



“For a Younger Crowd”: Place, Belonging, and Exclusion among Older Adults Facing Neighborhood Change

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Abstract

Cities are gentrifying, yet we know little about the experience of older adults aging in gentrifying areas. Most research has focused on a shortage of affordable housing and threat of eviction for low-income residents but has paid less attention to age. This trend neglects a fuller understanding of place’s heightened significance for older people and how commercial gentrification threatens their possibilities to connect in non-institutional, intergenerational spaces. Drawing on five years of ethnographic fieldwork among older adults in a gentrified New York City neighborhood, this paper examines the significance of “third places” for longtime residents. I find that features of establishments such as proximity (distance from study participants’ residences), cost, physical design and layout, and surveillance shaped how different neighborhood places facilitated face-to-face interaction and a sense of ownership that supported participants’ independence as they aged in place. This paper contributes to limited scholarly knowledge about older people’s experiences of gentrification and neighborhood change, an understudied area of growing concern as population aging converges with the increasing desirability and cost of living in urban areas.

Keywords Aging · Life course · Community · Ethnography · Social ties · Commercial gentrification · Indirect displacement · Public space · Place

Given the high cost of institutional care and elders’ desire to “age in place,” or remain in their communities independently for as long as possible, scholars and ordinary people have an interest in understanding how communities and neighborhoods help elders¹ thrive. Place has important consequences for understanding the social ties older people develop, and as my

¹Aging scholars debate how to define age categories (for more discussion see Neugarten and Neugarten 2002) but have reached some consensus that in Western societies, old age begins somewhere between ages 60 and 65, when adults become eligible for public social benefits. In this article, I use the terms “elder” and “older adult” to describe people over the age of 60.

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study finds, neighborhood can increase in significance for elders with growing physical and financial limitations. The case of the old reveals the circumstances under which place becomes important and how people use places to build ties that provide social support and a sense of belonging (see Small 2009; Small 2017). In cities undergoing gentrification, defined as the process by which higher economic classes come to dominate residential and commercial uses in an urban area, older adults face threats not only to their housing but must also grapple with the practical and emotional consequences of a changing retail landscape, which include indirect displacement from commercial gentrification.

While prior studies have found that older adults' networks tend to be smaller and their social worlds "spatially circumscribed" (Fischer 1982, 184), relatively little research has examined the lived experience of aging in place using an ethnographic approach (some recent examples include Abramson 2015; Loe 2011; Portacolone 2013). We know little about the experience of aging in gentrifying areas (Smith et al. 2018). For older adults who face constraints that lead to increased time near their homes, such as declining physical mobility and fixed incomes that impede extensive travel and activities outside the neighborhood, my longitudinal observation suggests that place magnifies in significance for urban elders as spatial proximity to socializing spaces also grows in importance. This finding has implications for long-term residents aging in place in gentrifying areas, as direct and indirect displacement shape their possibilities for belonging, community, and attachment to home and place.

To investigate the role of public places in fostering social connection for older adults and how gentrification shapes those possibilities, I draw on five years of ethnographic observations. This study began in a mom-and-pop bakery in a Manhattan neighborhood. The bakery's most loyal customers, those who spent the most time there, tended to be in their seventies and eighties. Many preferred this type of informal neighborhood space that served a mix of ages over an age-separated, institutional space, such as a senior center. For elders with fixed incomes, surplus time in retirement, and difficulty walking more than a few blocks, La Marjolaine² served as a well-located meeting spot with reasonable prices and few restrictions on how long customers could stay. Most had lived in the neighborhood for several decades, and some, their entire lives. These lifers often attended elementary school together, knew each other's extended families, and carried long memories and mental maps of the neighborhood that predated the surrounding buildings, erected in the 1960s. When the bakery closed due to rising rent, the significance of this place and the challenges of recreating the conditions that fostered the connections there surfaced.

This paper examines participants' interactions in five retail establishments located within a few blocks of each other: La Marjolaine bakery, Pete's Delicatessen, McDonald's, Galaxy Diner, and Loaf bread shop. After describing my methods and the study's setting, I identify proximity, cost, design, and surveillance as four features of establishments that emerged from the data as categories that facilitated these connections and later colored former bakery customers' perceptions of alternative neighborhood gathering places. These four elements proved consequential for understanding participants' experience aging in place and how gentrification and the subsequent loss of affordable commercial spaces restricted people's access to neighborhood supports and created feelings of indirect displacement. I close with a discussion of how geographic proximity to home, low cost, physical design and layout conducive to socializing, and a lack of surveillance promoted access and emotional and physical comfort. This article contributes to the sociology of aging and community by expanding our empirical knowledge of older adults' lived experiences of aging in place amidst

² For confidentiality reasons, I have changed the names of most sites and people.

gentrification and identifying features of the built retail environment that helped elders connect and secure informal support in their communities.

“Third Places”: Belonging, Connection, and Attachment

Urban scholars have argued for the importance of place in understanding and promoting community (Gieryn 2000; Lofland 1998; Oldenburg 1989). Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) use the term “third place” to describe places beyond the home (the first place) and the workplace (the second place) where people come together, such as bookstores, post offices, and coffee shops. Gieryn’s (2000) discussion of “a space for place” in sociology makes clear that place is a real and important consideration for understanding how communities and social networks form. One of the most important distinctions Gieryn (2000) draws is that place, while physical, is also “doubly constructed” in the minds of people who imbue place’s physicality with meaning. The meanings that people invest in their places often lead to emotional attachments as people associate places with certain parts of their biographies and may grow stronger the longer a person frequents a special place, a process that creates an “interactional past” for the site and a reserve of memories (Milligan 1998).

Attachment to place may encourage people to become “public characters” (Jacobs 1961; Oldenburg 1989) and to develop a sense of ownership of these physical spaces. The meaning and emotion they invest in places can also extend to others there, and caretaking of place may lead to caring for and helping the people who inhabit these spaces (see Duneier 1992). The loss of places may result in grief, as occurred in this study case and as prior research has demonstrated. Milligan’s (1998) study of a university campus coffee shop’s move to a new location reveals the feelings of loss and attachment employees experienced along with displacement, which Milligan defines as “an involuntary disruption in place attachment” (3). Similarly, Fried’s (1963) study of forced residential relocation in Boston’s West End finds the majority of participants experienced grief, with a significant percentage reporting long-term sadness and depressive symptoms.

But while public places may encourage gathering, limits exist on the kinds of community people can form. Interactions can simultaneously exclude some and foster inclusion and cooperation for others. While in theory public places let everyone in, they can exclude as people carve out spaces for themselves and create their own private and intimate zones (see Humphreys 1970; Suttles 1968). Attachment can encourage people to take better care of their spaces and the people in them, but too strong of a sense of ownership can lead to the exclusion that breeds hostility, fear, and resentment in people who face restrictions on entering these public places (see Anderson 1990; Jacobs 1961; Rieder 1985; Suttles 1968). Whyte’s (1980) study of “small urban spaces” like outdoor plazas demonstrates how this inclusiveness can sometimes crowd others out. Due to worries that popular public places will attract the “wrong” sorts of people—“undesirables,” like people without permanent housing and those suffering from addiction—businesses may create spaces that no person with other options would want to spend time in. Such unattractive places usually lack seating (or contain only uncomfortable seating, such as ledges with metal spikes).

Urban Aging in Place

Scholars focus on social isolation as a problem of older adults because this age group faces a number of risk factors for isolation, including higher rates of living alone, physical illness, and

clinical depression (Courtin and Knapp 2017; Kharicha et al. 2007). Aging scholars have also highlighted elders' susceptibility to isolation because they often live alone. The number of elders living alone has risen throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Klinenberg 2002; Klinenberg 2012), often as a result of losing a partner but also the choice of many older people to live alone (Townsend 1957). While living alone increases elders' risk of isolation (York Cornwell and Waite 2009), this household arrangement does not predetermine loneliness or isolation. Health declines may limit social interaction and activity, but research has also found that older adults face less loneliness and isolation than previous scholarship implied (Carstensen 1992; Cornwell et al. 2008; Hooyman and Kiyak 2008; Schnitker 2007; York Cornwell and Waite 2009). Considering the sources of social support and resources older people develop in public places can help researchers form a more accurate picture of the risk factors urban elders face relative to their opportunities to connect in the face of such challenges.

Reliance on neighborhood-based social ties may increase with age, especially for elders with physical mobility limitations. Fischer (1982, 184) finds that older people's social worlds "tended to be spatially circumscribed," leading them to depend on their communities as key sites to create supportive ties outside of family. Local geography may rise in significance in urban areas where people drive less and walk to stores close to home (Ben Noon and Ayalon 2018; Cagney et al. 2013; Kugelmass 1986; Myerhoff 1978). Hochschild (1973) observes the salience of class for developing neighborhood relationships; working-class older people often draw heavily on these community ties, which may cushion the loss of work-based ties in retirement (see also Duneier 1992; Furman 1997; Victor et al. 2009).

Many older adults eschew age-separated, institutional spaces such as senior centers. While these organized centers stand as a significant policy intervention to reduce isolation, the number of senior center attendees has declined (MaloneBeach and Langeland 2011). The stigma associated with old age helps explain some of this decline. Many elders resist socializing exclusively with other "old" people and prefer intergenerational activities in non-age-specific community centers (Walker et al. 2004) and informal settings, such as public places. Declining participation also reflects the changing preferences of aging Baby Boomers. Given their identification with younger generations, negative stereotypes of senior centers filled with frail and lonely older adults dampen their enthusiasm for attending (Hostetler 2011).

Given the ageism and stigma attached to organized spaces for seniors, many elders enjoy multigenerational public spaces teeming with children, families, and other passersby that help forge a sense of community and connection (Finlay et al. 2015). A majority of studies on older adults' use of public space examine how elders socialize in "commercial third places," such as shopping malls (Graham et al. 1991; White et al. 2015), fast-food restaurants (Cheang 2002), and coffee houses (Murphy 2017; Windhorst, Hollinger-Smith, and Sassen 2010).

For example, many elders approach shopping malls as places to "do nothing" or for "people watching" and not as centers of consumption (White et al. 2015). Due to their safety and comfort, inclusive physical amenities (such as benches), and low or no cost, some elders visit shopping centers solely for social contact and interaction (Graham et al. 1991). Fast-food restaurants serve as another popular third place for elders. For example, Cheang (2002) observes a group of older adults in Hawaii who frequent a local fast-food restaurant. He finds that this spontaneously-occurring group not only provides structure, meaning, and social interactions, but more importantly, serves as a source of leisure, fun, and laughter. Public parks also provide elders with open space to cultivate social ties. Using still photography in Israel, Ben Noon and Ayalon (2018) capture the presence of older adults in public parks. They

find that although most arrive alone, almost half form a social group while lingering there, suggesting the importance of public spaces in facilitating social interactions among elders.

Gentrification has both expanded and limited elders' use of public spaces, offering new establishments and increased safety while also threatening and closing longstanding businesses, thereby curtailing the possibilities for belonging. Writing about neighborhood changes in early 1960s London, Glass (1964 [2010], 22–23) defines gentrification as a process in which more affluent middle classes “invade” working-class areas and convert formerly shabby residences into expensive homes. She writes, “Once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed.” I use a similar working definition of gentrification to refer to the process by which higher economic classes come to dominate residential and commercial uses in an urban area. This paper focuses on the gentrification of commercial spaces and indirect displacement of lower-income patrons through exclusionary practices and processes that make them feel unwelcome economically, culturally, and socially.

As gentrification has remade the face of cities in the United States and around the world, urban scholars have broadened their understanding of gentrification beyond direct residential displacement to include more indirect effects on neighborhoods and residents, many of whom remain amidst drastic changes. Davidson (2008) argues gentrification scholarship has dwelled at length on direct displacement while not devoting sufficient attention to theorizing more subtle forms of indirect displacement. Building on Marcuse's (1986) notion of “exclusionary displacement,” which moves beyond the removal of lower-income residents in favor of wealthier occupants to examine broader affordability pressures, Davidson (2008) identifies three forms of indirect displacement (economic, community, and neighborhood resource displacement) that help explain how the social character of a gentrifying neighborhood changes. Indirect economic displacement occurs in the long term when a steady reduction in affordable housing and an increase in upscale commercial and residential buildings make an area desirable to more affluent residents and more difficult for older residents and their friend and family networks to remain. Indirect community displacement involves a loss of power for longstanding residents to define place identity, participate in local politics, and determine the provision of services with the influx of newcomers. Indirect neighborhood resource displacement refers to the process in which a community's infrastructure and services becomes replaced with another's so that original residents feel increasingly like outsiders, for example, when new businesses cater to a wealthier clientele.

As the infusion of economic and cultural capital gentrifies an area and spurs the development of new commercial and residential construction, affordability pressures increase over a longer period. Consequences of such changes for remaining lower-income residents include growing discomfort, disconnection, and apathy. With the loss of power to define their own urban spaces and the eroded working-class clientele for modest businesses, longtime residents feel “out of place” amidst the influx of new products and aesthetics from moneyed new neighbors. The out-of-reach prices of these new goods and services compel some to travel to less gentrified areas to accomplish essential errands like grocery shopping (Davidson 2008). Although researchers may face difficulties in identifying, measuring, and conceptualizing indirect displacement, Davidson urges increased recognition of its importance alongside instances of direct displacement.

In addition to economic pressures, Hyra (2015) argues for increased attention to the social consequences of gentrification for longtime residents who remain in areas undergoing

transition. For example, participants in Hyra's (2015) study expressed feeling that new amenities such as bike lanes and dog parks were not intended for them and that their construction sent a symbolic message they no longer belonged. Tissot's (2011) study of public places such as dog runs reveals how seemingly open spaces can also create exclusive social boundaries, allowing gentrifiers to espouse a commitment to diversity while also distancing themselves from less affluent neighbors. In this context, dog runs become sites of power struggles in which the more privileged exert control and restrict access while projecting community inclusiveness. Centner's (2008) focus on elite consumption practices of young, urban, moneyed professionals flush with dot-com era wealth in San Francisco demonstrates how subtle processes steeped in privilege can exclude. His concept of "spatial capital," defined as the social power to take over and make over place, runs through participants' accounts of feeling unwelcome in formerly familiar places. For example, one interviewee spoke of feeling crowded out of a neighborhood bar packed with new customers and temporarily relocated to other nearby establishments until the dot-com bust helped thin the crowds.

The socio-cultural displacement and the dismantling of community infrastructure that Davidson and Lees (2010) describe have implications for aging residents. Their discussion of the phenomenology and intimacy of place and home has special relevance for elders as they lose the "emotional geographies" (Tuan 1977, 3) that anchor their identities and personal histories. Such dislocation often produces feelings of bereavement, which older adults may feel even more acutely (Davidson and Lees 2010; Rúa 2017). As Hyra (2015) finds, longtime residents may feel their attachment to place weakening as they no longer recognize their neighborhoods anymore. This loosening of bonds to the local area may also lead to political displacement, as residents lose political power as newcomers join community boards and longtime residents disengage, relinquishing additional power to have a say in neighborhood developments.

Scholars know little about the experiences of a growing number of elders facing gentrification, though some recent work points to troubling trends about how long-term older residents manage sweeping neighborhood changes (Smith et al. 2018; Rúa 2017; García and Rúa 2018). The potential negative effects of gentrification for elders include higher housing costs, the loss of formal and informal support networks, and eviction threats (Smith et al. 2018). Furthermore, the threat of isolation may increase. Indirect and commercial displacement burdens long-time residents aging in place, who may have secure housing but experience growing exclusion as the character of their neighborhood changes and makes them feel unwelcome (Torres 2018; Rúa 2017). Rúa's (2017) qualitative study of Puerto Rican elders in a gentrifying area of Chicago also finds that gentrification stood as the latest cycle of displacement many experienced, following previous displacement events linked to migration and Federal urban renewal slum clearance programs that caused widespread disruption and housing loss.

Methods and Research Setting

This study draws on five years of ethnographic observations and 25 interviews with participants. A union-built, low-equity co-op³ for moderate-income residents leased space for the

³ A co-op is a residence where a buyer purchases a share in the corporation that owns the building where they live and has the right to occupy a specified unit and a vote in the corporation. Low equity co-ops limit the resale of shares, helping to preserve affordable housing (National Association of Housing Cooperatives 2012).

bakery that served as the study's initial site. La Marjolaine was the last in a string of mom-and-pop bakeries that first opened in 1962 and it held the space for eleven years, until 2010. This remnant of a pre-gentrified neighborhood sat at the center of three residential swathes—the co-op, public housing projects, and a large rental complex. These buildings housed many longtime tenants, a number of whom frequented the bakery. The protections afforded to them through rent tied to income in the housing projects and co-op, or through rent control and stabilization programs in the rental buildings, meant that many longtime, lower-to-middle income residents had stayed in a neighborhood now home to upscale businesses and luxury condominiums. Many co-op and project residents had “aged in place” in buildings classified as NORCs (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities), which Federal law defines as “a community with a concentrated population of older individuals” (Niesz 2007). New York City has 27 NORCs in four boroughs (Interboro Partners 2010).

While I took field notes⁴ at this site for six months, from September 2009 through February 2010, my observations date to 2004, when I first came into La Marjolaine as a customer. Prior acquaintanceship with several key figures helped me build rapport and meet other bakery regulars. This fluid group of roughly 47 women and men aged 60+ skewed female, Puerto Rican, Jewish, and ethnic white (Italian, Greek, Irish descent), and low-to-middle income, reflecting neighborhood demographics prior to gentrification. During this intensive period, I observed the bakery during mornings, afternoons, and evenings, an average of four to five times a week for a minimum of two hours. I recorded my observations until the bakery permanently closed, upon which my study became multi-sited as former customers scattered across the neighborhood. I identified five sites where I hypothesized they would go, based on their plans to cope with the closing, housing proximity to the original site, and my knowledge of the neighborhood. I ended up primarily in two sites for four and a half years—McDonald's and Pete's Delicatessen—where different groups of former bakery patrons had convened.

The number of people I observed regularly in the store but for whom I did not always have a name or who fell into a younger age group is greater than the core group of regulars with whom I spent the most time and totaled 136. My fieldwork also took me out of public gathering spots as I visited participants in their homes, hospitals, nursing homes, attended wakes and funerals, and accompanied them to other neighborhood places. To supplement observations, I conducted 25 interviews with people recruited from the bakery, which began three weeks after the closing. These interviews asked about basic biographical information, residential history, experiences of the bakery and afterwards, social relationships, and daily routines.

Findings

The turnover of retail leases on a single block where La Marjolaine bakery stood reflects this narrowing of options for my participants who lived in the surrounding buildings. In two years, this block went from containing a total of five storefronts where they gathered to just one establishment, a cramped Dunkin Donuts that had not drawn nearly the same crowd since the rest of the lower-cost stores closed. During this period, a sandwich shop became a tax office, a

⁴ I use quotes when I wrote down in my notebook what people said as they spoke or shortly afterwards and when I transcribed dialogue from tape recordings made in the field or during an interview. Speech in quotes should be taken only as a close approximation.

corner deli an upscale pizzeria, a pizza-deli a Sushi restaurant, and a Tapas bar took over the lotto store next to the bakery. The bakery itself sat vacant for nearly two and a half years, waiting for its reincarnation as the sleek bread shop Loaf. When this higher priced establishment finally opened, a younger more affluent crowd started coming into the store.

I have identified proximity, cost, design, and surveillance as salient features of establishments that influenced the ways older people interacted face-to-face and their general use of neighborhood public places. These elements emerged from longitudinal observations and participant accounts of the elements they sought in a replacement gathering place as they assessed options before and after the closing of the bakery. The following four subsections will discuss each of these variables and demonstrate how these features emerged as considerations for participants at different sites.

Proximity

For those with health problems that limited their physical mobility, the immediate world that lay outside their front door loomed large in determining their relative quality of life. Due to growing physical limitations, the distance from my study participants' homes to the surrounding local neighborhood shops played a role in where they could go after the bakery closed. The bakery's central location, at the crossroads of the public housing projects, a large rental complex, and low-equity co-ops, drew a diverse crowd, not only in terms of race and class but physical capability as well. Proximity to residence also allowed older people to access this space more frequently. Judging from the hours some older customers spent in the bakery, they may have spent more time there during the day than in their homes. Many stopped in more than once a day, leading to greater interaction and opportunity to develop stronger ties to each other.

Other sites tested people's physical ability to walk there and their ability to surmount these physical barriers in other ways (i.e., taking a taxi or bus to their destination). Two places where clusters of former bakery customers headed after the bakery closed, McDonald's and Pete's Delicatessen, stood at opposite ends of the area surrounding the bakery. McDonald's sat on a busy avenue in a space leased by the co-op. Its location four blocks from the bakery made it a convenient gathering place for many seniors living in buildings nearby. But for those who lived further away and could walk to the bakery and not much more, McDonald's stood out of reach.

For example, when I first met Eugene at age 79, he traveled outside of the neighborhood, around the country, and all over the world. A white man originally from a small town in Texas, Eugene had lived in New York City for 55 years, 40 of those years in the same rent-stabilized apartment a half block from the bakery and around the corner from Pete's. He had attended performances at Lincoln Center, took singing lessons uptown, visited his friend Maggie who lived in Washington Heights, and dropped off typewritten manuscripts of his nutrition books to a typing service on the Upper East Side. Eugene continued to juggle multiple projects as a working writer.

Though Eugene often peppered his conversations with travel anecdotes and stories of past trips overseas, in his eighties his access to those far-flung places became limited to email and to his reserve of memories. At 88 he had decided for the first time not to renew his passport. During his last trip, to Fargo, North Dakota, he fell in the airport and needed major hip surgery afterwards. He could barely limp to the bakery with his severe hip pain, but the regulars he interacted with daily provided practical assistance when he underwent major surgery and faced

a challenging recovery while dealing with a string of setbacks. Though Eugene's affable disposition and sharp intellect helped him build good will among bakery regulars, this setting also allowed him to draw on a reserve of social resources. At least 20 people he knew from the bakery visited him in the hospital and brought him food, newspapers, cards, balloons, and well wishes for a quick recovery. Eugene's first night back, though thinner and paler, he returned to the bakery.

Since then he faced other health issues that limited his ability to walk much further than to Pete's or to the Galaxy Diner across the street, both a block from his apartment. He used a cane to make this journey but even with this additional support sometimes had fallen in the street. "People rushed over to help me," he assured us. A heart attack three years before made him feel "tired" when he walked much more. When he ventured further, to the movies or to the barber one long cross-town block away, to the UPS store roughly five blocks away, or to the Veterans Administration hospital across town on the East Side, he took a taxi. Given that going to McDonald's required a cab ride back and forth, he went to Pete's instead for breakfast and for dinner or coffee in the evenings. "It's a little too far, Eugene said of McDonald's, a few weeks after he had once joined others who had gathered there in the days after the bakery closing. In bad weather he avoided walking on slippery sidewalks by taking his building's underground tunnel and exiting from a neighboring pre-war building's entrance. One year construction scaffolding snaked around the block from the entrance of Eugene's building to Pete's, recreating the safe passage of the underground tunnel.

While this case may seem like an outlier, the mobility barriers that Eugene faced were common to most study participants. Many dealt with multiple chronic illnesses that affected their ability to get around. Though Sylvia, 87, walked 16 blocks with me slowly but steadily to her doctor's office nine years before, she had more trouble walking in later years. Arthritis caused severe leg and knee pain, and an untreated cataract in her left eye reduced peripheral vision. During superstorm Sandy, both she and Eugene remained stranded in their darkened apartments for days during the blackout due to their inability to climb the stairs. These physical hurdles kept Sylvia closer to home for most of her meals and routines. She avoided excursions beyond a two-block radius around her home except for medical appointments, trips to the bank, and family visits. After the bakery closing, she split her time between Pete's, where she gathered with former bakery regulars, and ate meals alone at the West Side Diner across the street. Both eateries stood a block and a half from her apartment. Whenever she heard neighborhood gossip about the group that gathered at McDonald's she said, "Oh, I haven't been there in years," as if McDonald's was a far off, distant place. Lucy, a retired secretary known for her bright red glasses and booming voice, was a regular at McDonald's and Pete's. She had begun using a cane after experiencing a series of falls in short succession five years earlier. During the last snowy, bitter cold winter of the study period, she went only to McDonald's and stopped going to Pete's for six weeks to stay closer to home.

Another former bakery customer, Eddie, 82, could walk to both McDonald's and Pete's, but with considerable effort. He retired from his job in construction in his late sixties, largely due to leg and back pain. He used a cane and wore compression stockings, but in his apartment he also used a walker. He had periods of severe swelling in his ankles and legs, which left him homebound. When he could not leave his apartment, a next-door neighbor pitched in and brought him newspapers and food. Eddie could not come out when it rained or even after the precipitation had ended if the streets remained rain-slicked and shiny, for fear of falling. To protect himself from the strong winds that gusted from the Hudson River, he developed strategies for crossing the street about 40 feet from the corner crosswalk. He positioned his

cane on the sidewalk to strengthen his balance (like the third leg of a tripod) and maintain his ability to stand up in the face of a blasting wind. This strategy did not always work. He narrated one occasion when the wind upset his balance, pushed him from the middle of the crosswalk, and slammed him into a fence across the street. He fell to the ground and two passersby helped him to his feet and retrieved his cane, which had blown several feet away. Eddie ended up going to Pete's, which pushed him to walk a block and a half further past the bakery. He went far less frequently to Pete's than to the bakery. When he could not make it, he called with a note of apology in his voice and an explanation, such as ankle swelling or fatigue from a full day of doctor's appointments at the VA Hospital clinic.

Cost

An important consideration in people's choices about where to gather was product price. At the bakery, customers could purchase a small coffee or tea for a dollar and a roll with butter for 65 cents. The owner and head baker, a native of Lyon, France, in his early sixties, stocked his cases daily with staples like apple turnovers, baguettes, and quiche, while also making concessions to his bakery's Manhattan surroundings and offering bagels, challah, and hamantaschen. Most of these items cost less than two dollars, and the low entry price of his goods allowed greater access to this space. After the owner left for the day, some people came in and sat for hours without buying anything. McDonald's low prices meant that former bakery customers had plenty of purchasing options in terms of price. Specials like two breakfast sandwiches for three dollars and other monthly promotions lowered the price of products further. And seniors received discounts on hot beverages, bringing the price down to 94 cents per cup of coffee and less for tea. Many bakery customers cited McDonald's prices as a major incentive for them to regroup there after the bakery closed. For example, Dottie, who lived in public housing, rattled off her impressive knowledge of items on the dollar menu, saying, "I can afford everything there. Works for me." In terms of price, McDonald's discriminated against no one. Even people who asked for change usually collected enough coins to buy something.

Unlike the sleeker coffee shop next door, "The Art of Coffee," Pete's made no lofty claims about its brew. The coffee was good and cheap at \$1.25 for a small cup. Two center beams contained merry-go-round shelves that catered to a wide swath of tastes, from single-serving packages of Oreos and Linden's cookies that cost a dollar, to more expensive Kashi brand cookies and other organic snacks. A salad bar housed a variety of hot and cold food, including lo mein, sweet plantains, mashed potatoes, salad, and wedges of pineapple and cantaloupe. Commercial refrigerators lined the right wall and carried a large variety of soda brands along with cartons of Tropicana and milk. A separate refrigerator contained a mix of more expensive brightly labeled Odwalla fruit juices and Naked smoothies that cost \$4.50 per 15-ounce bottle. But Eugene, Sylvia, Lucy, Eddie, and I only ever drank tea, coffee, water, milk, Snapple, and canned soda.

The variety of stock was not accidental. Pete's served a cross-section of customers comprised of building workers in Hudson Towers, moneyed residents of nearby market-rate apartments, and longtime older residents. The store's array of products also reflected its location, three blocks from the Hudson River. Retail spaces grew sparser and residential buildings lined the street, including a mix of pre-war town houses, the massive Hudson Towers complex that spanned an entire block, and new condos closer to the river. Within this neighborhood context, Pete's also functioned as a small supermarket. In addition to prepared food, customers could buy staples like milk, eggs, and bread and other household items such as dog food, paper towels, and cans of WD-40 behind the register.

Pete's buffet of options for people with different income levels had managed to attract its fair share of former bakery customers. A comparison of Eddie and Sylvia's purchases at Pete's reveals wide variation in spending. In the four years since the bakery closed and Eddie went to Pete's, I never saw him eat anything. In warmer weather, he drank a can of ginger ale for a dollar and in winter sipped a small tea for a \$1.25. Meanwhile, Sylvia often ate dinner there, either salad or sandwiches, which ran into the seven-dollar range. Over time, she shifted some grocery shopping there, buying paper towels, granola bars, yogurt, and milk. She knew that she paid more at Pete's for these items and for comparison's sake ticked off the lower prices at the supermarket around the corner. Her efforts to bolster Pete's business also reflected her apprehension about the possibility of losing another neighborhood place. "I don't want to get evicted again," she joked a few months after the bakery closed. She often updated us on the level of foot traffic at the West Side Diner across the street, which she had frequented for 30 years, and at Pete's. Sylvia regularly discussed her concerns about the slow-down in Pete's business and observed that the owner put less food in the salad bar because he could not afford to throw out what had not sold. She worried about the effect the diminished buffet offerings would have on customers because, "That's what the working people want to eat. The ones who labor need food to get them through the day."

In the first few days of its opening in the old bakery storefront, Sylvia and I went to "try" the new bread bakery, Loaf. She took a menu to show Eugene, who vowed not to go. I paid four dollars for an iced coffee and Sylvia paid \$2.75 for a small hot coffee. She was not in as precarious a financial position as many other bakery regulars and rarely complained about money stresses, though she admitted that rent on her rent-controlled apartment continued to climb. She noticed mysterious fees tacked onto her monthly rent bills but paid them without saying anything. "I don't want to make waves," she explained. That day Sylvia raised her eyebrows at the sizable outlay to purchase coffee and a buttered roll. "They're [older people] not going to go for this," she pronounced. Surveying the glass cases containing a small selection of high-priced baked goods with Italian names, such as the petite three-dollar doughnuts (or "bambolonis"), she said in a lowered voice, "This place is not for the neighborhood people. It's for a younger crowd."

For others, "trying" Loaf was not an option. As Sylvia and I sat, an older bakery regular named Juan, who lived in the housing projects, passed by without glancing over. Eddie also would not venture in, due to financial constraints and his anger at the toll of gentrification on mom-and-pop stores in the neighborhood. He often referenced his financial strain and shared his cost-cutting strategies, such as stocking up on canned soup and individual frozen pizzas on sale at the supermarket for a dollar each. Years before, he had walked to two less expensive supermarkets an average of 15 blocks away, but he could no longer walk that far and waited until Wednesdays to purchase sale items in bulk because he received a 10% senior discount at the supermarket a block from his building. Yet others, like Phyllis, visited Loaf more than once and relished telling me about seeing "people from the co-op" complain about the prices. "They'll try it once, but they won't come back," she said. She conceded that the prices were expensive but claimed she did not consider them a problem for herself and raved about the new bakery, saying, "I love it there." Phyllis also revealed that the new owner had spoken with her about the clientele he anticipated. "He said he doesn't want people from the co-op coming," she confided. Though she was a "person from the co-op," by gaining the owner's confidence she suggested that she had acquired a special status and distinguished herself from the other older, less desirable customers.

Design and Layout

Elements of spaces I categorize as “design,” including décor, seating arrangements, furniture, and window placement, combined to create an ambiance or atmosphere that added to or detracted from people’s comfort. “This place reminds me of my grandmother’s kitchen table,” mused occasional customer Luis, 26, about the bakery. The seasonal plastic-coated tablecloths and butter-colored paint on the walls made the place feel cozy, if a little worn, and handwritten signs advertising different baked goods completed the unfussy look. A few bakery regulars joked about the distressed furniture, the holes in the tablecloths, and creaky chairs, but the faded décor did not deter their patronage. The table layout at La Marjolaine bakery encouraged chatting among neighbors. Eight tables with two chairs apiece, with 16 total seats arranged in a rectangle, allowed people to dip in and out of any number of simultaneous conversations around them. When the bakery hummed with chatter, La Marjolaine felt more like a social club than a business, with the modest price of admission, a cup of coffee or tea. The seating arrangement allowed people to join in conversations or sit on the sidelines and observe, interacting as much or as little as they wished. But the seating arrangement alone did not guarantee such interactions, as observations at a bagel store on a bustling nearby avenue proved. Izzy’s Bagels had a similar table arrangement but nowhere near the same level of interaction. In the mornings, the place was too busy to foster the same kind of spontaneous banter, and during the quieter afternoons, people interacted more with technology (computers, smart phones, etc.) than with neighborhood acquaintances. This place drew fewer regulars, more tourists, and an overall younger crowd. When people interacted, they socialized as part of an established pair or group that arrived and left together.

After the bakery closed, gathering required greater coordination to ensure people showed up to alternate locations. Whereas people could always find someone at the bakery, meeting elsewhere entailed making phone calls. And once people gathered, physical features of the new spaces compelled greater commitment to interaction.

Phyllis, a regular customer of the shuttered bakery, called the women that frequented McDonald’s “the dementia club.” She no longer went to McDonald’s as much. “You are what you are by who you hang out with,” she explained. The women she referenced preferred to sit in an area near the entrance surrounded by a railing painted the same shade as Ronald McDonald’s fire-engine red hair. The section had a more intimate feeling than the rest of the busy store and contained six tables with seating for 24 people, eight more seats than the bakery. The layout felt more cramped, with tables for four people instead of two. Some tables sat further apart than those at the bakery. The space between tables and higher levels of ambient noise required people not to sit near other but *with* each other to participate in any extended interaction. If not seated at the same table, it was easy to feel left out. After the first table in the section filled up, along with the table across the aisle, those in the spillover group had to seat themselves directly behind at the second table in the row. One day I discovered Alice sitting alone, trying in vain to insert herself into the discussion with people’s backs towards her. She shouted to compensate for the distance. I sat with her, and we chatted. But after a few minutes I also felt left out of the larger group interaction and had no choice but to stand alongside the other tables to say hello and catch up with people. During the afternoons, the old generally clustered here, while the afterschool crush of teenagers held court towards the back of the store space.

Eventually McDonald’s roped off the space between the teen area and the rest of the store, drawing these boundaries more firmly. While educating me on the prison house origins of the baggy pants that the teenage boys at McDonald’s wore, Gladys informed me about the purpose

of the band stretched across this part of the store. “They [the kids] can’t go past there,” she said with a knowing nod. Carmen joked that the rope reminded her of a fancy night club. While the rope was more of a dirty retractable polyester belt than red velvet, it upheld a set of rules about entering this space. The rope separated the front and back areas of McDonald’s. During the afternoons, workers responsible for cleaning and unlocking the restrooms herded the after school adolescent crowd behind the rope. Teenagers had to show a tray with their purchases to enter. Adults could sit in this area as well, and I stepped inside without buying anything. Though many former bakery customers complained about the noise the teenagers made, many of them chose to sit in the back with them. They admitted missing the kids during their school breaks when McDonald’s grew quieter and emptier in their absence. More than one person explained that she preferred to sit there rather than in the railed-off area near the store entrance because she wanted to avoid the old people who sat there. Many who sat in this enclosed area predated the group that started coming to McDonald’s only after the bakery closed. A few members of the former bakery crowd like Theresa integrated themselves into this group, and she befriended an older, 90-year-old woman who came in with a middle-aged Asian woman who worked as her caregiver and performed tasks such as laundry and taking her to the restroom.

For most that came into Pete’s Deli in the early evenings when former bakery customers met, the deli-café served as a get-your-stuff-and-go kind of place. Save for a handful of regulars, most did not linger. Several people darted in from the street only to use the ATM. Others stayed briefly, like a young white woman with cascading brown curls that came in one night alone. She wore a stylish short navy dress, and her silver bracelet glinted each time she lifted a bottle of aloe peach drink to her lips. The woman stayed no more than 15 minutes and kept her eyes trained on her salad while texting on her iPhone. The men that worked in the surrounding buildings also did not stay long. Their uniforms gave them away, the Hudson Towers doormen in blue button-down shirts with navy epaulettes, and the porters and maintenance men in tan shirts with rolled-up sleeves and dark brown pants. These men usually left with plastic buffet containers or gobbled their food in a hurry.

Pete’s did not promise an experience or atmosphere. In contrast to the coffee shop next door with pale lime green walls bathed in warm golden light from amber fixtures, long fluorescent bulbs filled Pete’s with sterile white light. After sunset, this artificial light made the space seem darker, casting shadows on the visible patches of exposed red brick wall and outdated wood paneling over the cash register. Crumbs littered the stainless steel table tops covered with coffee rings. Lightweight aluminum chairs were comfortable but not too comfortable. Eight tables and 16 chairs squeezed into the front of the store required that people to sit close to each other.

One day Eugene, Sylvia, and I sat at two of these tables jammed between the store entrance and ATM. Eddie came in and I waved as he passed behind Sylvia and gave me a leery look, his eyes darting down to Sylvia, and then back up, as if to say, “What’s she doing here?” He headed to the back of the store and paid for his soda at the cashier. When he returned, the only seat left at the table was beside Sylvia, across from Eugene, diagonal from me. He told Eugene in a loud, staccato voice, “Get her outta here,” and pointed his right index finger at Sylvia. Sylvia raised an eyebrow at me and Eugene but said nothing. Eddie smiled afterward, but it was always difficult to tell how much he was joking. Eugene, Sylvia, and I continued talking as if nothing happened. This felt awkward to me, but at the same time I had become used to Eddie’s shtick, so this awkwardness also felt somewhat routine. Eugene continued an earlier thread of the discussion, about his ideas for patents and uncertainty about where or how to obtain one.

With Sylvia and Eddie at the table, interesting patterns of interaction emerged. When Eugene, Sylvia, and I chatted together before Eddie's arrival, we held a three-way discussion in which we all participated. When the four of us (Eugene, Sylvia, Eddie, and me) sat together, Eugene and Eddie mostly talked sports and Sylvia and I discussed a range of topics (health, memories, family). This gender division occurred not only in terms of discussion content but manifested in our positions at the table, as I sat across from Sylvia and Eugene across from Eddie. Because I spoke mostly with Sylvia when this quartet formed, I barely heard what Eugene and Eddie discussed and only caught snatches of discussion that drifted over. This pattern of interaction occurred largely because Eddie wanted to avoid talking with Sylvia, with whom he never chatted in the bakery.

Other battles took place over space at Pete's, most frequently between Sylvia and Lucy. Sylvia complained that Lucy did not think about anyone but herself and scoffed, "She's in her own little world." She disliked Lucy's tendency to leave her collapsible cane lying folded-up on the floor. Even when the cane rested beneath Lucy's seat, she cautioned in an alarmed, high-pitched voice, "Lucy, your cane. Watch your cane." When Sylvia's warnings first began, Lucy responded, distracted, "What? Oh, okay." Later on she answered with annoyance, "Yes, Sylvia, my cane, my cane, I know...." These battles not only concerned floor space but table space as well. Lucy often paged through her copy of *The Daily News* and read the headlines aloud for those seated beside her. Eugene quipped, "She's like our own mayor LaGuardia," referring to Fiorello LaGuardia's reading of the funnies over the radio during a newspaper strike. Sylvia turned her face away when Lucy held the paper open in front of her, "Uh, Lucy," she said batting the paper away. At the bakery, Sylvia had said a polite hello to Lucy and sometimes engaged in small talk but rarely sat with her. Since the closing, she sat several evenings a week in Lucy's company for four years. After one of these turf battles with Lucy, she said exasperated, "Who is she? And where did she come from anyway?"

Loaf's design elements and layout proved the least "age-friendly" to my older research participants. After its redesign, which involved completely gutting the old bakery's space, permanent exterior decorative coverings blocked parts of the window, making them smaller. Less light filtered through the reduced windows, and dim illumination from the fixtures made the new store significantly darker and strained older, cataract-prone eyes. Large heavy doors hindered easy entry for people with canes, walkers, wheelchairs, and reduced muscle strength. One woman pushing a rolling walker stood expectantly outside until someone inside noticed her and held the door open for her. The new layout also posed new physical challenges. A table for customers to add milk and sugar to their beverages stood on the other side of the store, several feet from the cash register and seating area. Eugene mentioned having difficulty carrying his tray to this table while also using a cane and said that in the old bakery, the counter person had always put his sugar in his coffee for him. Other features, such as the high pastry case that towered over the heads of some shorter customers, inhibited interaction with staff as people struggled to see behind the counter. Tables and chairs grouped along one wall in a row also precluded the interaction between customers possible in the previous space. Of the neighborhood spaces I observed, Loaf proved least accessible to my research participants in terms of design and layout.

Surveillance

The degree of surveillance that participants felt emerged as a primary consideration in their approach to finding new places to gather and helped explain why some places worked and

some never attracted a regular crowd of former bakery customers who had enjoyed a low level of monitoring. At the bakery, the owner allowed customers to linger, and many stopped in more than once a day. As Jacques explained, he did not allow people to spend as long as they liked in his store due to altruism. Rather, the bulk of his business's profits came from wholesale orders and catering, not his walk-in café business. And it helped business if people saw a packed store when they walked by, he said. At peak times like two o'clock in the afternoon, the bakery had standing room only. As one regular described the appeal of this site, "This place reminds me of the cafés they have in Europe. You can sit all day and nobody bothers you."

Jacques worked seven days a week, from five in the morning to about two-thirty in the afternoon. I rarely saw him out of his white baker's jacket. When he took a break from baking, he often sat at a table and chatted with customers. Bakery regulars sensed that he favored some customers, usually those that spent more money, based on the level of conversation he engaged in. But people expressed their comfort in the knowledge that as long as they bought something, no matter how meager their purchase, they could sit as long as they liked. When the owner left at around 2:30 p.m., customers had greater freedom to sit for hours and also to "break" the rules. With the owner gone for the day, people no longer had to purchase something to sit. Often, people treated the bakery as a rest stop before reaching home and bought nothing. They usually stayed longer than a few minutes, especially if they ran into someone they knew, and often chatted with the congenial middle-aged counterwoman, Angelica, an undocumented immigrant from Spain. Her warm and laidback presence allowed patrons to break rules further. She did not enforce prohibitions against outside food or using the restroom. One evening, a few women ordered a pizza and had it delivered to the store. Others brought Chinese takeout from across the street. When Angelica did not have time to eat the food she brought from home, she warmed up her homemade soup for Eugene, and he purchased less on those days. At the end of the day, she distributed bread and other unauthorized freebies to regulars, such as day-old muffins that she did not think should be sold the next day because they would turn stale and hard.

Other sites had varying degrees of surveillance. McDonald's loose supervision helped make it the most reliable site to find former bakery patrons. The fast-food joint was a remarkably democratic space, though perhaps too much for some. One of the most consistent complaints stemmed from the place's chaotic and noisy atmosphere. Much of its appeal derived from the fact "you could sit all day," similar to the old bakery. Many people did not buy anything and many brought in outside food. This lax supervision explained why measures like the rope caught me by surprise at first. While decals plastered to the entrance doors bombarded the entering customer with a laundry list of rules and regulations (e.g., Restroom for McDonald's Customers ONLY; Only Food or Beverages Purchased in McDonald's May Be Consumed in McDonald's; No Loitering: 30 Minute Time Limit for Consuming Food), the staff inconsistently enforced these rules and few infractions, short of violence, got you kicked out or even merited a warning. The place attracted people asking for money and people who appeared to suffer from a range of mental health troubles. For example, one middle-aged African-American man came in the afternoons and sat at a corner table by the window, shifting in his green oversized puffy green coat while talking to himself, the passersby outside, or sometimes shouting at the empty space in front of him. But as long as these people did not threaten or harass others to an extreme, the staff left them alone. The one time I saw someone kicked out, this person had attempted to engage in a sexual act in the restroom. After a worker escorted her screaming from the restroom, she threw a tray at a worker behind the counter before the manager threatened to call the police. This policy of tolerance also extended to the teenagers

who congregated there after school, from roughly three to five-thirty in the afternoon. They may have acted rowdy (loud yelling, play fighting, throwing cups and ice cubes), but as long as their behavior did not enter into violence, few were thrown out.

When the bakery closed, a regular named Arthur arranged for bakery regulars to regroup at a diner he and many others frequented. This arrangement lasted only a few days. People spoke of not feeling “comfortable.” Before entering the Galaxy Diner for the first time, word of the ground “rules” that governed this space circulated among the bakery crowd: you had to buy something; you had to leave a dollar tip; you could only hang out in the cordoned-off space for former bakery patrons between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. People disliked the waiters coming by and felt their true function was not to serve but to monitor. Days later, people migrated to McDonald’s and in time, to Pete’s. At Pete’s, when people began sitting at length, they felt the owner and staff watching. “I kept buying things,” Phyllis informed me, “because we sat for hours.”

As people became morning regulars, like Sylvia and Eugene, they felt greater liberty to sit if they followed the same golden rule that prevailed at the bakery—the necessity of buying something, anything. In the afternoons and evening, when Pete’s owner left, a more relaxed atmosphere prevailed, though not to the extent it had at the bakery. The young Mexican men who operated the cash register, prepared sandwiches and grilled food, made deliveries, and listened to music from the Spanish-language music radio station. They gave away free buttered rolls and prepared extra large sandwiches for regulars like Sylvia, whom they nicknamed “Corazón” (which translated affectionately to “heart” in English). Compared to the nuisances they had to deal with, such as a regular stream of aggressive panhandlers, these workers were not concerned with well-behaved older people who wanted to sit for a few hours. And they looked out for their regular older customers. Whenever Eugene did not show up a cashier named Ricardo asked, “No Mr. Eugene today?”

Discussion and Conclusion

While gentrification bestowed benefits on longtime residents who managed to stay, in the form of safer streets, increased amenities, and upscale stores for those who could afford them, the influx of younger, wealthier residents and visitors also set the stage for the indirect displacement of patrons from more modest neighborhood spaces they used for socializing. Landlords’ demands for higher commercial rents limited the number of nearby places where less affluent older residents could connect. My research finds that place’s importance grows for participants later in the life course, as features of old age such as poorer health, lower mobility, less discretionary income (Fischer 1982), and surplus free time in retirement, lead to increased time in the neighborhood close to home. With the bakery’s closing, narrowed choices forced those with the fewer resources to spend more time at a dwindling number of affordable and accessible places like McDonald’s. As Phyllis’s comments about “the dementia club” revealed, this lower-cost establishment had also taken on the stigma of age as elders competed for space with teenagers, another age group that also had less power and status.

Despite the rhetoric surrounding “aging in place,” both from elders who desire to remain in their homes rather than move to retirement communities and assisted living facilities, and from policymakers who see aging in place as a less costly and popular alternative to institutional options, less research has focused on capturing the lived experience of aging in place and understanding to what extent places and neighborhood relationships enable elders to remain in their homes. While large-scale survey research has provided an important portrait of older

adults' social networks, qualitative research suggests we have much left to understand about the ways neighborhood context helps nurture social connection. Aging in gentrifying neighborhoods adds another layer of complexity that further constrains older residents' options to find places where they feel a sense of belonging and comfortable economically, physically, and emotionally. In this context, increasing numbers of elders may also become "stuck in place" (Torres-Gil and Hofland 2012), lacking choice about where to grow old and the resources to comfortably age in place.

My ethnographic data confirm the development of emotional place attachments and suggest that they serve as an important positive component of belonging for those aging in place. Talk of the bakery among former customers in the years since its closing revealed how deeply people had bonded to this place. In the last days of her life in a nursing home, Dottie's daughter taped a snapshot of the bakery crowd to her dresser as comforting memento of home. Years after the bakery closing, people reported sightings of former patrons around the neighborhood and linked them to this place in the same way alumni from the same high school remain forever associated. In the context of gentrification, such losses of place understandably result in a range of negative responses (e.g., upset, grief, disappointment, uncertainty), and long histories of patronage make certain places more difficult to replace.

This study has offered insights into dimensions of places that emerged as important to participants in late life but shares the limitations of many small qualitative studies that draw on non-random samples and cannot generalize to the population. I also did not ask study participants to assess and compare the places they frequented, which could have provided additional data to help explain participants' choices about where to spend their time in the neighborhood. Future qualitative research that collects these data systematically would provide additional depth for our understanding of how to promote and preserve spaces that facilitate support and interaction for people with fewer material, cultural, and physical resources in the midst of gentrification pressures.

Despite these limitations, this study helps address Oldenburg's (1989) call for additional research on the use and value of these "third places" to older people. In the context of shrinking families and friendship networks, these kinds of daily social interactions between strangers and "non-intimates" will continue to grow in prominence in the lives of urban residents (Morrill and Snow 2005). And yet, despite the potential of urban areas to support aging in place, even elders with secure affordable housing in gentrifying areas may find themselves increasingly isolated and vulnerable as they grow older amidst new wealth (García and Rúa 2018). In their study of gentrification in three London neighborhoods, Davidson and Lees (2010, 407) found, "local place had often been reduced to home; collective existence now took place within four walls and extended little further." Indirect displacement and commercial gentrification have significant consequences for long-term, older residents but have not received as much attention as direct displacement and deserve increased awareness from scholars, policymakers, and community members.

Features of establishments such as geographic proximity to home, low cost, physical design and layout that promoted interaction, and low surveillance, that I have identified as beneficial to my participants' ability to age well in their communities support prior research on elders' social interactions in public places (Ben Noon and Ayalon 2018; Cheang 2002; Rosenbaum, Sweeney, and Windhorst 2009; Rúa 2017) and offer additional qualitative insights into what elders in gentrifying urban areas need to access space and secure emotional and physical comfort in their environments. After their central gathering spot closed, participants demonstrated tenacity and resilience in seeking out viable replacements that contained some of the

elements they had enjoyed previously. But ultimately none of the new gathering spots could quite recreate the same arrangement the bakery offered, and thus participants had to make compromises with the alternatives available to them. Future research should seek to uncover the features of neighborhood places that provide older people with opportunities for social support and interaction, the conditions under which such places come under threat, and the tipping point at which accessible places become impossible to replace.

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