Exploring Older Men's Intergenerational Friendships: Masculinities, Ageing and Ageism

Elliott O'Dare, Catherine. and Ernesto **Vasquez del Aguila**. 2023. "Exploring Older Men's Intergenerational Friendships: Masculinities, Ageing and ageism." In Willis, P., I. Pietilä and M. Seppänen (Eds.), *Ageing, Men and Social Relations: Global Perspectives on Masculinities and Men's Social Connections in Later Life* (19-34). Bristol: Policy Press.

Introduction

Friendship among men is a fundamental dimension in the formation of male identities and the production of gender and social relations across their life course. Early understandings in relation to the prevalence and importance of friendship networks indicated that community networks had declined along with friendship opportunities, with individuals becoming increasingly isolated to the detriment of the individual and society (Putnam, 2000). However, more recent research suggested that individuals are linked, and their health, actions and belief systems are influenced by friends and friends-of-friends, in a hyper-connected society (Christakis and Fowler, 2010). The importance and benefits of friendship to the well-being, health and happiness of older adults had been explored extensively across several disciplines (Li and Liang, 2007; Okabayashi et al., 2004; Allan, 2010; Blieszner, 2014; Huxhold et al., 2013). Adults are evidenced to share normative expectations in relation to friendship, with values of respect, trust, and support identified as fundamental to friendship regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, or ethnicity (Galupo and Gonzalez, 2013; Felmlee and Muraco, 2009). In later life, friendships are linked to increased happiness and health for the older individual, perhaps even more so than family relationships (Chopik, 2017). In summary, friendship is often seen as a panacea for many of the perceived ills associated with older age as friendship might stave off loneliness, passivity and the associated negative health effects.

This chapter examines the social construction of older age and later life by men (aged 65 and over) in the context of a particular 'type' of friendship, namely, intergenerational friendships. Intergenerational friendship here is understood as a friendship between a younger and a significantly older adult, who are not related. Intergenerational friendship is a useful 'lens' to explore how older men construe themselves in relation to younger people, and in the context of the arguably ageist, age segregated society that they live in. Ageing in contemporary societies has been outlined by Gilliard and Higgs (2000) as 'complex, differentiated and ill defined' (p.1), as contrasting expectations of older people exist. Older people are exhorted to be useful and productive members of society, for example, working as volunteers or as care givers to partners and to grandchildren (third age), and conversely as frail, care dependent adults, often a 'burden' on care and fiscal resources (fourth age).

The chapter begins by outlining how men's friendships are understood in extant literature, moving on then to examine the sparse extant literature that exists on the intergenerational friendships of older adults. In the subsequent sections, we introduce the findings from a recent study by Elliott O'Dare (2019a, 2019b, 2021) on intergenerational friendship, concluding with a discussion and conclusion on the ways in which the 'doing' of intergenerational friendship challenges societal and cultural expectations of what older men 'should' do and 'be', in supporting identity continuation, social inclusion and connectedness for these older intergenerational friends in later life.

Gender, masculinities and friendship

How men and women 'do' friendship has attracted research interest in extant literature. Cross cultural studies have argued that men's and women's friendships are perceived as being 'different': women's friendships being construed as being emotional and focused on feelings, as opposed to men's being understood as being activity based, competitive, specialised, and lacking intimacy (Dolgin, 2000; Gardiner, 2019). In this narrative, women's friendships are portrayed as 'face to face' and men's friendships as 'side by side' (Gillespie et al., 2015). Some scholars have emphasised that men have a stronger inclination to form friendships, to be more socially active and consequently had larger friend networks (Allan, 2010; Walker, 1994), with women having limited friendship networks as they are embedded in the private sphere (the home). Other scholars argue that women's networks are larger and more diverse than men's (Antonucci, 2001). Furthermore, research suggests that older men and women tend towards cross-gender friendships more than younger men and woman (Jerrome and Wenger, 1999).

Male sociability constitutes a space within which men develop bonds that shape their social interactions in society and where men expend a great deal of effort to preserve the homosocial grouping and keep women's interactions out of this male-only world (Kimmel, 2008; Flood, 2008). Homosociality (Sedgwick, 1985), defines the social bonds between persons of the same sex that are not of a romantic or sexual nature. It strictly relates to forms of gathering and socializing. Some spaces of male homosociality include sports, alcohol consumption, work-related and other leisure activities where men gather and spend time together. There is sociability among the members of a group without a specific purpose, other than the establishment of social interactions between them (Wacquant, 2004). The characteristics of male bonds vary from society to society—even within one society—and can differ in terms of factors such as race, sexual orientation, social class and age.

Male homosociality can be based on and formed through competition and exclusion (Hammarén and Johansson, 2014). Aspects considered as a part of this male bonding, such as aggression, competitiveness, political power, and sexual conquests, justify and promote the exclusion of women from important aspects of social life. This may even necessitate the display of hypermasculinity among peers (Brook, 2015; Cleary, 2019).

Hammarén and Johansson (2014) distinguish between vertical/hierarchical homosociality, which has been described as a means to strengthening power and patriarchal relations among men and a "new" form of homosociality described as horizontal for younger heterosexual adults, a close and intimate nonsexual homosocial relationship between two (or more) men. Some scholars call this type of more intimate relations 'bromance' (Crowhurst and Eldridge, 2020). These men value this new social space that provides emotional, intimate and trusting relationships with other men. Regardless of their sexual orientation, boys are socialised that in order to become men, they have to reject expressions of femininity and non-heterosexual intimacy. This normative male friendship excludes sexual minorities and, above all, women from "men-only" groups (Kimmel, 2005; Redman, 2001). Furthermore, there is a ritualised intimacy between men with very limited and forbidden boundaries.

Heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality create ideologies for boys and men about certain 'permitted' emotions, topics of conversation, and expressions of intimacy than can be displayed among them. Male friendship is constructed based on the 'reciprocity norm', by which they only return the affection and disclosure that they receive, and so there is a never-ending cycle of silence (Dolgin, 2000) which for many men is a source of distrust, competitiveness and power relations.

Homophobia and homohysteria also prevent heterosexual men from acting overly affectionate, as being perceived 'gay' is a threat to their masculine identity and building intimacy with other men (Flood, 2008; Thurnell-Read, 2012). Current research on younger, college educated male students from the Global North challenges the lack of relations and intimacy among men and calls for a more inclusive masculinity and intimate relations (Anderson and McCormack, 2016). Interestingly, friendship among older (heterosexual) men seems to dilute the lack of intimacy and these men value the emotional dimensions of their relationship with other men (Shaw et al., 2014; Walle, 2007). Other scholars also have found that as result of the emotional deficits within heterosexual male friendships, some of these men seek emotional intimacy in friendship with women or gay men (Cleary, 2019; Vasquez del Aguila, 2014).

Intergenerational Friendship

Intergenerational friendship had received some attention from social scientists (see Dykstra and Fleischmann, 2016; Roos, 2004; Stanley 2002; Holladay and Kerns,1999; Bettini and Norton, 1991; Matthews, 1986). Stanley (2002) concentrated on women (from within the lesbian community), while other studies reviewed recruited men and women as respondents (with no indication of sexual orientation). The overall impression, arising from the literature analysis was that adult intergenerational friendships were enjoyed by those involved in them, this type of friendship was rare and 'organised' (though interventions, clubs and so on). However, a study conducted by Dykstra and Fleishmann (2016) provided quantitative evidence pointing to the prevalence of intergenerational friendships throughout Europe. Dykstra and Fleischmann (2016) analysed data from the 2008 European Social Survey, with a sample from 25 European countries. A significant number of respondents reported to be engaged in two or more 'cross-age' friendships. Older men were reported as more likely to form cross-aged friendships than older women.

Elliott O'Dare et al. (2019a) argue that the paucity of research on intergenerational friendship highlights the influence of the principle of age homophily, with extant research focusing on friendships among older *or* younger adults; this in turn mirrors a social construction of older adults as being 'unsuitable friend material' as non-kin, chosen friends for younger adults. Homophily as a concept supports the notion that people seek out others like themselves based on age, gender, ethnicity, religion, education, and other key dimensions, with whom to form relationships (McPherson et al., 2001; Louch, 2000). According to Block and Grund (2014) homophily is likely to be pervasive in friend networks.

As part of a larger study with community dwelling older people, Elliott O'Dare et al, (2019b) analysed how older people negotiate age and ageing in their everyday lives, with and through their intergenerational friendships. By focusing solely on the 'older friend' in an intergenerational friendship the research aimed to answer the question: what meaning, significance and role do intergenerational friendships play in how older persons behave and feel as older individuals and as older friends? The purpose of the research was to explore how older adults experience and portray intergenerational friendships with non-kin younger friends (15 years or more their junior). The seven older men who were interviewed ranged in age from 69 years old to 91 years, all were or had been married [heterosexual relationships], were White-Irish and came from varying socio-economic backgrounds. The findings of the research are outlined in the following section.

Intergenerational friendships of older men

We began this section by exploring how the intergenerational friendships of the men who took part in the study began. In order to go on to form meaningful friendships the friends must meet and form a connection. An analysis of how the intergenerational friends met and what facilitated their friendship formation can be categorised into four main settings: leisure pursuits and interests, work and professions, peer-age friends and family members, and lastly through social interaction in their community. Leisure pursuits and interests along with work and professions were the sites which acted as conduits for many of the older friends. The friends met as they joined football clubs (as players, trainers or as spectators), golf clubs, camera clubs, amateur dramatic societies, musical societies, or historical societies. For example, Simon, who had a passion for music, met many of his intergenerational friends through joining societies:

> If I'm rehearsing shows a lot of the people in it, the majority of them will be younger than myself. When you're putting on a musical or there's a drama, or something being rehearsed, then there's a wide range of ages involved, and they all have a common purpose to achieve, something, the product. And we all just behave as adults of whatever age it is, [age] doesn't really matter, it's just we behave as adults (Simon, 69).

Age has little significance in this setting; a shared common goal to create is what is key. Similarly, professional societies for those interested in business facilitated Hugo to initially meet his friends as they shared similar professional interests. Within the group, people whose ages possibly span two generations meet solely to discuss finance and business topics. The group adopted a business-like format, indicative of its reason for coming together. Hugo therefore continued to perform in his profession after retirement in an informal way as a member of this group:

> They're [intergenerational friends]. We have a meeting every two weeks […] somebody makes a presentation on some various subjects […] and then, after the presentation, there is a discussion and questions and answers and then the chairperson concludes the meeting (Hugo, 92).

The group described by Hugo played an essential part in maintaining his intergenerational friendships. In addition to the group meetings, Hugo described how over the years, his intergenerational friends had arranged many social nights out, often including family members, and occasionally travelling and holidaying together. The shared identity of 'being a professional' was at the core of Hugo's friendships: Hugo had retired from 'formal' work 25 years ago, yet retirement did not alter his identity as a 'professional'. The friendship group is part of the process of emulating professional roles and identities beyond retirement. Transitioning from one status to another (employed to retired) was challenging for these older friends. The members in Hugo's group, his intergenerational friends, sought a way to remain embedded in a professional role by seeking out a platform and site where they could continue to perform this facet of their identities. The group members were countering the losses experienced through formal retirement by recreating a professional platform, agenda and multi-generational 'colleagues' in an informal way. A shared professional identity, not a shared age, is at the fulcrum of intergenerational friendships here.

Brendan, in a similar way, explained how he continued to provide career guidance to his intergenerational friends' children as he once guided those friends when they were his students:

> I taught a few of them [intergenerational friends]. It's lovely to rekindle the relationship at a different level. People have observed to me like it is great to have that relationship you know and friendship over such a long time. You would have the game of golf and they [former students now intergenerational friends] would sort of bring you up to date on their own lives (Brendan, 72).

Illustrated in this narrative, is the process of how sharing leisure pursuits with his former student allowed them to move on from practical assistance to personal exchanges.

While the friends met in a myriad of ways, the gateways to intergenerational friendship shared two aspects. First, an age integrated, intergenerational shared space or place provided the opportunity for the friends to meet. Leisure pursuits, interest groups or societies, former workplaces, families (their own and their friends' families) or simply through *ad-hoc* social interaction in a community, all were shared spaces by adults of all ages and stages of the life course. In many societies, opportunities are made available to older people to socialise with those of their own age. The people in this study sought out or grasped serendipitous encounters with like-minded people of *other* ages. Many retained their intergenerational friendships which were formed at mid-life into later life and oldest-old age.

Shared interests and leisure pursuits were a conduit to intergenerational friendships; however, these intergenerational friendship activities also supported the older men to maintain identities that they had held throughout adulthood. Watching football, camera club and music activities, among other interests, were community activities, cost-free for all to participate in.

Chatting over a drink about interests and their daily lives was readily accessible to all, thus wealth or privilege in later life played no essential part in forming and maintaining intergenerational friendships. The importance of remaining engaged and included in society, particularly after retirement from work, emerged as a vital impetus for intergenerational friendship formation and maintenance. For example, Simon in speaking about how music provided an 'ageless', shared interest, explains how he transitioned after 'formal' retirement into a new career. Simon's lifelong interest in music motivated him to work in amateur entertainment, thus fostering intergenerational friendships:

> There's no natural limit to that [music] where the government says you must leave and you must stop. Ah, whereas I think in normal occupations, you see retirement coming up, you yourself know the old problem of the person who retires. They go home and they just fade, because they've nothing else to do. But I've always been blessed with a mix of activities. Then the music is always the night job, and the night job just keeps on going forever (Simon, 69).

Here, Simon is linking retirement from formal work (the day job) with decline in older age. Disconnected from the workforce, a process of invisibility and exclusion ensues, as older people 'fade' when they are not busy in a meaningful way and engaged with society. The concept of an 'active retirement' and its connection to an 'active age' had negative implications for some of these participants and it was construed as a form of differentiation or exclusion from 'mainstream' society. Retirement was rejected, and instead, remaining involved and continuing to engage in meaningful work and society were championed.

The importance of his intergenerational friendships is emphasised by Walter, and he particularly alluded to the role interests and leisure activities played as being his 'salvation'. Walter explained what 'salvation' meant as he said:

> The camera club was the salvation. Well like when you do be at home you feel kind of bored and you would be going the same places day after day, Sunday after Sunday. You wouldn't have any variety in things and then the camera club changed and different people and different outings and things and we all [his wife and son] used to go (Walter, 91).

Walter, in contrast to a view of ageing that presents the older person as static, actively sought out new interests in later life in the intergenerational setting of the camera club. Some additional insights into this way of thinking are provided by Brendan in his comments about his reluctant retirement:

> When you retire it is challenging, it's quite a challenge to yourself as an older person because you drop out from a very busy, vibrant life, and you are just sort of dropped out of society, so coping with that can be big (Brendan, 72).

Retirement from formal employment was not a positive transition for Brendan. The image Brendan sketched was that retirement resulted in isolation from society: intergenerational friendship was his 'anchor' to remain connected to contemporary society. At a time of significant change and transition from middle to older age - in many contemporary societies retirement age is considered to signal the onset of older age – intergenerational friendship gained a new significance in Brendan's life. Brendan elaborates and explains that his younger friends are active and engaged:

> […] they [intergenerational friends] would be optimistic people. I would not hang around with negative people for too long you know. They [intergenerational friends] would be out and about you know, doing and eh, you gravitate towards people like that. I'm not saying you would avoid, but you wouldn't invest too much time because that [negativity] can bring you down and that's a big issue for older people, you know. You can go into a shell […]. I suppose really it can be a sort of a negative vibe you know like health is bad and struggling (Brendan, 72).

Finally, a further impetus to pursue a friendship with a younger adult is revealed. Many of the oldest-old participants spoke of the loss of peer-age friends. Jack, aged 83, fondly remembered his old friends who had died and lamented the loss of their friendship; Jack evoked a strong generational tie:

> That's the way, you know. A lot of the old local people that was with me is dead and gone… It's just something, that's just it. Then you're thankful in another way that I'm still in the land of the living [laugh]. You would meet [younger friends] but it's a different era. The things that I'd be talking about the younger people wouldn't know or wouldn't remember (Jack, 83).

Older men like Jack experience a process of acceptance of the loss of peer-aged friends in later life and learn to adjust to new friendships with younger people who do not share the same history as they do. Intergenerational friends cannot fulfil the role of sharing the same life course (past events). Therefore, the participants framed their friendships as not only peer-age but as generational, with the shared social and cultural experiences from their past. Longevity, therefore, is not only positive but brings its own sadness; the loss of valuable

friends as one outlives them. However, the importance of friendship is emphasised as the older friends indicated the value that they place on friendship ties by choosing not to withdraw from socialising. Instead, they sought to form friendships with similarly minded younger adults. Having experienced friendship throughout their lives, they were not willing to forgo the enjoyment and bounty that friendship had brought them.

Age and the onset of older age was at the nexus of the narratives of the older men as they spoke about their intergenerational friendships. Through their intergenerational friendships these men sought continued inclusion and identity maintenance in later life. Moreover, further analysis revealed that the older friends were spurred to form intergenerational friendships for another reason: ageist ideation. The following section explores how ageist ideation shapes the older friends' approach to being older, ageing and intergenerational friendship formation.

Fourth age stereotyping*: sketching the 'old fogey', and the 'old haggard''*

The meanings that the participants attached to 'being old' were often subtle. For example, Tommy distinguished between being chronologically old and acting old as he declared: '[I] probably don't act it [75 years old]', implying that, in his view, 75-year-olds are expected to act in a particular way. Tommy gave an example of what he saw as being expected of him as an older individual by others of his generation as he spoke about being in the pub with his intergenerational friends:

> I think some people think that when you get older, you shouldn't be here [in the pub], and you should go home earlier maybe [laugh]. It comes to a certain time and they think they should be going home, you know, they think like that when they get old. I think that anyway, some of my people my age, they think that you might be out of place if you are there [in the pub] at one o'clock, two o'clock (Tommy, 75).

Some of Tommy's peer-aged friends self-regulate their behaviour by what they perceive to be socially expected of them. The fun and carefree characteristics of late-night drinking with a younger group of people were considered as being incompatible with old age. Social norms become social restrictions for the older patrons as they remove themselves from 'fun' social situations and return home at an earlier, age-appropriate time. The powerful influence of social norms to regulate and constrain the behaviour, and integrated social interaction of these older men is evident. Other meanings were more explicit and were presented in the form of negative stereotypical 'sketches' of the 'old fogey', or the 'old haggard'.

'The old fogey' represents a deficit, dreaded portrayal of old age: frail, experiencing falls and forgetfulness, an isolated figure of ridicule who is rejected and avoided by those in their own community. The characteristics of the 'old fogey' are an exaggerated amalgamation of what is often the focus of cultural and media representations of older age:

> The old fogey [is] bad on the pins [legs], getting a bit feeble, getting forgetful. I mean very, I'm forgetful anyway, but getting very forgetful and thereby finish up in, in maybe ridiculous situations. [The old fogey is] a person that people try to avoid because they're boring or they're just not able to keep up, maybe from a mental point of view and physical point of view. That's an old fogey (Simon, 69).

Similarly, Hugo spoke of the 'old haggard', connecting 'being older' and 'acting older':

> If I was to sit down here and just read the papers and sit at the fire, I'd be a zombie, I think. I go to visit a lot of my friends and that sort of thing. Well, of course, you have to face reality, I am older but it doesn't really come into the situation really. I never think of myself as just an old haggard or something like that (Hugo, 92).

These participants displayed ageist opinions and a form of in-group ageism, towards people of their own chronological age, for example, describing 'older people' as boring. They are framing older age as deficit through an array of socio-cultural constructs in the form of hackneyed 'characters': the old fogey, and the old haggard. The older men narratively constructed (through these descriptive stereotypes), and subsequently rejected a stereotypical older age identity for themselves. A contradiction is evident, as the participants are subscribing to stereotyping and ageism in describing *other* 'old' people as a homogenous, 'boring' or isolated, and in the pejorative terms of 'old fogey' or 'old haggard' yet reject such stereotyping and ageism in relation to their own ageing and 'being' older.

These stereotypical portraits of old age can be conceived as being a manifestation of social representations of a feared fourth age, a portrayal of the participants' understanding of what the fourth age *could* bring. Higgs and Gilleard's (2020) concept of the fourth age as social imaginary refers to a metaphorical 'black hole of ageing' that represents a collectively imagined terminal destination in life. Higgs and Gilleard outlined the characteristics of the fourth age social imaginary as a 'location stripped of the social and cultural capital of later life which allows for the articulation of choice, autonomy, self-expression and pleasure' (2020, p.14). The sketches of a fearful older age outlined by the participants echo these attributes.

In not adopting a 'ring-fenced' social life, in rejecting to socialise exclusively among people of their own age (many of the participants had formed and maintained both same age and cross gender intergenerational friendships), the older men were spurning age-appropriate behaviours, for instance, in Tommy's case, by not feeling obliged to leave social occasions early solely because they are deemed 'old'. The people who took part in this study did not reject being long-lived, their chronological age; they did not deny that they are old. Kaufman (1986; 1993) argued that old people do not perceive meaning in aging itself so much as they perceive meaning in being themselves in old age. The older friends sought to maintain their identities, to continue to be themselves. What the participants rejected was the ubiquity of behaviours and characteristics ascribed to older people through social norms, age norms and ageist expectations.

Conclusion

Friendship is a vital institution for men, from their early years to adulthood. It shapes male identities and provides men with the space to create bonds filled with complex dimensions of solidarity, love, competition and power relations. This chapter outlined how intergenerational friendship provides a space for the older men in this study to continue to 'do' the things they have always done or want to do, and to 'be' the person that they perceive themselves to be in older age, despite the limitations that society strives to place on them simply because they are long-lived.

This chapter illustrates how older men do not conform to the representations of older people as being disengaged and a 'burden'. Within the realm of intergenerational friendship,

they perceive themselves as performing as an equal 'partner', giving and taking in equal measure. In being an intergenerational older friend, the friends challenge societal and cultural expectations of what older people 'should' do and be. The nexus of being old for these participants is not chronological age (as embraced culturally and by institutions and society as an organisational category for *inter alia* education, retirement, and welfare supports) but how old age is 'performed'. The older men in this study did not seek to be limited in making friendship choices, which were a matter of personal preference and were not constrained by the influences of an ageist, age-aware society. The challenging of ageing expectations or behaviours took many forms, with the shared intention of defying alienation or exclusion as an older intergenerational friend.

However, in this research, accounts emerged of older people discriminating against those of their own age group. This approach may be considered another 'way' of ageing to evade becoming a stereotypical, feared caricature (old fogey or old haggard) and a way of avoiding being perceived by others in society as a member of an excluded, negatively framed group (older people). Goffman (1963) conceptualised stigma as an 'attribute that is deeply discrediting', with the stigmatised experiencing being socially rejected as they are distinguished from those who are socially accepted (p.3). The older men in this study anticipate the stigma attached to being perceived as members of the stereotypical 'deficit' group of old people. Seeking friendships with younger people, therefore, may be perceived as part of a coping mechanism to counteract the sense of being the object of age stigma. A paradox is therefore evident, as older men may both deify and ascribe to stereotyping and ageism through intergenerational friendship.

Gilleard and Higgs (2000) posited that in contemporary society, 'post-work lives have become richer and more complex' (p. 193). This would seem to be the case for those who took part in this study. The older men illustrated defiance by not abandoning the professions that formed part of their identity and that they had been mandated (by employment policy) to officially retire from. Instead, they continued to pursue these professions or embraced other professions in an informal capacity, with or through their intergenerational friendships. Maintaining a long-held identity supported the older friends to remain embedded in pursuits that facilitated inclusion and a sense of self and of belonging.

Friendship is often seen as a remedy for many of the perceived 'problems' associated with older age. The older friends in this study perceived friendship and friendship activities with younger adults as a shield against a possible deficit of older age, fuelled by ageist ideation of what older age could 'look like' (an alienated, ridiculed old fogey or old haggard) without continued engagement with friends. The benefits of intergenerational friendship are pursued and enjoyed by the older men who participated in this study.

Intergenerational friendship challenges the pervasiveness of homophily and ageist assumptions on how ageing and older people are understood and 'framed' in contemporary societies and in research; that older people are not suited to, or capable of, intergenerational relationships that are voluntary, chosen, and mutually enjoyable. Intergenerational friendship is shaped by social forces in the form of expectations and social and age norms relating to how older adults are perceived. Additionally, the social segregation of older people from younger people has the potential to act as a constraint to intergenerational friendship formation. In order to go on to form intergenerational friendships, older and younger men need to meet and to view each other in such a way that friendship formation becomes, in principle, a possibility and a celebration of human connections across our lives.

Male intergenerational friendship, horizontal homosociality, and caring social relations, challenge hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal relations and promote egalitarian gender relations with women and among men. Further research is needed to explore negotiations of masculinities and age in the private and public spheres, in the context of private and public patriarchies.

The research findings outlined in this chapter have implications for policy and practice, in contributing to the understanding of how 'ordinary' older men negotiate their search for enjoyment and belonging in later life. This chapter recognises that 'older' people are a heterogeneous group with diverse experiences, interests and needs that are shaped by factors such as sexual orientation, social class, or race/ethnicity. Policies need to address this plurality in older men's' experiences and positionalities.

- Policy and practice should counter and tackle the pervasiveness of ageism and age stereotyping for older men.
- Spaces and places for intergenerational interaction for all ages across the life course should be provided to create opportunities to actively promote and foster meaningful intergenerational activities.
- Employment inclusive policy should foster flexible/part time working arrangements as well as choice in retirement age to facilitate a multigenerational workplace.
- Further research to inform policy is needed that explores complex social interactions at the intersections of race/ethnicity, masculinities, sexualities and age in relation to the formation and maintenance of intergenerational friendship.
- Finally, the Covid-19 global health pandemic urges us to rethink the impact of isolation and a lack of social capital in the lives of older men. Pandemics such as Covid-19 threaten intergenerational friendship and solidarity and needs to be addressed by inclusive policies.

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