent a mean of 9.9 years in their current homes, with time of residence ranging from six months to 30 years. A total of 21 participants (70%) lived with their partner, four (13%) lived alone, three (10%) lived with roommates and two (7%) lived with their partner and roommates.

Employment and Education. Twenty-seven participants (90%) were retired and three (10%) were still employed part-time. The sample was highly educated; for eight participants (27%) the highest level of education completed was a bachelor's degree, for nine participants (30%), a master's degree, and for three others (10%), a doctoral degree. Six participants (20%) had completed some post-secondary college. Two participants (7%) had completed trade school while another two (7%) reported high school as the highest level of education completed.

Health. Participants were asked to rate their health. Seven participants (23%) stated they were in *excellent* health, nine (30%) indicated their health as *very good,* twelve (40%) reported it

as *good*, two (7%) said it was *fair* and none specified *poor* health. Data on the number of chronic conditions was also collected (M=2; range 0 to 8). Most participants (33%) reported one chronic condition, with eight participants (27%) reporting two, five (17%) reporting three, one (3%) reporting four, and two (7%) reporting eight chronic conditions. Four participants (13%) indicated they had no chronic conditions.

Participant lifetime migration patterns. Participant migration patterns were mapped out using the data from the semi-structured interview transcripts. In this project, consistent with the definition of non-metropolitan used in literature addressing LGBT participants such as Morandini et al. (2013) I include rural, small town, and small city regions up to 130,000 inhabitants. Concomitantly, further modifications to traditional methodologies such as those employed by Statistics Canada were necessary in order to map out the lifetime migration patterns of research participants. One problematic issue emerged in the present research in that Kelowna proper with a population of 127, 400 (BC Stats, 2011) qualifies as non-metropolitan in this research yet is also considered to be one of Canada's 35 large Census Metropolitan (CMA) regions when the surrounding area is included (Statistics Canada, 2018a). As such, in mapping out the migration patterns, I have chosen urban to refer to one of Canada's top 20 CMA's (thereby eliminating Kelowna), non-metropolitan as a population up to 130,000 in size, and rural (small town) as less than 10,000 (du Plessis, Beshiri, Bollman, & Clemenson, 2001). Using these guidelines from birthplace to current location, 15 participants have a migration pattern which may be described as urban to non-metropolitan, 6 participants with a non-metropolitan to non-metropolitan pattern, and 9 participants with a rural to non-metropolitan pattern (full details of the migration patterns may be found in Appendix E). Only one of the participants in this research did not live in an urban center for a portion of his life (OK-73, who is characterized as rural to

non-metropolitan). Two participants are considered "natives" meaning they currently live in the non-metropolitan community in which they were born and raised (both lived elsewhere in the interim, one a large portion of his adult life elsewhere, the other just for two years of his adult life). Accordingly, 28 participants would be considered "transplanters" (Bell & Valentine, 1995b; Kennedy, 2010). Twenty-one participants made a move to a non-metropolitan area as a pre-retirement/retirement decision (note: in some cases, participants moved to a different non-metropolitan location, before settling in their current location). This is important information given that a significant portion of the non-metropolitan literature (Fellows, 1996; Preston & D'Augelli, 2013; Riordin, 1996) is concerned with gay men who live in the non-metropolitan region in which they were born and raised and may be identified as natives.

Summary. The sample was geographically well distributed within British Columbia; however, the largest group of participants was from Salt Spring Island where I also reside. While there was variation, overall the typical participant was in his late 60's or early 70's, white, well educated, partnered, owned his detached home, in good to excellent health, with one or more chronic conditions, who identified as gay.

Interview Data

The interview data are organized into four overarching themes: the life stories of gay men; migration factors; rewards; and challenges, each with a series of categories and codes (See Table 1). The themes are organized in a roughly temporal sense whereby life story data is presented prior to the presentation of migration factors, which in turn are presented prior to rewards and challenges. The data in this section are organized using participant identifiers, combining geographic location with age. For example, SS-65, refers to participant from Salt Spring Island who was 65 years of age at the time of the interview. When more than one

participant in a particular location is the same age, a further letter (e.g., a, b, c) is used in identification. The other geographical locations are coded: (PR) for Powell River; (VI) for Vancouver Island in the Duncan-Nanaimo corridor; (OK) for the Kelowna/Okanagan region; (SI) for Southern Interior; and (ANY) is reserved for those participants whose chose to further conceal their identities by stating their residence as the fictional Anytown BC. The rewards are presented prior to the challenges only because it appears logical to end with the challenges given their presentation leads one to question how such challenges may be addressed. The categories and codes are arranged in the order that they typically are found within the interview transcripts themselves. For example, in the life stories of gay men, participants typically talked about their coming out story first, followed by reflections on how the norms, times, and values impacted their feelings about the same-sex attraction they felt, closing with the manner in which they expressed their sexuality which for 13 of the participants included a discussion of their heterosexual marriages. A selection of PGI's are presented throughout this section to illuminate themes where applicable. The images chosen for presentation were mutually agreed upon with my supervisor. Participant identifiers are not included with the photos and the purpose of this omission is that where participants can be identified (many chose to submit photos that included their faces), the absence of an ID # allows their remaining *in-text* quotations to remain confidential. A separate analysis of the PGI data follows this section.

Table 1.

Non-Metropolitan Gay Aging – Themes, Categories, and Codes

THEMES:	CATEGORIES:	CODES:
The Life Stories of Gay Men (personal and historical context):	**Same-sex attraction and coming out**	***Feeling different:*** "I was always an odd different kid, it never rang any bells" (SS-67b)
		Age of attraction: "It started just around puberty" (SS-67a)
		Attachment to male friends: "I kept getting too attached to male friends" (ANY-65)
		Coming out and first same-sex encounters: "By the time I got to college I was actually learning the fine art of gay encounters" (SS-67a)
	Identities shaped by norms, times, and values	***Adherence to social norms:*** "I was probably comparing my family to Leave it to Beaver" (ANY-65)
		Negative perceptions of homosexuality: "And she (OK-73's mother) says, 'that filthy queer', and boy that stuck in my mind" (OK-73)
		Religion: "We're both survivors of the Catholic church" (VI-65)
		Positive experiences through time: "Things have changed so, so rapidly, and in gay life too, I mean if I had known then what I know now, I would have never been so afraid of being myself" (SS-83)
	Sexual expression	***Concealment and Sanctions:*** "I got beat up in the bar a couple of times because (of), um, a truck driver who didn't like fags, didn't like working for fags" (SS-76)
		Internalized homophobia: "One learns to hate oneself" (SS-72b)
		Multiple modes of sexual expression: "I have an open relationship and from time to time we, you know, like to find another man to kind of play with, not as a three-way" (SS-64)
		Limited sexual opportunities in non-metropolitan settings: "No, not at all, no, it's the, what is the term for desert [laughter]" (VI-69)
	Gay men in heterosexual marriages	***Social pressure to marry:*** "Damned if I didn't get married to a second woman, again peer pressure" (OK-73)

		Marriage overlap with gay life: I really didn't meet my first gay man until after I was married" (SS-65)
		Contrasting heterosexual marriage with gay life: "The night I moved out and moved in with him, my stomach ache went away, I didn't have it again" (SS-65)
		Children and grandchildren: "We have 12 grandchildren, and 10 great grandchildren" (SS-76)
Migration factors:	**Personal factors**	***Approaching retirement:*** "This is where we want to go to retire" (SS-65)
		Family nearby: "Close to family" (OK-63)
		New relationship: "We had a commute relationship for four years" (OK-76)
		Leap of faith: "Actually I trusted things would work" (ANY-65).
	Push factors	***Leaving city life behind:*** "Vancouver…it was crowded and dirty and it just looked like a social problem" (OK-67)
		Emigration: "America's a bad place for me to live in, and it's proven, we've got Trump there now, and he's just so chipping away at the basic structure…I came to Canada for selfish reasons, the values of Canada far more reflect our values than the values of the United States" (VI-70)
		Financial issues**:** "It (previous location) became more expensive to live" (SS-72c)
	Pull factors	***Key amenities:*** "This is a small town but…it has the hospital" (OK-75)
		Climate: "Nanaimo is great weather wise…it was a gorgeous day, we went to a restaurant and sat outside and had our lunch, in February" (VI-81)
		Nostalgia/Rural idyll: "The quietness and slower pace and being close to the natural world" PR-59)
		Community factors: "I sensed that it was accepting of queers, um, and not just queers, it's accepting of other strange people" (SS-71)
Rewards:	**Support networks**	***Family:*** "[partner's] family has become my family, his parents have become my surrogate parents" (SS-71)
		Friends and families of choice: "We have a bunch of gay friends here" (ANY-70)
		Organizational support: "Becoming involved in (the local gay organization) shaped my life in becoming so much more open about my sexuality" (SS-72a)

	Sense of community	***Small community life:*** "In a large city where you're invisible and you're not even seeing the people you are passing or there's no eye contact, and here you say hi to everybody, smiling and eye contact" (SS-67b)
		LGBT Acceptance: "We're welcomed, and we're very much accepted as a couple" (PR-67)
	Setting factors	***The quiet life:*** "As I say, the peace and quiet, the, I even love driving on this island, it's just, you know there's no traffic for one thing" (SS-69)
		Nature: "It gives you a sense of how close we are here, to being really close to nature" (VI-61)
		Activities: "We have a lot of great cultural activities here in Kelowna like the orchestra and such" (OK-67).
Challenges:	**Lack of support**	***Healthcare:*** "If you have terminal cancer in [name of the region] you can't get health care, um, there, and so we started commuting to Kelowna" (OK-67)
		In LGBT Organizations: "There's a lot of history and a lot of shared things that we've done but it's not the same level of friendship" (ANY-65)
		Gay Community: "The problem with the network here is more serious than gay people want to admit" (SS-72c)
	Community issues	***Politics:*** "Anytown is not without its own range of little issues…a fair amount of problems of a political nature" (ANY-70)
		Lack of amenities: "On [name] there was nothing in terms of amenities, you had to go to [name] to buy everything, there was a General Store, but you know, you're paying $7 for a gallon of milk" (VI-73)
		Transportation: "I hate the bus system, I'm used to the Vancouver bus system…but here I just can't figure out where they're going and when, and the website doesn't help much" (OK-76)
		Privacy: "Um, I guess sometimes when you want to get lost in a crowd, it's really hard to disappear here, when you go downtown, you're sure to see somebody" (SS-72a)
	Relationships	***Finding partners:*** "Came to realize that I am not going to find a gay partner in Powell River, the dating scene here is pretty much zero" (PR-59)
		Friendship factors: "People here, I hate to say it but some of our friends have been kind of flakey, like the friendships show good potential initially, and then the friendships didn't go anywhere" (SS-64)

	Physical setting factors	***Upkeep of home:*** "It requires work, we just spent three hours yesterday trimming that fucking hedge [laughter]" (VI-65)
		Wildlife: "I have a rabbit problem here" (SS-67a)
		Envisioned future challenges: "The only thing we worry about you know, is at our age, the stairs, and when we moved here we decided we would buy a house without stairs…this was the only place we felt was viable at the time we needed to buy, and so we ended up with stairs" (VI-73)

The Life Stories of Gay Men. This first theme comprises several categories that serve to describe the gay men in their personal identities and unique personal and historical context. The four categories subsumed by this theme include: same-sex attraction and coming out; identities shaped by norms, times and values; sexual expression; and gay men in heterosexual marriages. Each of these categories contributes to establishing the unique historical and subjective foundation of the gay men in this research.

Same-sex attraction and coming out. Four codes represent the category of same-sex attraction and coming out: feeling different; age of attraction; attachment to male friends; and coming out and first same-sex encounters. These are presented in order in this section.

Feeling Different. While there is no definitive life-course patterning to identifying as a gay man, one code that was common to many research participants was the early life experience of feeling different from those around them. Overall, 12 participants (40%) commented on this experience of feeling different, in many cases, compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Such differences were experienced across a spectrum of possibilities; for example, in the case of one participant (raised on a farm) it was felt that his perceived gender non-conforming behaviors characterized such differences: "I was a weird child, I mean I was not your typical farming boy, I mean, I was…I liked flowers, I was good in music and I was deathly afraid of all animals" (SS-

67a). Alternatively, another participant expressed his differences in terms of not being able to live up to masculine norms of the time: “every guy was better than me, I wasn’t macho enough, I never spoke up for myself, never ah, I just, I have a feeling it’s because I was so different and didn’t know what to do about it” (OK-73). While comparisons to other heterosexual males was most commonly expressed in terms of gender norms, some participants also noted how they felt different from other gay men over the course of their lives. For example, OK-75 had this feeling that he “was born a little bit different than most gay people.” Feeling different was often divulged with a negative connotation; however, in contrast, PR-84, in comparing himself to other gay men shared that “I might have been a little too hot to handle…I was a step above them.”

Age of attraction. Twenty-two participants (73%) shared their thoughts on the age of their first same-sex attraction. The range at which such an attraction occurred was typically young, yet for some it came later. In the case of OK-63 it occurred “only moments after [he] stepped out of high school” whereas for PR-84 “it was when I was in my 20's or something.” While it was common to report that “I’ve always had a sexual attraction to men” (VI-73), the earliest definitive age of attraction stated was ANY-70 who declared that “I’d known in myself, since I was 4 years old that I was gay.” Many participants described “liking the boys” (VI-61) in describing their first same-sex attraction, likely placing their age in the pubescent or pre-pubescent period. Participant OK-75 mused “I often wondered when I was a kid, even when I was a young kid, seven and eight why I really uh, gravitated to other boys.” In contrast, ANY-86, who in a subsequent section reports that he did not become a gay man until the age of 76 struggled to determine when same-sex attraction first occurred for him and he shared “it’s questionable in my own mind how I was attracted to men because how does one know when something really starts in their life?”

Attachment to male friends. Nine participants (30%) reflected on attachment to male friends. Such attachments included those to similar age peers: "I remember all the way through school having infatuations with other boys" (SS-72b), as well as attachments to those who were not boys and were older than the participant at the time:

> There was an older brother of a friend, he looked like a man to me, and I was 13, and thinking back he must have sensed that I was queer, I don't know what the vibes were, but I must have given out something, because I realize now he was chasing me for lack of a better word. Ah, he would invite me for car rides, and I thought wow this is neat (SS-71).

In general, most participants reflected positively on these early attachments, but there were exceptions; for example, ANY-65 recalled that he "had a crush on one boy and it got kinda weird." Similarly, SS-67a, in developing an attachment to a male friend in his early college years, reflected that "unfortunately I fell in love with a straight guy."

Coming out and first same-sex encounters. Eighteen participants (60%) shared their coming out story during the interviews. The turning point for some was the decision to act and pursue a first same-sex sexual encounter: "it was almost like I was telling myself you can't go through life without having had the experience and so that first experience was enough to say, I want more" (SS-71). For others, the continued pursuit of gay sexual encounters acted as a turning point in their eventual coming out: "I stayed for four days at a steam bath, never left…after that, you have to realize and start thinking, I'm gay, I'm gay and what are you going to do about it" (OK-73)?

There was wide variation regarding the age at which participants came out as gay, from OK-67's assertion that "I came out every year from when I was 13 till when I was 17" to ANY-

86's declaration that "I was 76 years old before I became gay, you know, not gay all my life." Mid-life coming out was also reported: "guess I was about 40 when that happened" (SS-65). Coming out was also described as "an ongoing process…it doesn't ever stop" (VI-61). ANY-70's description of coming out further exemplifies this idea of an ongoing process:

> When I came out to my mother I was in my 30's, I came out to my brothers and sisters in my 20's… work never once asked me if I was gay, and I never ever admitted to that until, um, the last 6 months I worked with the government.

Twelve participants (40%) discussed the reactions they received after coming out. Such reactions ranged from those that were negative: "their response was horror, anger, and shutdown" (SS-72b) and VI-73's declaration that "I was cut out of the will, I was cut out of all family associations." Some of the reactions were positive: "she put her arms around me anyway and she said we love you" (VI-81). Reactions for some were and remain mixed: "my father accepted it right away…mother, I had a great relationship with my mother before, I have a lousy relationship with her now, she's the one who can't accept it" (SS-65). For participant OK-67, who in the previous section it was noted, came out every year from age 13 to 17 was told by his parents: "it's just a phase, a stage, you'll grow out of it, or I guess you better go and see the school psychologist."

Identities shaped by norms, times, and values. This category comprised four codes: adherence to social norms; negative perceptions of homosexuality through time; religion; and positive experiences. An annotation of these codes will be presented in this section.

Adherence to social norms. Fourteen participants (47%) discussed the social norms present in their youth. For most this involved a statement describing *the way things were* in the time they were growing up, for example, SS-72a noted that "the only way to happiness in those

days was to have a wife married to a man, and a white picket fence, one and a half cars and two and a half kids." For some it was characterized in terms of a force: "society pushes you into it [heterosexuality and marriage], that's what your parents want, that's what your friends want, everybody you know is getting married" (OK-73). The 'way things were,' was also described in terms of sexuality, clearly noting that "you're not expected to be queer, you're expected to be heterosexual" (SS-71) and that "it [homosexuality] was kind of a taboo at the time" (SS-83). Contrary to these descriptions, on occasion some participants expressed a feeling of liberation, often referencing the counter-norms of the times: "It was the 60's maybe late 60's, it was a time of trying everything once" (SS-67b).

Negative perceptions of homosexuality through time. Forty-seven percent of participants (n=14) described negative perceptions of homosexuality. Several participants reflected on homosexuality in the past being regarded negatively as effeminate. SS-71 recalled, "I saw the perception of being gay as effeminate, Nancy, put on, you dressed up and I didn't, that wasn't for me, I didn't want to be that, I didn't want to be labeled that." Similarly, SS-83 noted that "most people they associate gay, as men who wear dresses and lipstick and you know, were very nelly so to speak." In addition, participants reported that society at the time believed homosexuals to be "mental and…sick" (OK-75) and in possession of "a disease [that] can be cured" (SS-72b). Further illustrating this perception, one participant noted: "I'd been brought up that gay men don't have relationships, they only had sex…they were only sexual beings, who drank too much and smoked too much and had a lot of sex" (VI-65). Lastly, the physical space or gay bars, in which the drinking, smoking, and sexual encounters took place or were negotiated, were perceived as being "dirty and disgusting and awful" (SS-72a).

Religion. Ten participants (33%) discussed the role of religion in their lives. Often, it was

mentioned in illustration of the communities in which they were raised such as: “redneck ignorant mining communities with central Europeans of all natures, and a very strong Roman Catholic / Protestant divide in the mining town” (SS-76). It was also introduced to describe their home setting with VI-61 noting “I was also raised very Catholic, I consider myself raised in a very conservative Catholic home.” How life played out in such conservative homes and communities was described by VI-73 who reported:

> It was and still is [participant’s hometown] to a great degree, very, very, conservative Christian, when, in my junior year, [it] was the first year my school had a prom, with a dance, and well, they called it the devil playing in the schoolhouse.

These religious experiences and contexts introduced further dissonance as the gay men came to accept their homosexuality. One participant noted, that his “upbringing made [him] feel, well, it’s [homosexuality] against God and it’s against the church” (OK-75). Similarly, in attempting to come to terms with his feelings of same-sex attraction PR-67 reported “I was brought up Catholic, so I felt guilty and horrible, and I knew there was something terribly wrong with me and I’m going to go to hell.”

Participants also discussed specifically their teachings from religious life that were concerned with same-sex partnering and applied it to their present lives; for example, OK-76 reported that “they [the church] could accept we were gay, but they could not accept we were a couple.” On a similar note, VI-61 characterizes his religious teachings as meaning “God doesn’t care if you’re gay, he just doesn’t want you to act on it kind of thing.” The impact of such teachings was described by VI-65 who explains that “as a Catholic I was very good at repressing my emotions and worries and concerns.”

Participants also reported how religious institutions “weren’t very supportive of LGBT

issues" (OK-67). Such lack of support was often covert, but it was also reported as manifesting itself in an overt manner as described by VI-73:

> There was a Christian group that got together, the Oregon Citizen's Alliance [participant previously lived in rural U.S.A.] and they were trying to put in a law saying that no one who was gay or perceived as gay could teach or own property, business property.

Nine of the 10 participants who discussed the role of religion in their lives also reflected positively on some aspect of their religious upbringing or the role of religion in their current life. For example, VI-61 felt that "the religious life part was what drew us [he and his partner] together, we have a lot of history in common [church background] which you know does help, it helped in the past, and it still does." Similarly, in describing the search for a church in their recent move to a non-metropolitan community, OK-76 reported meeting "a new priest at that church who was very accepting…the first day we walked into the cathedral, I thought he was going to swoon, he was so happy to see us there." Likewise, OK-63 reports with pride that "we were the first legal and recognized same-sex blessing in the world." Positive affect may on occasion emerge from a defiant stance, SS-76 shared that "I take a great deal of pleasure in having people be uncomfortable with who I am…yeah I like it a lot, like taking on the Bishop in the church" (SS-76). A positive religious experience was not exclusive to those who are active in church life, OK-67 who in being diagnosed with cancer reported that "when I got sick, those communities [religious] were the first to respond, even the very right wing, very evangelical, you know people you would not expect, um, but they did."

Positive experiences. By positive experiences, this section refers to conversations in which four participants (13%) who experienced the restrictive environments described above, now describe positive changes they have seen in gay life in recent years. In contrasting his early

mixed feelings about homosexuality to his later years when he came out as a gay man, SS-65 reflects "oh gosh, society had changed so dramatically by then." On a similar note, SS-71 who originally had mixed feelings about perceptions of gay men as effeminate, shared his new feelings and perceptions in the present day:

> Gay isn't one thing…it's this huge range of people, and you can be in there somewhere, and enjoy and accept those people who want to be Nancy [effeminate], and accept them, that's how they are, and you can accept these other people, who are different on the scale.

***Sexual expression*.** The category sexual expression has four codes that will be discussed in this section: concealment and sanctions; internalized homophobia; multiple modes of sexual expression; and limited sexual opportunities in non-metropolitan settings.

Concealment and sanctions. The research displayed that there were three main components to concealment, namely, concealment from family, community/friends, and in the workplace. On one hand, concealment is driven on a personal level and the lack of readiness to disclose sexual orientation to family and friends. On the other hand, concealment was also practiced in light of perceived and/or real threats and sanctions regarding one's same-sex orientation.

Nine (30%) of the participants reported concealing their sexual orientation from their families at some point in time and one participant stated that "I never told my parents ever" (OK-73). Concealment concerns often intensified for participants once they were partnered. For example, VI-73 revealed that "as far as my family wanted to know it was strictly a roommate situation." Likewise, OK-63 describes what might be termed a quasi-concealment situation:

> Many of my family members um, that was kind of how they accepted it as being you know, two roommates and you know, and wink, wink, nod, nod, I knew that they knew, but I never really did have to have that discussion with my parents.

Fifty-seven percent of the participants (n=17) reported concealing their homosexuality from community/friends at some point in their lives. Like the previous section, the living situation that was concealed from family was also concealed from the community and some friends, PR-59 explains: "the first couple of years we weren't out about it and obvious about it, we were just two guys living in the same house…there weren't any public displays of affection or anything like that." Similarly, PR-84 reflected that he "led a pretty secretive life." Managing concealment was often quite complex as is evidenced in this quote from OK-63: "we even had to have two separate bedrooms, so that we could say that's [partner's name] bedroom".

There was some evidence to suggest concealment from the community still plays a role in lives of some participants. For example, VI-81 explained that he does not "broadcast" his homosexuality and as a result he feels "that most people don't really know that I'm gay." Likewise, and more clearly stated, VI-69 in discussing his current town shared "this is a very conservative community and I was never out here." Thinking back to life with his former partner in the 1970's and 80's, SS-83 reflected:

> We didn't want to participate, like the gay parade, I thought, well if you show up people wonder why you are there and so it was kind of a fear that was instilled, protection, you became overly protective and sometimes it was hard because you had to lead a double life, you could not always do the things that you wanted to do for fear that people would find out that you were gay.

Lastly, and perhaps most poetically, SI-69 described his current concealment in these terms: “[there are] many who, like me, pass through the 'straight world' unknown, unsuspected.”

Workplace concealment was described by 12 (40%) of the participants. For many, concealment was described as “this façade all the time that you hid behind” (SS-65). To accomplish this task of concealment one participant employed a strategy of omission: “I was single at work and nobody would talk about home life, and if I talked, it would be a partner not gender” (SS-67b). Here the participant is referring to the use of gender-neutral terms where in comparison to co-workers who might comment that their wife is taking the kids to see their grandma on the weekend, he would, when pressed, use the terms partner versus wife to describe the same situation in hopes of not raising any suspicions. Workplace concealment was not only concerned with what was said. OK-73 explains how even a *look* could raise suspicions: “men [after work] took showers together too, and boy nobody was looking at, or boy you didn’t get caught looking at anybody.” Others constructed the façade by ensuring that they avoided any mannerisms or talk that would suggest they were gay, as explained by SS-83 who noted: “I kept up my standards, and I just didn’t drop any hairpins so to speak and I was professional, and I did my job.” Occasionally, homosexuality was accepted in the workplace but in such cases disclosing one’s sexual orientation remained selective: “I moved into elementary school teaching and I was um, pretty up [open] with the staff, not so much with the parents and kids” (SS-64).

Emerging from the interviews there were stories about sanctions which may be described as threats, verbal and physical abuse, and behavior change taken in light of perceived threats. Participant VI-61 asserted that “anyone my age would have gone through a lot of homophobia, it was part of the air.” Eight research participants (27%) commented on threats they had received as gay men over the course of their lives. These included the general threat where it was stated

"we all feared losing our jobs" (OK-63) to the more benign, "we always run into this risk of being called dirty old men" (OK-67). Physical violence was also threatened: "one of our [now] sons-in-law used to come over and play [when he was a young boy], and his dad used to come looking for him with a baseball bat when he was about 12" (SS-67b). That bat in this case intended to be a threat and display the level of repercussion SS-67b should expect if the neighbor's son was ever found at his house. Similarly, VI-73 told the story of a neighbor who "threatened us with a machete one day."

Verbal abuse ranged again from the clement, "there was a lot of teasing of course and stuff in the 50's about being gay" (SS-72c), to the much more serious: "we went through, you know the hate calls, we went through the telephone calls from the neighbourhood and the group committee, and how it would be better if my mother had drowned me at birth" (SS-76). Sadly, verbal threats persisted through time for the gay men in this study, where in the 1990s SS-71 recalls: "I remember one night walking down [name] street and there's this guy, Jamaican accent, and he's 'hey baddy boy', and I thought oh geez it's never going to end, and on occasion there were slurs thrown your way." Similarly detailing an experience from the 1990s, VI-73 reported that "people would drive by and call us fucking faggots." Extending into the 2000s, ANY-86 shares a comment received around the time of his partner's recent retirement party where his partner disclosed his sexual orientation to his co-workers: "we said we got married, and she came back and said, you're dogs aren't you, you do it like dogs."

The research also found that actual physical abuse was a component of the lives of the gay men in this research:

> We were sitting in a beer parlour…having a beer and what not, and just generally enjoying the after dinner, it was with four women and I…they were talking about how

> safe they felt with [me] their faggy boss and they knew they weren't going to get hit on, I wasn't going to demand sex with them, and they, we were all talking about how wonderful it was and this guy [who had been listening in to our conversation] came over and just fuckin' blindsided me and knocked me on the floor (SS-76).

Similarly, recalling an experience of violence from the 1990s VI-73 shared that neighbours who were not accepting of he and his partner's homosexuality "killed our dog."

Given these stories, the concealment described in the previous section appears less surprising. The environment was hostile enough and wrought with sanctions that gay men such as OK-67 "deliberately made choices to put [myself] into environments that I felt were comfortable for me or safe." Unfortunately, such conditions have not entirely disappeared, SS-65 explains:

> You never wanted to act queer, so you know, you don't go like this, you go like this [participant displays different gestures – limp versus firm wrist], you know and even now… I know my movements are very stiff at times, and depending where I am.

Similarly, it was noted that even in the present day "you still don't want to walk down some back alley where you're going to be bashed or something" (SS-71).

Internalized homophobia. Very much related to the previous theme of concealment and sanctions is internalized homophobia. Ten participants (33%) shared stories that displayed apparent feelings of internalized homophobia, "the fear of my own sexuality" (SS-72c) or "being gay and not comfortable with myself until the final year [of high school]" (ANY-65). For some, these were reflections on erotic play with other males as children: "I knew that what we were doing had shame to it, but only if we were found out" (SS-67a). Oftentimes, it was expressed as rejecting one's emerging feelings of attraction toward the same sex: "hitting puberty I kind of

felt that I was gay, which was horrific to me because it was the last thing I wanted to think of about myself" (SS-72a). On a similar note, SS-71 felt: "um, it was funny, but I knew I had attraction to other boys, but I didn't put the word homosexual or queer to me, to myself – you're one of those!"

This idea of not being *one of those* (flamboyant effeminate gay men) was also stated in terms of expressing one's own homosexuality in a different manner from others:

> There was a certain kind of gay guy that I wasn't interested in at all, and it was the REAL [participant emphasis], you know, the ones that didn't care if anybody knew, whatever and all the rest of it, a lot of them were dancers (OK-75).

Likewise, PR-84 shared this description of a gay man of whom he did not approve: "Nellie queen was a kind of a flittin' around, falsetto voices and that kind of stuff, and I wasn't used to that, and put on too much, they gave a bad name for a lot of us you know." Lastly, internalized homophobia was also expressed as a feeling that appeared not long after a sexual encounter:

> There you go, yep, but you come away from it [a casual same-sex encounter] all feeling not adequate, a bit dirty, a bit um, frustrated of course…and um, maybe that's another part of the reason for moving, so if it [being identified as gay] happened, at least I wouldn't be home, wouldn't be in front of everybody and maybe embarrass my parents (OK-73).

Multiple modes of sexual expression. Participants discussed numerous components of their sexual expression describing types of relationships as well as information about sexual encounters over the course of their lives. The type of relationship described most (47%) by participants was a current monogamous relationship. Such relationships were often long-term

unions: “we’ve been together for over 30 years” (VI-61). The rationale for monogamy was typically values based: “I don’t know, it’s [an open relationship] just against my values totally, and so I would have to be monogamous” (SS-72b). On a similar note, OK-75 declared that “I don’t believe in the cheating business.”

Seven participants (23%) described polyamorous relationships, although for many, these relationships were in the past and they are currently practicing monogamy. The rationale for entering into polyamorous relationships were at times based on free spirited values: “we weren’t monogamous, we lived in different types of collective households” (SS-72c). Similarly, SS-83 commenting on his previous relationship reflected: “we had this attitude of live and let live…you know, you cannot tie anybody down.” These statements supported sexual relationships with individuals other than their partner. Alternatively, such activities could be the result of relationship discord as described by ANY-65: “[we were in] an unhappy relationship, so it wasn’t exactly monogamous.” Lastly, a monogamous relationship could change to polyamorous as a result the declining health of a partner: “why don’t you have him [said the ill partner, referring to a younger man who was flirting with his partner], and oh my god, I mean…hell I’m getting permission right” (OK-75).

Almost one third of participants (30%) commented on their experiences with “the horrendous world of the baths” (PR-67). While PR-67 was just kidding and did in fact enjoy the baths, the range of perceptions and experiences with this mode of sexual expression varied greatly: “I met some wonderful people there and uh, I was actually in demand…and it makes you feel awfully good and all the rest of it” (OK-75). On a similarly positive note OK-73 relived how it “was unbelievable, the first time I went to a steam bath.” In contrast, one participant (SS-67a) did not have such a fond reflection:

> I remember going to the baths and you know trying to get laid all night long, and it's 5 o'clock in the morning and I still haven't had an orgasm, and I go home, and I go WHAT [participant emphasis] was that all about?

Interestingly, two couples who participated in this study met their current partner in a steam bath: "I met [name of partner] at a bathhouse, yeah I didn't even talk until after our encounter" (SS-67b). Likewise, OK-63 reported that "I met [name of partner], at the steam bath."

Another component of sexual expression that is related to age, is a fascination with one's ability to now, with advanced age, be able to attract younger men into their lives: "being attractive to men at my age, at 72, the younger men especially, has really been mind-blowing for me, because I'm now attractive to younger men…like I said I just have to pinch myself" (SS-72a). On a similar note OK-75 commented "I found him to be a very mature 23-year-old when I first met him…at that point I guess I would have been 67, yay, honey." Likewise, and speculating on a possible reason for the attraction, OK-73 shared:

> There's lots of people and surprisingly enough, not necessarily your own age either…a guy came up, took me home, wanted to know if he could call me daddy and I said, you sure can, you can show daddy what a big boy you are [laughter], why not play the role?

The attraction was not limited to sexual encounters, in the case of SS-83 who at the time of the interview was in the midst of his eighth year in an intergenerational relationship with a partner/spouse 30 years younger, reported: "kind of unusual at my age, I never expected that, it's a good life."

Limited sexual opportunities in non-metropolitan settings. Seven participants (23%) commented on the limitations related to finding a partner or sexual encounter in their non-metropolitan setting. Regarding finding a partner SS-72a stated "it's hard to find anyone here on

Salt Spring." The population of the non-metropolitan location was not the only factor, VI-81 living in a location approximately 10 times the size of Salt Spring disclosed "to be honest with you I have never been together with anybody in Nanaimo." On a similar note, simply finding sexual encounters can be difficult; "there's not really venues for meeting or you know, exploring here, tricking or whatever, with other guys" (SS-64). Given this limitation, SS-67a has shared "I did have a couple of little sexual encounters with local people, but it wasn't a fit." The limitations described have led eight participants (27%) to explore using the Internet to find partners:

> [Name of partner] and I met on the Internet, yeah, on Silverdaddies [A gay dating website], we'd both lost a partner, I'd had a partner for 14 years in Florida and he'd lost his partner, we were both lonely, started talking, had a lot in common (VI-89).

Similarly, PR-67 recalled that "I guess we met online, 2006, then we, like I say we just kept on going back and forth between the city and here." Interestingly, no men in the research reported using the Internet to find local casual sexual encounters.

Six participants (20%) have or are currently participating in sex tourism and traveling outside of their country of residence to pursue sexual encounters and potential relationships. SS-67a divulged:

> Down in Argentina [I] had this escort guy, and I mean he was so handsome and he was so much fun, and we just kind of, for nine months had a little kind of fling…I didn't feel guilty about it, I didn't feel like I was using that young guy, he was using me, yeah I gave him a lot of money, I bought him a motor scooter.

Likewise, regarding financial exchange, OK-75 reported: "I've fallen for a Mexican guy…I sent him a few dollars here and there, I sent Christmas presents you know." Similarly, also involving a man from Mexico, SS-72a noted that:

> Last year in PV [Puerto Vallarta] I met two guys at the same bar…both of them liked older men and they were friends with each other and um, ha, I was very, very flattered by this and so I had this little fling with one of the guys…a few times, a couple of times, and then I met his friend who he was with the first night and we really clicked.

It is interesting, given these stories come from travel abroad, that these situations were/are described as ongoing with an actual, potential and/or perceived relationship component. Only OK-73 described an experience in terms of an *encounter* rather than with any relationship component:

> I met a guy in Zambia a couple of years back and I was just amazed that he'd invite me to the Zulu village, and it was a real bona fide Zulu village, and it was something else, and we had the pleasure of sleeping together.

Gay men in heterosexual marriages. Forty three percent (n=13) of the men in this research had previously been involved in heterosexual marriages and offered commentary on this. As such, it was clear early in the research that this topic would appear as a category. The subgroup of men in this research were heterosexually married anywhere from two to 42 years, with OK-73 being married twice, once for 10 and once for 15 years. The mean length of marriage was 17.3 years. Four codes emerged from the data and will be presented in this section: social pressure to marry; marriage overlap with gay life; contrasting heterosexual marriage with gay life; and children and grandchildren.

Social pressure to marry. Of the 13 participants who had been in heterosexual marriages, seven (54%) commented on the pressure to get married. Participant VI-89 explained: "in those days, it was decided for you, it was an expectation…I knew I had to get married, so I found somebody suitable." Similarly, SS-65 reflected: "I got married in 1974…it was the thing to do and I always wanted to fit in." The social pressures were intertwined with the previously described sanctions and internalized homophobia as SS-69 explains "if you could be attracted to women you didn't come out."

Marriage overlap with gay life. Seven of the heterosexually married participants reported that their gay life overlapped with their married life: "while I was married I had some [gay encounters] as well" (SS-72a). The reasoning for the overlap with their marriages is summed up by SS-71 who declared "there came a time when the urge was just too much." On a similar note, regarding the power of such urges, OK-73, who had been married and had experienced overlap in his first marriage shared: "so I wound up doing it all over again, got married [a second time], big wedding the whole bit, two years after, I'm looking around for guys."

These findings are not entirely unexpected given that some of these men either had gay experiences prior to their marriages or suspected they were gay. In responding to my follow-up question about gay experience prior to marriage, SS-72a replied "yeah a few, yup I did." In terms of suspecting they were gay, ANY-86 stated "there are times in my life when I suspected I was AC/DC [a slang term used to describe going 'both ways'; a way of describing a type of bisexuality]." In the case of one participant who had 20+ years of gay life prior to having his first sexual relations with a woman at age 40, and then entering into a 23-year marriage with this woman explained: "I was happily married to be honest with you, but I still considered myself gay, I mean I knew my desires were elsewhere you know" (VI-81).

Contrasting heterosexual marriage with gay life. Six of the 13 formerly married men chose to share how gay life contrasted with married life. At the purely sexual level: "I was very happily married I must admit, and the sex was great, but I still never lost my interest in having sex with men" (VI-81). On a like note OK-73 contrasts gay versus heterosexual sex: "I went and had a couple of experiences with women, and the guy was the best of course." The men also described and contrasted their gay life in emotional terms. SS-72a for example, had been having casual sexual encounters with men while married and maintaining a balance with his heterosexual life; the balance ended when he fell in love with one of his sexual partners and in contrasting it with married life, he described his newfound same-sex love as "an incredible feeling" (SS-72a). Similarly, VI-65 mentioned: "I realized when I got into a relationship with [name of current male partner] that this was something totally different." For one participant, the feelings that accompanied gay life acted as a turning point in his overlapping relationships: "this is too strong a thing I felt with [partner's name], we wanted to live together, have a full gay life" (SS-71).

Children and grandchildren. Eleven of the 13 men formerly married to women reported having children and grandchildren in their lives. Most commonly discussed was the sense of pride and accomplishment participants had as fathers: "the kids were the bright spots in my life for sure" (OK-73). On a similar note VI-89 described his children as "three wonderful, smart, intelligent beautiful kids and one of them is gay."

Several of the relationships with ex-spouses were described as positive, supportive relationships, mostly revolving around children. Raising the children was one such cooperative effort: "the three of us [participant, his ex-wife, and same-sex partner] raised a son" (SS-64). Additionally, SS-83 describes his partner's relationship with his former spouse:

> One of the things that I liked when I came here, I met his ex-mother-in-law and his ex-wife and her new beau and his daughter and they all get along, they all love each other and to me that was so re-assuring that there are people who care about one another.

Relationships with ex-wives were also reported to be negative, participant SS-65 shared: "She [participant's ex-wife]…convinced everybody that I was the worst thing on earth, so I've been estranged from my son for 25 years, he's now 38 and we really have no connection, no relationship at all."

This first overarching theme locates the sample as gay men and differentiates them from heterosexual men by way of their unique personal and historical life story context. The four research categories, same-sex attraction and coming out; identities shaped by norms, times and values; sexual expression; and gay men in heterosexual marriages, each contributed to establishing the unique but culturally diverse experiences of the gay men who participated in this research project.

Migration Factors.

Migration factors is the second of the four overarching themes. This study focused on gay men living in non-metropolitan regions and embedded in this second overarching theme are three categories that describe how research participants arrived at their current location: personal factors; push factors; and pull factors.

Personal Factors. Four codes of the category personal factors emerged from the research interviews: approaching retirement; family nearby; new relationship; and leap of faith. Each will be explored separately in this section.

Approaching retirement. Thirteen (43%) participants in this project mentioned retirement as a personal migration factor. For many, moving to a non-metropolitan location was part of the

retirement plan, for example, VI-65 noted they wished to "retire to a quieter place." Many participants, echoed SS-72c's anticipatory statement that "we saw our retirement coming" which often precipitated some action. For example, in anticipation of the retirement, SS-69 reported that "two years before I retired, we bought the house."

Family nearby. For five participants (17%) family played a role in the choice of non-metropolitan location. Family included adult children: "we wanted to be closer to our son" (SS-72c). For one participant, it was a nephew who "was encouraging people to come visit him and he wanted family and friends living around him, so he invited us to come out, we did two years ago, and we really enjoyed it" (VI-61). On another level, a First Nations participant explained how he felt compelled to move back home to live with family members after his mother had passed away because "traditionally…the family has to tighten itself" (VI-69).

New relationship. Four participants (13%) in this research moved to be in a new relationship. Interestingly, three of these four moves involved relocating from the United States to Canada. Two of these participants moved to Canada to be in their current home and one had initially moved to Vancouver to be with his partner prior to moving to the current non-metropolitan location. Such lengthy moves were not reserved for the younger members of the sample, as VI-89, who was 86 years of age when he met his current partner explains:

> I was living in Florida when we met, he flew to Florida to meet me, and then I joined him in California in Palm Springs and then we went from Palm Springs to here, and I've been here ever since.

Similarly, one participant who met his current partner in 2009 at the age of 75 shares a like story in the caption of Photo 1. In the case of the participant who did not make a cross-border move, the dynamic of urban to non-metropolitan was evident in PR-67's comment: "he

imported me up here because there was no way he was going to move back to the city and I was like, oh I think I can give up the city."

Photo 1. "We got to meet, and it was a good match and he lived in Canada, but I thought, well he can come to Sausalito but it's very hard for Canadians to get a visa to come" (participant photo).

Leap of faith. Eight participants (27%) described their decision to move in language that may be characterized as a *leap of faith*. The category developed with the first participant, who in describing his and his partner's decision to purchase a home and move to Salt Spring noted "we just took the leap" (SS-72a). Similarly, SS-64 reported that "we found this house, and rather impulsively bought it." On a parallel thought VI-73 felt, "at some point you just have to bite the bullet." Once such a bullet has been bitten, participants reported a commitment to their decision; VI-65 for example stated that "we didn't really know what to expect and frankly [we] didn't care." Here, VI-65 clearly describing a readiness to accept both the positives and potential negatives that come with moving to a distant (from another province to Vancouver Island) new community.

Push factors. Push factors may be described as those associated with the desire to leave a previous residence, and in most cases in this research, it is referring to a desire to leave behind city life. Three push factor codes emerged from the research, and the findings from each of the

following will be reported in this section: leaving city life behind; emigration; and financial issues.

Leaving city life behind. Sixteen participants (53%) described a desire to leave city life behind. For some it was growing tired of something that once held appeal: "I like the energy in the West End [of Vancouver], but um, yeah I kind of thought I'd had it with that" (SS-72b). Echoing this thought PR-59 felt that "as I've gotten older I've wanted less to be around that city energy." For others the push away from the city was values based: "you have to understand that people who live in a city, they're far more ambitious, they have to make a living and there's more competition, and people try to outdo one another" (SS-83). Similarly, reflecting on the competitive nature of those in the city, which ANY-65 felt extends into the perceived trivial realm of fashion declared: "I see gay people in cities…I don't care about clothes…it seems empty." The thoughts of SS-83 and ANY-65 may be summed up in ANY-86's more general reflection on city life who stated that "I found it quite superficial."

As may be expected there were numerous declarations of a desire to leave behind the perceived crime, crowdedness and unclean conditions of the city. Illustrative quotes of city descriptions include:

- "Lots of traffic and lots of noise" (SS-64).
- "Was starting to have violent crime and we even started to have a couple of robberies around our house" (SS-72c).
- "Toronto was too big and noisy, dirty" (SS-71).
- "Vancouver…would drive me crazy" (VI-65).
- "Crowded, 30% of the population is immigrants, black, purple, Chinese, or whatever" (OK-75).

Emigration. It was coincidental that almost one third of the sample, nine of the 30 participants, emigrated to Canada from the United States. As such, the desire to leave the United States was a migration factor mentioned by six of the research participants. On a general level, SS-67a reflected on his life choices: "I've done two brilliant things in my life, the first one was immigrating to Canada" (SS-67a). More specific was the desire to leave the U.S. due to the election of conservative governments: "we had this kind of fantasy about immigrating to Canada, because it was an alarming time in the U.S. with George W. Bush at the time" (SS-64). Almost paralleling this thought:

> Bush was elected president and [name of partner] was very upset about that and wanted to leave the country, and I said no, but if he gets in again then we will leave, thinking that there was no possibility that he would get in again, and he got in again and so we started the search for where we could go (VI-73).

Intertwined with politics was the idea that values did not or no longer aligned with those in the United States, ANY-65 shared: "I always wanted to get out of the U.S…I feel like, I always felt my values toward nature and the environment don't align [with those of the majority in the U.S.]."

Financial issues. Ten participants (33%) discussed financial issues as a migration factor. One component of this code was that the previous residence had become or was becoming unaffordable. PR-59 expressed this as: "part of the impetus for leaving Vancouver and coming to Powell River was that I couldn't afford to live in Vancouver anymore on this much lower income." On a like note, OK-67 reported: "in 2009 we had moved to Castlegar, why did we do that? Primarily because we couldn't afford to live in Vancouver."

A second component may be termed *cashing out,* where it was felt that selling an existing property and moving to a less expensive region would be financially beneficial. OK-76 explained: "we figured we'd sell our place in Vancouver and buy here and have 100 thou or maybe more leftover." Similarly, SS-64 stated: "we were able to get a lot more house/property for the money up here than we would have been able to there." A third factor in play, was a comparative process as described by VI-73: "we had no choice, Nanaimo was our only choice, we couldn't afford to buy in Vancouver, and we couldn't afford to buy in Victoria." Likewise, VI-81 in comparing housing markets noted "Nanaimo…it was reasonable, certainly more reasonable than Victoria." Lastly, some participants expressed a sense of urgency in their move: "let's do it now before the houses start costing a million dollars apiece" (VI-65).

Pull factors. The third category of the migration factors theme are what may be termed pull factors, those which draw the participant to non-metropolitan life. Four codes emerged from the data, namely: key amenities; climate; nostalgia/rural idyll; and community factors and each will be presented in this section.

Key amenities. Amenities played a prominent role as pull factors for the participants of this study. The presence of a hospital was one key amenity mentioned by 30% of the participants. For example, SS-69 noted that "another reason we came here too is…the hospital." For some the lack of a hospital was the reason to move: "it's another reason we wanted to get off the island [previous non-metropolitan dwelling]…the problems of getting a person in an emergency situation to the hospital in [name of town] was either a flight or the ferry" (VI-73). For others, this factor was used as a measure to rule out possible locations: "we didn't want to go to places like Qualicum and that, because they didn't have any hospitals" (VI-81). Lastly, and for most participants, it wasn't in response to a current need, but the anticipation of a potential future

need for hospital facilities: “I need to know that I’m going to be close to a medical centre that has those kind of services [specialized services, such as heart specialists] and Kelowna definitely has those” (OK-63).

A variety of other amenities were also mentioned as important by 11 participants (37%). On a practical level, SS-72a noted, “it [Salt Spring] had nice clothing stores, I’m into clothes, and um it had you know, all these galleries and supermarkets and Pharmasave.” Similarly, SS-69 explained: “there’s a movie theatre, there’s a live theatre, there’s two actual grocery stores not some little hole in the wall, so that’s really a big point here too, and gas stations.” For others, the presence of cultural activities proved important: “big enough to have some culture with Artspring and theatre and music” (SS-64). Similarly, Kelowna has “some cultural things to go to, it has a hockey team and all those things” (OK-75). Lastly, VI-65 summarizes the importance of key amenities on a general level: “so we really liked the fact that Nanaimo had enough of the good life, enough amenities”.

Climate. Seven participants (23%) commented on how climate was a factor encouraging their move to the current residence. Typically, the benefits of the climate in the destination location were expressed in terms of how it compared to a previous location, as VI-65 explains: “I wanted a better climate, I’m from Ontario and I’ve always found the prairie winter really harsh.” Similarly, and expressing clearly how climate factored into the decision to move: “we hated Ontario winters and so this is the warmest part of Canada, the mildest part of Canada, um, and so that’s more or less why we chose here” (SS-65). Likewise, SS-76 commented that “it doesn’t snow here very often, there are some years when it doesn’t snow at all.” For one participant there was an intersection between climate and nostalgia; “the weather [here] reminds me of the way it used to be when I was a child” (SS-83).

Nostalgia/rural idyll. A total of 16 (53%) participants commented on how a sense of nostalgia about non-metropolitan life and an attraction to the rural idyll played a role in their decision to move to their current home and community. This sense of nostalgia and its role in one's life is clearly articulated by OK-67 who theorized: "I come from that kind of small-town background and I guess my own little theory is that if you come from rural or small-town origins, you tend to have a nostalgia for that kind of lifestyle." On a similar note, SS-66b reflected "my parents had a farm when I was very young…so it had always been something that I wanted to get back to." The rural idyll was also described in terms of a storied narrative that revolved around fantasy, for example, VI-70 stated: "my kind of idea of the country was a fantasy world, you know the kitchen with curtains with the gooses trotting across with the bows on their necks, that's what I thought country life was like." On a parallel note, OK-67 shared: "we found a wonderful house, um, it looked like a dolls house it was beautifully kept."

Community factors. This code represents community factors that were not related to the existence of key amenities known to the participant prior to his arrival. Eight participants (27%) shared some of the community factors that drew them to their current location. Interestingly, most of the comments in this section (75%) are from participants who reside on Salt Spring Island. SS-64 mentioned that "one of the things that attracted us to Salt Spring was the eclectic feel of the community." This *feel* was thought to result from a sense that "people who are attracted to islands are slightly different" (SS-67b). Possibly related to a sense of LGBT-friendliness, SS-72c stated that "we knew it was more progressive in a lot of ways." Lastly, SS-83 felt "the ambience on the island, the people seem genuinely content living here." Such commentary was not restricted to only Salt Spring Island; VI-65 stated: "I sensed that BC was a generally pretty open-minded place."

This second overarching theme presented the findings related to migration factors that contributed to participants decisions to move to their current non-metropolitan locales. The three research categories that emerged from the interview data were personal factors, push factors, and pull factors, each contributing to the participants decision to move.

Rewards.

The third of the overarching themes revolves around the rewards of living and aging as a gay man in a non-metropolitan region. Three categories emerged from the interview data and are presented under the following headings: support networks; sense of community; and setting factors. Additionally, this third overarching theme along with challenges (the fourth and final overarching theme), is where the bulk of the participant generated image data and photos from the elicitation process are found.

Support networks. Three codes of the category support networks emerged from the data and will be presented in this section: family; friends and families of choice; and organizational support.

Family. Twelve participants (40%) reported that their relationship with family was a reward of aging as a gay man, even though, in most cases family did not live nearby. SS-72a drills down what he feels is an important reality: “if push comes to shove you really depend on your family at the end of the day right?” For many, family was stated in terms of how one’s relationship has blossomed with a partner or deceased partner’s family. SS-65 explains, “[partner’s name] daughter and her husband just became really, really, close friends.” On a similar note, ANY-70, in discussing his partner’s family, reports: “his family is delightful, his family is really good, he’s incredibly proud, I’m incredibly proud, we all get along fine.” Lastly, SS-67a noted that “his [deceased partner’s] sister is still one of my best friends.” For others,

family was discussed in terms of extended family such as grandchildren: “we have grandchildren…and they all would like us to be closer” (SS-76). The most direct comment made in terms of relying on family as one ages was made by SS-67b who felt: “it dawned on me, maybe when we’re older we’ll be quite appreciative of having nieces and a daughter-in-law not far away and maybe it will be helpful.”

Friends and families of choice. Twenty-three participants (77%) discussed the friends and families of choice present in their lives. In total 16 photos of friends and families of choice were submitted by research participants; however, none will be displayed in this section because model releases were only obtained for research participants and could not be obtained for additional people who appear in the photos.

To begin this section, a comment by VI-61 is provided because it sums up the role of friends and families of choice in the lives of many gay men: “for me family’s a choice, the people that we’ve grown close to, the friends who are really, really, close, so I have, so we have some really good friends.” At times, the presence of friends and families of choice factored into the move to the new region: “we already had some existing friends here” (OK-63). For others it was felt that “once we got here we just started meeting lots of people” (SS-72c). Friendship was also contrasted with city life, SS-72a reports: “friends, friendships, meeting people everywhere that I know, having great conversations, way more friends than I ever had in the city.” On a similar note, SS-67b stated that “it’s nice living in a small community where you know people and you can say hello.” This benefit of small-town life was also commented on by PR-59: “for me the reward about Powell River generally is knowing people…here I cannot go to the store without meeting somebody I know.”

The sexual orientation of friends and families of choice was part of many of the conversations with research participants. On the one hand, those who shared one's sexual orientation were conceptualized as closer: "there's really only one or two, that we would count as friends who are not gay or lesbian, so yes, our closest social circle is almost exclusively gay men" (VI-65). Also noting the value of this type of friendship: "[my partner] and I have had potlucks in the house and it's been the young dykes that have come, and you know, really made the evening" (PR-67). On the other hand, non-metropolitan living has resulted in a state, where as SS-64 reports: "we seem to socialize a lot with straight, you know, couples." In this regard, several participants commented with a tone of pleasant surprise to find: "we also have some straight friends, straight couples who are so accepting, I like that" (SS-71). This acceptance was also commented on by VI-89: "my husband has a lot of straight friends, but the situation's very different, people here know we are gay, know we're married and they are very accepting." Likewise, ANY-86 said that the "next door neighbours are a heterosexual couple, we are good friends with them, they are just wonderful and accept us."

Friends and families of choice provided some research participants with a sense of security: "here on the island I feel almost all the people I know I could call them and they would say, ok, I'll be there, I mean it's a very comforting feeling" (SS-83). They also clearly provided a level of actual support: "I'm amazed at my age I've got so many young friends that want to help me, girls most of them, and they come and clean for me and do all sorts of things" (PR-84). In the case of one participant, SS-67a, this support was considered to be life-saving: "the only reason I'm alive today is because my neighbor [name], was walking by and he said, something didn't seem right, and he came in and found me on the floor."

Organizational Support. Fifty seven percent of participants (n=17) felt they were

positively supported by organizations in their communities. Local LGBT organizations will not be discussed by name and instead will be referred to generically as *The Local Gay Organization*. The purpose for masking these organizations is related to a subsequent section where participants report on many negative issues related to their Local Gay Organizations. Here it was felt that naming the organization without offering a chance for rebuttal, which was beyond the scope of this research project, would be unfair to the organizations that have been critiqued. Moreover, it was also feared that specific quotes of negative appraisals of organizations might risk the confidentiality of the participant. When discussing organizations, all but one participant discussed organizations with an LGBT focus; the sole exception was offered by PR-59 who stated that "most of my friends come from joining organizations, none of them are LGBT focused." Much of the organizational involvement however, centered around being involved in a group that sponsored a Pride parade and festival in one's region. Such a statement was present in each region, on Salt Spring; "I knew about [The Local Gay Organization] when we were in Vancouver and I knew about Pride when we were in Vancouver, that Salt Spring had a Pride" (SS-72b). Similarly, on Vancouver Island: "we've gotten involved with people connected with gay Pride and now we are involved with at least one part of the gay community" (VI-73). Likewise, In Powell River: "that's what it's all about, that was total good, and [it's] the same way when we meet for our tiny Pride committee" (PR-67). Lastly, in Kelowna OK-67 states proudly that "we had more than 4000 people out for our Pride festival in the park, last summer."

After Pride festivals, a variety of social activities were reported to be the reason for participating with local LGBT organizations. Participant SS-69 explains: "I found out about [The Local Gay Organization] and ended up going to things that [The Local Gay Organization] held, dances, get togethers or whatever." On Vancouver Island, it was mentioned: "we formed the

chapter of [The Local Gay Organization] here…and they're very thankful for it, and we want to keep it going" (VI-89). In general, friendship was typically the motivating factor in participating: "we got to know various people, got connected with, I'm not sure if you're familiar with it, there's a Facebook group called [The Local Gay Organization]" (VI-61).

For some, activism is what drew people together in these organizations: "there is an active group called [The Local Gay Organization] that is working on these issues" (VI-70). In summary and extolling the positive role of organizational support ANY-65 stated: "I went to a [Local Gay Organization] meeting about two days ago and I wanted to hug everyone in the room, um, yeah I don't know, I guess it's friendly and welcoming."

Sense of Community. The category sense of community comprised two codes; small community life, and LGBT acceptance.

Small community life. Sixteen participants (53%) commented specifically on small community life and its impact on sense of community. The benefits of small community life were often expressed as a contrast to one's previous life in the city: "I have a real sense of community here, I never did in Vancouver, you don't in the city" (SS-67a). In comparison to big city living, participants felt that in smaller non-metropolitan areas "people help each other" (ANY-65), that people "pulled together" (OK-67) resulting in plenty of "goodwill and lots of energy" (VI-65). Overall, this "supportive culture" (SS-64) provided participants with "that feeling of being at home" (PR-67).

Alternatively, and related to the supportive nature described above, SS-72a who moved from his previous home in Vancouver stated that "I think a big advantage of living in a rural community is that one can reinvent oneself, can discover one's passion or follow one's passion

that one thought might not be possible in a previous life." This sense of reinvention was also evident in a photo 2:

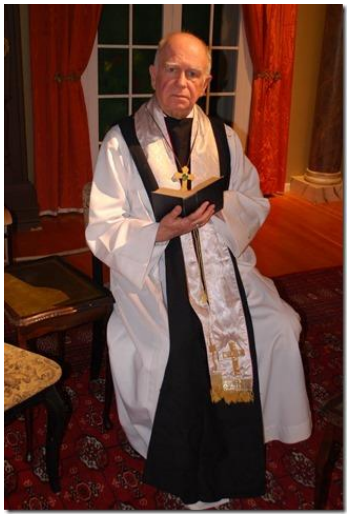

Photo 2. "Salt Spring has really allowed me to get into acting, I've done 18 productions since 2010! Here I am as Father Finnegan, the priest who has to tell teenager Harold why he shouldn't have sex with 80-year old Maude, in *Harold & Maude*" (participant photo).

LGBT acceptance. LGBT acceptance was a key factor in the development of a sense of community among participants, with 18 (60%) sharing the importance of sensing acceptance in one's community. One participant who previously lived in the United States expressed his feelings about LGBT acceptance based on a national level: "they love one another regardless of sex, because Canada is free in terms of gays" (ANY-86). Most participants; however, made their comments based on local knowledge and experience. For example: "everybody knows [partner's name] and I are together and people in the stores, people everywhere, nobody cares. I think that's what's so nice here, is they just sort of accept you" (SS-69). On a like note SS-83 articulated that "I think on this island, I don't think people differentiate much and they just see you as a person and they don't care whether you're gay or not." Similarly, VI-89 told me "people here know we are gay, know we're married, and they are very accepting."

One interesting tangent that emerged from the data was the participants' (sometimes implicit) questioning, and speculating if their community was different from others:

> But it's not important to them [whether you are gay or not], and it's not important to me, ah, I think we're the exception to the rule, Salt Spring Island is pretty special when it comes to things like that (SS-67a).

In line with SS-67a, ANY-65 asked: "I would love to know…if there's any place else like this where it's just totally ok to be gay?" For some, acceptance was discussed in terms of no longer feeling the need to conceal their sexual identities: "we've just never had any secrets on Salt Spring" (SS-76). Likewise, SS-72a shared that he is "freely openly gay here on Salt Spring." The feeling was also felt by SS-67b: "we're very fortunate we live in a pretty welcoming community, it's generous and I don't recall any incidents at all, of any kind, and never any need to hide who we were."

Photo 3. "Witnessing progress for LGBT persons in Nanaimo" (participant photo).

The sense of acceptance also included an intermingling of gay and straight in community events, in the Kelowna area it was reported:

> Pride last year was the first parade and we went down, and I was expecting, if a couple of hundred people show up I'll be surprised, and there were thousands of people that came out for that, it blew me away, and straight families with their kids, so that's exciting (OK-73).

A similar reaction was found on Vancouver Island in the Nanaimo area: "in the park afterwards [after Pride parade] there were thousands of people and that surprised us too" (VI-65).

Symbolic gestures of acceptance were also greatly appreciated; for example, OK-67 with enthusiasm comments: "this is wonderful, they got the rainbow crosswalks" (OK-67). Overall, LGBT acceptance and its importance are summed up by PR-67 who stated, "the allies are amazing!"

Setting Factors. The category setting factors is organized into the following three codes; the quiet life; nature; and activities and these will be presented in this section.

The Quiet Life. There is potential for overlap between the quiet life and the draw of nature and its inherent quietness. To differentiate, this section will focus on the human component of the quiet life and in the following section where *Nature* is presented, thoughts expressed by participants about the quietness of the natural setting in which they reside will be covered.

Emerging from the data were two facets of the quiet life, the first characterized by the 11 participants (37%) who specifically commented on quiet features in their communities. The second facet involved the five participants (17%), all Salt Spring Island residents, who expressed quiet life in terms of what their community did not have, namely, a busy corporate presence.

On a general level quiet features were articulated by ANY-65: "these surroundings where there's no noise, no lights and all that, has always appealed to me." Similarly, and also on a

general level, Anytown is described as a "good a place to relax and retire and enjoy" (ANY-70); PR-59 enjoyed "the quietness and slower pace" of his community. For several others, the quiet life was associated with valued privacy: "very private here, neighbours can't see us, we can't see them" (SS-67b). Making a similar reflection SS-64 felt "it's so nice, you can just sit here and not see any neighbours, and our road is very quiet." Several participants linked a difference in driving conditions to this sense of quiet living:

> There are no stoplights on this island, so everybody drives, less hurriedly, you know they're not in a hurry, they don't try to pass you, like on the freeway [in urban areas] they hoot their horn if you don't go fast enough or if you're not in the right lane (SS-83).

This feeling was also evident in the larger non-metropolitan locales as noted by VI-65 residing in Nanaimo: "I like the lifestyle here, it's one that I remember from the old days…especially if you drive anywhere after 6:30 or 7 o'clock at night, the city is absolutely deserted." One participant equated the quiet life with a temporal component: "I'm on island time now" (SS-71). Overall, the quiet life it was felt, resulted in life that was "less stressful" (OK-63).

Photo 4. I included a photo of Ganges and specifically Grace Point Square. I wanted to capture people's thoughts about *town* and in this photo you can very much see that lack of a world-level corporate presence in Ganges (Photo and caption prepared by the author as part of the Salt Spring Island elicitation photoset).

The quiet life for several Salt Spring residents was in part related to a lack of corporate

presence on the Island (See Photo 4). SS-72b for example, notes that there's no "fast food stuff and that sort of thing, more local businesses." This feature was even thought to be "one of the things that attracted us to here, you know, no McDonald's, Starbucks, and the big box stores" (SS-64). This desire for a non-corporate culture continues to the present day as explained by SS-71: "there's still a sense of we don't want big box stores here, there's a sense that we want to keep it a small community." Interestingly, this feature is vitally important to those living on Salt Spring, vital to a point where "I can see staying here, it would depend, if incorporation comes along and all of a sudden, there's Walmart's here I might start thinking [about moving somewhere else]" (SS-69).

Nature. Eighteen participants (60%) discussed nature as a rewarding component of their current dwelling and community. At the very core level, this component is characterized by "a deep, a feeling of connection to nature" (ANY-65).

Photo 5. "Birds and craggy mountainsides with clouds drifting over" (participant photo).

For others, what epitomized nature was a sense of beauty, SS-83 for example, enjoys "the quietness and the beauty of the island." Similarly, SS-64 shared: "the part I like is the rural, you know the beauty." Likewise, OK-73 stated: "it is beautiful, you can't fault the beauty here." For many, nature meant a closeness to wildlife: "where else could you go and see a bear climbing up

a tree outside your window" (VI-89). Also expressed by SS-72c who said its "the environment, the owls and the deer."

Photo 6. "One of the things we love about Salt Spring is the wildlife. In our yard we've had sheep, miniature horses. rabbits, an otter, bats, deer of course, and a wide variety of beautiful birds, among others" (participant photo).

A combination of factors also characterized nature for participants; SS-72b spoke about birds and vegetation; "nature, how many different kinds of birds are there that I don't know about, how many mushrooms can I look at…I'm happy as a lark."

Photo 7. "The breeze on my skin, and the scents from the forest, and the sounds from the birds and so on, and as the birds quiet down as the sun sets, the insects come out and fly around and flutter around and after a little while the bats come and eat the insects and stuff, you know it's just so ahhh, I'd love to die that way, you know" (participant photo).

As another example, SS-67b states how it is a combination of views, vegetation and wildlife: “it’s just good clean air and the mountains, and the water, and the vegetation, and the critters.” A view was also a factor worthy enough to stand alone in characterizing the idyllic natural state: “[I] fell in love with it, see the mountains over there and the water and so on” (ANY-86). Similarly, commenting on views and the potential benefits of such a view: “I can sit here and look out at this, and every day it changes, every day it looks different and it just makes me calmer” (SS-71).

Photo 8. “Gardening” (participant photo).

For others, the physical setting, it’s connection to nature and what it offered was important: “I knew I wanted to have something rural, I wanted a garden” (SS-67a). Also commenting on the physical setting, SS-76 noted: “I’d always wanted to be on an acreage.”

Activities. The third code in the category setting factors revolves around activities which were noted by 11 participants (37%). Many of the activities reported were physical, for example, “we um, both go to yoga classes and the yoga teacher is a gay man” (SS-64). Hiking was another activity mentioned: “there are other opportunities here that I never had like hiking” (VI-61). A similar thought was shared by SS-71: “dinners, get togethers, bowling, hiking, there was a hiking group as well.” Volunteering was viewed as a valued activity by some participants: “I volunteer a lot, I’m in all these [community activities] and everything” (SS-69). Some of these activities

intersected with a desire to be more of an activist: “we went to the meeting and got involved, and as a result we’ve volunteered the cottage, so we’re part of the core group in sponsoring a young [refugee]” (VI-73).

The importance of cultural activities was also reported by participants: “the theatre community, that’s a big part of my life” (OK-63). The importance of having such activities available is summed up by SS-72b: “there are enough activities and, you know, things to get involved in and I can never complain about being bored.”

This third overarching theme presented the findings related to the rewards of aging as a gay man in their current non-metropolitan locales. The four research categories that emerged from the interview data were: the quiet life; nature; weather; and activities. Data, which included a large quantity of participant generated images was presented in this section and displayed how participants have conceptualized the rewards of living in their regions across the various categories that emerged from the research interviews.

Challenges.

The fourth theme revolves around the challenges of living and aging as a gay man in a non-metropolitan region. Four categories emerged from the interview data and are organized under the following headings: lack of support; community issues; relationships; and physical setting factors. It is evocative that similar categories populated the theme of rewards (i.e., social support, sense of community, setting). Additionally, like the rewards section presented previously, this fourth overarching theme is richly populated with participant generated image data and photos from the elicitation process.

Lack of Support. Lack of support comprised three codes: healthcare; lack of support in LGBT organizations; and lack of support in the gay community.

Healthcare. One third of the participants (n=10) reported challenges accessing healthcare. For four participants, difficulty finding a doctor was a key issue; OK-76 who is relatively new to his region stated that "we still haven't found a doctor." On Salt Spring, it was difficulty finding a new doctor after one's doctor retired: "there is the biggest challenge, trying to find a GP, we lucked into Dr. [name] when we came to the island, he's now gone [retired]" (SS-65).

For others, the main concern was over the adequacy of local healthcare services and the distance one may need to travel to receive appropriate care. PR-59 explains "there's definitely challenges in dealing with health issues, if you have anything out of the ordinary at all, you've got to go out of town." This was also echoed by VI-73: "we were watching people our age having heart attacks and you know, the problems of getting a person in an emergency situation to the hospital, in Comox was either a flight or the ferry [from another Gulf Island]." Regarding concerns over distance, SS-67b stated that "it's a long way to get into Victoria or Nanaimo…for medical things." This feeling was shared by another participant who felt that "just being farther away from services [can prove to be difficult]" (SS-64). Lastly, one participant who is not out to his current physician, did not feel his doctor was sensitive to his needs as a gay man: "it's not like I need to see a gay doctor or a male doctor or a female doctor, just somebody who's more open" (VI-61).

Lack of support in the LGBT Organizations. Eighteen participants (60%) reported issues with LGBT-designated organizations in their communities. Due to the sensitive nature of this issue, concerns over confidentiality, and the limitations of this research project where organizations have not been given the opportunity to respond to the concerns and critiques expressed by research participants, geographic identifiers and age of participants will not be placed after quotes in this section.

To begin, one participant described a general apathy in regard to his feelings about his Local Gay Organization: "I belonged to [The Local Gay Organization] since then and I'm not belonging to it right now, I'm kind of over it, for whatever reasons, if you want me to get into it I will." For one participant it was interpersonal conflict that led to the discord: "there's quite a bit of drama here in organizations, [The Local Gay Organization] has a lot of drama." In greater detail another participant explained: "I think it's really hard here because we had counted on [The Local Gay Organization] as being that network, and because of the internal struggles there, and the difficulties, people's personalities…here if I say one thing wrong, I'm blacklisted." For others it was the perceived new direction the organization was taking: "the only thing that has changed is [The Local Gay Organization] itself, it's become more militant" which has resulted in a feeling that "my values do not mesh with a lot of them." On some occasions, it was speculated that the reason for discord may be the result of a conflict between insider/outsider status:

> Some lesbians, especially on the committee, and some gay men, go back their whole lives here in [name of region/city], and they may not look so kindly on people coming from Edmonton or Toronto or whatever, and having different points of view.

Several participants reported on an ageist and anti-male sentiment that had grown in the organization: "I've gotten off their mailing list and I have no idea what they are doing any more, it just got to where I was not comfortable, where I was getting criticized as a white gay man." Similarly, actions left another participant feeling that "the current leadership of [The Local Gay Organization] isn't too interested in old gay men."

Another key issue across these non-metropolitan regions was difficulty first, in attracting membership, and then second, in getting members to fully engage with the organization. One participant commented that "they [referring to a gay couple and local gay men in-general] never

come to any organizational get-togethers." Likewise, in another region, a participant declared: "I'm so disappointed, there's roughly 250 what I call semi-active [members], and the best turn-out was your talk last night." [Note: I led LGBT town halls or spoke at Local Gay Organization meetings in all the regions where I recruited participants and approximately 25 people attended the event to which the above participant is referring]. In another region a participant shared that: "there seems to be interest, but nobody wants to do anything, they don't want to take any responsibility." Speculating on a possible reason for these difficulties in engaging with community members and encouraging participation in events, one participant reflected: "we've got a lot of members who don't really want to be too far out there, not too prominent, they're not going to march in the parade."

Lack of Support in the Gay community.

Photo 9. Commenting on his perception of how the gay community and the sense of support it offers has changed with time this participant reflected: "I remember those early days in the bear movement when there was really, a really wonderful feeling of community happening" (participant photo).

Twenty-seven percent (n=8) of participants reported that lack of a gay community and/or difficulty connecting to this community was a challenge in their region. PR-59 simply stated "the problem with Powell River is that there's really no gay community." Lack of such community was felt to make things difficult in other regions as well: "It was hard because there isn't a gay community here" (VI-69). In terms of access, OK-63 felt "there's lots of LGBT community up here but it's hard to link up with them." Participants were willing to speculate on reasons why access was difficult, for example: "it's kind of an island of introverts, of course not everybody's that way, but some people move to an island to hide out, you know, so um, some time you wonder, where are all the gay folks?" (SS-64). Alternatively, VI-73 felt the gay community is:

> Very fractured here too…because you've got the gays that have been here all their life and have lived a closeted existence with their gay friends, yeah, so you've got that sort of clique who are there, they're still afraid to come out.

Lastly, commenting on a lack of physical space PR-67 reflected on "how much I was missing the city, how much I was missing the queer space."

***Community issues*.** The category community issues is made up of the four codes explored in this section: politics; lack of amenities; transportation; and privacy.

Photo 10. "Challenge, part of a seven-acre clear cut behind our house" (participant photo).

Politics. Politics is a community issue mentioned by nine (30%) of the participants. On Salt Spring, SS-64 noted there is "small island politics and there's quite a bit of drama here." Such drama was similarly represented in a comment shared by SS-72c: "it's really hard to do something with a community that's this fractured." Similar issues were reported in other regions: "in Nanaimo you will find some tensions, ah the old way of doing things" (VI-65). On a like note, VI-73 said: "it's a peaceful tranquil island [one of the Gulf Islands] but when you scratch the surface it's really contentious." Attesting to what was felt to be the triviality of some issues, VI-70 reported that "anything was an issue and I didn't want to live that way, you take a piece of driftwood off the beach, somebody would scream."

Alternatively, and stemming from a more activist perspective, another participant reported: "there's a hell of a lot of trees coming down, people are just logging the shit out of [Anytown] over views" (ANY-65).

Lack of Amenities. In this section lack of amenities not related to healthcare are reported. Twenty-three percent (n=7) of participants shared their thoughts on amenities that were lacking in their communities. For most, the conversation revolved around the difficulty found shopping for non-essential items, such as:

> Men's clothing [laughter], that's the one thing we always bitch about, there's basically no clothing stores for men here at all, except for [name of store] and the shirts are $300, you know, so if you want to go buy any clothes you have to go off island (SS-69).

Also commenting on the lack of choice and price: "the one problem was when Mark's Work Warehouse closed, it was the only place to buy men's underwear, you know, so you can [now] get $30 underwear at [name of store] or something if you want" (SS-72c). The commentary was not limited to clothing, SS-72a laments: "well there's no Ikea near here,

Coquitlam, gotta go to Coquitlam to get your friggin' Ikea." For others, the lack of amenities revolved around dining out: "I kind of wish we had some better medium and high range restaurants" (SS-64). In addition, cultural activities were at times thought to be better in more urban settings: "we liked the theatre, attended a lot more theatre actually in Edmonton, there was more theatre, we missed that when we first moved here" (SS-67b). Overall, the *lack* of some amenity frequently manifested in terms of frustration: "I'm finding it hard really living here at times…I find it an incredibly limited town" (PR-67).

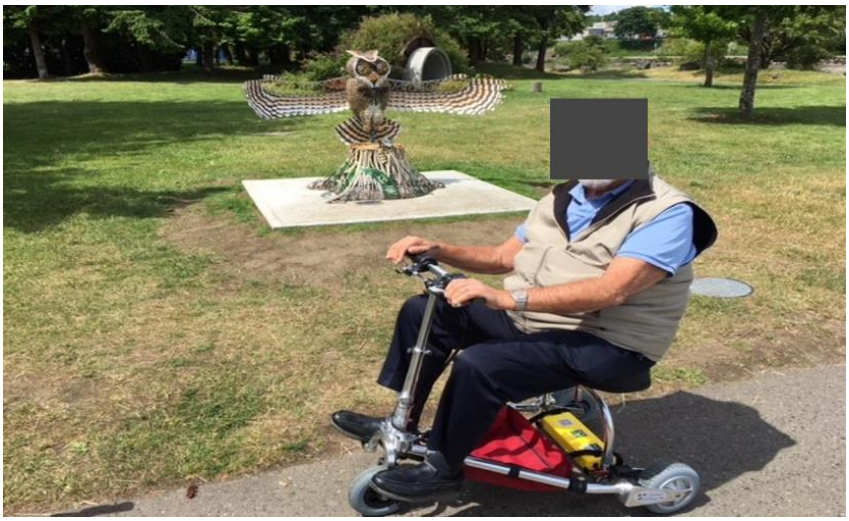

Photo 11. "Challenges of transportation overcome" (participant photo).

Transportation. The fourth community issue revolved around transportation challenges. Ten participants (33%) reflected on how transportation issues represent a challenge in their lives. On a general level it was reported that "trying to get up and down in the snow, this winter has been really bad because it stuck around for so long" (SS-65). In addition, but perhaps somewhat political, it was shared that "a lot of living here is just tolerating the terrible roads" (SS-72c).

Photo 12. I felt I had to include a photo of a ferry, it displays that an extra effort must be taken to get here. For me this is both a reward and a challenge (Photo and caption prepared by the author as part of the Salt Spring Island elicitation photoset).

For those who live on islands it was noted: "well one [challenge] is around travel, the getting on and off" (SS-71). Participant SS-67b reflected: "initially the cruise was kind of fun, the ferries were a novelty, that tires." For others it was found to be an expensive mode of travel: "the one drawback is the fact we have to take the ferry…not that I mind taking the ferry, but it gets pretty expensive" (VI-81).

Photo 13. "The smoky picture is of an area that sits across the road and across the river from our front porch" (participant photo).

Something that is perhaps a more common transportation issue in non-metropolitan regions is noted by SI-69: "for many people the [forest] fires cut off access and egress." Lastly, PR-67 acknowledged that "part of the challenge we've done to ourselves on purpose, because [name of partner] and I have made the decision not to have a vehicle."

Privacy. This code is only populated with three entries (from 10% of the sample); however, given they are all from Salt Spring, perhaps this suggests this is an issue relevant to living on an island. A couple of comments regarding the lack of privacy includes SS-64's realization that "yeah, everybody knows everybody else's business [laughter]." Similarly, SS-67b felt that "it's nice living in a small community where you know people and you can say hello, but it's also nice to have some anonymity."

Relationships. This category, relationships, comprises two codes, finding partners, and friendship factors. The findings pertaining to each of these will be reported in this section.

Finding Partners. Seven men (23%) reported that finding a partner in a non-metropolitan region was, or in the case of those who are currently unpartnered remains, a challenge. SS-72a reports that "meeting potential partners is very difficult." Not entirely surprising, SS-64, also from the same region noted "the fishbowl is pretty small." These sentiments were felt across the regions as VI-81 stated "I never met anybody here", a thought echoed by PR-84 who felt "there wasn't anything much up here."

Photo 14. "One after another all the people we had known died, I mean I looked at pictures of where we had dinner for Christmas…and I'm the only one that's still alive" (participant photo).

Friendship Factors. Sixteen participants (53%) commented on issues regarding friendship quality in their non-metropolitan locales. At a core level VI-89 shared "it's hard to make long lasting friendships." Also reporting at this most basic level of friendship, SS-72c said that "there was a point about a couple of years ago I started, and I still do say, why did we come here if we're having so much problems with developing friends." More specifically, some participants commented on the quality of friendship available:

> I've yet to find my coffee friend, and I mean I've tried…a coffee friend is a person that you can just hang out with, that you can phone at 8 o'clock in the morning and say what are you doing today, let's just get together (PR-67).

On a similar note SS-64 reflects: "you know the kind of friend that you can just tell them anything…I don't really have that here." Lastly, issues of trust were expressed by VI-70: "on [name of place]…I kept withdrawing, just further and further because it was not a very friendly place to be, you couldn't trust your friends."

In some cases, it was a matter of not finding friends with shared interests and values: "just because you're gay doesn't mean every gay person that you come into contact with, you're going to have a relationship, a friendship with" (VI-73). Paralleling this thought OK-76 explained: "there are two or three obviously gay men at church, but so far we haven't done anything to socialize with them because they just don't seem to have comment interests." Interestingly, several participants appeared to have a disinterest in meeting and socializing with other gay men: "I much prefer my heterosexual friends they're just…the gay people, most of them it seems, get so hung up on being gay" (SS-67a). Participant SS-67b shared the same sentiment: "a lot of gay men I have a bit of trouble with… I don't know it's the bitchiness."

A shrinking network of friends was also a concern (see Photo 14). For example, SS-65 had "lost most of my friends that I had with my wife." This was similarly reported in another account: "then when he [deceased former partner] died…what was even sadder was a lot of people that we knew, they kind of dropped me, you know" (SS-83). Lastly, the death of friends is a key factor in a shrinking social network. Simply put, "not many are alive anymore" (PR-84).

Physical Setting Factors. The fourth category of non-metropolitan aging challenges is concerned with physical setting factors. The three codes to be presented in relation to this theme are: upkeep of home; wildlife; and envisioned future challenges.

Upkeep of home. Challenges of maintaining the upkeep of one's current home was discussed by seven (23%) participants. SS-67b shared his concern: "I'd hate to see the place get run down, there's already been a few things that we've let slide a bit and that bothers me." Aging factored into this code: "one of my big frustrations is I cannot do the things I used to do so easily" (SS-83). This in turn, for SS-76, led to the feeling that "we're not getting as much joy out of it now and we're becoming more task oriented and gradually were letting standards slip."

Lastly, it was mentioned that in isolated settings such as Salt Spring, finding a tradesperson to complete work for you can also be difficult; SS-71 noted that "we just crossed our fingers" when it came to hiring a tradesperson to complete some emergency repairs.

Wildlife. Three participants (10%) all from Salt Spring Island felt that wildlife presented some challenges. Much of the concern is the impact wildlife has on their pastimes such as gardening: as SS-67b notes "they [the deer] eat everything, even the stuff that they don't like, the fawns have to try them." A potentially more serious concern was mentioned by one participant: "we both hit one [a deer while driving], both of us, I've hit one twice" (SS-69).

Envisioned future challenges. Eleven participants (37%) had thought about some challenges that may come up at some future point in time. There were two main components to this code. First, were concerns over healthcare in the future: "I think if like, there was ever a really serious health problem that either of us had, where one of us was incapacitated, I think it would be difficult to stay here" (SS-67b). With a similar concern OK-63 shared:

> I worry a bit because Alzheimer's runs in my family, and I worry, if [partner's name] is to die before I do, and then I'm in a situation where I no longer have control over what's happening in my life, then who's going to make those decisions.

This was also a concern of ANY-70: "If I suddenly have a health problem, I've got to find someone to take care of [partner's name]."

The second component was a concern about reaching a point where they might need to go into a care facility. VI-61 explained:

> As I age, I'm a little bit concerned about the state of health care for really aging seniors who need ongoing day-to-day supports, and I don't know that the health care system [in general] is really ready to take care of me as a real old person.

On a more specific note VI-89 speculated: “um, if I ever had to go into a nursing home or a facility, I would question whether I could be open there.” Likewise, PR-59 summarized that “looking ahead there's an ongoing issue regarding spaces for people needing care, seniors, just in a general way, there's nothing at all LGBT specific.”

This fourth overarching theme presented the findings related to the challenges of aging as a gay man in one’s current non-metropolitan locale. The four categories that emerged from the interview data were: lack of support; community issues; relationships; and physical setting factors. Data, which included a large quantity of participant generated images was presented in this section and displayed how participants have conceptualized the challenges of living and aging in their regions.

Participant generated image data.

Participant generated image data refers to photos taken by the participants specifically for this project and/or photos provided by participants from existing photo albums. While in the previous section, a cross section of photos were included to support the interview data, this section will begin with a summary of the photographic data collected during the research process followed by the findings from our qualitative content analysis of the photos.

Overview. Twenty-two participants (73%) discussed a total of 121 participant-supplied images. Eighty-three of these photos were provided to me and 49 may be used in the dissertation and research related publications (34 are not useable due to model releases, typically of friends/family appearing in the photos that could not be obtained, or by the direction of the participant). Only seven participants prepared photos prior to the interview in accordance with the originally proposed methodology. Eight did not wish to provide photos. Due to early difficulties in participant compliance and opt-out of photo method, I created two photosets (The

Salt Spring photoset included six photos and the Okanagan photoset included five photos) and I used photo elicitation with 11 of the 30 participants (See Appendix F). Interestingly, the use of photo elicitation inspired five of the participants who initially did not have photos prepared, to supply and discuss photos via email post-interview. In summary, using a combination of photographic methods (participant supplied images & photo elicitation), photos were discussed with 25 (83%) participants (See Appendix G) and these photos were an opportunity for participants to enhance their stories and provide additional context to their narratives.

Qualitative content analysis. A total of 83 photos were provided by the participants for analysis. The photos were initially divided into five categories in consultation with my supervisor, based upon the content of the photos: photos of the participant appearing alone (28%, n=23), photos of the participant with partner (20%, n=17), photos of the participant with a group of people (16%, n=13), and photos of nature, including views, vegetation, and wildlife (14%, n=12). The fifth category comprised miscellaneous photos (22%, n=18) that did not fit into the other categories, such as a photo of one's parents, of a friend, or an object such as a boat and these were not analysed. The first four categories of photos were then independently analysed by myself and my supervisor and we both assigned each "set" of pictures a series of key words (See Table 2).

Table 2.

Qualitative analysis of participant generated images.

Category name:	**Keywords assigned in my analysis:**	**Keywords assigned by supervisor:**	**Keyword overlap:**
(1) Photos of participant appearing alone (n=23).	"Engagement" ***"Hobbies"*** "Nature" "Nostalgia"	"Individuals in action" ***"Disguise"*** "Nature/animals" "In earlier times"	3 of 4 (75%)

(2) Photos of participant appearing with partner (n=17).	"With partner" "Celebrations" "Nostalgia"	"Weddings/commitment" "In costume/festive/ "celebration" "Earlier times" ***"Portraits"***	3 of 4 (75%)
(3) Photos of participant in a group (n=13).	"Socializing with friends" "Celebration" "Hobbies" "First Nations community engagement"	"At dinners" "Parties" "Engaged in activities" "Honouring First "Nations"	4 of 4 (100%)
(4) Photos of nature, including views, vegetation and wildlife (n=12).	"Birds/animals" "Views" "Challenges"	"Nature up close" "Open vistas" "Obstacles/challenges"	3 of 3 (100%)
(5) "Other" photos (n=18).	Not analysed	Not analysed	Not applicable

Note*:* ***Bold italic*** indicates a keyword that does not overlap.

It was not pre-determined how many keywords would be assigned to each set of photos. Keyword overlap refers to the amount of overlap where the assigned keywords are conceptually related. For example, in the category with photos of the participant appearing alone, *engagement* and *individuals in action* it was agreed were conceptually the same and therefore a match.

Hobbies and *disguise*; however, were not conceptually related and therefore did not count as a match. Seventy-five percent of the keywords overlapped in the first two categories, photos of participant appearing alone and photos of participant appearing with partner. There was 100% overlap in the final two categories, photos of the participant in a group and photos of nature. Overall, there was overlap in 13 of the 15 keywords (87%) assigned to the photos by me and my supervisor.

Lastly, the keywords, *disguise* and *costume* were intriguing and we did a simple count of photos that fit into this category and were surprised to find that 13 of 83 photos (16%) provided by participants in this project depicted them in costume or regalia. I speculated that perhaps appearing in costume was in some way connected to concealment; however, this may have been an overstatement given that during the member-checking process OK-75 reminded me that

"Halloween is a favourite holiday for gays, because it used to be the only day you could dress up, dress up like a woman and not get arrested."

The above qualitative analysis was based upon the grouping of photos based solely on the visible content of each photo, and then developing keywords to describe each set of photos and comparing the amount of overlap between two raters. In addition, we also conducted an interpretive qualitative content analysis by considering how the photos were related to the interview text provided by each participant. In conducting this further analysis two categories of photos emerged beyond those found in the first qualitative content analysis, namely, *social group comprising primarily heterosexual friends* and *social group comprising primarily LGBT friends.* In considering what was said about each photo during the interviews I was able to determine the sexual orientation of the friends in each picture. Interestingly, 15 of 83 photos (18%) showed the participant in a social situation with a group that was primarily heterosexual. In contrast, only 7 of 83 photos (8%) showed the participant in a social situation with a group that was primarily LGBT.

Summary.

This chapter presented the findings from the research interviews and PGI's. The characteristics of the sample were described first and while the sample was geographically well distributed and varied, the typical participant, was in his late 60's or early 70's, white, well educated, partnered, owned his detached home, in good to excellent health, with one or more chronic conditions, who identified as gay. This presentation was followed by findings from the interview data which were organized into four overarching themes: the life stories of gay men; migration factors; rewards; and challenges, each with a series of categories and codes. Where applicable, PGI's and the photos used in the elicitation process were displayed to further validate

the themes that emerged from the participant interviews. This first overarching theme described the life stories of gay men, differentiating them from heterosexual men by way of their unique personal and historical context. The four research categories, same-sex attraction and coming out; identities shaped by norms, times and values; sexual expression; and gay men in heterosexual marriages, each contributed to establishing the unique but culturally diverse experiences the gay men who participated in this research project. The second overarching theme presented the findings related to migration factors that contributed to participants decisions to move to their current non-metropolitan locales. The three research categories that emerged from the interview data were personal factors, push factors, and pull factors, each contributing to the participants decision to move. The third overarching theme presented the findings related to the rewards of aging as a gay man in their current non-metropolitan locales. The four research categories that emerged from the interview data were: the quiet life; nature; weather; and activities. Data, which included a large quantity of PGI's was presented in this section and displayed how participants have conceptualized the rewards of living in their respective regions. The fourth overarching theme presented the findings related to the challenges of aging as a gay man in one's current non-metropolitan locale. The four categories that emerged from the interview data were: lack of support; community issues; relationships; and physical setting factors. Data, in this section also included a large quantity of PGI's displaying how participants have conceptualized the challenges of living and aging in their regions. The chapter concluded with a summary of the PGI's collected and a content analysis of the images.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this research was to explore how older gay men, as members of a sexual minority, perceive and describe themselves and the lived experience of aging in non-metropolitan locales. Discussion of the themes is organized similar to the findings section in a roughly temporal sense beginning with migration factors and followed by the rewards and challenges. The discussion differs from the presentation of findings in that the life stories of the gay men are intertwined in the text that follows, often providing a reflective tone to the discussion of migration factors, rewards and challenges. Additionally, within these three areas, the commonalities between the gay men in this study and the findings from the primarily heterosexual-based literature on aging in non-metropolitan regions will be discussed followed by the features of non-metropolitan aging that are unique to gay men.

As a preview, an unexpected finding that emerged from the research was concerned with LGBT organizations, whereby the organizations, which might be expected to appear solely as a reward to older non-metropolitan dwelling gay men were viewed as both a reward and a challenge. Also highlighted in this chapter is a second unexpected finding regarding the role of family and friends, which appears among participants to resemble a more traditional family and friend's structure, in contrast to expected similarities with urban-dwelling gay men. The unique features of non-metropolitan aging among older gay men lend themselves, naturally, to a discussion of theoretical considerations of this research. As such, the ways in which these findings relate to the conceptual framework which incorporates Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Model and Elder's (1994) Life Course Perspective will be woven throughout this discussion. Upon completion of this core discussion, I will share my reflections on the methodology and methods used in this research in terms of advantages and drawbacks. Lastly, the strengths and

limitations of this research will be presented along with recommendations for future research and a knowledge dissemination plan.

Migration factors

The literature review revealed a unidirectional pattern of gay men migrating from countryside to large metropolitan centers (Annes & Redlin, 2012a; Herring, 2007). The city is described as a gay mecca, an embodiment of freedom where gay men can fully express their sexual identities (Aldrich, 2004; Annis & Redlin 2012b; Baker, 2016; Binnie, 1995; Kazyak, 2011; Kennedy, 2010; Kramer, 1995; Lewis, 2015; Preston & D'Augelli, 2013; Weston, 1995). Much like the research of Annis & Redlin (2012b), this study displays that migration is not unidirectional and that gay men have returned, or in the case of urban born and raised gay men, sought out a non-metropolitan lifestyle. Migration factors was one of the four overarching themes that emerged from the interview data. The focus was on how participants came to live in their current location, and it revolved around three discussion categories, namely, personal factors and push/pull factors. Interestingly, many of these migration factors were similar to those found in research based primarily upon heterosexual populations. While most migration factors were shared with older heterosexuals, a factor unique to gay men in this study was the extent to which participants subtly tried to assess the LGBT friendliness of the region to which they were considering moving. In this section the many common factors will be discussed first followed by the one unique factor.

Migration factors (common). There are three categories of common migration factors, personal, push and pull factors. Each of these will be discussed in order in this section.

Personal factors. Personal factors influencing migration that participants have in common with older heterosexuals include: approaching retirement (leap of faith); family nearby;

and entering into a new relationship. For almost half of the participants, moving to a non-metropolitan location was part of the retirement or pre-retirement plan. The retirement literature discusses multiple modes of retirement spanning from full retirement (complete disengagement from the workplace) to those who wish to partially retire and continue to do some work (Stein, 2000). This latter format is also known as *bridge* retirement and a few participants in this research continued to work after moving to their current location.

Leap of faith. Related to the decision-making process, participants also described their decision to move in language that may be characterized as a leap of faith when retiring and moving to a somewhat unfamiliar non-metropolitan location. This finding does not fit into the neat and orderly models of retirement migration found in most studies based primarily on heterosexual populations; however, it does somewhat echo Longino, Perzynski, & Stoller's (2002) notion that "asking persons…to tell us in their own words about how they decided whether to move, and where, was a lot like helping Pandora to unpack her suitcase" (p.46). Nevertheless, it is somewhat reminiscent of a lifestyle posture whereby retirement is seen as an opportunity to make a *new start* (Hopkins, Roster, & Wood, 2006; Hornstein & Wapner, 1985); however, because retirement migration was not the focus of this research, it is unknown if the leap of faith among gay men in this study is fully related to the concept of making a new start. It is possible that this conceptualization is related to the fact that a move among gay men to a hetero-centric non-metropolitan landscape is one that comes with worries about LGBT acceptance in the new location. While such depths were not explored in this study it would certainly be an area for future research.

Overall, retirement as a stimulus to move shares much in common with previous research concerned with primarily heterosexual populations. For example, Wiseman and Roseman (1979)

have noted that using life cycle theory as a lens, retirement represents a 'triggering' factor in one's decision to move. This is an interesting point because the life patterns of gay men rarely fit into existing models concerned with the timing of life events, especially given such models are heterosexually informed (Easterbrook, 2009). In the case of life timing, however, it appears that retirement as a trigger to move is one that is shared among gay men and heterosexual older adults.

Family nearby. Family also played a role in the choice of non-metropolitan location. Family typically included a desire to be nearer to adult children; this finding appears in this research, no doubt because of the large number of participants who were previously married to women (43%) and have children and grandchildren. As a result, gay men who have biological and/or adopted children share this migration factor which is frequently found in research concerned primarily with heterosexual populations (Bolzman, Fibbi, & Vial, 2006; Bures, 1997; Longino, Perzynski, & Stoller, 2002; Wiseman & Roseman, 1979).

Entering in a new relationship. Beginning a new relationship was also a stated reason for migrating with three participants who moved to be with their current partners. There is some difficulty in comparing the partnering and re-partnering of older gay men to heterosexual research given that a great deal of the heterosexual research revolves around marriage, an option only available to gay men in recent years in Canada and still banned in many locations worldwide (MacIntosh, Reissing, & Andruff, 2010). Further, co-habitation, which may appeal to older gay men as a partnering or re-partnering option, is understudied, particularly among older heterosexual samples (Brown, Lee, & Bulanda, 2006). Interestingly, the likelihood of heterosexual widowers to re-marry is much higher than in widows (Carr, 2004) and the older gay men in this research appear to share this desire to marry. The two participants who entered into

new relationships after the death of a same-sex partner/spouse, both chose to marry their partner and the third who moved to be in a new relationship was not married at the time of the interview but married shortly thereafter. In considering this finding, it is important to keep in mind that while many in my sample were partnered, older gay men in general are much less likely to be partnered than older heterosexual men [40-60% of gay men are not partnered] and also more likely to be living alone (Hostetler, 2004; Metlife, 2010; Wassersug et al., 2013).

The three relationships mentioned above evolved from the use of online dating sites. This is an interesting finding given that these participants were older men, one in his 60s, one in his 70s and one in his 80s at the time of their Internet searches. The development of these relationships defies three common stereotypes. The first is a stereotype that characterizes older adults as asexual (Alterovitz & Mendelsohn, 2009). The second derives from the persistent myth that older adults do not use such technologies and suffer a digital divide (Beringer, 2017; Wu, Damnée, Kerhervé, Ware, & Rigaud, 2015). The third stems from research findings such as Suen's (2017) where older gay men were found to have internalized their aging bodies as unattractive and felt it was doubtful that they could attract a new partner into their lives. Lastly, much of the research concerned with gay men and using the Internet as a platform to meet other men has focused on casual sex (Couch & Liamputtong, 2008; Davis et al., 2006; Elford, Bolding, & Sherr, 2001) in contrast to participants in this study who searched online with a future relationship in mind. Alterovitz & Mendelsohn's (2009) research found that older heterosexual men used the Internet to seek out new relationships and this is something that is shared with older gay men in this research.

Push Factors. Push and pull factors are traditional components of models developed to better understand retirement migration among older adults (Bures, 1997; Longino, Perzynski, &

Stoller, 2002; Wiseman & Roseman, 1979). Push factors may be described as those associated with a desire to leave a previous residence, and in most cases in this research, it was referring to a desire to leave behind city life. Three push factor codes emerged from this research, including leaving city life behind; emigration; and financial issues, findings that match those found in research based primarily on heterosexual populations.

Leaving the city behind. There were a variety of reasons provided for leaving the city behind. For some it was growing tired of the "city energy" that once held appeal. For others the push was rooted in more values-based considerations and expressed as a desire to leave behind the "ambitious" city people. Very much in concert with researched based on heterosexual populations (Bures, 1997; Jauhianen, 2009; Longino, Perzynski, & Stoller, 2002; Wiseman & Roseman, 1979), participants in this study shared a desire to escape "traffic," "noise," and the "violent crime" of the city.

Emigration. Almost one third of the sample emigrated to Canada from the United States. Further, a desire to leave the United States was a migration push factor mentioned by six of these nine research participants who emigrated. This revolved around the election of conservative governments and the perception that one's values no longer aligned with those in the United States. These proportions are higher than expected; for example, only 10% of the respondents in a study by Casado-Díaz (2006) reported that disenchantment with one's home country was a reason for migrating to another country in retirement. While not specifically stated by research participants, it appears possible that the conservative politics mentioned may have been concerned primarily with the advancement or lack thereof of LGBT issues in the United States. Again, this emerges as a possible topic for future research.

Financial issues. Participants also discussed financial issues as a migration factor. Components of this factor included a sense of unaffordability of the city and, perhaps relatedly, a type of "cashing out," where participants felt that selling an existing property and moving to a less expensive region would be financially beneficial. In these respect's participants in this research had much in common with primarily heterosexually based research where affordability, economic reasons, and cost of living were all reported as migration factors among older adults (Bures, 1997; Jauhianen, 2009;Longino, Perzynski, & Stoller, 2002; Wiseman & Roseman, 1979).

Pull Factors. Four pull factor codes emerged from the research, three of which match heterosexual-based research (amenities, climate and nostalgia) and one (community factors) that does not. The common pull factors will be discussed in this section, with the unique factor reserved for discussion in the following section.

Amenities. There were also pull factors drawing participants to non-metropolitan life. Amenities played a prominent role in such a context. The presence of a hospital was one key amenity and it was mentioned as a reason to move to a given retirement location and also in the reverse, as a reason to avoid a possible retirement location when no hospital was present. A variety of other amenities were also mentioned including shopping and cultural activities such as theatre and music. The older gay men in this research share the presence of key amenities as an important migration factor, similar to what is found in heterosexually-based research (Carlson, Junk, Fox, Rudzitis, & Cann, 1998; Jauhianen, 2009; Longino, Perzynski, & Stoller, 2002).

Climate. Several participants commented on how climate was a factor encouraging their move to the current residence. This category could of course be counted either as a push factor or as a pull factor dependent on the nature of the response. In this study, I've grouped them as pull

factors because most participants who expressed the push component of the equation also expressed the pull component shortly thereafter. For example, the benefits of the climate in the destination location were often expressed in terms of how it compared to a previous location. Participants often noted a desire to escape "harsh" eastern Canadian winters and at the same time they gravitated or were pulled to the "better climate" of British Columbia. Weather is a factor that is featured in many retirement migration studies (Carlson et al., 1998; Jauhianen, 2009; Longino, Perzynski, & Stoller, 2002) and is therefore not a factor that is unique to older gay men.

Nostalgia. More than half of the participants commented on how a sense of "nostalgia" about non-metropolitan life and an attraction to the rural idyll played a role in their decision to move to their current home and community. This is similar to a concept in the literature called return migration (Bolzman, Fibbi, & Vial, 2006; Jauhianen, 2009; Wiseman & Roseman, 1979) where older adults retirement migration is based upon a desire to return home; however, in the case of the participants in this research it was articulated more in terms of a desire to get back to a place that *reminds* them of home. The storied narrative of the rural idyll as a collection of picturesque (Watkins, & Jacoby, 2007), romantic (Phillips, 2014) and constructed images (van Dam, Heins, & Elbersen, 2002) permeates the broad-based literature and such imagery was shared by participants in this research.

This section was concerned with findings that share common ground with research based primarily upon heterosexual populations, related to migration factors that contributed to participant's decisions to move to their current non-metropolitan locales. The three research categories that emerged from the interview data were personal factors, push factors, and pull factors, each contributing to the participants decision to move. Many factors such as retirement,

weather/climate, amenities, affordability, the rural idyll, and wanting to be nearer to family were components shared with older heterosexuals in other studies. A desire to leave city life behind acting as a push factor was shared with primarily heterosexual research populations where concerns over crime, traffic and noise were concerned. Lastly, many of the participants in this research had emigrated from the U.S., in many cases due to the political climate, and the number of participants leaving one's country for reasons of disenchantment was much higher than what has been reported in larger studies primarily concerned with heterosexual populations.

Migration factors (unique). While most migration factors were shared with older heterosexuals, one factor unique to gay men in this study (a pull factor) was the extent to which participants subtly tried to assess the LGBT friendliness of the region to which they were considering moving. Simply, participants desired to move to a community they perceived to be "progressive," "open-minded," and "accepting of queers." This is clearly in contrast to one's heterosexual peers where it is highly unlikely that one would take into consideration the level of heterosexual acceptance prior to moving to a given region. This epitomizes a key difference between gay and heterosexual males, whereby that latter experience the benefits accrued as members of the dominant and default heteronormativity (Hudak & Giammattei, 2014). One of four components in Elder's (1994) life course perspective is concerned with historical effect and it is particularly relevant to the material in this section. Historical effect means that year of birth differentiates a given cohort from other cohorts in terms of socialization experiences. The historical effect is particularly salient for the cohort of older gay men today who grew up in a period where the norms, practices and values were hostile towards homosexuality. Recall for example that in the formative years of the participants in this study, homosexuality was both illegal and defined as a mental illness (Orel & Fruhauf, 2015). This effect may be confirmed by

revisiting the life story lines of the participants, a period when one was "not expected to be queer" because homosexuality was "taboo at the time." The existence of some level of internalized homophobia in these and other quotes from research participants connects with a central feature and proximal stressor in Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Model. It is worthy to note that these feelings of internalized homophobia were expressed in life stories of the past and as such they may have emerged in either an urban or non-urban setting. The past tense is an important distinction in that it signals a further progression down the path of gay identity formation (Cass, 1984; Troiden, 1979) and it is also in contrast to studies such as Morandini et al. (2015) where it is reported that men in rural and remote areas report higher levels of internalized homophobia in the present day. Further, in contrast to heterosexuals who do not suffer any consequences as a result of their sexual orientation, gay men learned early on that declaration of one's same-sex sexual orientation was wrought with sanctions such as threats, verbal and physical abuse. Displaying how such sanctions are related to behavior change, one participant reflected how over the course of his life he made deliberate choices to put himself in environments that were "comfortable…or safe." Interestingly, despite numerous positive social and political changes affecting gay life over the years, the historical effect of past social norms and the threat of sanctions meanders into the present day where participants sought to determine the progressive nature of the communities to which they were moving.

Summary. My perception of the research literature on gay men is that it has the tendency to focus on how gay men differ from their heterosexual peers. Interestingly, in looking at my data in its entirety, what emerged were two cross-cutting themes with one focused on similarities found among older gay and heterosexual men aging in their respective non-metropolitan locales and another focused on the differences. In this section of the chapter, these similarities and one

difference were explored in terms of migration factors. It was revealed that gay men and heterosexuals share many common personal factors in choosing to migrate to a non-metropolitan location. These included retirement or pre-retirement that functioned as a triggering factor, the desire to be near family, and in some cases to enter new relationship. Common among both groups were several push/pull migration factors. Three push factor codes emerged from this research, including leaving city life behind; emigration; and financial issues. Four pull factor codes emerged from the research, three of which match heterosexual research, namely, amenities, climate and nostalgia. Upon reflection, I found this lens that includes shared common ground to be potentially beneficial because it takes us further away from the tendency to focus on how the group that is typically thought of as 'other' (Goffman, 1963; Riggens, 1993) differs from the dominant population. Knowledge of commonalities regarding our relationships 'to place' (Manzo & Perkins, 2006) is something that has the potential to foster 'intergroup' (Fingerhut, 2011) dialogue and future researchers may wish to explore how such common ground may be used to build community. Where gay men differ from their heterosexual peers in terms of migration factors is the very subtle need to assess the level of LGBT acceptance in advance of moving to a new region.

Rewards (common). In some ways the rewards of non-metropolitan aging are an extension of the migration factors that drew participants to their region in the first place. In this section three rewards of non-metropolitan aging that are shared among older gay men and heterosexuals, namely, small community life, setting factors, and children/grandchildren will be discussed.

Small community life. Small community life is a code under the sub-theme sense of community and the benefits of small community life were often expressed as a contrast to one's

previous life in the city. In comparison to big city living, participants in this study felt that in smaller non-metropolitan areas "people help each other" (ANY-65) and "pulled together" (OK-67) which resulted in plenty of "goodwill and lots of energy" (VI-65). Overall, this "supportive culture" (SS-64) provided participants with "that feeling of being at home" (PR-67). I've provided numerous partial quotes here, not only to support this finding, but to illustrate that I found this positive effect in multiple research sites, Salt Spring Island, Vancouver Island, Powell River, Kelowna and Anytown BC. It is noteworthy to also consider that participants are describing their 'whole' communities within the above quotes and that they are not limited to one's sense of support and well-being 'within' an LGBT community. This finding is very much shared by research on primarily heterosexual populations where "the merits of the host community…[are contrasted]…with the shortcomings of home" (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, p.3).

Setting factors. Setting factors that were characterized as rewards comprised the quiet life, nature, activities, and each were found to be a reward in common with the literature describing heterosexual populations.

The quiet life. The quiet life is similar to *nature* and its inherent quietness but is differentiated with its focus on the human component. More than one-third of participants commented on quiet features in their communities, which were articulated as a being "less stressful" with a "slower pace" of life. One participant equated the quiet life with a temporal component stating: "I'm on island time now." The articulation of this human component of quieter living was also found in studies based primarily on heterosexual populations (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Jauhianen, 2009; van Dam, Heins, & Elbersen, 2002).

Nature. Almost two-thirds of participants discussed nature as a rewarding component of their current dwelling and community. What epitomized nature was a sense of "beauty" and "the

rural." For others, nature meant a closeness to wildlife such as "a bear climbing up a tree outside your window" (VI-89). Others felt that a view of mountains or water was an important component of a "connection to nature." Such views were thought to be beneficial even possessing the ability to make one "calmer." The draw of nature has been identified as a rewarding factor in non-metropolitan living in LGBT-based literature (Cody & Welch, 1997; Gorman-Murray, Waitt, & Gibson, 2012; Gorman-Murray, Waitt, & Gibson, 2012: Kennedy, 2010; Kennedy, 2010 Jones et al., 2013) and it is also shared in research based upon larger, primarily heterosexual samples (O'Reilly & Benson 2009; Jauhianen, 2009; Nelson, Oberg, Nelson, 2010; van Dam, Heins, & Elbersen, 2002).

Activities. The third code in the category setting factors, revolved around activities and more than one-third of participants commented on the role these activities played in their lives. Many of the activities reported were physical, such as yoga classes, hiking, and bowling. Volunteering was also viewed as a valued activity by some participants. Cultural activities such as the theatre were important to some and overall SS-72b felt it was important to live in a region where one can "never complain about being bored." Again, regarding activities, the older gay men in this research appear to have much in common with their heterosexual peers. As such, they accrue the same benefits, such as increased sense of well-being from volunteering (Kahana, Bhatta, Lovegreen, Kahana, & Midlarsky, 2013; Van Willigen, 2000; Wheeler, Gorey, & Greenblatt, 1998) and myriad health benefits associated with increased physical activity (Nelson et al., 2007; Warburton, Nicol, & Bredin, 2006). Further, becoming involved in activities in one's new region and volunteering is a method of building social ties to the new community which results in an increased likelihood of remaining in the new location (Carlson et al., 1998).

Children and Grandchildren. The traditional hetero-centric conceptualization of family life is dominated by the goal of opposite-sex partnerships (Settersten & Hägestad, 1996). Interestingly, in this research, 13 of the 30 participants were previously married to a woman and 11 of these marriages resulted in participants having children and grandchildren. As such, many of the gay men in this study share the rewards of family life with their heterosexual peers. While having offspring is a reward that does not pertain to geographical space (e.g. non-metropolitan living) it certainly has an overall impact on one's well-being. Having children was a rewarding experience for most participants and the children and grandchildren also provided these men with a level of comfort and support. SS-72a for example in describing his relationship with his children stated that "you really depend on your family at the end of the day." Thinking about the future, SS-67b noted "maybe when we're older we'll be quite appreciative of having nieces and a daughter–in-law not far away and maybe it will be helpful." This feature of life, the existence of children and grandchildren is something that renders some of the men in this research both similar, to presumably heterosexual men in the primarily heterosexual-based literature and somewhat distinct from other gay men; the literature suggests that only one in ten gay men identify as fathers (Tasker, 2005). While family is not subject to non-metropolitan boundaries, given the existence of these meaningful relationships it is not surprising that a large percentage of the men in this research described their relationship with family to be a reward in life.

Floyd and Bakeman (2006) have asserted that sexual orientation development is subject to multiple trajectories, and the plentiful accounts in the life stories revolving around heterosexual marriage certainly attest to this claim. Connecting back to the theoretical framework and considering the strong hetero-centric norms and historical effect expressed in participant life stories, also representing another component of Elder's (1994) life course

perspective, namely that of human agency. Human agency is concerned with the impact that individual decision making has upon the life trajectories. In Cass's (1984) model of gay identity formation, three possible development paths are identified, with the possibility of homosexuality being identified as either 'positive' or 'negative', and third rejecting this possibility entirely and 'foreclosing further development.' In the case of many of the participants in this research, in particular, those who chose to enter into heterosexual marriages, the homosexual identity was foreclosed but as it turns out not entirely rejected only to surface many years, even decades later. Interestingly, Floyd and Bakeman (2006) found support for their hypothesis that "the recent historical context of more accepting attitudes toward homosexuality would promote experiencing coming-out milestones at relatively younger ages" (p. 294). Given the many advances in LGBT rights over the course of the lives of the participants in this study, it would be interesting to explore the degree to which the changing cultural and political landscape has had specifically upon these research participants. Had the strong hetero-centric norms experienced by my participant's as youths not changed with time, would some of them have chosen to not come out and never explore and discover their gay sexual identities? This is a question worthy of future research.

Rewards (unique).

In this section three rewards of non-metropolitan aging that are unique to older gay men will be discussed, namely, LGBT acceptance, friendships, and LGBT organizations. These categories will be presented in the same order in this section.

LGBT acceptance. LGBT acceptance was a key factor in the development of a sense of community among participants with almost two thirds sharing the importance of sensing acceptance in one's community. This reward is unique because acceptance as a heterosexual in a

heteronormative landscape occurs by default (Hudak & Giammattei, 2014). Attesting to the positive feelings accrued from acceptance, SS-83 stated that "on this island, I don't think people differentiate much and they just see you as a person and they don't care whether you're gay or not." One participant wondered if in his location acceptance was the "exception to the rule." This study has displayed otherwise and LGBT acceptance was reported across the research sites. VI-89 reported that "people here know we are gay, know we're married and they are very accepting." The sense of acceptance was also generated via a positive intermingling of gay and straight residents in community events. For example, in the Kelowna area it was reported that "thousands of people that came out for it [Pride], it blew me away, and straight families with their kids, that's so exciting" (OK-73). Overall, LGBT acceptance and its importance were summed with the declaration that "the allies are amazing!"

These findings regarding LGBT acceptance are in contrast to much of the non-metropolitan gay literature, primarily US-based, that was reviewed. Only one study (Gugliucci et al., 2013) had a similar positive finding where in Maine, U.S.A., two-thirds of aging GLBT respondents (operationalized as aged 45+) reported that they were living an openly gay life, which suggests a relatively high-level of community acceptance. Existing research suggests non-metropolitan landscapes are potentially hostile to gay men with the masculine hetero-centric norms that persist (Annis & Redlin, 2012a; Cody & Welch,1997; D'Augelli, & Hart, 1987; Foster, 1998; Fuss, 2018; Kramer, 1995; Powell, 2016; Whittier, 1998; Williams, Bowen, & Horvath, 2005). In this research it was the heterosexual community that provided many participants with an enhanced sense of community by way of their welcoming nature. This I would consider a key finding in this study because it is in contrast to what has emerged in the research literature to date.

Friendships. Friendship as a rewarding part of life is something that gay men have in common with their heterosexual peers. I have; however, placed friendship in the unique rewards section because friendship for gay men is different and typically revolves around one's family of choice which often includes many friends (Heaphy, Yip & Thompson, 2004; Hrostowski, 2013; Muraco, 2006; Shippy, Cantor, & Brennan, 2004). Further, much research shows that friendships are more important to gays and lesbians than to heterosexual men and women (de Vries, 1996; Dewaele, et al.,2011; Riggle et al., 2008). Lastly, Nardi (1999) along with a few men in this study highlighted a preference for gay men to socialize and develop friendships with other members of the LGBT community, in particular gay men and lesbians. Most participants in this study, however, reported on a diverse group of friends that included heterosexual men, women and couples. As such, the uniqueness here is in terms of how this sample appears to be unique among the LGBT community. For example, participants noted that "we seem to socialize a lot with straight…couples." Similarly, it was highlighted that a heterosexual couple living nearby are "just wonderful and accept us." This is just a selection of the many stories shared by participants in this research regarding friendships with heterosexuals with acceptance resonating throughout these comments. The use of Participant Generated Images (PGI's) were especially insightful in exploring and confirming this finding where 15 of 83 photos showed the participant in a social situation with a group that was primarily heterosexual. In contrast, only 7 of 83 photos showed the participant in a social situation with a group that was primarily LGBT. I speculate that a similar study of urban gay men who were asked to submit PGI's would not result in set of photos displaying the high number of heterosexual friends found in this study. This is certainly an area for future research. I can also only speculate as to why my participants would appear to have a larger proportion of heterosexual friends in comparison to other non-metropolitan

research to date. Only one of the studies in my literature review (Rowan et al., 2013) noted the importance of an extensive social network that included heterosexual couples in the well-being of their 80-year old participant. One potential explanation for the findings in my research could be derived from the socio-political landscape in British Columbia, Canada. Here participants felt that "Canada is free in terms of gays" and another participant shared that he was able to be "freely openly gay…on Salt Spring."

Another possible explanation for the unexpected number of heterosexual friendships among my participants could be identity factors. In research such as Preston and D'Augelli (2013), some participants noted that expressing oneself as a gay man was not the top priority, instead, holding in higher regard the identity of being "a good neighbour" (p.51) or some other non-gay identifier. I envision that not holding one's gay identity at the top of an identity hierarchy is what participant SS-67a was trying to express in my research when he said: "I much prefer my heterosexual friends…the gay people, most of them it seems, get so hung up on being gay." Similarly, SS-67b noted "a lot of gay men I have a bit of trouble with… I don't know it's the bitchiness." There is however a 'piece' in these stories that cannot be entirely untangled from the research data collected. While these participants are describing an alternate identity hierarchy, their commentary also puts forth a stereotype of a gay man who is bitchy and hung up on being gay. In other research, these types of comments, a disdain by gay men regarding gay men who *acted gay* (Trentham, 2010; Whittier, 1998; Williams et al., 2005) were connected to the idea of *blending in,* which in turn may be connected to concealment (Annis & Redlin 2012a; 2012b; Baker, 2016; Boulden, 2001; D'Augelli, & Hart, 1987; Fisher, Irwin, & Coleman, 2014; Fuss, 2018; Hughes, 2008; Jones et al., 2013; Kennedy, 2010; Lee & Quam, 2013; Morandini et al., 2013; Rowan et al., 2013; Swank, Fahs, & Frost, 2012; 2013).

A common thread of concealment of one's sexual identity runs through much of the LGBT literature (Herdt & de Vries, 2004; Orel & Fruhauf, 2015) and was present in the life stories of the participants in this research. It is also a key component in Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Model where it is associated with stigma. This research explored three components to concealment reported by participants, namely, concealment from family, community/friends, and in the workplace. Concealment is a complex issue and is driven on a personal level related to the lack of readiness to disclose sexual orientation to family, friends and community. Concealment is also a response to perceived and/or real threats and sanctions regarding one's same-sex orientation. With that said, reflecting on the data, I find that much of the concealment discussion with participants in this research referred to something that was practiced in the past, and failing to comment on guardedness when it comes to disclosing sexual identity, I feel confident in saying that this sample is less guarded than those in other studies. In fact, only a few minor acts of continued concealment remain in the life stories of the men in this study. As such, using the Minority Stress model my assessment of the men in this study is that they have taken a pathway that includes positive marginality (de Vries, 2015) and are living their lives fully as gay men. Interestingly, some research suggests that the experience of stigma was related to the adoption of a positive orientation toward their marginalized identities (Halpin & Allen, 2004; Gagnesjö, 2014; Meyer et al., 2011; Shih, 2004). This is something that is perhaps shared by participants in this research. Returning to friendships, developing a deeper understanding of how friendship circles differ among non-metropolitan and urban gay men is a topic for future research.

LGBT Organizations. Much of the literature reviewed commented on the lack of an LGBT community in rural areas (Annis & Redlin, 2012a; Bell, & Valentine, 1995a; Cody & Welch, 1997; Kennedy 2010; Rosenberger et al., 2014). In comparison to this literature I found

plenty of evidence of a gay community in terms of LGBT organizations in my research locations. Interestingly, such organizations that one may envision would act as a pillar of support to the gay men, were described as both a reward and a challenge by the men in this study. In this section I will discuss the manner in which these organizations provide a supportive environment for gay men. As a lens I will incorporate McMillan and Chavis's (1986) four-component theory of Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) to frame this discussion. The four components that frame this theory are: (1) Membership, or the feeling of belonging to the group; (2) Influence, or the feeling that one matters to, is able to influence, and is influenced by the group; (3) Fulfillment of needs, or the feeling that one's needs will be met through group membership; and (4) Shared emotional connection, or feelings of warmth and understanding among group members.

Fifty seven percent of participants in this study felt they were positively supported by organizations in their communities. [As noted previously: Due to the sensitive nature of this issue and concerns over confidentiality, geographic identifiers and age of participants will not be placed after quotes in this discussion and local LGBT organizations will not be discussed by name and instead will be referred to generically as *The Local Gay Organization*]. Organizational involvement typically centered around being involved in a group that sponsored a Pride parade and festival in one's region. On a positive note, participants felt they were "connected with gay Pride" and "involved with the gay community" and that this sense of connection was "what it's all about." In considering PSOC these comments echo feelings of 'membership' and shared 'emotional social connection' with the gay community through the LGBT organization. In terms of the PSOC component 'influence', it was with pride that one participant stated "we had more than 4000 people out for our Pride festival in the park last summer." Similarly, another

participant after having been involved in the formation of a gay organization felt that the gay community was "very thankful for it." These statements attest to the sense that the group to which they belong has influence in the community. Lastly in terms of 'fulfillment of needs', one participant shortly after walking into a meeting exclaimed "I wanted to hug everyone in the room…it's friendly and welcoming." As such, using PSOC as a lens is quite clear that LGBT organizations play a positive role in many of the participants lives.

Challenges (common).

In this section four challenges of non-metropolitan aging that are shared among older gay men and the primarily heterosexual-based research literature, namely, transportation, upkeep of one's home, access to healthcare, and lack of amenities will be discussed.

Transportation. Transportation challenges were expected to be discussed, given that such challenges were important to respondents in both non-metropolitan research that is primarily heterosexually-based (Herold et al., 2002; Napier, 2016; Sylvestre, Christopher, & Snyder, 2006) and also that which is LGBT focused (King & Dabelko-Schoeny, 2009). In rural areas, transportation challenges typically focused around one's continued ability to drive an automobile (Herold et al., 2002; King & Dabelko-Schoeny, 2009). Interestingly, only one of the participants in this study reported a concern regarding not being able to drive, instead the focus was more on driving conditions such as snow and dealing with terrible roads. For those who lived on islands there was a general concern that ferries can be "pretty expensive." One issue that did not appear in the literature reviewed was the impact of forest fires which can potentially "cut off access and egress" a feature relevant to British Columbians with its densely forested topography. While there was not an exact match in terms of transportation concerns, the transportation issues are not LGBT-specific and may be shared with their heterosexual peers.

Upkeep of home. Challenges of maintaining the upkeep of one's current home was discussed by almost one quarter of the research participants. This was also a concern in the literature that is primarily heterosexually-based (Sylvestre, Christopher, & Snyder, 2006). There were slight differences, however; in the literature, concerns were focused more on the high costs of home maintenance whereas participants in this research had concerns that were more health and aging based. Participants were concerned about their ability to perform maintenance activities as easily as they once could, potentially resulting in one's home becoming relatively "run down" in comparison to how it used to be in the past.

In this study one third of the participants reported challenges accessing healthcare and almost one-third had concerns over accessibility to other amenities. Healthcare concerns were shared with men in the primarily heterosexual research literature. Difficulty finding a doctor was a key issue among numerous participants. This finding was expected in the Canadian setting where difficulty finding a doctor is an issue salient to both those living in metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions (Sanmartin & Ross, 2006; Viscomi, Larkins & Gupta, 2013). For others, the main concern focused on the adequacy of local healthcare services and the distance one may need to travel to receive appropriate care - "anything out of the ordinary at all, you've got to go out of town." (PR-59). This concern was echoed by many participants and was a concern also shared with heterosexual older adults (Sylvestre, Christopher, & Snyder, 2006) and the LGBT community (King & Dabelko-Schoeny, 2009).

Lack of amenities. Lack of amenities not related to healthcare were reported by almost one quarter of the participants in this research. Stores selling basic goods such as clothing, furniture and grocery items that were not premium priced were thought to be lacking in these non-metropolitan communities. For others, the lack of amenities revolved around activities such

as the lack of medium and high range restaurants and cultural activities. These concerns are shared by a broad spectrum of individuals (both gay and straight) and older adults in-general, living in non-metropolitan settings (Sylvestre, Christopher, & Snyder, 2006; Therrien & Desrosiers, 2010).

Challenges (unique).

Elder's (1994) principle of linked lives, refers to one's interaction with the social world and it provides us with a lens through which we can identify some unique challenges faced by gay men in comparison with their heterosexual counterparts. Three challenges were identified as unique to gay men included finding a partner, lack of a gay community, and issues that emerge as challenges with LGBT organizations and each will be discussed in this section.

Finding a partner. Almost one quarter of the sample commented on challenges related to finding a partner or sexual encounter in their non-metropolitan setting. The stories included both those that have been resolved (a partner has been found and the participant describes the experience) and those that are ongoing where some participants who wish to be partnered and/or find sexual opportunities remain unpartnered and/or unfulfilled. Interestingly, these difficulties were found across multiple research sites including those with both the smallest and largest populations. Intuitively one might expect that such challenges would be more prominent on Salt Spring Island, which may be categorized as rural/small town, but they were also found to be salient among participants in Kelowna and Nanaimo which may be characterized as small cities. Interestingly, this provides some support to the conceptualization of this research as 'non-metropolitan' because it displays that simply living outside of a large metropolitan area provided these participants with a similar set of challenges. I envision that some may argue that this feature is not unique to gay men and that heterosexual men would also find difficulty locating

partners in the same regions. This is difficult to entangle because research on older adult sexuality remains scant (DeLamater, 2012; Sassler, 2010); however, because a much smaller percentage of the population is homosexual, 1.7% (Statistics Canada, 2015) to 5.3% (Bozinoff, 2012), we can envision that the number of potential partners in a non-metropolitan region would be proportionately limited for older gay men. This percentage can be reduced further if we adopt the generally accepted assumption that gay men tend to migrate to and live in large cities (Aldrich, 2004; Kelly et al., 2014; Weston, 1995). In addition, with life expectancy lower for men in comparison to women, in older heterosexual samples men would naturally have a larger pool of single women available for potential partnership (Thies, & Travers, 2006; Wylie, Wood, & McManus, 2013).

The limited sexual and partnership opportunities described have led a number of participants to explore using the Internet to find partners. While urban gay men also use the Internet, it is perhaps more out of a sense of convenience versus a concrete lack of opportunity as described in non-metropolitan settings. The participants in this research represent a combination of those who have used the Internet to find their current partner and those who continue to use the Internet as a facilitator in sex tourism. While finding a partner using the Internet is shared with their heterosexual peers (Alterovitz, & Mendelsohn, 2009) the number of participants in this research (20%) who have or are currently participating in sex tourism seems unusually high. Sex tourism may be defined as the traveling outside of their country of residence to pursue sexual encounters (Clift & Forrest, 1999; Mendoza, 2013) and potential relationships. For participants these included an escort “down in Argentina” and for more than one participant “a Mexican guy.” These encounters ranged from what might be conceptualized as traditional dating scenarios with both parties sharing expenses, to others, that involved Christmas gifts and motor scooters

given as tokens of one's appreciation. Interestingly, some authors have differentiated between sex tourism and romance tourism and have characterized the latter more by the exchange of gifts versus money (Herold, Garcia, & DeMoya, 2001). Considering this distinction, the stories of the men in this research might possibly be conceptualized more accurately as romance tourism. While not clearly stated by participants, it is possible that the pursuit of romance tourism is directly connected to the perceived and/or real lack of sexual opportunity in one's non-metropolitan region. Lastly, and perhaps somewhat puzzling was that despite this discussion of sex and romance tourism (which represent casual sex) it was interesting to note that no men in the research reported using the Internet to find local casual sexual encounters.

Gay community. Related to the previous section, more than one quarter of participants noted that lack of a gay community, and difficulty connecting to whatever community there was, is a challenge in their region. Powell River for example was thought to have "no gay community," on Vancouver Island it was perceived as "very fractured," and in Kelowna it was felt it is "hard to link up with them." On Salt Spring one participant simply queried "where are all the gay folks?" It is interesting to hear these comments considering these and the other participants also provided knowledge about the existence of an LGBT community during our discussion of LGBT organizations. There are several potential explanations for this disconnect. First the research of Kennedy (2010) and Bell & Valentine (1995b) have identified differences between transplanters (those who lived most of their life outside the rural context) and natives (those who grew up in rural areas) with the latter being far more responsive to the expectations of their local communities. These researchers are referring to the expectation that the dominant masculine hetero-centric norms in their communities be maintained. This very much echoes what was heard among participants in this study - "you've got the gays that have been here all their

life and have lived a closeted existence with their gay friends, yeah, so you've got that sort of clique who are there, they're still afraid to come out" (VI-73). Connecting back to the literature cited, the closeted existence is the reported expected norm to which one is expected to adhere under the dominant hetero-centric landscape. Regarding the idea of insider/outsider status and acceptance into the gay community one participant noted that natives may not look so kindly on transplanters arriving with "different points of view."

A second fact of life about the gay community is offered by VI-73 who reminded me that "just because you're gay doesn't mean every gay person that you come into contact with you're going to have…a friendship with." This is somewhat similar to a comment mentioned by SS-67a who stated that "I much prefer my heterosexual friends." Since there is some evidence of a gay community, it is possible that participants in this study are like the older participants in Holt's urban-based study (2011) where the men reported that they had a stronger connection to the gay community in the past when they were younger. On a like note, there has also been a sense among the younger members of the gay community, in urban areas, that in the past two decades the gay community been undergoing a structural decline (Simon Rosser, West, & Weinmeyer, 2008). Much of this decline may be the result of heterosexual intermingling in venues that were previously exclusively homosexual and the rise of the gay community on the Internet. While it was not the focus of my research design, given the amount of disconnect reported by participants in this study, it would be interesting to explore in greater detail the structural changes that have occurred in non-metropolitan gay communities through time.

LGBT Organizations. While LGBT organizations were discussed earlier as a reward, the organizations themselves also proved to be a challenge in the lives of many gay men in this

study. [As noted previously: Due to the sensitive nature of this issue and concerns over confidentiality, geographic identifiers and age of participants will not be placed after quotes in this discussion and local LGBT organizations will not be discussed by name and instead will be referred to generically as *The Local Gay Organization*]. The Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) lens used to discuss the rewards can also be used here to illuminate the issues that can cause a divide in the one's community. For example, in considering the idea of membership, one participant described a direct opposite view where in talking about his Local Gay Organization said "I belonged…and I'm not belonging to it right now, I'm kind of over it." Similarly, a strong PSOC is epitomized by a feeling that one matters to a group, which is much in contrast to one participant's feeling that "if I say one thing wrong, I'm blacklisted." Another reported that his Local Gay Organization "isn't too interested in old gay men," suggesting some level of ageism within the LGBT community. The above statements also display that one's needs were not being met through group membership. Likewise, the overall sense that one's "values do not mesh with a lot of them" and the feeling of being "not comfortable" display that at some level the LGBT organizations in my research locations contribute to a psychological sense of division in terms of community.

I feel this is a key finding in this research given that much research has reported that lack of an LGBT community, and is one of the challenges older gay men face living in non-metropolitan communities (Annis & Redlin, 2012a; Bell, & Valentine, 1995a; Cody & Welch, 1997; Kennedy 2010; Rosenberger et al., 2014). In contrast, components of an LGBT community were found to some degree in all research locations in this study; however, while such organizations had the ability to enhance one's psychological sense of belonging to a gay

community, it also had the potential to divide and fuel discontent. Of course, such division and discourse may be present in urban LGBT organizations (Vogler, 2016); however, in many cases there are alternative options for LGBT kinship in urban areas where there are often than one LGBT organization. This is important because it represents an issue unique to aging in a non-metropolitan region as a gay man. An older heterosexual male does not need look far for a sense of community in the dominant hetero-normative landscape, and further, if discord is found within an organization the older heterosexual man likely has multiple options to 'find' community elsewhere. For older gay men, the local LGBT organization is akin to one-stop shopping and is likely the only formal opportunity to engage with fellow members of the LGBT community. As an outcome of this research, I feel it is important to disseminate this information to highlight the importance of ensuring one's local LGBT Organization is welcoming to all local LGBT individuals and to take better steps at healing discord when it emerges.

Summary.

Many of the themes that emerged from the data in this study were often conceptualized as both a reward and a challenge, often by the same participant at different times during the research interview. Oftentimes, both the rewards and the challenges of non-metropolitan aging had much in common with what has been reported in broader based samples comprising primarily heterosexual men and women. Examples of these similarities were the draw of the rural idyll, and the important role of family (children and grandchildren) in one's life. This role of family differed from other studies in that the men in this research appeared to rely less on the notion of families of choice that is found in much of the LGBT literature. Friendships were discussed as a reward and finding partners a challenge by participants in this research. While

friendships were thought to be of higher quality in non-metropolitan areas in comparison to cities, there was a challenge making new friendships that were meaningful when retiring to a region in which one has few friendship ties. Most participants in this study however, reported on a diverse group of friends that included heterosexual men, women and couples which is in contrast to literature that suggests gay men are most comfortable socializing with fellow gay men and other members of the LGBT community. The benefits of small community life were often expressed as a contrast to one's previous life in the city. LGBT acceptance from the community was a key factor in the development of a sense of community. Interestingly, LGBT organizations in my research locations contributed to a both a bonding among gay men as well as a psychological sense of division in terms of community. I feel this is a key finding in this research given that much research has reported that a lack of LGBT community is one of the challenges older gay men face living in non-metropolitan communities. In this research such organizations thought to be so important in drawing those with common interests together resulted occasionally in unexpected discord.

Reflections on the methodology and methods

I adopted the interpretive paradigm (Levers, 2013; Scotland, 2012; Sefotho, 2015) as an overarching approach and employed a narrative gerontology methodology (Kenyon, Clark, & de Vries, 2001). My two core methods for data collection were semi-structured interviews and participant generated images (PGI). I followed the semi-structured interview format whereby participants were asked a set of specific questions and I maintained a certain level of flexibility regarding the follow-up questions I chose to pursue (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). Participants were told that they could use their PGI's at any time during the semi-structured interviews to illustrate a reward or challenge they were currently experiencing and/or to provide further context to a

component of their life story that they were sharing. My reflections on this methodology and my methods used will be informed by Kenyon & Randall's (2001) five basic assumptions of narrative gerontology.

The first of these assumptions is that storytelling is a fundamental aspect of being human. Attesting to this being fundamental, I feel it was the desire to tell one's story that made recruitment for this study proceed with relative ease. For example, it was agreed that I would complete a minimum of 20 research interviews and a total of 30 were completed, in part due to the wide range of participants who made themselves available to me. The research participants essentially told me selected pieces of their life stories as gay men, leading up to how they came to live in their current community and home, typically ending with the rewards and challenges they faced. This storytelling framework qualifies the transcript texts as narratives using Polkinghorne's (1998) criteria. What was most fascinating in this process was how quickly, often within the first three to four minutes of the interviews, that participants would begin to share deeply personal stories from their lives, typically beginning in childhood. Interestingly, while nevertheless illustrative, the use of PGI's often brought the level of discussion in our interviews back to a superficial level. This is in contrast to what was expected where the use of PGI's is purported to be a method that can open the doors to deeper memories among research participants (Collier, 1957).

The second assumption in narrative gerontology is that lives, as stories are made up of both facticity and possibility, which means that, in principle, human lives are open to change (Kenyon & Randall, 2001) and this was certainly explored in the research interviews which revealed a plethora of life story trajectories. The third assumption is that, from a narrative point of view, the meaning and nature of time are connected to our lives as stories. Narrative time is

different from clock time and speaks to what people have done and not done and who they are as people (Kuhl & Westwood, 2001) and this reflective process was felt among participants, many of whom told his story in terms of life review. The fourth assumption is that our lives are seen as stories involving interrelated dimensions (Kenyon & Randall, 2001), which include, on one hand, our personal story, and on the other hand, the larger story that we live within. In this sense each participants story was told and expressed among the ever-changing backdrop of LGBT rights, freedoms and acceptance. Lastly, the fifth assumption is that, as fundamentally interpersonal beings, we are, paradoxically, creating our personal story in a context that is larger than our individual selves, namely, the larger story that we live within. As such, each narrative is an individual expression of the 'truth' at that moment in time as told by the participant, with the potential for the narrative to change over time, thereby expressing one's life in terms of a story, in a "storying moment" (Kenyon & Randall, 2001, p. 6).

Overall, the narrative gerontology methodology fit well with my research, where in asking older gay men to describe the experiences (both positive and negative) of non-metropolitan aging, I was in essence collecting a set of multiple realities (their narratives) to be further examined. I also felt that my goal of providing a sense of service to the community of older gay men was a success because the interviews provided the participants with a voice, an avenue through which to tell one's story - particularly as viewed in context where the voices of older members of the LGBT community have been silenced and they have at times been described as invisible (Escobar, 2015; Kosciw, & Diaz, 2008; Mule, & Smith, 2014; Price, 2005). In providing these older gay men with a voice (Corbin & Morse, 2003) I was able to take steps, albeit small ones, toward ending this silence. Hutchinson, Wilson and Wilson (1994) have reported that the benefits of qualitative interviewing to the interviewee include sense of purpose,

empowerment and self-healing. I am confident that I have provided some of these benefits to participants, because I received numerous post-interview emails, for example and without disclosing his identity - “it was such a pleasure spending time being interviewed for your research, although it felt like a visit with a new friend.”

Limitations.

In considering limitations, it is first necessary to briefly re-visit the epistemological framework of this research. On a general level, narrative methodologies may be approached using any one of three paradigms: positivistic, critical, or interpretive (Åstedt-Kurki, & Heikkinen, 1994; Oliver, 1998; Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012; Stanley & Temple, 2012). The narrative gerontology methodology used in this research, with its storytelling nature, naturally lends itself to the interpretive paradigm that was employed in this research. The interpretive paradigm is non-positivist because there is no objective truth to be discovered and researchers are merely afforded access to multiple realities found in society (Perry, Bratman, & Fischer, 2010; Sefotho, 2015). From a narrative perspective, Smith (1974) asserts that this means the only world we can communicate about is the world that is experienced. As such, to express that a limitation of the research is that it is not generalizable is a moot point in that it was not intended to be generalizable in the first place. Accordingly, the limitations here will be expressed in terms of limitations within the interpretive paradigm and within the context of communicating about one’s experienced world.

Here the main limitation is likely the impact of the social desirability response (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002) where participants tended to portray their stories biased towards the positive. Further, those who choose to volunteer and share their stories are likely to differ from those who do not volunteer and remain quiet. One goal of this research was to access the more closeted

members of the older non-metropolitan residing gay population here in BC. While three participants chose to identify their location as ANYTOWN, perhaps suggesting some level of a closeted existence, all the participants were, nevertheless recruited through a snowball sampling technique with some LGBT organization acting as an intermediary, thus suggesting some level of participation and thereby outness in the local gay community. In addition to these issues, the sample itself was mostly well educated, well-off financially, and mostly Caucasian. This latter point being the least problematic given that in Canada, outside of the large Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA), visible minorities make up only 9% of the population so a primarily Caucasian population is to be expected (Statistics Canada, 2018b). Further, in Kelowna which technically qualifies as a CMA, visible minorities comprise just 6% of the population (World Population review, 2018). Not capturing, however, a large cross-section of those older gay men who may be less financially well-off, less educated, diverse in terms of race and ethnicity suggests these stories may not fully capture the experiences of our older gay non-metropolitan dwelling residents here in BC.

Future Research and Recommendations.

While this research, incorporating a non-metropolitan sample is a positive step in extending our knowledge beyond LGBT research that is typically urban-based, the preceding section suggests that future research should be directed toward samples that are even more diverse in terms of financial status, education and ethnicity. In addition, future research may wish to incorporate a larger sample to explore cohort effects, for example comparing the lived experience of gay men in their 60s to older gay men in their 80s. Further, it was surprising that my sample included a large number of men who had been previously married, and this topic appears to be understudied in the literature. I would recommend that we further examine

comparatively, the social networks of previously heterosexually married gay men in comparison to older gay men that have never been married. It appears that there may be significant differences between the two groups in terms of family, friends, and families of choice - with implications for aging. Without regard to previous marital status, one of the unique findings in this research was the extensive networks of friends that included many heterosexual singles and couples. This may be attributed to lack of opportunity to meet and socialize with other gays and lesbians in non-metropolitan areas; however, there was also some evidence that it may be connected to changing times and a welcoming landscape in the British Columbia locations I visited. This is certainly an area for future research as there is the potential to map out what works to help build community and bridge the gaps between the heterosexual and LGBT populations in non-metropolitan regions.

Knowledge Dissemination.

The research in this dissertation will be shared with the academic community by way of traditional venues such as conference presentations and peer-reviewed publications. Further, given the applied nature of this research, funding will be sought to transform the collection of participant photographs and corresponding commentary into a gallery style show and toured around the province of British Columbia highlighting the lived experience of older non-metropolitan dwelling gay men. Combined with town hall style meetings the photographic exhibit will provide a stimulus to communities to better understand the needs and concerns of older gay men living and aging in non-metropolitan British Columbia.

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Appendix A.

EBSCO Host ‘select all’ databases list:

Academic Search Premier
AgeLine
AHFS Consumer Medication Information
Alt HealthWatch
Alternative Press Index
Alternative Press Index Archive
America: History & Life
American Antiquarian Society (AAS) Historical Periodicals Collection: Series 3
American Antiquarian Society (AAS) Historical Periodicals Collection: Series 1
American Antiquarian Society (AAS) Historical Periodicals Collection: Series 2
American Antiquarian Society (AAS) Historical Periodicals Collection: Series 4
American Antiquarian Society (AAS) Historical Periodicals Collection: Series 5
Anthropology Plus
Applied Science & Business Periodicals Retrospective: 1913-1983 (H.W. Wilson)
Applied Science & Technology Index (H.W. Wilson)
Art Full Text (H.W. Wilson)
Art Index (H.W. Wilson)
Art Index Retrospective (H.W. Wilson)
ATLA Religion Database
Audiobook Collection (EBSCOhost)
Bibliography of Native North Americans
Biography Index Retrospective: 1946-1983 (H.W. Wilson)
Biological & Agricultural Index Plus (H.W. Wilson)
Biomedical Reference Collection: Comprehensive
Book Review Digest Retrospective: 1903-1982 (H.W. Wilson)
Business Source Complete
CINAHL Complete
CINAHL with Full Text
Communication & Mass Media Complete
Communication Abstracts
Computer Source
Criminal Justice Abstracts with Full Text
eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)
EconLit
Education Index Retrospective: 1929-1983 (H.W. Wilson)

Education Source
Educational Administration Abstracts
Environment Complete
Ergonomics Abstracts
ERIC
Essay and General Literature Retrospective (H.W. Wilson)
Film & Television Literature Index with Full Text
Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia
General Science Abstracts (H.W. Wilson)
GeoRef
GeoRef In Process
Global Health
Health Source - Consumer Edition
Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition
Historical Abstracts
Humanities & Social Sciences Index Retrospective: 1907-1984 (H.W. Wilson)
Humanities Abstracts (H.W. Wilson)
Humanities Source
International Political Science Abstracts
Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts
Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text
MAS Ultra - School Edition
MEDLINE with Full Text
Mental Measurements Yearbook with Tests in Print
Military & Government Collection
MLA Directory of Periodicals
MLA International Bibliography
Music Index
Peace Research Abstracts
Philosopher's Index
Political Science Complete
Primary Search
PsycARTICLES
PsycBOOKS
PsycCRITIQUES
PsycINFO
PsycTESTS
Readers' Guide Abstracts (H.W. Wilson)
Readers' Guide Retrospective: 1890-1982 (H.W. Wilson)

Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature (H.W. Wilson)
Regional Business News
Short Story Index Retrospective: 1915-1983 (H.W. Wilson)
Social Sciences Abstracts (H.W. Wilson)
Social Sciences Full Text (H.W. Wilson)
SPORTDiscus
Teacher Reference Center
Women's Studies International

Appendix B

Interview guide

The Experience of Older Gay Men Living in Non-Metropolitan British Columbia

Objective of interview:

To gain insight into a broad research question:

1) *How do older gay men, as members of a sexual minority, in the context of a particular life course, perceive and describe themselves and their lived experience of aging in non-metropolitan locales?*

Confidentiality

All statements made will be non-attributable unless at the discrete request of the interview participant.

Introduction

My name is Robert Savage (Beringer) and today is _____ 2016. I have just received the informed consent form from_____. We are at _____in _____BC to do an interview about the experience of non-metropolitan aging. _____has agreed that we can record this interview.

Questions

A. I'd like to begin by learning more about you and your life as a gay (or participants preferred descriptor, e.g. homosexual, queer) man.

Possible probes:

When did you come out as a gay man?

Prior to coming out as a gay man did you ever have any heterosexual relationships?

What was it like being a gay man in the 19??'s?

B. How did you come to live here in (state name of interview location**)?**

Possible question probes:

Have you always lived here?

Where did you grow up?

Have you ever lived in a city?

C. What do you feel are the rewards of living here?

Possible question probes:

Do you have family nearby?

Do you socialize with other gay men in the area?

Do your friends, family, neighbours and community know you are a gay man?

Do you have a lot of straight friends?

Is there an LGBT community, are you involved with it?

Have your feelings about this community changed over the years?

How do you feel this location has impacted and/or shaped your sexual life?

D. What do you feel are the positives and negatives of living here?

Possible question probes:

Do you have family nearby?

Do you socialize with other gay men in the area?

Do your friends, family, neighbours and community know you are a gay man?

Do you have a lot of straight friends?

Is there an LGBT community, are you involved with it?

Have your feelings about this community changed over the years?

Do you still drive?

How long have you had (repeat chronic condition mentioned by participant either in interview or participant profile)

How do you feel this location has impacted your sexual life?

E. Now let's turn to the pictures you have taken.

Possible probes (depending upon picture presented):

Could you please tell me the story behind this picture?

What does this mean to you?

Who is this person in our life?

What role does this play in your life?

You mentioned your home…….

You mentioned community…….

You mentioned your neighbours…..

Closing

My name is Robert Savage (Beringer) and today is _____ 2016. I have just finished and interview in _____BC with _____ at_____.

Appendix C

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Experience of Older Gay Men Living in Non-Metropolitan British Columbia

This research project is a requirement of the Doctorate of Social Sciences at Royal Roads University. The student concerned is: Robert Savage (Beringer). This student's credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by…[This information intentionally removed in accordance with BC privacy regulations].

The goal of this project is to explore the experiences of non-metropolitan aging among older gay men. You will be asked to take photographs and/or provide photos of your own that you feel will help you describe during an interview (which will take up to approximately 2 hrs), scheduled on _____, 2017, how you, as a gay man, came to live here in your current residence. Further, I ask that you take photographs or provide photos of your own that will help you describe the experiences of living and aging in this home and in this community. I will ask that you provide six to eight photos for the above purpose. When completing the above tasks, I ask that you do so on a personal level, meaning that during our upcoming interview I would like for you to share with me your own story of being a gay man now living here in _____.

The interview will be audio recorded and the recording will be transcribed and analyzed. The photos will also be analyzed for themes. Your study data will remain confidential and pseudonyms will be used in any quotations used in articles, publications, and presentations. Only photographs that you have specifically consented to be used for publications and presentations

will be used for these purposes. The transcriptions will only contain your pseudonym and will be kept in locked file at the home of the researcher for a period of five years after which the data will be destroyed. A number of participants will be asked to confirm the accuracy of the themes that emerge from the interview process – would you like to be included in this follow-up process: yes/no.

As a prospective participant, you are not compelled to take part in this research project. If you elect to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time with no prejudice. Similarly, if you elect not to take part in this research project, this information will be maintained in confidence. If in the course of your participation you have any questions or concerns you are invited to contact …[The information in this section intentionally removed in accordance with BC privacy regulations].

By signing this form, you give free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

The Experience of Older Gay Men Living in Non-Metropolitan British Columbia

PARTICIPANT PROFILE:

Participant ID Number/Psuedonym:

Birthdate:

Age:

Sexual identity:

Gay

Homosexual

Queer

Bisexual

I'm a man who has sex with men

Other (describe):_____

Current relationship status:

Single

Legally married to a male/female

Common law relationship with a male/female

Widowed from relationship with male/female

Separated from relationship with male/female

Divorced from relationship with male/female

Have a boyfriend/girlfriend

Have friends with benefits (FWB) relationships with _____ men/women

Description of living space:

Apartment

Townhome

Detached house

Do you own your residence:

Yes

No

How long have you lived here:

Since_____, _____years.

Describe your living arrangements: (e.g. alone, with spouse, roommates etc.):

Employment status:

Employed

Unemployed

Retired

Education level:

Some high school

Graduated high school

Completed trade school

Completed some university/college

Bachelor's degree

Master's Degree

Doctoral degree

In general would you say your health is:

Excellent

Very Good

Good

Fair

Poor

Do you have any of the following chronic conditions:

- Arthritis/Rheumatism
- Cataracts/Glaucoma
- Back problems
- Heart problems (do you take hypertension medication and/or medication to lower cholesterol)
- Diabetes
- HIV
- Thyroid condition
- Urinary incontinence
- Asthma
- Bronchitis/Emphysema/COPD
- Mental Illness
- Cancer
- Migraine
- Effects of stroke
- Stomach/intestinal ulcers
- Bowel disorder/Crohn's disease/colitis
- Chemical sensitivities
- Alzheimer's disease/ other dementia
- Fibromyalgia
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Epilepsy

Do you use any of the following assistive devices:

Bathroom grab bars

Cane

Walker

Wheelchair

Other:_____

Appendix E

Participant Migration Patterns:

Participant ID	Born and raised	Life migration	Retirement location
SS-72a	Urban	Urban	Salt Spring
SS-67a	Rural	Small town-small town-urban-urban-urban	Salt Spring
SS-76:	Small town	Urban-urban	Salt Spring
SS-67b	Urban	Urban-urban	Salt Spring
SS-69	Urban	Urban-urban-urban-urban-urban	Salt Spring
SS-72b	Urban	Urban-urban	Salt Spring
SS-64	Urban	Urban	Salt Spring
SS-72c	Rural	Small town-urban-urban	Salt Spring
SS-65	Urban	Urban	Salt Spring
SS-71:	Urban	Urban-urban	Salt Spring
SS-83	Urban	Urban	Salt Spring
OK-75	Kelowna	Urban-urban-urban	Kelowna
OK-67	Urban	Urban-urban-urban-urban-urban-urban-urban	Kelowna
OK-76	Small town	Urban	Kelowna
OK-63	Urban	Urban	Kelowna
OK-73	Small town	Urban-urban	Kelowna
VI-61	Urban	Urban	Nanaimo
VI-65	Small town	Urban-urban	Nanaimo
VI-69	Urban	Urban	Duncan
VI-73	Urban-rural	Urban-urban-urban-rural-rural	Nanaimo
VI-70	Urban	Urban-urban-rural-rural	Nanaimo
VI-89	Urban	Urban-urban	Nanaimo
VI-81	Urban	Urban	Nanaimo
PR-67	Small town	Urban-urban	Powell River
PR-59	Urban	Urban-urban	Powell River
PR-84	Powell River	Urban	Powell River
SI-69	Urban	Urban	Small town Southern Interior BC
ANY-65	Urban	Small town-urban-urban-urban-urban-urban	Anytown
ANY-86	Small town	Urban	Anytown
ANY-70	Small town	Urban-urban-urban-urban-urban-urban	Anytown

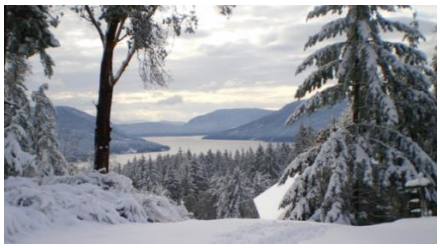
With the exception of current location (and the locations of the two participants who now live where they were born and raised), location names are masked to further protect confidentiality of participants.
URBAN: One of Canada's Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) (Statistics Canada, 2018b).
SMALL TOWN & RURAL: Population less than 10,000 (du Plessis, V., Beshiri, R., Bollman, R., & Clemenson, H., 2001) - the decision on whether to call a location small town or rural is based on participant designation.

Appendix F

Salt Spring Island photoset (6 photos). This photoset is a combination of images I obtained on the Internet and my personal photos. The copyright status of the Internet photos is unknown, so only a description of each photo is provided where applicable.

[PHOTO: A picture of Ganges Harbour, the marina and seaplanes].

(1) This photo is of Ganges Harbour, it displays beauty and boating life as well as seaplanes, attesting to the location being somewhat remote.



© Robert Savage/Beringer

(2) I chose this photo because it displays the beauty of Salt Spring's natural setting. I also included it because the winter of 2016/17 was cooler than normal with more snowfall.

© Robert Savage/Beringer

(3) I chose those this photo not only because of the connection to nature, but because I am aware of Salt Spring residents love/hate relationship with deer.

© Robert Savage/Beringer

(4) For me growing my own food is a great reward of living here and I wanted to see how participants responded to this photo, suggesting both gardening and market freshness of food.

© Robert Savage/Beringer

(5) I Felt I had to include a photo of a ferry, like the seaplane it displays that an extra effort must be taken to get here. For me this is both a reward and a challenge.

© Robert Savage/Beringer

(6) I included a photo of Ganges and specifically Grace Point Square. I wanted to capture people's thoughts about *town* and in this photo you can very much see that lack of a world-level corporate presence in Ganges.

Kelowna/Okanagan photoset (five photos). My Kelowna/Okanagan photoset was compiled from images I obtained on the Internet. The copyright status is unknown, so only a description of each photo is provided.

[PHOTO: A view of Okanagan lake, a vineyard and mountains in the background]

(1) I included this photo because I felt it displayed the beauty of the region and the natural setting with the water and the mountains.

[PHOTO: A picture of the rainbow crosswalk in Kelowna BC]

(2) I Included this photo because the painting of the rainbow crosswalk was somewhat controversial, so I wanted to see and hear how participants responded to the photo.

[PHOTO: A view of an old western style building with lots of motorcycles parked in front of it]

(3) I included this photo because for me it represented a dominant, heteronormative masculine space.

[PHOTO: A hillside park with a bench overlooking Kelowna, snow is on the ground in the photo]

(4) I included this photo because it displays beauty, a park-like setting with a bench and also snow, which provided a segue to talk with participants about climate.

[PHOTO: A view of Kelowna from West Kelowna, displaying the bridge and in the foreground houses under construction]

(5) I included this photo because, in addition to the beauty, in the foreground there are signs of development, something that may impact aging in one's community.

Appendix G

Participant generated images and photo elicitation summary.

ID:	# of photos discussed	# of photos provided to me	# of photos I am permitted to use in the research	Discussed photoset I supplied	Were photos prepared as per methodology
SS-72a	3	1	1	Photoset not yet created	No
SS-67a	1	0	0	Y-6	No
SS-76	Participant did not wish to provide photos	0	0	Did not discuss photoset due to unexpected interruption	No
SS-67b	Participant did not wish to provide photos	0	0	Y-6	No
SS-69/ SS-72b	6 (post interview)	6	6	Y-6	No
SS-72b	1 (post interview)	1	1	Y-6	No
SS-64	8 (post interview)	8	5	Y-6	No
SS-72c	10 (post interview)	10	6	Y-6	No
SS-65	Participant did not wish to provide photos	0	0	Y-6	No
SS-71	Participant did not wish to provide photos	0	0	Y-6	No
SS-83	8	8	4	Participant supplied photos	Yes
OK-75	8	0	0	Y-5	No
OK-67	4	4	0	Y-5	No
OK-76/ OK-63	0/24	8	8	Y-5/ Participant supplied photos	No/yes
OK-73	1	1	1	Y-5	No
VI-61/ VI-65	10/0	10	4	No photoset	Yes/no
VI-69	11	11	1	No photoset	Yes
VI-73	Participant did not wish to provide photos	0	0	No photoset	No
VI-70	Participant did not wish to provide photos	0	0	No photoset	No
VI-89/ VI-81	4 (post interview)	4	4	No photoset	No
PR-67	4	1	1	No photoset	Yes
PR-84	1	1	1	No photoset	No
PR-59	5	0	0	Photoset not yet created	No
SI-1	4	4	4	No photoset	Yes
ANY-86	8	5	2	Participant supplied photos	Yes
ANY-70	Participant did not wish to provide photos	0	0	No photoset	No
ANY-65	Participant did not wish to provide photos	0	0	No photoset	No
Totals:	121	83	49	11	Y= 7 N= 23