

A Qualitative Evaluation of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program

by

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ABSTRACT

Home sharing is defined as an arrangement between two unrelated people to share a living space to their mutual benefit. The Home Share St. John's Pilot Program is a local home sharing endeavour that commenced in 2012 in response to the need for affordable housing options for older adults and students. This thesis constitutes the qualitative portion of an evaluation of this program. Qualitative interviews were conducted with sixteen home share participants in the fall of 2012 with the primary goals of understanding the participants' experiences with home sharing in relation to facilitating aging in place, social inclusion, and intergenerational learning; and, more generally, to explore home sharing best practices. Although limited by the short duration of the pilot matches, the findings suggest that home sharing is a desirable and affordable housing option, with the potential to address some broader systemic issues of an aging population.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In developed countries around the world the proportion of older people is expanding rapidly (Powell, 2010). For the first time in history, individuals aged sixty-five and older outnumber children under the age of five (Powell, 2010). As the number of older people in our community increases, so does the necessity to assess programs to ensure their needs are being met. Formal program evaluations assist with making the determination of program effectiveness and success. In addition, evaluations enable for meaningful change to be instituted into existing programs. The Home Share St. John's Pilot Program is a program that endeavours to meet the housing needs of older individuals and students in greater St. John's area. This thesis details the qualitative component of an evaluation of that program.

Background Information

Conditions of later life often bring on health or mobility restrictions that can render aging in place difficult (Black, 2008). Physical limitations and a lack of support may prevent some older people from staying in their own homes (Black, 2008). Risk for social isolation and a shortage of opportunities for meaningful social interaction are also prevalent for these individuals (Moody & Phinney, 2012). In addition, older adults are often subject to ageist attitudes that define them in an oversimplified or generalized manner (Minichiello, Browne, & Kendig, 2000). Students too can be subject to difficult circumstances. The shortage of affordable housing options for students in the greater

St. John's area was a particular point of concern of the project at hand (Canadian Federation of Students, 2013).

It was the recognition of the issues of aging in place, social inclusion, and ageism facing individuals aged fifty plus and the lack of affordable student housing that initiated the creation of the home share steering committee in September of 2009. Based on a review of the literature, an examination of existing home sharing programs around the world, and the completion of an independent feasibility study, the steering committee developed a proposal for a two-year pilot project, and the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program commenced in 2012.

There are two different models of home sharing. In the referral model, program staff conduct screenings and interviews, assist in the matching process, and provide moderate support to the participants by establishing contact with program participants at various points in time throughout the duration of their involvement (Rahder, Forge, & Todres, 1992). The counselling model provides participants with all the components of the referral model, along with a more intensive level of counselling support throughout the duration of their home share experience (Rahder et al., 1992). Based on a review of the two types of home sharing models, and to reduce concerns about liability issues, the steering committee determined that the referral model of home sharing provided the best fit for the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program.

In the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program older individuals who have available space in their home are paired with students who are in need of affordable housing.

The program coordinator conducts a matching process based on applicants' self-identified needs resulting in a living arrangement that works to the mutual benefit of the participants. Typically, household responsibilities (e.g., meal preparation) are shared between home sharing partners¹ with additional non-medical assistance (e.g., accompaniment to appointments and assistance with grocery shopping) in exchange for reduced or free rent. A contract is developed between the home sharer (fifty plus individual) and the home seeker (student) that details the expectations of both parties. Both home sharer and home seeker have private bedrooms and share common areas of the home such as the kitchen and living room. Once matched, participants are provided with moderate ongoing support by program staff throughout the duration of their participation. The program coordinator makes contact with the participants after weeks one and two, at the end of semester, and as requested by the participants.

There are ten active home share programs in existence in other Canadian provinces (White, 2010). This is a relatively small number compared to the United States where several hundred similar programs are in operation (White, 2010). Based on their combined observations of the housing challenges of some students and older adults in St. John's, and a review of existing home sharing programs, the steering committee identified several goals:

¹ Participants in home sharing are referred to here and elsewhere in the thesis as 'partners' as the objectives of the program are directed toward benefitting both parties.

- to alleviate the strain that many older people experience in maintaining a home (aging in place)
- to provide companionship and a social outlet for this group (social inclusion)
- to provide the participants with an intergenerational learning experience (more specifically to increase student knowledge of older adults), and
- to provide students with an affordable housing option

In addition, with a view to the expansion of the program, the steering committee was interested in developing an understanding of “best practices” for home sharing. In their request for funding the committee included an amount allotted to a formal program evaluation. I was hired as a Research Assistant by the external evaluator, Dr. Gail Wideman, to undertake a qualitative component of the evaluation. With her supervision and guided by the advice of the steering committee, I designed and implemented the research project that constitutes this thesis.

Research Objective

In keeping with the primary goals of the Home Share St. John’s Pilot Program, the research objective of this thesis is a qualitative exploration of home sharing as it relates to participants’ experience of aging in place, social inclusion, and intergenerational learning; as well as a more general summary of their views on home sharing best practices and of students’ experiences with home sharing as an alternative housing

option. The qualitative nature of the research allowed for the participants to express how they may have benefited or been disadvantaged from their participation in home sharing, and to provide suggestions on how to enhance the program.

Personal Interest

Several factors contributed to my decision to pursue the current research. As an undergraduate student I experienced the challenges associated with attaining decent affordable housing. A program that provides formal assistance to students in this area is vital in supporting the success of students. Even more intriguing to me was the concept of pairing students and older people together in a living arrangement. As a person who lived periodically in a household with grandparents, I have witnessed first-hand the benefits of exposure to the wisdom and companionship that older adults can provide. Conversely, I have intimate knowledge of the difficulties that some of these individuals experience in living independently as my grandparents lived with us during the winter months when maintaining their own home proved too difficult. I considered the principles and goals of home sharing to be of fundamental value to both groups of participants (home sharers and home seekers) and I was interested to explore whether the objectives of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program were met.

My primary area of social work practice has been in the area of children and women's health. In pursuing this research I recognized that my knowledge of gerontological issues was relatively limited. Therefore, while the topics of aging in place,

social inclusion, and intergenerational learning were chosen for exploration in the literature review primarily due to their connection to the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program goals, they were also selected to further my understanding of some of the important issues facing older individuals in my community.

Key Terms

It is important to acknowledge the ageist assumptions that underlie the use of chronological age as a marker of need or ability, and the negative connotations that accompany the use of overly generalizing terms that are used to describe this group. For this reason, I have avoided the use of the terms 'senior' and 'elderly' unless they are included in direct quotations from literature. Instead, I refer to this group interchangeably as older people, older individuals, or home sharers. Age group categories are only used where they reflect statistical data collected using age as a parameter.

While age is an inadequate instrument in understanding the health, abilities, and needs of older persons, it is often used for establishing program parameters and eligibility guidelines for services. The Home Share St. John's Pilot Program uses the age fifty and older to determine eligibility of older adults for their program. It is important to note that although this thesis features research conducted with Home Share St. John's Pilot Program participants who are fifty plus, much of the literature consulted and

summarized here uses sixty-five and older to designate the demographic category of older members of a population.

Organization of the Thesis

The remainder of this thesis is organized into four chapters. In the second chapter I offer an overview of what is known about three key challenges facing individuals aged sixty-five and older - aging in place, social inclusion, and ageism - and describe their connection to the goals of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. Chapter three details the research design and the process of analysis. Details of the participants' responses are reported in chapter four - the findings section. The thesis concludes in chapter five with a discussion and summary of what was learned from participants about the success of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program in meeting its identified goals.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

On a global scale older adults make up the fastest growing age demographic (Powell, 2010). Low replacement fertility rates and the aging of the baby boom generation² provide some explanation for this trend (HRSDC, 2011). In addition to these developments, life expectancy has risen dramatically over the last 100 years (Powell, 2010). Improvements in healthcare, living conditions, and sanitation are credited as contributors to the steady increase in human life spans (Corner, Brittain, & Bond, 2006). As a result of these combined trends, people over the age of sixty-five now make up the largest sector of the population in industrialized societies (Hernandez & Gonzalez, 2008).

Canada is no exception to these demographic developments. Wilkins (2003) asserts that Canada is approaching a dramatic growth in the population of older adults. As of 2011, there were approximately five million individuals aged sixty-five and older living in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011a). Projections place the number of Canadians aged sixty-five and older in the year 2021 at 17% (Kembhavi, 2012). By 2041, the number of older adults living in Canada is expected to soar to 24.5% of the population (Kembhavi, 2012). There are variations of aging patterns within Canada with each province and territory experiencing their own unique demographic configuration. In the

² The term 'baby boomers' refers to individuals born after World War 2 between the years of 1946 and 1965.

year 2011, Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest median age in the country at 43.8 years (Statistics Canada, 2011a). It is projected that by 2016, older adults will comprise nearly 20% of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador (Statistics Canada, 2001) with the expectation that by the year 2036, this province will have the highest percentage of individuals aged sixty-five and older in the country (HRSDC, 2011). Population aging has accelerated in Newfoundland and Labrador as a result of the increase in life expectancies and low fertility rates³ combined with high rates of out-migration among individuals within child-bearing range (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2011). Given this growth, understanding the diverse needs and preferences of an aging population is crucial (Johansson, Josephsson, & Lilja, 2009; Reichstadt, Depp, Palinkas, Folsom, & Jeste, 2007).

Furthermore, in recent years there has been an increase in the value placed on older adults and their contributions to society. “Today there is a more informed recognition of the important contribution that older people make to their families, communities and nation” (Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group, 2011, p.4). Consequently, awareness and interest in the issues facing this population has grown. The Home Share St. John’s Pilot Program was initiated in response to some of the issues facing older individuals in the St. John’s area.

³ Newfoundland and Labrador has the second lowest birth rate in Canada with an average of 1.45 children per woman (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Two primary goals of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program are to alleviate the strain that many older people experience in maintaining a home and to assist older individuals with keeping a connection to community. Therefore, while there are numerous and diverse challenges that accompany the aging process, for the purposes of this review of literature focus will be placed on what is known about the experiences of aging in place and social inclusion in later life. In addition, as the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program matches two age groups of individuals (older adults and students) to live in the same household it is important to briefly discuss ageism, its impact, and the benefit of intergenerational learning.

Aging in Place

'Aging in place' is a phrase that is increasingly used by scholars, policy makers, and service providers to embody the general process of aging in the place that one calls home (Wiles, Leibling, Guberman, Reeve, & Allen, 2012). Boldy, Grenade, Lewin, Karol, and Burton (2011) further delineate aging in place as the ability to age in one's preferred setting. Black (2008) broadens this concept to involve not only a person's residence, but his or her neighbourhood and community. At the very least, it is a generally accepted belief that there is value and importance in aging in a familiar environment (Andrews & Phillips, 2005; Gitlin, 2003; Keating & Cook, 2001; Rosel, 2003).

Chappell, McDonald and Stones (2008) found that the majority of individuals express a desire to age in place and to remain in their own homes. Gitlin (2003) states

that “most individuals grow old in their primary, long-term, community-based residence (rented or owned); and staying put or aging in place at home is the consistently expressed desire of both adults and family caregivers” (p. 628). In fact, statistics demonstrate that the rate of home ownership and occupancy is high amongst older adults. In 2011, of the five million individuals living in Canada aged sixty-five and older 92.1% (or over 4.5 million) lived in private households or dwellings (Statistics Canada, 2011b). Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest rate of home ownership amongst individuals aged fifty and over living in Canada with less than 7% of individuals aged sixty-five and older living in personal care or long-term care facilities (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2007).

Nevertheless, barriers to aging in place do exist (Black, 2008; Denton et al., 2010; Plath 2008). Where these barriers are insurmountable due to advanced chronic illness and/or mobility restrictions, it is understood that a move to a more supported environment may be required. However, it is known that older adults are often forced to leave their homes prematurely and inappropriately as a result of a lack of moderate and low-cost resources. In support of these individuals, a deep understanding of the relationship of aging in place to well-being and quality of life is essential.

Adding to the complexity is the diminution of networks of informal support traditionally relied upon to enable aging in place. As previously noted low fertility rates and outmigration of younger adults are credited for the steady increase in the mean age

of individuals living in Newfoundland and Labrador. If this pattern continues it can be assumed that there will be a decrease in the availability of people willing and capable of providing assistance to older adults who still reside in their own homes. Without the availability of support that many older adults require to maintain their home it will become increasingly difficult for individuals in this province to age in place. Moving away from one's home may mean separation from one's family and friends and the loss of personal belongings that have emotional value and importance (Chappel et al., 2008). Moreover, remaining in one's home (even if assistance is required) has found to be less costly than institutionalization (Keating & Cook, 2001). For these reasons, supporting older adults to age in place, and exploring avenues by which to provide this support, is gaining increased recognition.

The following sections will deconstruct the concept of aging in place by discussing place attachment, sense of identity, and feelings of independence and the connection between these elements of aging in place and the notion of quality of life. Barriers to aging in place, government response to this issue, and the connection to home sharing will also be discussed.

Place Attachment

Krasner (2006) states that place attachment is the "complex relationship between self, space, and habit when older people identify with their homes" (p. 210). There is a tendency to spend a more significant amount of time at home and in familiar

neighbourhoods as one gets older (Gardner, 2011; Rowles & Chaudhury, 2005). Gardner (2011) attributes this to the decrease in personal responsibilities (e.g., work) that require older individuals to venture beyond their immediate area, and to the increased potential for physical and health limitations for these individuals. How each individual classifies space in terms of geography (e.g., one's immediate dwelling, the neighbourhood, or the greater community) varies. Nevertheless researchers identify the connection to the neighbourhood as a strong component of place attachment.

In addition to the physical space, the term place attachment can focus on other elements like the importance of routines and relationships, attachment to belongings, and the memories associated with one's residence. Cristoforetti, Gennai, and Rodeschini (2011) cite personal rituals and routines as significant factors that create the bond between person and place. They suggest that it is the familiarity of these rituals and routines (and the connection to the area) that instils a sense of safety and security (Cristoforetti et al., 2011). This is especially true amongst older individuals who tend to feel more vulnerable in public places (Cristoforetti et al., 2011).

Personal relationships (e.g., with neighbours and individuals in the community) are recognized as having a significant impact on place attachment. Rosel (2003) has suggested that attachment to one's neighbourhood and community develops primarily due to the personal connections that are forged in these settings and to the potential for

ongoing social opportunities. Wiles et al. (2012) contend that the friendships and the familiarity associated with place are essential resources for aging.

Personal belongings in and around the home, and the memories associated with these items, are the focus of other descriptions of place attachment. Older individuals derive comfort and support from the objects that are in their home and the familiarity that they provide (Krasner, 2006; Rosel, 2003). This familiarity results in an emotional attachment to the home for the inhabitants (Wiles et al., 2011). Krasner (2006) adds that objects are laden with meanings that allow their owners to access memories about people and places.

In an earlier work, O'Bryant (1982) asserts that memories associated with one's home can serve as a link between generations as the location of family celebrations and holidays. The home may also invoke memories associated with beginnings and endings of life, as it may have been the birthplace or place of death for family members (O'Bryant, 1982). Furthermore, the home is often identified as something that older adults desire to leave to their children (O'Bryant, 1982). Therefore, the attachment to place can be said to have an association with a personal legacy of sorts. Whatever the specific focus of the definition, place attachment has been identified by many as a key determinant of the desire to age in place and to have increasing significance as one ages (Boldy et al., 2011; Rowles & Chaudhury, 2005).

Identity

Identity associated with home ownership and occupancy has been recognized as a significant contributor to the aspiration to age in place. The role of home owner accompanied by additional roles an older person has played in the home (i.e., parent, grandparent, son, daughter, etc.) is closely connected to a person's sense of identity (Krasner, 2006; Wiles et al., 2012). This is particularly true for individuals who have lived in their place of residence for an extended period of time (Krasner, 2006). In addition, O'Bryant (1982) posits that home ownership brings with it a sense of pride that further acts to strengthen the identity as a home owner. Rosel (2003) suggests that one's life history and sense of self is strongly connected to the home and the objects that are present there. Perkins Taylor (2001) goes on further to state that identity is shaped through an individual's sense of place, and that the place of residence can serve as a collection of memories or experiences (positive or negative) with those who are no longer physically present (either by distance or death). The implication is that identity (in part) is formed through the home and its contents.

Maintaining Independence

Research suggests that aging in place has a direct positive influence on feelings of independence (O'Bryant, 1982; Plath, 2008; Wiles et al., 2012). Remaining independent is another major goal for older individuals (Boldy et al., 2011; O'Bryant, 1982; Plath, 2008; Wiles et al., 2012). Independence is a relative term that can have different

meanings for each person. However, independence associated with aging in place is a feeling derived from the type of dwelling an older adult lives in (e.g., own home, long-term care facility, etc.) or living arrangement an older person has (e.g., with one's children).

O'Bryant (1982) found that for some older people independence simply meant living separately from one's children. "Today's elderly persons express a strong desire not to live with their children" (O'Bryant, 1982, p. 352). Plath (2008) noted that living in a long-term care facility or other institution connoted dependence. Independence for these individuals is experienced through the choice and autonomy in choosing one's place of residence (Plath, 2008; Wiles et al., 2012).

Quality of Life

Retaining control through home ownership and occupancy has been found to enhance a person's perceived well-being and ultimately their quality of life. O'Bryant's (1982) work demonstrated that the level of satisfaction that one has with their housing situation, both its location and condition, is a significant determinant of quality of life. Beyond satisfaction, control over the location of where one lives is an important contributing factor (Corner et al., 2006; Gitlin, 2003). The personal autonomy and independence that is associated with aging in place works to combat the sense of loss of control that is often experienced by older adults due to the decline of functional abilities associated with later life (Gitlin, 2003); and evokes feelings of empowerment related to

one's life and destiny (Hammarstrom & Torres, 2012). In addition to sense of control, Perkins Taylor (2001) and Rosel (2003) describe the connections between the home and the belongings inside as related to an individual's memory and identity. Gitlin (2003) agrees that these symbolic meanings, and the happiness that is derived from them, contribute to perceived quality of life.

Barriers to Aging in Place

Although aging in place is the preference of the majority, some considerable barriers exist to achieving this goal. Health status and the condition of the home have been found to be factors that affect the ability to age in place. Older individuals are especially vulnerable to experiencing issues that affect their health and mobility (Black, 2008). Declining physical abilities negatively affect an individual's ability to maintain physical independence which could also pose a challenge to remaining at home (Black, 2008; Plath 2008). Activities of daily living like meal preparation, grocery shopping, and home maintenance can be challenging for some older adults (Denton et al., 2010). To some degree these challenges can be mitigated with assistance. The preference is that the provision of support be carried out in the home allowing a measure of choice and control (Barrett, Hale, & Gauld, 2012). As described in the introduction to this section, compounding the challenge of physical limitations or other health issues is the declining availability of informal caregivers (i.e., children and other family members) and formal caregivers to provide this support (Denton et al., 2010). As the population of older

adults continues to rise, strain on both formal and informal systems of care will intensify.

As people age, so do their dwellings (Pynoos, Caravielle, and Cicero, 2009). Consequently, older individuals are at a higher risk of residing in homes that have deficiencies and/or have fallen into disrepair (Golant & LaGreca, 1994; Pynoos et al., 2009). Financial inability to pay for the costs of repairs combined with the physical inability to maintain the home are both identified as obstacles to aging in place and contributing factors in the decision to move out of the home (Golant & LaGreca, 1994; Pynoos et al., 2009). As Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest rate of home ownership in Canada, this barrier will be of particular concern for program and policy development on issues related to aging in place.

Aging in place can be a gendered experience. Trottier, Martel, Houle, Berthelot, and Legare (2000) suggest that women have more challenges to aging in place than do their male counterparts. Women account for a progressively larger share of the population particularly in the older age groups due primarily to higher rates of mortality for older males (Trottier et al., 2000). They are also less likely to find partners later in life. "Since elderly women frequently have no spouse, the likelihood that they will receive personal assistance at home is reduced, and institutionalization may be necessary" (Trottier et al., 2000, p. 55). Older women who reside alone may be solely responsible for home maintenance, food shopping and meal preparation, grounds

maintenance, house cleaning, etc. As one ages their ability to complete these tasks without assistance from others can be compromised. Older males, on the other hand, are more likely than older females to live with a spouse and benefit from assistance and shared responsibilities (Trottier et al., 2000).

Government Response and Connection to Home Share

The proportion of older adults in our population is expanding and the pressure on public and private systems providing assistance to these individuals will intensify accordingly. Black (2008) identifies that public and private efforts to facilitate aging in place are emerging in response to the growth of the population of older individuals. In the Provincial Aging Policy Framework, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2007) has identified several strategic goals in response to the needs of older adults. The importance of aging in place is specifically reflected in two of these goals.

Goal twelve is aimed at combating the barrier to aging in place that is posed by the decline in the condition of homes. Programs such as the Home Repair Program strive to assist older adults with the cost of home repairs that will allow them to remain in their current housing situation.

Goal nineteen addresses the need for programs of support in the home for those individuals who require a minimal level of assistance to remain in their homes (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2007). This goal highlights an enhanced

role of communities to support an aging population and to promote older adults' independence. The Home Share St. John's Pilot Program is aligned with this latter goal.

Social Inclusion

Enhancing the social inclusion of the participants is a second major goal of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. Social inclusion is a phrase that embodies many elements. Scharlach and Lehning (2013) define social inclusion as association with peers and opportunity to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships. Others incorporate connection to the community and the larger society in their definitions (Moody & Phinney, 2012; Shookner, 2002). Moody and Phinney (2012) state that "social inclusion is a term that is often used to describe individuals and groups who are involved in society in a meaningful way, who are included in a social network, and who hold a respected place in a community" (p. 56).

Access to resources is yet another common element of many definitions of social inclusion, and one that is closely related to community connection. Opportunity and ability to utilize transportation, access programs and services (e.g., community centres, doctor's offices, etc.), and amenities (e.g., grocery stores, movie theatres, etc.) have all been identified as components of social inclusion (Scharlach & Lehning, 2012; Shookner, 2007). These common elements of social inclusion definitions are interrelated. That is, in the process of meeting a basic need (e.g., grocery shopping), one could also be facilitating social inclusion by shopping with a friend or family member.

While the definition of social inclusion varies, it is recognized that social inclusion is an essential factor associated with the health and wellbeing of older adults (Moody & Phinney, 2012; Scharlach & Lehning, 2012; Wilkins, 2003). In addition, social inclusion is described as paramount in reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation in older people (Heylen, 2010; Tomaka, Thompson, & Palacios, 2006).

The following sections will describe in greater depth common elements of social inclusion: interpersonal connections and connection to community as well as the correlation between social inclusion and health. This section will conclude with an overview of the barriers to social inclusion, identification of government response to this issue, and the connection to the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program.

Interpersonal Connections

Older adults identify social networks as an important factor associated with successful aging (Reichstadt et al., 2007). There are many individuals in an older person's life that can serve as agents of socialization. One's spouse, children, friends and neighbours provide interpersonal connections and enhance social inclusion (Martinez del Castillo et al., 2010). Other individuals who have a meaningful role in a person's life (e.g., colleagues, members of the same church, etc.) can often be relied on to assist individuals with meeting their social needs (Moody & Phinney, 2012). Adams (2004) found that older individuals attributed great importance to maintaining social ties with friends and in preserving relationships with family members. In addition to

nurturing existing social ties, expanding one's social network to include new relationships is also identified as vital to one's social inclusion (Tang & Lee, 2011).

More specifically, relationships with friends and family have been shown to alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation in older individuals (Van Tilburg, Havens, & Gierved, 2004). Social loneliness has been described as a subjective feeling of being disconnected from others, while isolation entails the actual physical separation from people (Tomaka et al., 2006). Heylen (2010) found that older people who attached importance to, and reported satisfaction with, the quality and quantity of social relationships reported feeling less socially lonely.

In addition to reducing loneliness and social isolation, social inclusion (through interpersonal relationships) has also been linked to other important social issues. Scharlach and Lehning (2013) state that "reciprocal social exchanges foster interdependence rather than inequality and disempowerment" (p. 113). Shookner (2002) also states that participating in social opportunities encourages empowerment and fosters a freedom of choice. Through social exchanges older individuals are provided with the opportunity to choose to become involved in community decision making and social action pursuits (Shookner, 2002). Furthermore, role identification (e.g., parent, sibling, church member, etc.) is enhanced through interactions with others and linked to self-esteem in older adults (Scharlach & Lehning, 2013). These roles help to preserve an individual's self-construct and provide an avenue for social recognition

from the community (Scharlach & Lehning, 2013). This is important given the changes in roles and responsibilities as one ages.

Interpersonal connections, and the opportunities that they provide, have been linked to aging in place. Tang and Lee (2011) state that older adults are “very likely to be able to age in place with support from their social networks of family, kin, friends, and/or neighbours” (p. 447). Social networks essentially enhance independence, and therefore in some cases reduce the need to move to a long-term care or other facility (Tang & Lee, 2011). They found that participation in social activities created opportunities to maintain connections with existing friends and to make new connections (Tang & Lee, 2011). In addition to the social benefits of maintaining personal connections, there were tangible benefits (e.g., resource information sharing) that proved important in keeping older adults abreast of service and housing related information and ultimately enhancing the ability to age in place (Tang & Lee, 2011).

Connection to the Community

The definition of social inclusion includes participation in the community and availing of the resources that communities have to offer (Moody & Phinney, 2012; Shookner, 2002; Warburton, Ng, & Shardlow, 2013). The autonomy associated with making decisions on which places in the community to visit, and the control or independence that this represents, are said to be benefits of social inclusion through community involvement (Scharlach & Lehning, 2013).

Connection to community can take many forms. Shookner (2002) highlights the physical nature of accessing public places and community resources in his discussion of social isolation. Meeting basic needs (e.g., shopping for groceries or visiting a doctor's office) contributes to reducing the risk of isolation as these activities typically require an older person to physically leave their home (Warburton et al., 2013).

Theurer and Wister (2010) emphasize the importance of the sense of belonging to a community in their discussions of social inclusion. They attest that performing altruistic deeds through volunteering in one's community results in a sense of belonging and perceived happiness (Theurer & Wister, 2010). Employment in the paid workforce, participation in civic activities (e.g., voting), or in other social action pursuits are other activities that can invoke a sense of belonging to the community (Shookner, 2002; Warburton et al., 2013).

Availing of these community opportunities can further enhance social inclusion by presenting occasions for interpersonal connections (Shookner, 2002). The Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group (2011) discusses the relationship between community involvement and interpersonal connections by identifying that it is often the relationships that one has with friends and family that enable older adults to participate in the community, or that make community events desirable.

Relationship to Health

Social inclusion, and the support provided by community connection, is paramount for the health and wellbeing of older adults (Moody & Phinney, 2012).

Numerous studies have found a positive relationship between social inclusion, physical health, and lifestyle choices (Corner et al., 2006; Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group, 2011; Poortinga, 2006; Tomaka et al., 2006; Wilkins, 2003). For example, older individuals who are socially isolated tend to eat more poorly than those who have strong interpersonal relationships and community involvement (Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group, 2011). In addition, older people may be more inclined to exercise or participate in physical activity if they are accompanied by a friend or family member (Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group, 2011).

In addition to physical wellbeing, mental health also has a connection to social inclusion. The Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group (2011) highlighted the significance of social inclusion in mental health outcomes for older adults particularly with respect to positively affecting one's ability to effectively cope with change and life transitions. Shields and Martel (2005) found that older adults who reported a connection to the community experienced lower levels of stress and better coping skills. Furthermore, one's overall cognitive function has been found to be enhanced through social involvement (Engelhardt, Buber, Skirbekk, & Prskawetz, 2010). Loneliness is said to place strain on an older individual's psychological health (Tomaka et al., 2006). This is

important given that social networks tend to decrease as one ages, thus increasing the risk of loneliness for some individuals (Heylen, 2010, Tomaka et al., 2006).

Even without accounting for lifestyle choices, social inclusion has been linked to length of life. Wilkins (2003) states that “over the past two decades, evidence has accumulated indicating that people with weak social ties are at a greater risk of death, even when age, physical limitation and illness, and socio-economic status are taken into account” (p. 21).

Barriers to Social Inclusion

If social inclusion and involvement in social networks become increasingly more important as people age, it is of particular concern that older individuals are at an increased risk for social isolation, loneliness, and decreased opportunities for making and maintaining meaningful social connections (Heylen, 2010; Moody & Phinney, 2012; Tomaka et al., 2006). Physical impairments and decline in health status create barriers that negatively affect an older person’s opportunities for social or community engagement (Pynoos et al., 2009; Shookner, 2002). Key events like the death of a spouse or retirement can further increase the risk of social isolation (Heylen, 2010; Warburton et al., 2013). Difficulty in accessing public transportation and inability to drive a car (or afford to do so) are also linked to the risk of social isolation (Dwyer & Hardill, 2011). Furthermore, accessibility to the home has been identified as contributing to the risk of social isolation (Pynoos et al., 2009). Older individuals

frequently reside in homes that have aged without the necessary repairs or upgrades which can limit mobility in and out of the home for the older person and visitors (Pynoos et al., 2009).

Government Response and Connection to Home Share

As the population ages, the need for programs and services that ensure that older individual's social inclusion needs are met is gaining recognition (Cattan, Whilt, Bond, & Learmouth, 2005). Communities can enhance the social inclusion of older individuals by creating social opportunities and removing any barriers to forming and preserving social relationships (Scharlach & Lehning, 2013). Goal ten of the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Aging Policy Framework specifically endorses the creation of community-based programs to tackle important issues like the enhancement of social inclusion for older residents (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2007).

The Home Share St. John's Pilot Program creates social opportunities by pairing a student with individuals aged fifty and older (who may have been living alone). There is a physical presence in the house (or someone providing company), opportunities for interpersonal communication, and also the prospect of community outings or assistance with accessing community programs and services.

Ageism

A third important goal of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program is to provide participants with an intergenerational learning experience. While combating or changing ageist views is not specifically stated in this goal, the topic area is of interest given that there is potential for students involved in the program to have ageist views of the older adults with whom they are paired with in a living situation and vice versa

The term 'ageism' was originally coined by Robert Butler (1969) who stated that "age discrimination, or ageism, is prejudice by one age group toward other age groups" (p. 243); nevertheless public attention to this issue is relatively recent (Palmore, 2004). Many people are even unaware of their own discriminatory attitudes about older people (Lee, 2009). As a group, older adults are subject to discriminatory beliefs and attitudes by others who define them in an oversimplified or generalized way (Minichiello et al., 2000; Yilmaz, Kisa, & Zeyneloglu, 2012).

The definition of ageism does not indicate negative and discriminatory attitudes as being exclusive to one specific age group toward another. However, in terms of intergenerational learning, the focus of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program was primarily to increase the student participants' knowledge of older adults. As such, this section will primarily be reporting on ageism as it pertains to older adults.

Hernandez and Gonzalez (2008) identify a change in society's view of older people in recent decades. Older adults were once viewed as respected elders, teachers

of history, and the keepers of traditions (Hernandez & Gonzalez, 2008). In contrast, according to Hernandez and Gonzalez (2008), older adults today are typically viewed as weak and incompetent; views which have negatively affected their social status.

Perceived discrimination has been linked with increased mortality risk for older people (Barnes et al., 2008). Barnes et al. (2008, p. 124) state that the “subjective experience of interpersonal mistreatment is toxic in old age.”

Older adults are commonly portrayed as frail, in poor health, non-productive, bad-tempered, vulnerable, unattractive, incompetent, lonely, and dependent on others or needing to live in long-term care facilities (Aging and Seniors Division, 2006; Minichiello et al., 2000; Warburton et al., 2013; Wurtele & Maruyama, 2013; Yilmaz et al., 2012). These negative stereotypes result in societal inequalities and in older individuals being devalued by others (Minichiello et al., 2000). Palmore (2004) found that 91% of Canadian respondents reported experiencing one or more incidents of ageism. Frequently experienced forms of ageism were identified as jokes and birthday cards that target older people, insults, patronizing behaviour, and assumptions of frailty (Palmore, 2004). Further to this, research affirms that an older person’s sense of safety in the community is also affected by subjection to ageism in interpersonal relationships (Minichiello et al., 2000).

Studies have found that those who discriminate against older adults tend to be in the younger age groups (Minichiello et al., 2000; Yilmaz et al., 2012). University

students in particular hold the most negative views of older people (Alan & Johnson, 2009; Kalish, Coughlin, Ballard, & Lamson, 2013; Wurtele, 2009; Wurtele & Maruyama, 2013). Wurtele and Maruyama (2013) have found that students “appear to envision the late adulthood years as retiring from life” and that “students’ characterization of later adulthood as void of productive activities (particularly working and learning)” (p. 61). An exploration of the ageist views of university students and the connection to the home sharing will be discussed in the next two sections.

Ageist Views of University Students

Ageist views may be created in response to an individual’s denial over their own aging (McHugh, 2003; Minichiello et al., 2000). This denial may be a result of the internalizing of the assumptions of what becoming older will entail (Minichiello et al., 2000). Denial (in this sense) closely resembles fear of old age. Anxiety over one’s own aging, and the uncertainty about what the future will look like has been attributed to the construction and belief of ageist views in university students (Allan & Johnson, 2009). Kalsih et al. (2013) adds that young adults view themselves as separate from older adults, and as a consequence “view themselves more favourably than their older counterparts” (p. 101).

Allan and Johnson (2009) propose that the amount of knowledge that individuals have about aging is associated with the level of anxiety one experiences. University students who are knowledgeable about aging tend to be less anxious about growing

older (Allan & Johnson, 2009). They have found that the reduction in anxiety levels directly reduced students' ageist attitudes (Allan & Johnson, 2009). Cottle and Glover (2007) state that one way to improve students' factual knowledge of aging is to offer university courses covering material on aging. Knapp and Stubbelfield (2000) found that students' knowledge and perceptions of aging were positively influenced by participating in a course on aging.

Other studies point to the benefit of physical interaction between students and older adults as a way to reduce ageist beliefs (Hernandez & Gonzalez, 2008; Kalish et al., 2013; Pinazo-Hernandis, 2011; Underwood & Dorfman, 2006). Students develop more positive attitudes and respect toward older people, and gain increased comfort with the idea of aging through spending time with older people (Kalish et al., 2013). In addition, spending time with an older person may put an actual face to the concept of aging, which can assist with combating negative societal and media messages regarding aging (Kalish et al., 2013).

Aside from dismantling ageist attitudes, other advantages to intergenerational learning opportunities have been identified. Research has demonstrated that social support and opportunities for physical activity and social outings for older persons, and an avenue to share stories which assists these individuals with making meaning of their lives, have all been found to be benefits of intergenerational learning (Underwood & Dorfman, 2006). Pinazo-Hernandis (2011) states that "intergenerational learning is a

way to learn together, a way to share information, thoughts, feelings, and experiences that can enrich two different generations” (p. 115).

Government Response and Connection to Home Share

There is growing recognition of the need to address discrimination against older adults. Wurtele and Maruyama (2013) state that “as the number of people who turn 65 every day increases, there exists an urgent need for all members of society to possess an accurate knowledge about, and positive attitude toward, older adults” (p. 59). Goal one of the Provincial Aging Policy Framework calls for increased recognition of older adults in this province (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2007). Promoting positive images of older adults to combat ageist stereotypes is one of the identified mechanisms for achieving this goal (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2007).

Creating opportunities for interaction between older people and younger generations would provide an avenue to promote these positive attitudes (Knapp & Stubblefield, 2000). The Home Share St. John’s Pilot Program creates opportunities for interaction between fifty plus homeowners and students. It is not a specific intention of the program to challenge ageist beliefs. However, proponents of home sharing anticipate that sharing space, meals, and daily conversation ought to enable the type of interaction that is necessary to promote an accurate view of older people and in turn to challenge ageist beliefs. “When we dispel myths and counter myths and counter

stereotypes, we come closer to recognizing the strengths and contributions of older people” (Aging and Seniors Division, 2006, p. 9).

The significance of aging in place, social inclusion, and ageism has been established through exploration of the literature. The connection between these three issues and the goals of the Home Share St. John’s Pilot Program has been highlighted. The next chapter of this thesis will describe the research design and data collection including a statement of ethical issues.

Chapter 3

Methods

As noted in the introductory section this research was conducted as part of a larger study that was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. Data collection for the larger study included quantitative and qualitative data linked to the goals and indicators of the project, and organized using a logic model approach.

“The logic model is a planning and evaluation tool that illustrates a sequence of relationships between inputs, outputs and outcomes as they relate to a specific and identified problem, and a path toward its alleviation. An examination of each element of the sequence communicates the successes and gaps along the path toward a desired result. The logic model format enables consideration of the efficiency, quality, effectiveness, and evidence of inputs, and relevance to clients and community” (Wideman, 2014, p. 4)

The qualitative element of the evaluation that was the foundation for my research consisted of in-depth interviews that allowed for participants to discuss their experiences with the program and to offer comments or suggestions for its improvement. In collaboration with the steering committee two semi-structured interview guides (one for students and one for fifty plus participants) were developed for this purpose (see Appendix A and B). The guides reflected the primary objectives and indicators of success as agreed upon by the steering committee and consisted of

open-ended questions that allowed for depth of responses and permitted the participants to expand on their answers.

To summarize, in accordance with the main foci of this thesis and adhering to the logic model principles, questions were posed regarding experiences of aging in place, social inclusion, and intergenerational learning. In addition, questions that were aimed at gathering program specific information (to determine which elements of the program that participants found helpful), to request suggestions for improvements, and to gather information about the students' experiencing with home sharing as an alternative housing arrangement were also asked.

While some questions were common to both qualitative interview guides, others were specific to fifty plus participants or students. Questions that gathered information about aging in place for example were only included in the fifty plus interview guide; questions that collected information about the student's experience with home sharing as an alternative housing option were specific to the student's interview guide. Interview items that aimed to measure the impact on economics, intergenerational learning, and to gather opinions and suggestions about the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program were common to both interview guides.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited from a convenience sample of individuals who had been involved in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program at any point from the time of

its commencement in September of 2012 through to December of 2013 as either home sharers or home seekers. As part of the intake process, the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program coordinator requested permission for contact to be made by myself at a later date for purposes of program evaluation. The coordinator provided a list of twenty-three Home Share participants (eleven home sharers and twelve home seekers) who had agreed to be contacted. As is required when conducting research with human participants, approval from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research from Memorial University of Newfoundland was obtained in January of 2013 (see Appendix C). As part of this application I outlined the research process and addressed all potential areas of ethical concern. These are summarized below.

Ethical Issues

Voluntary Participation

To ensure voluntary participation, the coordinator of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program was not informed as to which individuals eventually participated in the interview process.

Free and Informed Consent

I followed up with a phone call to these individuals and asked if they wished to receive information regarding the evaluation. Those who agreed were emailed or mailed information about the research study (see Appendix D). They were also provided

with a copy of the informed consent form that they would be required to sign if they agreed to be interviewed (see Appendix E).

A week after this contact, I made a second call to each potential participant to confirm their agreement to be part of the research study and to answer questions as needed. Once the individual agreed to be a participant in the research study, the date, time, and location were arranged for the qualitative interview. Each participant was given the choice of being interviewed in their home if that was their preference (and to accommodate any mobility restrictions), at the School of Social Work, or at another location. Telephone interviews were offered to international students who had already left the province and to other participants who identified that meeting in person would be problematic. Participants were advised that they could be interviewed on their own or with a person of their choice (excluding the home sharer).

Anonymity and Confidentiality of Participants

To protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, the audiotapes were transcribed by a transcriber who had signed a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix H). In addition, prior to analysis, the transcripts were de-identified and pseudonyms were assigned. As there were only two male participants, gender was removed as an identifier in the presentation of the findings to further enhance anonymity. All data (audiotapes and transcriptions) were stored in a locked cabinet at the School of Social Work. Access to this material was limited to my supervisor, the transcriber, and myself.

The participants in this research may be considered to be vulnerable persons. As such, the participants were informed that the limits to confidentiality would entail my lawful and ethical duty to make the necessary referrals to the Regional Health Authority and/or the police in the instance if a disclosure related to abuse or mistreatment was made. Participants were advised that support would be provided to assist the fifty plus participant or student in placing their own referral if this were preferable to them.

The ability to offer absolute anonymity was further limited in this research due to the sample size. Participants were informed that while their involvement would be confidential, and their data would be de-identified, complete anonymity would be difficult to ensure due to the small number of participants.

Potential Harm

The participants were not at risk for physical harm. However, there was a risk for psychological or emotional harm given the possibility that a participant could divulge information of an embarrassing nature, or that may cause them to be uncomfortable. I was the only researcher conducting the qualitative interviews and I am a registered social worker with ten years of experience working in the community with vulnerable populations. This experience assisted with mitigating participant uneasiness, and in recognizing when participants were experiencing discomfort. To avoid the perception of occupying dual roles of social worker and researcher, I was prepared to take an arm's length approach to lending assistance by referring the participants to other sources for support (by providing information and telephone numbers for the mental health crisis

line, the MUN Counseling Centre, the Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador information and referral line, etc.).

Potential Benefits

The anticipated benefits of this research study involved the potential advantages for participants as improvements to the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program are brought about by the outcome of the results. More broadly, participation could contribute to increased ability for older adults to age in place, enhanced social inclusion, the reduction of ageist attitudes, and an increased range of housing options for students and fifty plus individuals.

Withdrawal of Participation and/or Data

Participants had the right to withdraw their involvement at any point up to the time the report was submitted to the steering committee. This included their right to revoke an agreement to be interviewed, to terminate an interview before its completion, and to have their data removed from the report prior to the submission date. Details about the right to withdraw were included in the written information provided to the participants prior to the qualitative interviews (see Appendix D). In addition, I informed the participants about their right to withdraw in-person before each interview.

Sharing of Research Results

At the completion of each interview, participants were informed that they could access a copy of the evaluation on the Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador website in the spring of 2014.

Data Collection

A total of sixteen individuals agreed to be interviewed (nine home sharers and seven home seekers). Of this number, thirteen interviews were conducted in person, and three were completed via telephone. I was the only researcher conducting the interviews. This limited researcher bias as there was uniformity in how the questions were presented and any discrepancies in interview styles that would likely be a factor if there were more than one interviewer were avoided.

All nine fifty plus participants were female with a range of ages from fifty-three to seventy-four (mean age of sixty-three). In addition, eight of the fifty plus participants were single, widowed, or divorced. One fifty plus participant was married. Of the seven student participants two were male and five were female. In addition, five students had permanent residences outside of the province (two of which were from countries other than Canada). Appendices F and G offers complete profiles of both groups of participants.

I agreed to meet the participants in the venue of their choice or via telephone. Of the thirteen in-person interviews, twelve were conducted in participants' residences, and one was completed at the School of Social Work. Prior to proceeding with each interview, participants were again offered an opportunity to ask questions. Participants were informed that their involvement in the research study would be confidential, and no person aside from the immediate research team would be privy to knowledge involving their participation. Limits to confidentiality were also discussed. Informed consent forms were signed prior to starting the interview. For those individuals who were interviewed via telephone, I requested that signed consent forms be sent via email or mail and received before the interview.

Prior to the interviews, two participants elected not to be audio taped. For these interviews, I kept a detailed record of the participants' responses. After the interviews were concluded, participants were provided an opportunity to ask any further questions regarding the research and thanked for their involvement in the research study. The length of the interviews was largely dependent on the depth of answers provided by the participants. However, roughly thirty minutes was the typical interview duration.

Coding and Analysis

In the book *Doing and Writing Qualitative Research*, Holliday (2002) discusses the use of themes in organizing qualitative data as essential to the examination and presentation of the findings. According to Holiday, organization begins with the construction and

identification of broad categories and entails arranging the raw data into categories to create a framework that allows for a more focused inspection. Next steps in the process are the highlighting of common response patterns (or themes) and identifying any atypical responses. Discussion emerges from analysis of these themes.

In keeping with Holliday's process, I started with the interview guide as my organizing framework. Thus, the initial categories were predetermined by the goals of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. As such, the interview guides themselves were essentially arranged to reflect these headings. Aging in place, social inclusion, intergenerational learning, and information about best practices of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program were all categories built into the interview guides. Consistent with the interview guides, some categories had responses from only one set of participants (home sharers or home seekers), while others had responses from both. The responses that were collected in each category were further analysed for any inherent patterns. This process yielded several response patterns (or themes) that will be discussed in the findings and analysis sections.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research statistical tests to ensure reliability and validity are not applicable. Nevertheless, in order to establish confidence in the results, and to increase the credibility of the study, it is the responsibility of the researcher to give a precise account of the findings and to conduct the research with rigor (Padgett, 2009).

Establishing rigor in qualitative research ensures that the voices of the participants are represented truthfully (Lietz, Langer, & Furman, 2009). Padgett (1998) advised that devising strategies to increase rigor in qualitative research supports the legitimacy of the findings.

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) concept of trustworthiness, bounded by the elements of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, is often used in qualitative research for establishing rigor. These elements correspond to terms commonly used in quantitative methods: internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Using Lincoln and Guba's framework as a guide, steps were taken to achieve trustworthiness in this thesis in the following ways:

Credibility: Lincoln and Guba offer several techniques to enhance a study's credibility and the probability that accurate findings will be produced. Among these is the use of negative case analysis, selected as the best fit for the project at hand. In negative case analysis, findings that are contrary to the researcher's interpretations of the data are also presented thereby accounting for "all known cases without exception" (p.309). In the findings section of this thesis I presented all information that was related to a particular theme even when it was contrary to my expectations, or as Lincoln and Guba describe – the "disconfirming data" (p.310). One example of this is when I stated that although six fifty plus participants identified that home sharing had financial benefits, one individual stated that she was financially disadvantaged by her

participation. By representing all the findings, and not just the findings that confirm a theme's strength, I was contributing to the trustworthiness of my thesis.

Transferability: Measures of external validity are not a primary goal in qualitative research. However, Lincoln and Guba advise that to enhance generalizability of the data the researcher can provide thorough descriptions of the participant base. This allows for the readers to determine for themselves whether or not the data is transferable to other groups. To establish trustworthiness through transferability I provided participant profiles complete with demographic information on each participant both in the body and via tables in Appendices F and G.

Dependability: Audio taping the interviews was a third method used to establish trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba describe "auditability" as essential in authenticating a researcher's interpretation of data (p.318). During the interpretation of the raw data, and throughout the process of organizing the findings, I was able to refer to transcriptions that represented the actual words of the participants. The findings chapter in this thesis presents many direct quotations as a means to communicate the views of the participants. Availability of the audio tapes ensured that I did not have to rely on my own ability to write accurate notes during the interviews (aside from the two interviews for which consent to tape was not obtained) and contributed to the auditability of the research.

Confirmability: Related to dependability, and to demonstrate impartiality in research Lincoln and Guba discuss the process of confirmability auditing. Only when the full range of findings is considered can research attain a sense of objectivity. Lincoln and Guba state that the records stemming from the research process create an “audit trail” that can be revisited to ensure that all information is considered when making interpretations or formulating conclusions (p. 319). This paper trail includes instrument development information, raw data, investigator notes, and documents pertaining to the organizing and analysis of the data. My audit trail included notes from my research journal, copies of the various drafts of the interview guides, transcriptions of the raw data, and the documents that were created when the data was organized into themes. When analyzing the findings I was able to return to this audit trail to ensure that all information was considered. This allowed me to present an all-inclusive view of the results. In addition, to achieve transparency in this process I provided the entire collection of responses in regards to individual questions via direct quotations or summary of the responses to each identified theme in the findings section.

The next chapter of this thesis will report the findings gathered from the qualitative interviews organized into broad categories that correspond with the focus of this thesis. Each category will contain common response patterns (or themes) complete with direct quotes from the participants.

Chapter 4

Findings

The primary focus of this thesis was a qualitative exploration of participants' experience of aging in place, social inclusion, and intergenerational learning in relation to home sharing. The data collected from the qualitative interviews yielded information about the participants' views on these issues in the context of their overall experiences with the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program.

In addition, I sought specific information about home share best practices: suggestions for improvements, what participants felt were both positive and negative attributes of the program, and financial benefits of participating in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. Information was also solicited about the unique experiences of the student participants in home sharing as an alternative housing option.

This chapter will focus on the presentation of the various themes organized into five sections. The organization reflects the specific categories of questions asked during the qualitative interviews (e.g., aging in place, home share best practices, etc.) and emphasizes the data that materialized from these interviews. Therefore, while the sections themselves were predetermined due to the focus of this thesis and the manner in which the interview guides were organized, the specific themes within these sections are determined from the data that was collected.

The first three sections will present the themes derived from the primary foci of this thesis (aging in place, social inclusion, and intergenerational learning). Themes that emerged from questions gathering information on home share best practices will be discussed next, followed by themes derived from the examination of the student experience of home sharing as an alternative housing option.

Aging in Place

It is known that the majority of individuals express a desire to remain in their own homes. However, barriers such as declining physical abilities and lack of caregivers or family support can negatively influence an older person's ability to age in place (Black, 2008; Denton et al., 2010; Plath, 2008). The fifty plus participants in this research study were asked if they would still be living in their own homes if they were not participating in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. All nine home sharers who were interviewed reported that they would indeed still be living in their own homes. Participation in the program did not appear to directly influence their ability to remain in their home (or to age in place). However, a theme of practical assistance provided by the student matches that allowed for easier maintenance of their properties was evident in the participants' responses. This practical assistance is something that has the potential to facilitate aging in place over the long term.

Physical limitations that make grounds maintenance difficult were highlighted by three fifty plus participants. In these cases, it was reported that the students were of

assistance in ensuring that activities like snow clearing and lawn mowing were completed. Two of these comments were:

Sophia: "I asked him to help me with the lawn because I have bad arms, and so he does, and I don't need to ask him or remind him; I find him excellent that way, I must say."

Della: "Someone to help me shovel the snow in the winter, because I am not physically as able as I once was to be able to do that."

Another participant identified that if her home share match was not available to assist her in completing yard work and other tasks, she would have had to hire someone to do this chore.

Sophia: "He takes the garbage out, and mows the lawn because otherwise I'd have to pay so much. Yeah, that's a real help. To me, the best part is having a helping hand like with the yard work."

Having practical assistance was identified as being particularly helpful when family support was absent. One person said:

Kelly: "I don't have any family here so I'm pretty much on my own, he painted a room for me, and he will do anything, and that's a real bonus; and then his son shovels snow for me in the winter."

Although all the fifty plus participants who were interviewed stated that home sharing did not impact their ability to age in place, it is evident by their responses that there were practical tasks that many of them need assistance with completing in order to keep their properties maintained. Without student home sharers, the assistance they provided would have to be delegated to other people (e.g., friends, neighbours, family, or a hired helper). For many, this type of informal support was not available. Financial inability to pay for the costs of repairs, and physical inability to maintain a home and property, are both obstacles to aging in place (Golant & LaGreca, 1994). In this regard, it can be said while participants did not feel that home sharing had a direct influence on their ability to age in place, some known challenges to aging in place were addressed.

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion entails connection to the community and the larger society, the opportunity to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships, and to participate in civic activities and other social action pursuits (Moody & Phinney, 2012; Scharlach & Lehning, 2013; Shookner, 2002). During the qualitative interviews I asked the fifty plus participants if there was any change in their ability or desire to participate in social activities as a result of their home sharing relationship.

Like aging in place, a direct influence on social inclusion due to participation in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program was not indicated. All nine fifty plus participants involved in this study reported that there was no change in their ability or

desire to participate in social activities due to home sharing. Despite their negative response to this question, the participants' responses highlighted three themes related to social inclusion. This section will address and discuss the themes of home security and pet sitting (that enhanced the home sharers' ability to participate in social activities), reduction in loneliness, and civic engagement.

Home Security and Pet Sitting

Many of the home sharers reported that having a presence in the home while they were away provided a sense of confidence and security. One person commented that she felt more comfortable traveling as her home share partner could attend to any issues arising from the rental of her basement apartment.

Tina: "Just the fact that I could go away on, you know, extended travel and know that the house was, you know, occupied. It's especially relevant because I have a downstairs tenant, so this is an apartment that's connected with a lot of the household systems like the plumbing and heating. If I go away, I can't help that tenant. But, if there's someone in this part of the house, then, all systems can sort of be run from here."

Another participant discussed that her home had been previously broken into, and knowing that the student would be in the home made it more likely that she would take the opportunity to leave for an extended period of time.

Evelyn: "Our house was broken into a couple of years ago, and everything was taken; and so we hate going. We're more inclined to go now because we got somebody to mind the house for us."

Several others discussed the importance of pet sitting and having a physical presence in the home with their animals. It was reported by three fifty plus participants that due to having a student share their home who was willing to pet sit they were able to leave the home for longer periods of time to go out into the community. One participant commented on this subject by saying:

Sophia. "You could go and not worry about the dog. So if I went and decided not to come home six hours later... I could stay for twelve hours. I knew there'd be somebody home, so that's a real nice feeling."

Another fifty plus participant advised that when she was traveling, she would reduce the student's rent in exchange for her caring for her pets (creating a financial advantage for the student).

Evelyn: "They would get a reduced rent. Yeah, so while we were gone she looked after the animals, but they didn't pay any rent during that time."

Programs and communities can enhance the social inclusion of older adults by reducing any barriers to making and maintaining community connections (Scharlach & Lehning, 2013). While the fifty plus participants reported that their desire to participate in activities outside their home was unchanged since home sharing, they did recognize

that their ability (or freedom) to leave their homes was enhanced due to the added security and pet care provided by the students. In this way, the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program had an indirect positive influence on social inclusion for the fifty plus participants.

Reduction in Loneliness

Making and maintaining interpersonal connections is another important aspect of social inclusion as older individuals are at risk for social loneliness and disconnection from others (Tomaka et al., 2006). Interpersonal connections can enrich social inclusion and alleviate feelings of loneliness (Martinez del Castillo et al., 2010; Van Tilburg et al., 2004). The majority of fifty plus participants interviewed identified that they felt less lonely since their home share partner moved into their home.

Seven out of nine home sharers discussed various reasons for why their loneliness had been reduced. Four participants mentioned that having a student present in the home provided them with opportunities to have conversations on a regular basis. One fifty plus participant referred to the conversations as "emotional dialogue." She went on further to say:

Della: "The emotional piece, which I referenced, is about if you are living on your own having someone else in the household allows you to not only to be the wise woman but allows you to remain interested and interesting to someone else in your life."

Others referenced the bond with their home share partner as providing a sense of companionship that lessened loneliness. One participant discussed her partner in familial terms.

Michelle: "I've been so lucky, you know, getting a perfect tenant, and we go places together. She's like a buddy too. She's the daughter I never had."

Two home sharers reported that due to a death of a spouse they had been living independently. The companionship provided by the student worked to decrease the lonesomeness of living alone:

Mona: "Well, I like having company because I'm a widow and I live alone, and I like the company of somebody coming and going."

The two fifty plus participants who said they had not experienced a reduction in loneliness had similar explanations. They both reported that the student they had been paired with spent the majority of their time in their room. For these individuals, there was minimal interaction with the student, and they did not derive the companionship they were expecting. One of these participants commented by saying:

Tina: "No, it didn't work because that young fellow was too busy and just kept to his room."

For the majority of the fifty plus participants the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program created an avenue by which to forge new relationships, and to remove the

loneliness associated with living alone. In this regard, participation in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program had a positive effect on social inclusion.

Civic Engagement

Participation in civic activities or social action pursuits are examples of social inclusion through establishing connections to the community (Shookner, 2002; Warburton et al., 2013). Two fifty plus participants reported a sense of civic engagement emerging from their participation in home sharing. It was the drive to do something good for students and display social responsibility that lead these individuals (in part) to participate in the program. These responses are important in identifying another link between home sharing and enhanced social inclusion for the home sharers.

One of the fifty plus participants advised that while she benefited financially from home sharing, helping a student made her feel positive about herself.

Della: "Feeling like I was doing my civic duty made me feel good about myself and about getting outside of my own head."

Both Jennifer and Della discussed their belief in the principle of the program, and the need to give back to the community led them to become involved.

Jennifer: "Personally, I believe in the social structure and the involvement in the program so I wanted to participate in it to help the students, basically."

Della: "The sense of citizenship and that's linked to the reinforcement of my value system and what I think is fair, equitable and right that when I have something to give that I do."

In addition to the link between civic engagement and social inclusion, understanding the motivations for becoming involved in the program is important in that it helps to determine the manner in which the program is promoted, and its likelihood of being a successful sustainable program.

Intergenerational Learning

Both qualitative interview guides attempted to solicit information about the potential of home sharing to facilitate intergenerational learning and thereby address ageist views. Fifty plus participants were asked if they had learned something new about students and vice versa. It appeared that intergenerational learning did occur in students but not in the fifty plus participants. This is an important finding as studies have indicated that university students tend to hold the most negative views of older people (Alan & Johnson, 2009; Kalish et al., 2013; Wurtele, 2009; Wurtele & Maruyama, 2013).

Four of the seven students acknowledged that living with their home share partner had added to their existing information about older adults. One student stated that she learned that older people can be a source of wisdom through having life

experiences. Another student mentioned she learned that like everyone, older adults can have difficulties and life challenges.

Melanie: "I guess I learned a lot about how some older people don't really have the support works you would hope they would have; social supports and financial supports."

Common negative stereotypes associated with older people are that they are both vulnerable and frail (Minichiello et al., 2000). These types of attitudes were challenged for one student who advised that she learned that older individuals can be active and fun loving.

Brianna: "I never would've thought I'd get along that well with, you know, a sixty-one year-old, but I did. And she was just like a little kid, she went out and sledded with me, and she was always excited about what I was doing and seemed to be very young and active."

The remaining three students stated that they had not experienced new learning. For those who offered explanations, it was stated that they have grandparents who are actively engaged in their lives. For these students, their existing knowledge base of older adults was not advanced by their participation in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program.

All nine fifty plus participants stated that their knowledge of students had not evolved due to their participation in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. Some

individuals identified that they had not learned anything new about students due to the limited amount of time they had spent with the student (either due to the living arrangement being of short duration or to the arrangement having recently begun). Others stated that they have children of similar age and therefore already have an awareness of the behaviours, needs, and strengths of students.

Home Share Best Practices

In addition to these broader goals the steering committee wanted to gather general information about home share best practices. Participants were asked if they had any concerns about home sharing or suggestions for improving the program. In addition, they were asked what were the “best” and “worst” parts of the program. There were several repeating responses that came to view during the organizing of the raw data. Six themes were generated from this organization. Financial benefits to home sharing, the need to develop clear expectations about food sharing and purchasing, rental assistance, the importance of appropriate matching, benefits of ongoing support, and participants’ ideas for enhanced marketing of the home share program will be addressed in this section.

Financial Benefits

The first theme to be discussed is the financial benefit of participating in the Home Share St. John’s Pilot Program. Nearly all respondents stated that home sharing was financially beneficial although their descriptions of the benefits varied.

All seven students reported that they had benefited financially by home sharing. Several students stated that private rentals in the St. John's area can be expensive and with a maximum rental cost of \$400, the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program offered an economical alternative. Other students highlighted the low monthly rent as a practical means of offsetting the high cost of tuition.

Sandy: "The Home Share Program is a real economic way for students to get through because your tuition and everything is expensive and your school experience is expensive, and you don't want to be spending a lot of money on just some place to lay your head."

Another student from outside the province emphasized that travel to and from Newfoundland is costly, and the low cost of rent from home sharing with a fifty plus individual was of assistance.

Robin: "I would say how inexpensive it is compared to, like, other rentals in Newfoundland, even compared to living in residence at university it's so much and nicer and really beneficial to me because, obviously, attending university is really expensive, especially for me because I have to fly here so that's been really great."

Other students stated that as part of their contract their home share partner had agreed to reduce or eliminate their share of the cost of utilities in exchange for providing practical assistance like snow clearing, yard work, or pet sitting.

Many of the fifty plus home sharers also reported a financial benefit to home sharing. Of the ninety plus participants interviewed, six reported that they have benefited financially from renting a space in their home to a student. One home sharer discussed how the rental income provided her the means to assist her own son (in part) financially.

Sophia: "I'm supporting my son in school. It's not enough to fully support my son, but it is a help. It is a help so I do appreciate that."

Another fifty plus participant highlighted the difficulty in independently maintaining a home from a financial standpoint, and how having a home share partner assisted with reducing some of this strain.

Della: "Having someone in the home contribute to defraying the cost of everyday living expenses is helpful. The advantage was that I had gone from sharing a large space with somebody to living on my own and covering all the expenses and so having someone come in to just help me make sure I could stay there."

Other responses focused on retirement and the challenge of living on a fixed income. One of the barriers to aging in place is lacking the sufficient finances to maintain one's home (Golant & LaGreca, 1994; Pynoos et al., 2009). The benefit of extra income was identified as a distinct advantage of participation in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program and may be beneficial in reducing the financial barrier to aging in place.

Of the remaining three home sharers who did not identify a financial benefit to renting space to a student, two stated that due to having utilities included there was no benefit as the rental income evened out the costs. Only one fifty plus participant reported a disadvantage. As the disadvantage has a close association with the next theme, it will be discussed in detail in that section.

Expectations about Food Sharing and Purchasing

The participants were not directly asked questions during the qualitative interviews about sharing food and the associated costs. However, two students and two fifty plus participants did raise the topic. The participants who discussed food during their qualitative interview identified food sharing as a negative element of their home share experience and advised that sharing food costs and cooking responsibilities is not a sound idea.

All four of these participants stated that including the cost of food in the monthly rent and sharing cooking responsibilities resulted in negative experiences. In connection to the financial disadvantage mentioned in the previous section, one home sharer stated that her home share partner consumed a considerable amount of food, and that the extra cost of groceries exceeded the rental income.

Evelyn: "I was charging [the student] \$400 a month; but, actually, I think I lost [due to the cost of food]."

Others referenced that sharing food created situations where ownership of particular food items was confusing. Having food included in rent resulted in awkwardness in identifying specific items a student would like to have purchased.

Brianna: "I really didn't want to ask or tell [the home sharer] what I preferred to eat. There were a couple of times where I was hoping [the home sharer] would buy things but [the home sharer] wouldn't buy them...so that was kind of an iffy area."

Another student identified that food preferences and cooking styles can differ between individuals, and this can create situations where shared meals are not liked by both parties.

Melanie: "I don't eat the same way she does at all. She's eats traditionally and I don't eat like that at all. I eat much healthier than she does."

One of the fifty plus participants discussed food sharing situations during her interview and stated that at times she would feel disappointed and hurt when her student match declined to eat the meals she had prepared.

Developing clear expectations regarding food sharing and purchasing was identified by these participants as something that would be of benefit to future home sharers and home seekers.

Rental Assistance

Some fifty plus participants reported that prior to their involvement in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program they had considered renting out space in their home to generate extra income and that the program was effective in helping them achieve this goal. Their comments suggest that the program staff performed the necessary background work required to find desirable tenants. That is, the structure of the program eliminated the labour of meeting and interviewing individuals interested in renting their room. One home sharer commented on this by saying:

Jennifer: "If I had to advertise that room, I would be bombarded by meeting so many people and then having to judge them. You know, you end up judging people. I don't want to do that. I would not have engaged in home sharing if I had to do all the interviewing myself."

Another remarked positively on the program's practice of introducing potential matches prior to both parties agreeing to home share. She connected this practice with lessening the probability of having an unsuccessful living arrangement.

Sophia: "If I advertised a room for rent, I'd have to interview 10, 15, 20, 30, 40 people before I find someone. I've had to interview tenants, and there's a lot of undesirable tenants. Now, maybe I said no to the wrong person sometimes too, but now someone else is doing that, and it takes the work off and then filters

down, and then even then you got a chance to say, 'No, I'd like to meet somebody else'."

For these individuals, being a participant in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program enabled them to rent space in their home, and to delegate the background work of finding a suitable tenant to the coordinator. Four fifty plus participants identified this practice as one of the best components of the program.

The Importance of Appropriate Matching

During the qualitative interviews participants were asked for their feedback on the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program's matching process. The majority of fifty plus participants and students were in agreement that the matching process resulted in their being paired with a suitable partner. Many participants identified that the value of this aspect of the program was unexpected.

Della: "I didn't expect to have such a great match, I really didn't. I had not expected to have somebody that was such a good match and with whom I got along with so easily. I've never shared my home with anybody that I got along with so well. It was just so smooth and I'm not giving her credit for that or I'm not giving me credit for that, I think the credit really goes to the program because they found that match."

One fifty plus participant identified that the matching process resulted in her getting paired with a student with whom she considered to be like family.

Mona: “Well, the matching process was perfect because she’s just like my own granddaughter.”

Remarks by students and fifty plus participants gave credit to program staff for matching them with partners with whom they have complementary personalities. One student identified that through soliciting information about preferences during the intake process, the program ensured that she was paired with an individual who shared similar interests in entertainment.

Three participants (one fifty plus participant and two students) provided suggestions on how to improve the matching process. Two individuals advised that more transparency was needed on what they expect from their partners in terms of finances and in what will be included (e.g., food, toilet paper, laundry detergent, etc.). One student suggested that being able to view video tapes of their potential home share matches would be of assistance in their selection process especially for students who were not familiar with St. John’s and the proximity of neighbourhoods to the university campus.

Ongoing Support

As discussed in the introduction chapter, the Home Share St. John’s Pilot Program provides participants with moderate ongoing support by program staff throughout the duration of their participation. Formal check-ins were conducted after weeks one and two and at the end of semester. Informal support was provided by the

coordinator as needed. All comments offered by participants about ongoing support were positive. Several comments from students and fifty plus participants identified the program's support feature as a valuable part of the program. Some comments highlighted the support with conflict resolution and assisting with solving problems. One student directly named the coordinator as a source of support throughout her involvement in the program.

Melanie: "I thought that was great. [The coordinator] said 'that anytime you have any problems talk to me.' And whenever I did, I would talk to him on email and he stopped by. I thought that was really good. I'd say that was probably the best part of it."

Other students and fifty plus participants discussed the one week check in as helpful and supportive. Two fifty plus participants commented on the contact with program staff as contributing to their socialization in that they enjoyed their conversations and visits with staff and looked forward to this contact.

Gail: "I loved [the coordinator]. I enjoyed talking to [the coordinator]."

Participants commented on feeling connected to the program due to the contact with staff.

The Need for Enhanced Marketing

Increasing the awareness of the program through additional marketing was identified by both groups as a way to improve the program. Many comments involved the lack of information available to current and potential Memorial University of Newfoundland students as a gap in the current marketing campaign. One fifty plus participant identified that the university website did not have any information available on the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program.

Evelyn: "So we looked up MUN housing, but there's no mention of the Home Share in MUN housing, and I think that people who are on the mainland that are going to come to St. John's to go to MUN and have no idea of where to stay. I think that it needs to be a little more promoted."

Other remarks common to students and fifty plus participants identified marketing enhancement as the singular most effective way to improve the program.

Della: "I think if I had anything to say, it would be that more people have to know about this."

Both groups advised that public awareness of home sharing as a housing option is limited and that the awareness of the program needs to be enhanced.

An additional comment made by one of the home sharers draws attention to the ageist stereotypes considered in the literature review. It presents a viewpoint that could

be an important consideration in the marketing of the program. This participant noted that declaring herself a “senior” in need of help was a challenge. She pointed out that other potential fifty plus participants may not view themselves as eligible for the program if they do not necessarily view themselves as a person who needs help.

Della: “I think the challenge for me was characterizing myself as a senior who needed help to save her home. It was hard for me to see myself as a senior who needed help. And the strange thing is that we all need help throughout our lives but there’s something really negative about declaring yourself a senior who needs help. And I needed help with snow shovelling in my 20’s, 30’s, 40’s and 50’s and now that I’m 60 and to be eligible for the program, I had declared myself as a senior who needs help to stay in her home. And so that was kind of a tough pill for me to swallow. And I think that speaks to, this oppressive social discourse we have around what it means to be an aging person. I look around my office and I think ‘I don’t see this old person; I don’t see this old person anywhere.’ And so I am wondering if one of the challenges to marketing the home share program is that people who may be eligible may not recognize themselves in the program. And they may see the program as targeting an older version of themselves. And a less likeable version of themselves.”

The message in this statement is that individuals of all ages may need assistance with certain tasks. However, as it was highlighted in the comment, when older individuals are in need of help, this is often viewed as a deficit. This is consistent with

the literature that states that commonly held beliefs of older people are that they are frail and dependent on others (Minichiello et al., 2000; Warburton et al., 2013). Insights like these highlight the impact of language and its use in how the program is marketed; and identifies that older individuals may not want to be associated with the program as it is believed to be for “seniors” – a designation that connotes frailty.

Alternative Housing Option for Students

One of the goals of the Home Share St. John’s Pilot Program is to provide students with an affordable housing option. The qualitative interviews sought to gather information on the unique home share experience of students as participants in an alternative housing arrangement, and some valuable insights were gathered during this process. Like the fifty plus participants, repeating ideas about experiences and opinions were found in the student data. The responses generated four distinct themes relevant to the concept of home sharing as a housing option for students. A home away from home, ease of transition from one’s permanent home, better living conditions, and environment conducive to study are all themes that will be discussed in the following four sections.

A Home Away From Home

When students and fifty plus individuals sign up to participate in the Home Share St. John’s Pilot Program, they are agreeing to shared accommodations. The most noteworthy theme that was generated from the student interviews was that these

shared accommodations felt more like a home away from home than the typical rental arrangement. In response to being asked what was the best part of their experience in the program, five of the seven students replied that it was the home-like environment of the residence in which they were placed.

There were two general explanations presented by the students as to the reason the house felt more like a home. The first was the bond that was formed between the student and their home share partner. All five students reported that the relationship they built with the fifty plus participant was more like a family member than a housemate. Many students identified that the meaningful exchanges that were shared contributed to the development of these familial feelings. One student commented that she felt comfort and contentment due to the relationship she had built with her match. Another student described how she came to view the individuals she was matched with as a second pair of parents.

Brianna: "It was kind of like having this feeling like they were parents. I was willing to tell them where I was going and that I was safe and whatnot. I viewed them as parents in a sense."

A second explanation for the home-like environment was the support that was bestowed onto the student by the fifty plus individual. Four of the students advised that their home share match provided them with various types of support. For some

students, the support was emotional. One student described how her home share match would talk to her when she appeared upset.

Yvonne: "I really feel that I'm at home. I'm at home because [my home share partner] is really caring, she knows what I'm thinking, it's amazing. When I looked blue or depressed, she would ask me what happened and she would check to see if I'm okay or not."

For another student, support came by the way of introductions that expanded the student's social circle. This expansion was especially important as the student was new to the province.

Robin: "Well, it's a really great support as well because who I'm living with, she has introduced me to the rest of her family so I really feel like I have more than just a place to live in Newfoundland. I have, like, a family in Newfoundland because she has a couple of granddaughters so I've gotten to know them, and everything has been really helpful making me feel at home here."

Moral support regarding academics was reported by another student. She advised that the care she received from her match was helpful in ensuring her success as a student.

Brianna: "It was a really comforting feeling to go home after school to a family. If something was going wrong in school and I was stressing about something and, you have this mother figure and father figure there to counsel me and help me

feel better. I don't think I would've passed, especially if I lived alone. Yeah, it was very nice."

Generally, the students advised that they had not expected to share such a strong connection with their home share match. For the students, the relationships that were formed were unexpected benefits that became the most desirable part of the program.

Transition from Permanent Residence

Many of the student participants in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program are in need of local accommodations as they are originally from other provinces or countries. One of the themes derived from the student responses was that in general the transition from their permanent homes was made easier by going into a home share situation rather than live independently or with roommates. Of the seven students interviewed, five identified this to be the case.

Eliminating some of the work involved in moving was put forth by some as an explanation as to why their transition was eased. One student identified that the effort involved in moving from a different province was alleviated in part due to the background work (i.e., viewing and approving the homes as suitable places of residence for the students, etc.) performed by home share staff. She commented that if she were to have to find a place to live herself, she would have to spend hours searching for and

viewing apartments. She was appreciative of the fact that program staff had found her a suitable and safe home in a nice area of town.

Other comments focused on concrete needs. Bedroom furniture, bedding, cooking supplies, utensils and so forth were provided to the students by their home share partner. In addition access to a washer and dryer were put forth as helpful accessibilities that eliminated the student from having to travel outside the home to do laundry. Some students identified that having these items and amenities in place assisted with their transition. One student commented:

Robin: "I would say it made the transition easier than if I just moved here and moved into an apartment building by myself. They had already thought of my basic needs and they had gotten the room ready for me and, asked me if there was anything I need. My home sharer always checks in with me and asks if there's anything new that I need so it's really helpful."

The family-like environment provided by the fifty plus individual was yet another reason why the transition was eased. One student reported that the move from her permanent home in another country was made easier in that she preferred at that time to live with a family and not with other students.

Brianna: "I definitely liked living with a family and not have to live with roommates again."

It is apparent that the challenges associated with moving to St. John's to attend university from out of province are alleviated due in part to entering into a home share arrangement with an older adult.

Better Living Conditions

In addition to the financial benefit to home sharing identified by students in a previous section, the students also indicated that their accommodations were improved from previous lodgings. Four of seven students reported that the fifty plus individual's home provided them with better living conditions than they had lived in previous to their participation in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. While one student identified that the conditions were more optimal due to the area of town and proximity to the university, all other students discussed this theme in terms of rental cost. That is, the students advised that for the low cost of rent associated with their home share arrangement, they were surprised and impressed with the quality of their accommodations. Two students commented on this by saying:

Sandy: "This is my first home share so this experience has been just phenomenal. With what you pay for and what I'm getting is completely way above what you'd ever think of."

Melanie: "When I went into it I looked into her house and I thought 'my god she's rich', like she has such nice furnishings, everything was just so nice. I'm used to

living in dives. I said 'oh God, this is so nice'. I thought \$400 was great. I used to pay more and it's very difficult. I'm used to living in much worse conditions."

The students who commented on the quality of the accommodations did so generally when they were asked if there was anything unexpected about the program.

Environment Conducive to Study

The final theme associated with the student responses is associated with academics. Enhancing the recruitment and retention of Memorial University Students of Newfoundland is a goal of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. Therefore, the students were asked directly if their academic performance had changed in any way since they started participating in the program. All seven students reported that their academics had not changed. However, three students reported that the environment in which they were living was more conducive to study.

These three students identified that their ability to focus on their school work was enhanced due to the environment created by their home share match. One student commented that prior to moving in with her home share match she was living with loud roommates. She advised that her living arrangements with the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program were quieter and had enhanced her ability to study.

Melanie: "I had really loud room-mates because I lived on campus. They never slept. I just couldn't handle being there. I couldn't concentrate, couldn't sleep, nothing."

Another student discussed the supportive nature of her placement in that her home share match respected her wishes to study.

Brianna: "A lot of times when I had roommates prior to being there, I felt like they really didn't understand me wanting to study and me wanting get good grades. They're all, "Brianna, come on, let's go out; let's do this," and I'd always feel bad because I was, like, "Oh no, I need to stay in and study" or whatever. But my hosts understand that. They understood that I wanted to get good grades. They honoured my determination to try and get good grades, so I didn't feel like I was getting pulled one way when I felt like I needed to be studying."

While the students' academic performance was reported to be unchanged, their ability to study was enhanced due to their participation in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program.

The final chapter of this thesis will provide more in depth analysis of the themes and offer insight into the degree to which the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program was successful in achieving the goals of its organizers. Limitations to the research will also be identified and discussed in terms of how the findings may have been influenced by external factors.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The research objective of this thesis was a qualitative exploration of participants' experience of aging in place, social inclusion, and intergenerational learning in relation to home sharing. These topics were highlighted in the literature review of this thesis and represented in both interview guides. Exploring home sharing best practices and examining the students' experiences with home sharing as an alternative housing option were additional areas of focus. Investigations into these topics were undertaken in an effort to assess the overall success of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program and the satisfaction of the participants.

In this chapter I will discuss the findings and the degree to which it appeared that the goals and expectations of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program were met. As the primary focus of the current research was aging in place, social inclusion, and intergenerational learning these will be addressed first. A discussion of home share best practices and the unique experiences of the student participants in home sharing as an alternative housing option will follow. This chapter will conclude with identification of the limitations of the research design, and the exploration of how these variables may have influenced the findings.

Aging in Place

All participants identified that involvement in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program did not have an influence on their ability to age in place. However, the goal of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program is to alleviate the strain that many older individuals experience in maintaining a home (Canadian Federation of Students, 2013). That is, the goal is not to ensure that older individuals will be able to remain in their homes, but more specifically to assist with reducing the potential barriers that many experience in this quest. The findings indicate that the program was successful in achieving this goal.

The fifty plus participants identified two particular types of assistance that were beneficial. The first is the completion of practical tasks in and around the home by the students. Through delegating the responsibility of snow removal, yard work, and other home maintenance activities, the home sharers were essentially decreasing (or eliminating) their role in performing this type of necessary physical labour. This is important as older adults are often vulnerable to having physical limitations that make this work difficult (Denton et al., 2010). In addition, many older individuals have an absence of individuals who can assist with these tasks (Denton et al., 2010). This was true for some of the fifty plus participants who identified that finding people to complete these chores was a challenge. Due to the declaration that participating in the program did not allow for the fifty plus participants to remain in their homes, it can be assumed that they would either complete these tasks themselves (even when some of

these participants reported that they would have difficulty doing so), have family or friends provide assistance, or hire someone. Either one of these can place undue stress, strain, or add to already existing financial commitments. The Home Share St. John's Pilot Program was successful in alleviating these, and in reducing this potential barrier to aging in place.

It is not surprising that assistance with completing chores in and around the house was identified by the fifty plus participants as helpful. Trottier et al. (2000) suggest that women account for a progressively larger share of the population (particularly in older age groups) and have more challenges to aging in place than do their male counterparts. As previously noted, all nine home sharers interviewed were female. Of that number all but one fifty plus participants were widowed, single, or divorced. As older women frequently have no spouse, the likelihood that they will receive practical assistance at home may be reduced (Trottier et al., 2000). The type of support offered in conjunction with the absence of a spouse or partner to assist with practical household chores and grounds maintenance could be a factor in why these individuals originally decided to participate in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. It is possible that the program attracts single women to enroll as home sharers due to the practical assistance made available by the student matches.

The second type of assistance that the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program provided was financial. The rental income generated from sharing space in the home with a student was identified as useful in mitigating the difficulty of living independently

and (in some cases) on a fixed income. This is essential as having adequate finances can be an obstacle to aging in place (Golant & LaGreca, 1994). Home sharing not only provided the fifty plus participants with an additional source of monthly income, it eliminated the work involved in finding suitable tenants (which was a goal for some participants prior to learning about the program). By decreasing the potential for financial strain by increasing one's income, the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program had a measure of success in achieving their goal of assisting older individuals to age in place.

Participant bias may have been a factor in the absence of a direct influence on the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program's success in assisting participants to age in place. Individuals enrolled as home sharers in the program are fifty plus years old. As noted in the methods chapter, the mean age of home sharers interviewed for this thesis was sixty-three. As older adults are especially vulnerable to experiencing issues that affect their health and mobility, declining health status has been identified as a challenge to aging in place (Black, 2008). These declining physical abilities negatively affect an individual's ability to maintain independence which could also pose a challenge to remaining at home (Black, 2008; Plath 2008). It is probable that some of these barriers to aging in place that older adults experience may not be a factor for these relatively young older participants.

Social Inclusion

Another goal of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program is to enhance the social inclusion of the fifty plus participants. As we have already discussed in the findings chapter, the fifty plus participants interviewed reported that there was no change in their ability or desire to participate in social activities. Like aging in place, there was agreement that social inclusion was not affected (either positively or negatively) due to home sharing. Social inclusion is a term that encompasses many elements. While the fifty plus participants may not have considered that many of the benefits of home sharing that they identified was related to social inclusion, it is evident that this aspect was moderately enhanced in three ways.

An important element of social inclusion is the acquisition and maintenance of interpersonal and community connections (Scharlach & Lehning, 2013). The fifty plus participants in this study identified that they were more likely to leave their homes for longer periods of time due to the feeling of security created by having a presence in the home. In addition, many of the home sharers reported that their home share match was willing to pet sit, and this also made it more likely that they would stay out of the home for a longer duration or participate in travel opportunities. Travel opportunities may involve visiting friends or family members and/or visiting new places where there would be opportunities to forge new connections and engage in social opportunities. This trend fits with the fifty plus participant profile. Given the young age of the home sharers it is likely that the barriers they experience to participating in social

opportunities are different than the barriers experienced by those with advanced age. That is, mobility restrictions, health issues, inability to operate a vehicle, and other barriers typically experienced by older individuals may not be barriers to leaving their homes to participate in social opportunities for these younger participants. Ensuring that there is a responsible person available to provide pet care and home security enables these participants to leave their homes to venture out into the community where the possibilities for socialization are increased. Participation in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program thus resulted in the reduction of some barriers to leaving the home.

Pairing two strangers together in a living arrangement compels the establishment of a new relationship. Making new connections is an important aspect of social inclusion (Scharlach & Lehning, 2013). In essence, the concept of home sharing has the potential to increase social inclusion simply by placing two people in the same space and providing the avenue to facilitate the forming of a new interpersonal connection. Indeed, the participants in this research study identified that they felt less lonely since their home share partner moved into their home. The companionship, company, and opportunities for conversation were all reported as reasons why many experienced a reduction in loneliness. This is an important finding as older adults are at risk for social loneliness (Tomaka et al., 2006). There are many reasons why an older individual may experience loneliness. Death of a spouse, fewer social opportunities due to retirement, and lack of family or friendly connections (or distance from the same) are

but a few. Eight of the nine home sharers interviewed lived alone prior to their involvement in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. If loneliness is a factor for older adults, home sharing presents opportunities to build new bonds that could work to bridge social gaps. Based on the participants' responses the program was successful not only in creating new social opportunities, but also in breaking down the risk of loneliness.

Social inclusion is enhanced for individuals when there are opportunities for civic engagement available (Shookner, 2002; Warburton et al., 2013). The Home Share St. John's Pilot Program provides individuals with an opportunity to provide valuable services to others in need. For home sharers, they provide students with an affordable housing option and a home-like environment. Students have the opportunity to provide necessary supports to older persons (e.g., help with home maintenance, companionship, etc.). The satisfaction of doing something good for others and the sense of social responsibility that followed was identified by several individuals as a motivating factor to participate in the program. In this way, it can be said that the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program was successful in enhancing social inclusion for its participants.

Intergenerational Learning

Promoting intergenerational learning between the two groups of participants is yet another goal of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. The program can only pair the fifty plus individuals and students together in an effort to provide them with the

venue to learn from each other. Any learning that is undertaken is dependent on the participants' own motivation and previous experience. That is, if there is minimal interaction (by choice) between home sharer and student, then this would likely result in a corresponding lack of intergenerational learning. Prior knowledge of older adults and students too would affect the amount of learning that would take place.

The home sharers unanimously reported that their knowledge of students was not advanced due to home sharing. Therefore, any success was solely derived from student learning. As it was reported in the findings section, roughly half of the students interviewed reported some degree of intergenerational learning. Some of the student participants advised that they learned that older adults can be fun loving, active, and be wise. This is in direct contrast of ageist views of older people that portray them as incompetent, frail, and vulnerable (Minichello et al., 2000; Warbuton et al., 2013). One can deduce that for this small number of students their views had ageist origins, and that their home share experience was successful in challenging these negative perceptions. Other students however revealed that their view of older people had not changed due to home sharing.

The primary rationale provided by the participants as to why they believed their knowledge was not advanced was due to having other individuals of similar age in their lives. The students advised that they had existing connections with grandparents or other older individuals, and the fifty plus participants reported having children or grandchildren of similar age. This may reflect selection bias in that these existing

connections with members of the opposite group may in fact have been a motivating factor in deciding to home share. That is, there may be an established knowledge base and comfort level with older adults (for students) and students (for the fifty plus participants) that contributed to their decision to participate in the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program. The program may actually attract individuals who have knowledge and experience with the other group minimizing the potential for intergenerational learning (at least over the duration of the pilot).

Home Sharing Best Practices

In addition to exploring the impact of home sharing on aging in place, social inclusion, and intergenerational learning; soliciting participant opinions and suggestions on home share best practices was an area of interest. As reported in the findings chapter, there were numerous benefits to home sharing reported by the students and fifty plus participants. More importantly, both groups of participants offered some valuable insights into how the program could be improved.

The financial benefit to both groups was clear. As already discussed in the aging in place section, the fifty plus participants benefited from the extra rental income. The students also unanimously reported that they benefited from a lower rate of rent as compared to private rentals (or further reduced at times when that would provide other services like pet care). As previously noted, five of the seven students were from provinces other than Newfoundland and Labrador. The financial benefit of home

sharing may be more profound for these participants who have the additional expenses of airfare and other costly travel arrangements (as was indicated in the some student responses). The students and fifty plus participants credited their positive experience with the program with being paired with a suitable home share partner and a thorough matching process. In addition, the contact with program staff and the services provided by them was also identified as a benefit. The participants reported that the support feature of the program and the initial check in was helpful.

By examining the findings it is evident that there was an absence of disadvantages reported by the participants. There were however some cautionary tales reported by both fifty plus participants and students advising of the difficulties experienced when sharing food and cooking responsibilities was the practice between home share matches. This practice caused difficulty for both parties in terms of creating awkwardness in the home and (in some cases) financial strain. This difficulty was presented as an element of home sharing that the participants would keep separate in future home share opportunities, and not as a reason to refrain from home sharing. However, the disclosure of these difficulties does highlight the need for the development of clear expectations and boundaries between both groups of participants. In addition, the marketing campaign was identified by many participants as not having a broad enough scope. Some participants suggested that enhancing this area of the program could enable improvement.

Alternative Housing Option for Students

Another secondary objective of this research was to explore the students' experiences with home sharing as an alternative housing option. The student participants were asked direct questions during their qualitative interviews to solicit information about this topic. As reported in the findings chapter, the students discussed several benefits to this type of living arrangement.

In addition to the financial benefits to home sharing for students already discussed in the previous section, in many instances the accommodations provided to the students were of better quality than those in which they had previously lived. Proximity to the university, quality of the home and furnishings, and amenities included in the rental cost were all reported by the students as explanations as to why the accommodations provided by the fifty plus participants were of better value than what they have previously resided in. This is interesting given the typical process of exchanging money for accommodations. Normally, the more expensive accommodations are of better quality, and a home that is closer to post-secondary institutions can usually garner higher rental revenue. The Home Share St. John's Pilot Program has created an opposite situation to what is typical in terms of rental costs and what is provided.

Students also reported that the warm and supportive environment created by the fifty plus individual provided them with a home-like environment that was beneficial

to both their ability to study, and in easing the transition from their permanent place of residence. The opportunities for conversations and social exchanges were reported as beneficial to both groups of participants, and in many cases the participants advised that their home share match felt more like a family member than a roommate. This may indicate that the students had a pre-existing comfort level with older adults prior to considering home sharing as a housing option, and explain (in part) why there was a minimal amount of intergenerational learning that transpired between the students and fifty plus participants. Roughly half of the students advised that they had existing knowledge of older adults due to having grandparents who are actively engaged in their lives. For these students, the bond that was formed with their home share partner may have been developed in part due to this pre-existing knowledge and comfort level with older adults.

Limitations

Every research study has limitations that can affect the findings and the interpretations of the findings. In this project, there were several limitations to the research design and delivery which will be discussed in this section as to their potential impact on the findings.

The first limitation is related to program evaluation. Rubin and Babbie (2008) state that external evaluators have the potential to produce results that have integrity as they typically have no vested interest in the results. However, they are more likely to

make design errors than in-house evaluators as they have less intimate knowledge and experience with the program (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). In an effort to create interview guides that both accurately reflected the goals of the program and measured success of these goals, the guides were developed in consultation with the steering committee and based on a list of indicators of success this committee determined. However, it is possible that without intimate knowledge and experience with the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program, the research design and resulting interview guides may have errors that are typically produced by external evaluators.

Another limitation is related to sampling. As the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program is a relatively new program and had a limited number of matches at the time the research was conducted, the participant base for this thesis was small. Of a possible twenty-three participants, only sixteen agreed to be interviewed. Overall, the responses from the participants were generally positive. It is possible that the remaining seven potential participants who did not agree to participate may have been those individuals whose experience was less positive than the participants who agreed to be interviewed. If the potential participant base was larger, it is likely that the findings would have reflected a larger variety of opinions and suggestions, and perhaps comments of a more negative tone may have been expressed.

The method of data collection could also be considered to be a limitation of this thesis. Although conducting the interviews in-person was identified in the methods chapter as a positive aspect of the research design, this may have had an opposite effect

whereby participants could have been less comfortable in expressing negative opinions face-to-face. These limitations may have had an effect on the overall accuracy of the results.

The question soliciting information on social inclusion was double-barrelled. The question was: “has there been any change in your ability or desire to participate in social opportunities since home sharing?” Ability and desire are two separate variables and have very different meanings. The double-barrelled nature of this question was not realized until I was analyzing the interview transcriptions for response patterns. Although the participants reported that there was no change in their ability or desire to participate in social opportunities, it was evident in their responses that the fifty plus participants did experience a change in their ability to participate (due to pet care and home security). It is possible that this question was confusing to the participants, and if it were changed to two separate questions, the responses may have been different. Given that enhancing social inclusion is a primary goal of the program, it is a significant detriment to the evaluation that this question was not fully understood by the participants.

One final point to discuss was the parameters of the age demographic for home sharers, and how this may have influenced the findings. As was discussed in the introduction chapter, the Home Share St. John’s Pilot Program considers those aged fifty and over to be eligible to participate as home sharers. While this is not a limitation of the research design per se, the fact that many of the fifty plus participants interviewed

were ‘younger seniors’ could have affected the results considerably. Participant bias was considered in the three major areas of focus for this thesis. For instance, while it was found that the Home Share St. John’s Pilot Program did assist the participants to age in place by reducing some of the barriers, the participants unanimously identified that without home sharing they would continue to live in their own homes. These results may have been quite different if the program had increased their age of eligibility for home sharers and specifically targeted an older age group. In addition, this highlights that program goals for home sharers may actually be designed for much older participants. One participant identified that she had a difficult time in considering herself a “senior” in need of help. This may indicate that both the program goals and corresponding marketing campaign do not match the participants that are enrolling as home sharers. A closer examination and analysis of this fit is required.

Implications for the Field of Social Work

I believe that the research undertaken for this thesis has the potential to advance our understanding of the issues facing older individuals in our community. The qualitative nature of the research allowed for the opportunity to integrate the voices of the participants in this program evaluation. Using this approach we were permitted access to a more profound understanding of their housing needs. This may be of particular value to social workers in this province who work with older adults in long term care facilities, as part of the regional health authorities, and in community-based programs like Home Share. Awareness of the needs and unique experiences (as they

identify them) of older adults can inform social work programs and policy development.

As the need for creative and responsive community-based resources will only continue to grow as this population expands evaluating current programs is a necessary activity.

Conclusion

The primary focus of this thesis was to explore participants' experiences in home sharing in regard to aging in place, social inclusion, and intergenerational learning and to make a determination of the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program's success in achieving organizers' goals in these three areas. The findings tell us that there was success in the reduction some barriers to aging in place and social inclusion. However, a direct influence was not indicated in these two areas. In addition, there was only moderate success in achieving the goal of facilitating intergenerational learning. Providing assistance to age in place, enhancing social inclusion, and facilitating intergenerational learning could be considered to be long-term goals which would make measuring the true success difficult within the confines of a pilot program with a small number of participants. A research initiative with a broader scope and more longevity may be needed to accurately determine whether the program achieves these goals as the current information is insufficient to make such a determination.

Exploring home share best practices and the student experience of home sharing as an alternative housing option (the secondary focus of this thesis) proved to be more a more appropriate venture for this research. Success in these areas could be determined

more easily over the short-term, and the participants identified several direct benefits to home sharing and tangible suggestions for program improvements. The Home Share St. John's Pilot Program experienced success in many areas (e.g., financial benefits, appropriate matching, benefits of ongoing support, etc.). In addition, home sharing proved to be a successful alternative housing arrangement for students in terms of affordability and quality.

Analyzing the benefits gained versus the disadvantages experienced by the participants will permit a determination of the success of the program and the satisfaction of the participants. Although there were limitations in the research design and scope, it is clear that the Home Share St. John's Pilot Program was successful in offering a creative housing alternative for students and fifty plus participants and that the level of satisfaction for participants was high. The findings support that the program creates multiple benefits for students and fifty plus participants that goes above and beyond their established program goals (e.g., the close bonds formed between student and fifty plus individual).

On a personal note, conducting this research has advanced my knowledge and understanding of the older adult demographic and provided me with an opportunity to re-evaluate some of my own opinions and views. Due to my experience with grandparents who were of advanced age, and my employment experience in long-term care, I was surprised at times when I would visit the home of a home sharer and be faced with interviewing an individual who appeared young in age and spirit. Like some

of the student participants, my image of older adults has been challenged, and my viewpoints altered. This will only stand to help me improve the quality of social work service that I am able to offer going forward into the future.

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Appendix A

Post-Match Interview Tool – STUDENTS

1 – This item is meant to measure the student’s accommodation experiences of home sharing, impact on economics, intergenerational learning/discrimination, and unexpected benefits.

Questions:

1. Overall, what were the most important benefits you received from home sharing? Please describe.
2. Did you have any difficulties with home sharing? Please describe.
3. What kind of practical help did you expect to receive? What did you actually receive?
4. What other kind help or support did you expect to receive? What did you actually receive?
5. Were there any financial benefits or disadvantages to sharing a home with a senior?
6. Did you have any thoughts or feelings about older persons that were changed after homesharing? Or, did you learn something about older persons that you had not known before?
7. Was there any part of the home-sharing experience that was totally unexpected?

2 – This item is meant to explore social inclusion - describe

Question:

Has there been any change in your ability or desire to participate in social activities since you started home-sharing?

Prompts:

Have there been any community, school-oriented, or other social events that you were able to participate in due to sharing a home with a senior?

Do you feel more connected to others or less lonely?

Do you feel happier than before you participated in the Home Share Program?

3 – This item is intended to measure impact of home-sharing on recruitment and retention, increased desirability of MUN, academic performance, and transition from other places.

Question:

Were there any parts of the program that changed your experience as a student of MUN?

Prompts:

Has your academic performance changed in any way?

Has your participation affected your decision to continue attending MUN either way?

Do you think that this program will make it easier for students from outside the city to attend MUN, or more attractive to prospective students?

Was the transition from your permanent home affected due to your participation in the program? In what ways?

4 –This item is intended to measure best practices for the Home Share Program

Question:

What was the best part and the worst part of the Home Share Program?

Prompts:

What parts of the program could be improved to make the program better for students?

- Intake
- Introduction/match
- Problem solving/ongoing support
- Exit

Did you have any concerns about the program during your participation?

Do you have any suggestions on how to make the program better?

5 – The next question is aimed at the participant’s more general opinion about home-sharing.

What advice would you give to people trying to home share?

Does the participant have any questions? Inform about the report being available on the Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador website.

Appendix B

Post-Match Interview Tool – Fifty Plus Participants

1 – This item is meant to measure the senior’s experiences of home sharing, impact on economics, intergenerational learning/discrimination, and unexpected benefits.

Questions:

1. Overall, what were the most important benefits you received from home sharing? Please describe.
2. Did you have any difficulties with home sharing? Please describe.
3. What kind of practical help did you expect to receive? What did you actually receive?
4. What other kind help or support did you expect to receive? What did you actually receive?
5. Were there any financial benefits or disadvantages to having a student share your home?
6. Did you have any thoughts or feelings about students that were changed after having a student share your home with you? Or, did you learn something about students that you had not known before?
7. Was there any part of the home-sharing experience that was totally unexpected?

2 – This item is meant to explore social inclusion - describe

Question:

Has there been any change in your ability or desire to participate in social activities since you started home-sharing?

Prompts:

Have there been any community, family, or other social events that you were able to participate in due to having a home-sharer?

Has there been any change in your feelings of independence?

Do you feel more connected to others or less lonely?

Do you feel happier than before participating in the Home Share Program?

3 – This item is meant to explore aging in place/better use of housing

Question:

Were there any major challenges to living in your own home that were relieved or solved due to having a home-sharer?

Prompts:

If you weren't involved in the Home Share Program would you be able to stay in this home? Describe why or why not.

What would your living arrangements have been if you didn't participate in the Home Share Program?

4 –This item is intended to measure best practices for the Home Share Program

Question:

What was the best part and the worst part of the Home Share Program?

Prompts:

What parts of the program could be improved to make the program better for seniors?

- Intake
- Introduction/match

- Problem solving/ongoing support
- Exit

Did you have any concerns about the program during your participation?

Do you have any suggestions on how to make the program better?

5 – The next question is aimed at the participant’s more general opinion about home-sharing.

What advice would you give to people trying to home share?

Does the participant have any questions? Inform about report being available on the Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador website.

Appendix C

Ethics Approval

ICEHR Number:	<u>20131480-SW</u>
Approval Period:	January 30, 2013 – January 31, 2014
Funding Source:	Supervisor's <i>Home Share Program Evaluation</i>
Responsible	Dr. Gail Wideman
Title of Project:	<i>Home Share Qualitative Program Evaluation</i>

January 30, 2013

Dear Ms. Legge:

Thank you for your email correspondence of January 28, 2013 addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above- named research project.

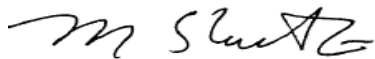
The ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the justifications and revisions submitted and is appreciative of the thoroughness and clarity with which you have responded to the concerns raised by the Committee. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* to January 31, 2014.

If you need to make changes during the course of the project, which may involve ethical concerns, please forward a description of the intended changes to Theresa Heath at icehr@mun.ca.

The *TCPS2* requires that you submit an annual status report to the ICEHR if the research continues beyond January 31, 2014. Also to comply with the *TCPS2*, please notify us upon completion of your project.

We wish you success
with your research.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Shute'.

Michael Shute, Th.D.

Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

copy: Supervisor – Dr. Gail Wideman, School
of Social Work

Director, Office of Research Services

Appendix D

Information about the Home Share Research Study

Research Study Title: Home Share Qualitative Program Evaluation

Researcher: Rhonda Legge, Master of Social Work Student at Memorial University

Telephone number: (709) 682-4906, Email: rhonda.legge@mun.ca

Research Study Supervisor: Dr. Gail Wideman, Assistant Professor at Memorial University School of Social Work

Telephone number: (709) 864-8161, Email: gwideman@mun.ca

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “Home Share Qualitative Program Evaluation”

The following information is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study at any time. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact Rhonda Legge if you have any questions about the study or for more information not included here before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research, or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to have more information about the research evaluation of the Home Share Program sent to you for your review. As part of my Master’s Thesis I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Gail Wideman at the Memorial University School of Social Work. The evaluation of the Home Share Program is funded

by the Seniors Resource Centre. This evaluation will assist the Home Share Program staff to improve the program for future participants.

Purpose of the Research Study

Basically, we want to find out how useful the program has been for you. The experiences you have had as a participant in the Home Share Program (both positive and negative) are important to us. Hearing about your experience with the Home Share Program will help the program's staff to improve the program for future participants. The purpose of this evaluation is to simply help us to learn more about your feelings about the program.

What you will do in this Study:

If you agree to take part in this study we will meet for a one-time interview. You will chose where we meet. The interview can take place in your home if you chose, or we can find another place to meet such as a coffee shop. The interview consists of roughly four main questions regarding your experiences with the Home Share Program and you match in particular. You decide how much information you provide, and how detailed your answers are. The interview will be audio recorded with your permission.

Length of Time:

The interview will take approximately an hour to an hour and a half. The length of time is really dependent on how much detail you provide.

Withdrawal from the Study:

You may chose to withdraw at any time during the study. If you withdraw before the interview then the interview will simply not take place and there will be no further contact. If you decide to withdraw during the interview I will stop the recording and the interview will end. Any responses that you had given will not be included in the study. If you decide to withdraw after the interview, you responses will not be included in the

study. It will not be possible to remove your responses after the report is submitted in April 2013. However, all responses you provide will be anonymous.

Possible Benefits:

The benefits of this study will be the ability to make changes to the Home Share Program based on the experiences of the people who have taken part in the program. If you decide to continue to be a participant in the Home Share Program, you may benefit personally from any changes that could be made.

Possible Risks:

You decide how much information you give to me during the interview. However, depending on the type of information you provide, and the detail you give, there is a slight chance that you might feel embarrassed or uncomfortable during the interview.

Confidentiality vs. Anonymity

There is a difference between confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality is ensuring that identities of participants are accessible only to those authorized to have access. Anonymity is a result of not disclosing participant's identifying characteristics.

Confidentiality

Your privacy is important to us. Your participation in the study will be confidential; no person will be made aware of your participation in the study (aside from the immediate research team).

There is a limit to confidentiality. The only instance where your responses will not be kept in confidence is if there was a disclosure of abuse. In this event, there is a lawful and ethical duty to report this information to the authorities. In addition, together we can talk about the resources in the community that can provide support and assistance in coping with these types of negative experiences. Making contact with support

agencies is your choice. We only want to make sure that you have all of the information you need.

The audio tapes and all other information will be stored in a locked cabinet in Dr. Gail Wideman's office at the School of Social Work. The interview audiotapes will be transcribed by a transcriber who has signed a confidentiality agreement. Only the immediate research team consisting of Rhonda Legge, Dr. Gail Wideman, and the transcriber will have access to the cabinet.

All data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as per Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research.

Anonymity

Your names will not be included in the research results or any reports that are submitted. However, there will be a small number of individuals involved in this study (a maximum of twenty participants). This number of participants is relatively small and could pose a barrier to achieving anonymity in the research results. Every reasonable effort will be made to assure your anonymity.

Reporting of Results:

The results of this study will be used in a program evaluation report to the Seniors Resource Centre, in a master's thesis, and potentially in the publication of a journal article.

There will be no personal identifying information in any of these reports. The information you provide could be used in the form of direct quotations and/or in a summarized form.

Sharing of Results with Participants:

You will have access to the final report. The report will be available to view on the Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador website.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: Rhonda Legge at (709) 682-4906 or Dr. Gail Wideman at (709) 864-8161.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at (709) 864-2861.

Appendix E

Informed Consent Form

Home Share Qualitative Program Evaluation

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research
- You have been able to ask questions about this study
- You are satisfied with the answers to all of your questions
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights, and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Your Signature (please check all items that are applicable):

- ☐ I have read and understood what this study is about and appreciate the risks and benefits
- ☐ I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered
- ☐ I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation at any time
- ☐ I agree to be audio-recorded during the interview
- ☐ I do not agree to be audio-recorded during the interview
- ☐ I agree to the use of quotations in the research reports

☐ I do not agree to the use of quotations

☐ A copy of the Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records

Name of Participant(s)

Signature of Participant(s)

Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study, and that he or she has freely chosen to be a part of the study.

Signature of Principle Investigator

Date

Appendix F

Participant Profile: Students

Student	Gender	Year of Birth	Permanent Residence in Newfoundland?	If no, Canadian or International
1	M	1989	No	International
2	F	1995	Yes	
3	F	1994	No	Canadian
4	M	1972	No	Canadian
5	F	1972	No	Canadian
6	F	1984	Yes	
7	F	1989	No	International

Appendix G

Participant Profile: Fifty Plus Participants

Fifty Plus Participant	Gender	Year of Birth	Marital Status
1	F	1940	Widowed
2	F	1952	Divorced
3	F	1952	Single
4	F	1961	Divorced
5	F	1953	Widowed
6	F	1952	Divorced
7	F	1952	Single
8	F	1950	Married
9	F	1945	Widowed

Appendix H

Home Share Qualitative Program Evaluation:

Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

I, the undersigned, recognize that the data collected as part of this study is confidential. I agree to respect the right to privacy and anonymity of all participants in this research project. I agree to maintain the confidentiality of all information related to this project. This means that I will not discuss this information with anyone other than the researcher and that I will ensure the secure storage of all tapes, transcripts and computer files and any other documentation associated with the study.

Specifically when transcribing tapes, earphones will be used during playback of tapes to protect the interviewee's privacy. Typed data will be stored on a floppy computer disk, memory stick and or a secure hard drive accessible only to me. If stored on disk or memory stick these will also be kept in a locked filing cabinet. At the completion of my work with the project, the data will be saved on disk or memory stick, deleted from the hard drive (if applicable) and the disk or memory stick will be given to the researcher. No paper or computer file copies of the data will be retained by me

_____	_____	_____
Name	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Witness' Name	Witness' Signature	Date