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Spaces of (non-)ageing

A discursive study of inequalities we live by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines processes and practices that make certain social categories *real* in people's lives. One of these categories is old age and old people. In contemporary societies that are inundated by images of youth, old age is under attack. Old age does not fit into the contemporary framework of idealised lifestyle and images of perfect people. Thus, the main question addressed in this dissertation concerns spaces of ageing, which are societal arenas in which people are expected and/or allowed to become old.

This study investigates discourses of old age within the context of welfare. It describes actions, statements and attitudes related to old age within the context of the welfare state. The study is based on multiple data that include 121 opinion weekly news magazines articles, social policy observations, and two case studies of a non-governmental and a user-organisation. The method of analysis comprises two approaches to discourse: discourse analysis and analysis of discourses. The study adopts a perspective that highlights the contextual, emotional and unstable character of welfare states that undergo constant processes of change. It notes the process of people production based on instilling in them norms and principles that should govern their lives.

The findings of the study illustrate the lack of spaces of ageing in the welfare state context. People are expected not to grow old, and old age remains a misunderstood phenomenon. Therefore, spaces of (non-)ageing are invoked to elaborate on these processes. Spaces of (non-)ageing occur in various societal domains and show what is required to avoid becoming old. Spaces of (non-)ageing frame the idea of old age as something terrifying and, in many cases, immoral.

The findings of this study are discussed in relation to the processes and practices of inequality (re)production. The complexity and mulitperspectivity of understanding such phenomena are taken into consideration. The study invites a perspective of 'us' from which to examine social inequalities, and 'we' who think and feel at the same time.

This dissertation is written from a perspective of knowledge, which is always plural, changing and fluid. Therefore, the results are discussed in terms of the production of some knowledges about the researched phenomenon but not as an exhaustive study. The final sections of the dissertation are devoted to a cross-study discussion of new ways of interpreting and describing the research material presented in four sub-studies. This discussion does not aim at obtaining better or more correct results; instead, it aims at presenting a different aspect of these results. It acknowledges different spatial and temporal locations and the ways in which these locations affect the production of knowledge.

Original papers

The thesis is based on the following papers, which are referred to by their Roman numerals in the text:

Paper I

Wilińska, M. & Cedersund, E. (2010) "Classic ageism" or "brutal economy"?- Old age and older people in the Polish media, *Journal of Aging Studies,* 24(4): 335-343

Paper II

Wilińska, M. (2010) Because Women will always be Women and Men are Just Getting Older: Intersecting Discourses of Age and Gender, *Current Sociology,* 58 (6): 879-896

Paper III

Wilińska, M. (2011) Is there a place for an ageing subject? Stories of ageing at the University of the Third Age in Poland (accepted for publication in *Sociology*)

Paper IV

Wilińska, M. & Henning, C. (2011) Old age identity in social welfare practices, *Qualitative Social Work,* 10 (3): 346-363

Contents

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Human Family

I note the obvious differences
in the human family.
Some of us are serious,
some thrive on comedy.

Some declare their lives are lived
as true profundity,
and others claim they really live
the real reality.

The variety of our skin tones
can confuse, bemuse, delight,
brown and pink and beige and purple,
tan and blue and white.

I've sailed upon the seven seas
and stopped in every land.
I've seen the wonders of the world,
not yet one common man.

I know ten thousand women
called Jane and Mary Jane,
but I've not seen any two
who really were the same.

Mirror twins are different
although their features jibe,
and lovers think quite different thoughts
while lying side by side.

We love and lose in China,
we weep on England's moors,
and laugh and moan in Guinea,
and thrive on Spanish shores.

We seek success in Finland,
are born and die in Maine.
In minor ways we differ,
in major we're the same.

I note the obvious differences
between each sort and type,
but we are more alike, my friends
than we are unalike.

We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unalike.

We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unalike.

Maya Angelou

1. Introduction

This dissertation is about me, but it is also about you. It is about all of us. It concerns processes that construct social categories and identities. The processes and practices to which I refer in this dissertation touch everyone. The only difference lies in the degree to which their effects are recognisable and in the type of social categories that trigger and are reinforced by these processes and practices.

The term 'inequality' is central to the main argument in this dissertation. Typically, the story of inequality is as follows: there are bad characters (e.g., people, institutions, etc.) that harm good people, and help is needed to ensure that the good people will have a good life. It is a nice story, but I refrain from reproducing it here. Instead, in this study, I show how we contribute to inequalities ourselves and how the distinction between bad and good people ceases to have any relevance in this context. "Inequality is created and reproduced by instutionalising imbalanced flows of socially valued resources" (Schwalbe, 2008b:26); it involves a range of practices, processes and relationships that let inequalities thrive in the social world. The task is not only to understand the conditions of inequality but also to try to understand its the roots (ibid.). Towards this end, it is important to acknowledge that there are connections between the objects, people and phenomena that produce reality in which we live (Schwalbe, 2008a, b). This is the perspective that guides the present study.

Discussions of inequality usually begin with a single category. Categories can be understood in terms of resources that enable us to understand the world around us (Juhila, 2004). As much as categories make social interactions easier, they also constrain our thinking about ourselves and other people (ibid.). In my case, the social category of *immigrant* gave me a lot to ponder. As a citizen of one country (Poland) living in another country (Sweden), I have confronted the category of *immigrant* on a daily basis. These experiences have shown me how it feels to be categorised and how life labelled as 'Other' can be. However, these encounters also enabled me to

consider various situations and actions in which I was an active participant. My status as a person from a different country, which is the basis for the *immigrant* category, was beneficial in some instances. At the university where I work, my immigrant status gave me access to *the international staff* category, which is often an object of pride among Swedish universities. Belonging to *the international staff* group is valued. As both an immigrant and a member of the international staff, I experienced the consequences of both categories simultaneously. Often, travelling from work to my home in the immigrant area felt like a journey between different worlds. However, these worlds were not so disconnected. Even as losing my job as part of *the international staff* caused one to be classified as a part of the socially defined problem of *unemployed immigrants*, my *international staff* business card was helpful when talking to a nurse in the clinic in the immigrant area. My experiences were different when I visited my home country. In the small community in Poland where my parents live, I was received as a kind of *local hero*. I was the one who had made it against all odds. I went abroad and got job at a university, not in a restaurant (though I experienced that as well). Here, it is important to note that the country to which I migrated was in the West. Had I gone to the East, reactions of the people in my parents' village may have been different. Apart from being a *local hero*, I became a part of the phenomenon youth *exodus* in my home country. The latter has been an issue of concern in Poland and other EU countries that became destinations for many Polish citizens after Poland joined the EU in 2004. These Polish 'journeys' (Temple & Judd, 2011) have also received growing interest from scholars interested in the reasons for and consequences of such migrations.

My experience as a member of the *immigrant* category has become part of my life. The examples here show that the situational and contextual nature of categories produce various consequences. However, they also demonstrate the persistence of thinking in certain categories as well as the ways in which various categories interact with one another. If I were of a different gender, belonged to a different social class, had a different skin colour, believed in a different God, were of a different age or had a different nationality, the story may have unfolded differently. The story may also have developed differently if I had moved to a different country and/or if I had moved at a

different time. The circumstances described above were never only about me. They constitute small details from a life story to which great importance has been attributed for understanding an individual, but these details are always about collective bodies, never only individual. I could say that I *just* moved to another country. Why is it, then, that that move was so frequently used by the people I interacted with as well as by myself as a characteristics of who I *really* was*?* This dissertation attempts to answer this question.

1.1.   The aims of the dissertation

The overall aim of this dissertation is to investigate the processes and practices that make certain social categories *real* in people's lives. One of these categories is old age and old people. Unlike other categories, old age is one that every person, regardless of gender, race, religion, place of residence or other characteristics, will experience should he or she live long enough. In contemporary societies that revolve around images of youth, old age is under attack. Old age does not fit into the contemporary framework of the idealised lifestyle and images of perfect people. Ageing is equated with decline and misery (Gullette, 2004), and what is old is, by definition, bad. Old age may become a type of trap spreading around our social and cultural environments (Hazan, 1994). This trap presents old age as a fearsome and frightening disease, and it depicts old people as having no gender, race, religion, class, etc. (Cruikshank, 2003). In light of these observations, questions emerge about places of old age in contemporary societies and spaces assigned to old people. The main question posed in this dissertation is as follows:

- What are the spaces of ageing created by the welfare state?

Spaces of ageing are societal arenas in which people are expected and/or allowed to become old. They are socially constructed and may occupy different physical locations. On the other hand, the same physical space may contain various social spaces (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002; Richardson & Jensen, 2003). In this dissertation, my interest is in the spaces of ageing created by the welfare state. Each welfare state is found to "embody

assumptions about work, about care, about national membership, about who lives outside the nation, about forms of financial arrangements, about families and age/gender dynamics, about forms of difference and how to regulate them, make them not poor or make them less dangerous" (Clarke, 2004:48). Hence, the welfare state creates spaces for different groups of people and assigns them diverse tasks. Here, the concept of space indicates both "a field of action and a basis for action, on scale from the body to the global"(Richardson & Jensen, 2003:8).Therefore, such spaces invite inquiries into the processes of establishing membership criteria and encourage reflection on the discursive and material resources used to exclude and/or include some people (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002).

Welfare spaces of ageing are socially constructed, and they become *real* in people's lives through a number of practices and processes. The concept of *real* that I use here refers to the individual and one's experiences with the social world; it refers to a number of practices and processes that make social phenomena *real*. For instance, Smith (2005) describes the actualities of people's lives to illustrate the specific ways in which society influences individuals and their actions and to demonstrate that, by attending to these actualities in the lives of individuals, we can more clearly understand society. The *real* I use in this dissertation has a similar meaning: *real* is socially constructed and emerges from discourses, but *real* is also specific to an individual and shows the way life is. "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas, 1928:572). These consequences have both material and non-material character. However, *real* is more than an individual experience; it is institutional, political and social. The *real* makes a difference at many levels and on a variety of occasions; the *real* is known and felt by a number of actors. Thus, it is not the lived experience of an individual that is at the heart of this dissertation; rather, it is the *real* life of social categories. This dissertation addresses the processes through which certain social categories become innate parts of our lives in defining our thinking, feelings, actions and spaces that we inhabit.

Four sub-questions guided my explorations of this phenomenon:

- o   How are spaces of ageing constructed?
- o   What feelings do spaces of ageing evoke?
- o   How do spaces of ageing organise the actions of old people?
- o   Who inhabits spaces of ageing?

The concept of old age has a discursive character; its meaning is contingent upon current systems of social relationships and practices. Discourses organise our lives; however, individuals are not doomed or powerless, and they can make choices. In the light of this, it is important to focus not only on the analysis of discourses but also to engage in discourse analysis (Bacchi, 2005).Whereas the former identifies discourses, the latter acknowledges the changes that people can enact within discourses. Combining various approaches to discourse is not about choosing methods at random, it is based on reflection concerning the possibilities and limitations of various perspectives (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2010 [2002]). To examine welfare spaces of ageing, I conducted four studies that focus on different welfare state scenes and adopted various ways of approaching discourse:

1) In the first study, I (with co-author E.C.) analysed a media discourse on old age. By understanding media as an important ingredient of social reality that has close relationships with social policy, I shed some light on the general discourse on ageing in the welfare state. This study was grounded in critical approaches to discourse analysis, which view media as playing an important role in reproducing unequal power relations.

2) In the second study, I reflected upon the interactions between discourses on old age and gender in the public sphere. I focused on the media and social policy discourses to navigate various subject positions created at the intersection of these discourses. This study applied an intersectional perspective and focused on illustrating the dynamic relationship between discourses of old age and gender and the subsequent production of discriminatory categories.

3) In the third study, I analysed stories of ageing told by the University of Third Age (U3A). The study results emphasised the social conditions and processes of inequality reproduction that cause students of U3A to say, "I learn/I enjoy my life *in spite of* my age". This study approaches stories of old age told by the U3A as ways of orientating among various discourses, making choices and decisions about favoured subject positions.

4) In the fourth study, I (with co-author C.H.) focused on the social welfare setting. I conducted research on a social welfare programme offered by a non-governmental organisation. The study offered insight into practices of old age identity work as performed by social welfare professionals. It presented social actions as they are constructed in the interactions between discourses, spaces and people.

These four studies gave me an opportunity to observe and follow various welfare state arenas in which old age was discussed and its different meanings were produced. The list presented here is not exhaustive; it would be possible to choose other domains. However, my choices of study were carefully considered, and, while I am aware of their limitations, I considered these questions to be consistent with the overall aim of the study. By examining media, social policy, voluntary and non-governmental organisations, I aimed at describing some of the welfare state scenes in which the social reality of old age is constructed.

This book consists of two parts. The first provides the framework for the dissertation and a summary of the empirical studies and consists of eight chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the topic of the research. Chapter 2 discusses the background of this study. In Chapter 3, I present a review of the main research approaches that explore old age and inequality. Chapter 4 introduces the theoretical framework that inspired my studies. This chapter presents some of the key assumptions of various approaches to discourse and provides an introduction to central topics discussed within the analysis, such

as language, action, emotions, and subject. Chapter 5 introduces the methods of analysis that I applied in my four studies. Chapter 6 includes a summary of each empirical study. In Chapter 7, I discuss the main findings of all four studies and their relevance to the overall research aim. Chapter 8 concludes the dissertation.

The second part of the book consists of four papers that have been published or accepted for publication in international scientific journals and are reproduced in their entirety. I see these papers as snapshots taken at different points in time and portraying various welfare-state scenarios. What connects these snapshots is the fact that I used the same 'camera' to take them. However, each snapshot depicts a different phase of my research project. It shows the different angels and lenses I used in operating my camera. Moreover, it took time to discover the range of possibilities offered by my camera; gradually, I came to understand the different settings that not only affected the content of the snapshots but also altered my own perspective on the scene. Taking photographs is never only about representing something; it is about interpreting the social reality that one intends to portray (Pink, 2007). Therefore, these snapshots represent a simplified version of a phenomenon of interest; they are reduced via different interpretive frames that influenced my work, which I try to explain in the first part of this book.

2.   Background

The background of a research project can be presented in different ways. It may pertain to the particular times and spaces in which various data were collected. At the same time, the background may indicate a general framework that guided a researcher in designing one's own study. It may also refer to the position of a researcher and her way of engaging in the process of knowledge construction. One way of discussing the background is to emphasise "the conditions of emergence for something", which have both spatial and temporal dimension (Ahmed, 2006:38). These *Where were you*? questions are sometimes the most difficult ones to answer, not because they

were not taken into account but because the research project changes as much as its author does. The conditions are an inevitable part of the process, and there are not something that a researcher stands *on* but rather *in*. In the subsequent paragraphs, I will try to explain where I stood when designing this study.

2.1. Welfare culture background

The immediate perception of the concept of the welfare state is as a reference to the types of social policies pursued in different countries. Such perceptions have a long-standing tradition in social policy research. Definitions of the welfare state advanced within that field include the institutional aspects of welfare states that serve the well-being of their members (Baldock, Manning, Miller, & Vickersatf, 1999); an outcome of an interplay between the state, the market and the family, which has the consequences of social stratification and de-commodification (Esping-Andersen, 1990); "interventions by the state in civil society to alter social forces"(Orloff, 1996: 52); to a term interchangeable with social policy and covering a wide range of areas (Ginsburg, 1992); and those that attempt to incorporate the state dimension, a certain policy area and society, where the provision of equal opportunities and life chances is the prime goal (Pierson, 1998). These definitions exemplify the difficulty of differentiating a welfare state from a non-welfare state. I will focus on those definitions that highlight the meaning of living in the welfare state and address the concept of welfare culture.

Welfare culture is a relatively new concept in the field of social policy research. The idea stems from attempts to incorporate a cultural aspect into social policy studies and stress the implications of the welfare state (see: Chamberlayne, 1999; Clarke, 2004; Lockhart, 2001; Oorschot, 2007; Pfau-Effinger, 2005). Proponents of such perspectives point to the values, ideals (Pfau-Effinger, 2005), assumptions and emotions (Freeman & Rustin, 1999) that pervade the welfare- state space and contribute to social policy change (Jo, 2011). Consequently, the welfare state is assigned a new meaning that

accentuates its contested, constructed and contradictory nature (Clarke, 2004). The role of the welfare state is seen as exceeding frames of welfare provision, and its active function of shaping and 'producing people' (ibid.) is acknowledged. Therefore, the welfare state ceases to be "an abstract concept, it translates into, or is transfigured by, the experience of real actors in concrete situations"(Russell & Edgar, 1998: 6). The process of 'producing' different people entails not only cross-national variations but within-country differentiations as well. Each welfare state favours some groups of people and forms of behaviour (Clarke, 2004). Simultaneously, certain groups of people are less privileged and their statuses and positions are considered to be secondary. The key to understanding the welfare state lies in explaining the moral and ideological underpinnings of social policy and the perspectives of people who embody particular welfare cultures and take part in the processes of change.

Examining the ideological and moral foundations of the welfare state necessitates an acknowledgment of the active role of social policies in the process of constructing social problems. As much as social policy is about solving certain problems, it is also about setting them (Schön, 1996) by naming and defining areas that are deemed to be problematic. Social problems are social constructs that in a particular time and space are conceived of as requiring some sort of intervention in response to their imagined impact on society. The construction of social problems always relies on the assumption that there is something wrong that is changeable and, hence, certain actions need to be taken (Loseke, 2003). The success of such stories is contingent upon the quality of claims made to transfer imagined problems into material conditions (ibid.), which make the presence of these stories *real*.

The making of social policy is not disconnected from other activities and practices of everyday life. It is grounded in similar practices of meaning-making and relating to the world. In this way, social policies reproduce the understandings shared by their context as well as categories and codes invoked to explain it (Schram, 2000). In other words, an analysis of social

policies offers insight into the societal context in which certain social problems appear (Bacchi, 1999, 2009; Shore & Wright, 1997). Some topics are discussed, and others are not, and the choices of what will be discussed make certain social problems visible (Bacchi, 1999, 2009; Schram, 2006) while others fade into oblivion. However, the context in which social policy is made is not stable or proscribed in any way. Claims made about certain social problems stem from the context, which is also constructed by the people who inhabit the society and interact with each other (Bogard, 2003). In this sense, every one of us takes part in making certain social problems *real*.

I use the term 'welfare culture' in this dissertation to indicate the variety of societal arenas in which social problems are made and the practices of making them. Though social policy making is an important ingredient here, it is not the only one. First, people's lives affect and are affected by the construction of social problems. Various institutional and organisational configurations are designed to deal with certain *real* problems, and there are media that both reflect and shape the way we perceive *real* problems. These are spaces that I entered to take the four snapshots on which I based my research project.

2.2. Polish background

The material I used in my study was collected in Poland, which sheds some light on the way in which this study was designed and conducted. Here, I will focus on presenting the features of the welfare state that are considered to be typical of Poland. Next, I will apply a feminist perspective to reflect on the meaning of changes in the welfare culture of post-socialist Poland for lives of men and women.

My discussion in this chapter focuses on the changes and, in some respect, the lack of change in the welfare culture of post-socialist Poland. The year 1989 is considered to be a turning point in the history of Poland and the lives

of its citizens. There are several reasons for this. First, the fall of communism and Poland's liberation from the influence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR) can be viewed as the beginning of a new chapter in the process of rebuilding the Polish nation (Zubrzycki, 2001). Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to see the events of the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s as a process of fighting for independence. The idea of the nation and of Poland had to be redefined. For over 200 years, the Catholic Church's discourse had played a particularly important role in defining what Polishness meant; it provided a space in which ideas of the Polish nation were celebrated. In early 1990, these ideas were confronted by liberal ideologies and their concepts of citizenship and civic rights (Zubrzycki, 2001). This confrontation led to a moral clash between the newly emerging democratic and traditional values (Buksinski, 2003). As Buksinski (2003) notes, the moral transformation that resulted from systemic changes in the early 1990s explains a lot about Poland's current condition and directions it has taken. The opposition movement of the communist era presented itself as a moral project that aimed at restoring the traditional values of religious morality and community; these were the values that were supposed to guide the transformation process and triumph over the immorality of communism (Buksinski, 2003; Koczanowicz, 2008).

However, the course of events changed that image. It was the neo-liberal ideology that triumphed in defining visions of the future; the notions of individualism and independence became more important, and homo catholicus seemed not to have a place in the this new discourse (Buksinski, 2003). However, the liberal ideology was not highly prevalent. Liberalism, if not even fundamentalist neoliberalism (Stenning et al., 2010), was accepted but only in reference to the free market; personal liberties were not part of liberalism (Koczanowicz, 2008). The issue of economic success dominated the public sphere and the process of transformation focused to a great extent on the economy, neglecting socio-political changes (Einhorn, 2006). This situation maintained and deepened the division between public and private that was characteristic of the communist regime. The public and the state was one space; the private and, in particular, the family were about something else. The private sphere has been regarded as the location of true

and honest life, while the public space being the opposite (Stenning et al., 2010).

2.2.1. The welfare state model

There seem to be many unknowns regarding the shape of social policy in Poland and attempts at naming the welfare-state model in Poland face many difficulties. Researchers agree on the unique and undefined character of the welfare state in Poland (see Golinowska, 2009; Steinhilber, 2006). However, attitudes towards this condition differ; whereas some use a disease metaphor to comment on it (see, for example Golinowska, 2009), others present a more optimistic view and allude to a 'work in progress' perspective (see Inglot, 2008). What is shared is an interest in the historical events that have shaped Polish society over many centuries.

Therefore, the undefined nature of the welfare state is seen as born "out of drama of history" (Golinowska, 2009: 214). The last 200 years of Polish history have abounded with moments of great loss that impinged on the country's development and welfare. The partition times (1794-1918) were characterised by a vivid welfare society dominated by non-governmental organisations and a strong influence of the Catholic Church (Krzyszkowski, 2011). The events of the first half of the twentieth century disturbed those developments, whereas the communist regime (1945-1989) put an end to such initiatives, making any form of free association illegal (ibid.). As a result, post-socialist states were built on a legacy of mistrust for and dislike of public life, an attitude that has encroached on the growth of civil society in these countries (Howard, 2003).

The years post-1989 brought many changes to Polish society. The fall of communism and a subsequent turn to democracy and capitalism have affected the countries and people of Central and Eastern Europe differently. Moreover, the pace and character of the changes has differed among these nations. In terms of the economy, Poland has often been presented as a

successful story of a country that embraced the spirit of capitalism, opened its market and welcomed neo-liberalism. The 'shock therapy' of the Balcerowicz Plan in the early 1990s, which aimed at transforming the national economic landscape, was used as a positive example of following a neo-liberal agenda and closing the chapter of the centralised economy of socialism. However, although the shock occurred, the therapy aspect has yet to be experienced (Stenning et al, 2010). The Balcerowicz Plan, founded on the principles of liberalisation, internationalisation, privatisation and stabilisation, has been found to contribute to the escalation of a range of social problems, such as unemployment and poverty, and continues influencing the shape of the political scene in Poland long after its implementation (Stenning et al, 2010). Although the economic reality changed significantly, changes in social policy have been less impressive (Golinowska, 2009). When compared with the success story of the Polish economy, it appears that there were no clear ideas about how to build the welfare state (Kochanowicz, 1997). A number of structural and administrative initiatives were taken to transform the system into a de-centralised system with strong local governments; however, the bases of these initiatives are questionable (Krzyszkowski, 2011). The welfare provision has never been a focus of attention; on the contrary, it was marginalised, and efforts were made to reduce it as much as possible (Kochanowicz, 1997).

In general, the post-socialist welfare states are characterised by the end of universal benefits, the stigmatisation of welfare benefits, the application of means-tested schemes to all welfare benefits and services, and a focus on activation as a universal policy imperative (Stenning et al., 2010). However, in comparison with other post-socialist states of the region, Poland seems to be the least universal when it comes to social assistance and welfare provisions (Orenstein & Haas, 2002). The country is more oriented towards residualist and familial welfare models, and the family is the main unit of policy (Steinhilber, 2006). Social policy in Poland mainly takes the shape of reactive policies (Golinowska, 2009) that deepen social inequalities among various groups rather than counteracting them (Krzyszkowski, 2011). Social services are not fully developed and levels of social transfers are very low

(Mikołajczyk-Lerman, 2011). Social exclusion remains the prime issue of concern (Golinowska, 2009), and the so-called 3B[1] syndrome - poverty, unemployment and homelessness (Kawula, 2002) - pervades social reality in Poland.

In his description of 'new poverty' (new to the scientific discourse of post-1989 Poland), Karwacki (2011) delineates the main characteristics of this phenomenon in Poland: it is rural, often long-lasting in a family's history, affects some locations (e.g., regions, cities) more than others, and is feminised and juvenalised. In effect, this phenomenon produces types of social underclasses whose members live outside of the institutional infrastructure and have limited access to the mainstream life (Karwacki, 2011). The aforementioned characteristics of poverty can be separated at the analytical level, though in people's lives, they tend to interact and influence each other contributing to greater inequality. For example, consider rural women. The lack of sufficient policy initiatives and actions taken by local governments contributes to the difficulties faced by these women in the new market economy. The situation of rural women as forgotten and neglected constitutes an emergent social problem that, with adequate policies and structural responses, could have been easily ameliorated if not solved (Krzyszkowski, 2008). Another aspect of poverty that can be found in the countries of the region is 'in-work poverty' (Stenning et al, 2010). This newly emerging phenomenon describes a condition in which employment does not protect one's socio-economic situation. Some jobs, and even whole sectors, become marginalised and, as a result, cease to protect their employees from the risk of poverty (ibid.). Many households find themselves in a situation in which making ends meet becomes a lonely struggle in the face of constantly reducing welfare security. Working multiple jobs is a common aspect of everyday life for many (Stenning et al, 2010). Mrozowicki (2011), in his study of coping strategies among Polish workers, shows that the new reality of Poland's capitalism challenges people but does not make them powerless. These workers actively search for ways of dealing with new demands, as illustrated by the growth of the

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[1] In Polish: bieda, bezrobocie, bezdomność

communitarian spirit. Informal networks and locality are helpful strategies. In these strategies, people do not resist neo-liberal reality; rather, they find ways of 'domesticating' it by working hard (Stenning et al., 2010).

At the time, the new reality of the early 1990s was more beneficial for some social groups than for others. In the public discourse about the effects of the Polish transformation, the categories of 'winners' and 'losers' in the change from a communist to capitalist market economy have often been evoked. Because this transformation entailed changes to lifestyles and values, unbeknownst to the socialist agenda, many social groups found themselves without proper support and became disoriented. Old people are regarded as one of such groups. The experience of old people is sometimes referred to as a type of identity crisis caused by the fall of communism; they entered a new reality, which, in general terms, worsened their situation (Synak, 2003). Old age became a discriminatory factor that causes marginalisation, social exclusion and the disappearance from social life (Halik, 2002; Trafiałek, 2003). The lifestyles of old people tend to be confined to a private sphere as their existence becomes 'domesticated' (Trafiałek, 2003). The field of social care is a good example. The role of family in social care is enormous. In the context of weak public initiatives, the main responsibility for caring for old people lies with their families. The morality influenced by Catholic values supports this view. When needs arise, families must act, and their actions are rarely supported by the social welfare system because neither infrastructure nor relevant laws exist (Błędowski et al, 2006). The societal discourse does not embrace the multiplicity and variety of ways of growing old (Szatur-Jaworska, 2008; Tokarz, 2005). Old people are conceived of as a homogenous group whose members feel the same about the surrounding reality.

The only aspect related to old age that has been addressed at the policy level is a pension system. Public debates on ageing in Poland focus on the economic perspective of ageing as a time of financial distress (Mucha & Krzyżanowski, 2010; Perek-Białaś & Ruzik, 2005). After 1989, Poland transformed its system from a pay-as-you-go scheme to a three-pillar

pension model comprised of the state, individual and private accounts (Chłoń, Góra & Rutkowski, 1999; Zajicek et al, 2007). However, as a result of the aspects of social welfare in Poland described above, the new pension system appears to be beneficial to some groups more than to others. The preliminary assessments indicate that single, older women, in particular, emerge as victims of the new system (Zajicek et al, 2007).

2.2.2. Gender

"Feminism is for everybody" is the opening and closing sentence and the title of a book in which bell hooks (2000) outlines the meaning of feminism for today's visions of freedom and equality. In her concept, it is sexism that needs to be dismantled to counteract oppressions and inequalities existing among people. Feminism, understood as a form of politics, focuses on changing the structure of power relationships between women and men (Weedon, 2003[1997]. In the academic discourse, the definition of a feminist perspective is similar. A feminist perspective brings to the forefront the ideas of temporality, spatiality and complexity for understanding individuals and shows the need for revising and redefining assumptions about people's identities and their lifestyles (Griffin & Braidotti, 2002). In studies of welfare states, a feminist perspective draws attention to such omitted categories as sexual and bodily rights and shows how changes in welfare regimes affect the lives of all people (Silius, 2002).

In the setting of post-socialist changes, discourses on gender have played one of the key roles in the formation of new states and new realities (Gal & Kligman, 2000). Practices of gender have been used in many post-socialist countries as the means of legalising authority, (re)structuring the public/private divide and defining new welfare states (ibid.). Poland is not exceptional in this respect; however, there are some aspects that make it stand out. Discourse on the natural differences between women and men has been taken for granted, and, moreover, it was used as a starting point for many political discussions and debates that have shaped Polish politics. The image of women as family-oriented, apolitical, non-public beings is

contrasted against the view of men as the proper inhabitants of public spaces, such as politics and the labour market. To be woman in Poland is to learn that there is only one destiny for you: to be a housewife. Women are discriminated against by a discourse stressing their special and unique role, including compliments on their 'natural' qualities as mothers (Graff, 2010). Gender remains an important perspective from which to view events since 1989 and allows us to understand the changing identities of men and women (Marody & Giza-Poleszczuk, 2000). Gender may also provide a very different perspective on the history of and participants in the social change process. Penn's (2005) rereading of the Solidarity movement in Poland is exemplary in this respect. Through a study of the lives of women who were key figures of the movement, she not only shows how sex discrimination was intertwined with the movement's ideology, but, more importantly, she sheds light on the forgotten heroines of the transformation. Women were active in the process of change; on many occasions, it was as a result of their efforts that the movement was able to continue. However, in the official discourse of the change, only the names of male heroes appear. The dominant gender discourse presenting women as family beings successfully silenced their voices and opened a space for the creation of a male version of history. Graff (2001) adds to this discussion by illuminating the symbolism of the Solidarity movement. The Solidarity movement can be seen as the restoration of the patriarchal order that was disturbed during the communist era. Therefore, she explains, in official stories, women were only helping by "doing what they had to do" (p.27), whereas men were fighting the oppressive system. *Komuna,* which is an informal name for the communist era in Polish, is female, and it was she who destroyed the men (Graff, 2001).

The same discourse gave raise to new family and gender policies in Poland after 1989. These policies are based on the ideal of a patriarchal family with a clearly defined role for women. The implicit familialism (Szkira, 2010) or public maternalism (Glass & Fodor, 2007) of the Polish welfare state, assigns women the role of primary family caretakers, offering very little support for labour activity. Women are mothers foremost, and then workers, as is also reflected in the organisation of parental leave schemes (Plomien, 2009). Hence, the scarcity of child care and the conservative image of the

family are distinctive features of the Polish system (Fodor, 2006; Glass & Fodor, 2007; Lange & Frątczak, 2010; Steinhilber, 2006; Szkira, 2010). The vulnerability of women is increasing (Fodor, 2006) as the social system consistently pushes them towards the domestic space (LaFont, 2001; Fodor, 2006) accentuating the importance of the public/private divide (Rukszto, 1997). For these reasons, the whole system is often referred to as a "democracy with a male face" (LaFont, 2001: 213), and the newly emerged discourse of citizenship-entrepreneurship embraces the ideas of patriarchy, Catholicism and capitalism (Rukszto, 1997).

Gender equality has always been among the most neglected issues in Polish public policies (Fodor, 2006; LaFont, 2001; Steinhilber, 2006). This condition is so persistent that some even talk about the ghettoisation of women's issues in politics (Hardy et al., 2008). As is typical of a socialist policy, gender segregation in the labour market and gender gaps in wages remains intact; the only difference is a significant decrease in female employment that began in 1990 (Steinhilber, 2006). New policies restricting eligibility for family and maternity benefits have begun to encroach on the reconciliation of work and family (Balcerzak-Paradowska et al., 2003; Fodor et al., 2002; Plomien, 2009). Although women continue to be better educated in comparison with men, their entry into the labour market remains more difficult (Fuszara, 2000), causing increasing levels of employment (Balcerzak-Paradowska et al., 2003) and contributing to the process of feminisation of poverty in Poland (Tarkowska, 2002).In contrast, new spaces of activism that were opened by the neo-liberal market offer hope to women, particularly at the community level (Hardy et al., 2008). Grassroots initiatives, both in the workplace and outside of it, may provide an important starting point from which the situation of women in Poland may change (ibid.).

The processes described above indicate that there is something inherently wrong with gender relations in Poland. Patriarchy seems to thrive in the new reality, and it appears to be well-accommodated in politics, particularly in the right wing discourse (Graff, 2008a, 2010; Środa, 2010). The discourse of

nationhood provides many examples of how patriarchal norms are intertwined with the ideas of Poland and nationalism. As Graff (2008b) notes, gendered discourses of nationhood are common, but Polish discourse brings to the forefront the figure of the Virgin Mary. Hence, gender, faith and nation are crucial to the construction of Polishness (Gerber, 2010).Thus, gender equality discourse is perceived as an external discourse and is sometimes regarded as anti-Polish (ibid.).

The Virgin Mary became an integral part of discourse on the Polish nation in the XVII century when she was pronounced as the Crowned Queen of Poland (Porter, 2005). This began a long-lasting phenomenon of Marianism that is still visible in contemporary Poland. In recent years, the figure of the Virgin Mary was particularly visible during discussions surrounding Polish accession to the EU that provoked many nationalistic revelations. Analysing the rhetoric of right-wing parties, Graff (2008b) describes how feminine Poland and its vulnerability were constructed to reinforce the notion of brotherhood and encourage the sons of the nation to stand up in defence of their dear mother. Often, such statements were made in places known for their religious symbolism. The language of the conservative fraction of the Catholic Church is often used by the right-wing parties in public discourse, regardless of public opinion (Graff, 2008a). This politicised form of Catholicism that merges with a discourse of patriotism is prevalent in public life (Graff, 2010). Within this framework, to be a patriotic woman is to be like the Virgin Mary (Graff, 2008a). To be a true woman is to be a wife and a mother and to belong to a man (Środa, 2010).

This type of discourse gives raise to one of the strongest stereotypes of women in Poland, namely that of *Matka Polka* (Mother-Pole) (Porter, 2005). *Matka Polka* represents the ideal of women who will stand by her husband and children to nourish them and safeguard traditional cultural values. This ideal woman is devoted to family reproduction but does not really have sexuality and simply sacrifices herself for the sake of her family (Penn, 2005). Motherhood is a duty that she needs to fulfil (Środa, 2010). This

stereotype is an important part of the debate over 'abortion battle' (Zielińska, 2000) that occupies the public scene in Poland from time to time.

A preoccupation with reproductive rights is characteristic of new democracies in the post-socialist era; almost all former Eastern Bloc countries built their new legislative system beginning with a law on abortion (Gal & Kligman, 2000). These debates were used as the foundation for new democracies and politics and to establish new order, in which relationships between the state and its inhabitants were redefined, ideas about nationhood and morality were revised and women's role in the society was articulated (ibid.). In the case of Poland, the anti-abortion law was the first law to be signed in the new system. This gave an early indication of the role the Catholic Church would play in the new Poland and of the type of power relationships that would pervade the society. As Środa (2010) contends, the Church in Poland has power over women's reproductive rights and men's politics. This power became apparent when the language of law was changed, and the word 'foetus' was replaced with the phrase 'conceived child'; in the public debates, this shift quickly led to arguments replete with accusations of murder, immorality and failure among Polish women (Graff, 2001). This example shows another aspect of the new reality in Poland, where a gap is growing between official discourse and the actual behaviour and preferences of the people. The anti-abortion law contributed to the expansion of underground abortion, where it is not beliefs and values that matter but money (Graff, 2001; Zielińska, 2000). Neo-liberal reality gives choices to women who can afford it.

Feminism in Poland continues to be marginalised and often, and is often ridiculed by the dominant public discourses. Public debates seem to indicate that discrimination does not happen and that sexism is a foreign word that has nothing to do with Polish reality (Graff, 2001). As Graff (2010) acknowledges, the title of her first book on the situation of women in Poland, '*Świat bez kobiet*' (The world without women), published in 2001, was "meant to be ironic. Today, I think, it has become realistic" (p.12). Although the women's movement dates back to the XVIII century, it is rather difficult

to talk about Polish feminism that can mobilise many (Środa, 2010). It appears that the democratisation process entailed the de-emancipation of women, who were refused the right to take part in creating the new reality (ibid.). Hence, the phrase "democracy with a male face" (Zielińska, 2000:53) seems to be more than a figure of speech.

2.3. Knowledge background

In their seminal work on the social construction of reality, Berger and Luckmann (1989[1966]) postulated a shift in the sociology of knowledge that used to take knowledge about everyday life for granted. Instead, as they proposed, such knowledge should be reconsidered and founded on a close examination of the face-to-face interactions that are constitutive of social reality. Knowledge about social reality does not exist; it is constructed here and now. Since the publication of the work of Berger and Luckmann, social constructionism has become one of the key paradigms embraced by social scientists in their quest for understanding the world. Social constructionism is founded on the following guidelines: any knowledge that is taken for granted should be questioned, the process of understanding is embedded in the context, and the linkages between knowledge and social processes and actions are mutually reinforcing (Burr, 2007[1995]; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2010[2002]). Within this paradigm, the questions of truth and scientific accuracy in reflecting the exact image of reality become less important. Instead, the process of knowledge production/construction and its links with the social reality have come to the forefront in the social sciences discourse.

Within this context, knowledge ceases to be viewed as socially determined. Rather, the opposite becomes the focus of interest: the ways in which knowledge, and what type of knowledge, constitutes a social order (McCarthy, 1996). Knowledge is used more often in a plural than in a singular form; because there are diverse and multiple ways of knowing, there are also various knowledges that co-existing. This phenomenon gives rise to the concept of knowledge as culture, where culture does not entail a system of shared meaning but emphasises a range of cultural practices that form our

reality (McCarthy, 1996). These practices grow out of certain places or locations that influence their type and content. Likewise, science is one of many cultural activities entangled in varying circumstances (Pascale, 2011). Knowledge is, therefore, always located and situated (Haraway, 1991; Lykke, 2010). "Social life is not an aspect, but the environment of human life" (McCarthy, 1996:107), and the same holds true for all knowers, who are always "in the middle of" the phenomena they study and/or try to know (Lykke, 2010:5).Qualitative researchers should embrace "Immodest witnesses" (Clarke, 2005: 21) as a way of bringing the embodied knowers to the research process. Both our knowledge and the position of a researcher are embodied and situated (ibid.). The situations in which we find ourselves organise and influence our ability to see and to see in a certain way. Similarly, to study a situation is to be involved in the situation, as one can never rise above or move beyond it. "The conditions of situation are in the situation" (Clarke, 2005:71); that is, the conditions and the situation are inseparable. At this juncture, the notion of experience arises as a necessary condition of knowledge (McCarthy, 1996; Smith, 1990). This is a ground for research on people and for people (Smith, 2005). This position allows the researchers and the researched persons to be presented as embodied people who think and feel.

The challenge for a researcher is to find oneself in a situation and to be aware of the conditions that permeate one's research. However, the more important task involves a reflection upon one's own knowledge constructs. It is easy to engage in critiques of the existing knowledges only to claim the superiority of one's own perspective. "*Situated knowledges* are, by their nature, unfinished" (McCarthy, 1996:111), and no one has the final word. This is not a threat to researchers; quite the opposite, it is a great opportunity because "… only partial perspective promises objective vision" (Haraway, 1991:190). Social reality and knowledges are interdependent, and both are experienced as real (McCarthy, 1996). The process of generating knowledge implies the process of constructing reality and vice-versa.

For instance, language wields great influence on the way we see things. The role of the language used in research is central to questions of research responsibility and accountability (Lykke, 2010; McCarthy, 1996; Pascale, 2011; Schwalbe, 1995). As mentioned earlier, there are no final words, but words can make some things final. When discussing the emergence of sociology, Mills (2000[1959]) contested that before sociology, similar work had been performed by novelists, who described the human condition in rich detail. The style of writing is also crucial to research practice because it has immediate consequences for the type of audience reached (Lykke, 2010; Schwalbe, 1995). Writing good prose is a challenge (Schwalbe, 1995). Writing with passion is another practice of the contemporary researcher (Lykke, 2010) that, again, is far from simple. My style of writing has changed to reflect my different approaches to the studied phenomena. The language I used in Study 1 differs from the language in Study 4 and is also different from the way I write this part of the dissertation. Early on in my research work, I was drawn to discourse theories and various approaches to discourse analysis. The more I became engaged in various ways of performing discourse analysis, the more my feelings about my research project changed. Jaggar (1989) says that new emotions come with the growth of new knowledge. I was obtaining more knowledge about processes and practices in which I was interested, but there were also new emotions growing inside of me that eventually led me to this style of writing and sharing the different knowledges that I have encountered during my work.

Our being in the world is about orienting ourselves in certain directions. Orientations show how we inhabit various spaces (Ahmed, 2006). I see the research process in this way. Thanks to my parents, I grew up in a culture of reading. Throughout my life, I have read with passion and excitement in my quest for understanding. I also dreamt that one day I would write. When I met my Polish literature teacher in the fifth grade, I desired to be a teacher. I gradually came to inhabit the space of academia. When, in the second year of my undergraduate studies, I came across an announcement about establishing new student research group, I knew it was directed at me. Gradually, with help from a great mentor, I felt like I was entering a new world. However, this inhabitation involves many sub-orientations and

disorientation points. These points may concern phenomena we are interested in, theories and methods we choose, physical places where we choose to work, and people we decide to approach. However, disorientation points are positive in that they allow us to reach new understandings (Ahmed, 2006). I am happy to acknowledge that I have experienced many such disorientation points. Each one made me realise the direction I want to take, at least until I reached the next disorientation point. To be a knower is to dare to enter unfamiliar spaces and to be lost at times. These moments of losing something may be one of the greatest gifts ever (Ahmed, 2006) because they lead us to new spaces.

3. Social inequality and old age-new perspectives in research

"The old, like the poor, is a social category formed by what is done to and for its members rather than by what they do. To be one of the old is to be in a passively defined meaning space" (Green, 1993: 82). This statement is exemplary of the wider societal discourse on old age and old people, which is also reproduced in research. Green's description recognises the constructed nature of old age, and it notes the negative consequences of such constructions for old people; at the same time, it presents old people as powerless victims of oppressive conditions. To a great extent, the literature on ageing and inequality used to focus on things that were performed to old people rather than on things that everyone does, including old people. This perspective is important in showing the scale and depth of the negative images of old age and old people that permeate our societies. However, on its own, this perspective indirectly maintains the stereotype of old people as passive recipients of others' actions. The challenge is to describe such processes in their entirety, including and involving many elements, aspects and people. The discussion below presents some of the new approaches and perspectives that have changed the course of research on questions relevant to the topic of old age and inequality.

These approaches inspired the present study by showing that old age is a complex category that must be approached accordingly. The politics of old-age perspectives drew my attention to the welfare-state spaces and showed the importance of looking at old age as an object of social policies. The ageism lenses that I often used enabled me to see things hidden behind attractive slogans presented by people of different ages. The intersectionality perspective opened my eyes to connections and relationships between various categories, and it helped me to understand that old age in itself does not denote anything; it must be related to other categories, spheres of life, and spaces to determine its positive or negative meaning. As a result, I designed a study that focused on processes and practices that make old age relevant for people's lives. I decided to use different perspectives and various empirical material to capture various images of old age and its enactments, and I made language and social action my prime research areas to be able to illustrate the intricacy of inequalities that are not only known but also felt.

3.1. The politics of old age

Politics can be viewed as an array of practices and institutions that have consequences for ways in which we live our lives (Mouffe, 1999). The aim of politics is to create a sort of unity that is based on a clear-cut divide between 'us' and 'them' (ibid.). Politics is about the exercise of power through the establishment of various truths that should govern people's lives; hence, the link between politics and knowledge is essential to the art of governing (Foucault, 2008). Knowledge about old age and ways of organising ageing policies has been a recurring theme in research.

The beginning of gerontology as a science ushered in a new era in thinking about old age and ageing. The main objective of gerontology, which began developing in the nineteenth century, is to understand old age and aging; in this way, gerontology has successfully constructed a discipline around the problem of old age (Katz, 1996). Analyses of its development focus largely on discourse-oriented investigations that present gerontology as a socially

constructed field of science/knowledge that has consequences for ways of perceiving old age in society. Findings of these studies are unanimous: the development of scientific knowledge about ageing and old age greatly contributed to the medicalisation of old age, which began to be seen as a problem to solve (see Green, 1993; Katz, 1996; Powell, 2001, 2006). This problem, however, was not limited to gerontology itself; old age became a social problem that required social policies to solve. The welfarisation of old age came as a natural consequence of this approach. This concept stresses the process of the social degradation of old people, whose lives are seen through the perspective of a social problem (Jönson, 2002; Thomson, 2005). Social policies responding to old age and various structures built by the welfare state thus began attracting research interest.

The political economy of old age is one strand of research that examines the discriminatory influences of social policies on the lives of old people. Studies that apply this perspective focus their analyses on the production process, showing that the prime mechanism leading to the underprivileged position of old people in society is the market and capitalism. The unequal distribution of resources and the discriminatory social structures embedded in various power relationships lead to the underprivileged position of old people in society (Estes et al., 2003; Estes & Phillipson, 2002; Townsend, 1981). However, this perspective accounts for only one of many ways in which inequality and old age have been understood. Many note that the key to understanding and preventing discrimination against old people is addressing the ideology hidden behind various policy initiatives that raises alarm and the fear of ageing (see Katz, 1992; Powell, 2006; Vincent, 1996). Studies that have investigated the rationales behind ageing policies have found that such policies preserve the view of old people as a homogenous group (Biggs, 2001; Nilsson, 2008), strengthen age divisions in societies (Estes & Phillipson, 2002; Hendricks, 2004), delineate the space for old people's potential responses (Ng & McCreanor, 1999), and control the size of a problem (Katz & Green, 2009).

Ageing policies affect and are also affected by the shape of health and welfare services. For instance, the growth of social policy is found to have profound consequences for the ways of addressing old age within the context of welfare professionalism (Biggs & Powell, 2001; Powell & Biggs, 2000). As a result, hostile policy environments evoke negative attitudes among health and welfare professionals. The voices of old people within health and welfare settings are disregarded, and decisions are made about, instead of with old people (Aronson, 2002; Aronson and Neysmith, 2001; Cedersund and Olaison, 2010; Harnett, 2010). Not only are old people removed from the communicative spaces, but they are also designated to separate physical spaces built by and around professional discourses (Petersen & Warburton, 2011). Critical research contends that ageing policies are replete with examples of ageism and contribute to social inequalities. Thus, ageism as a research perspective is becoming increasingly important for the study of welfare for old people (Jönson, 2009).

3.2. Ageism

The term 'ageism' refers to discrimination based on chronological age (Bytheway, 1995). The term was coined in 1969 by Robert Butler, who stressed that this type of prejudice and discrimination refers to any age group, though old people are at the highest risk of being affected (Palmore, 1999). This "last form of discrimination" (Palmore, 1999: 3), preceded by sexism and racism comprises the variety of negative attitudes towards old people. The ageing process is viewed as something that renders people unattractive, unintelligent, asexual, unemployable and mentally incompetent (Atchley, 1997). However, the phenomenon of ageism needs to be understood as much more than a set of attitudes because ageism "is also a complex tendency woven into the social fabric" (Hendricks, 2005a, 2005b) that is built on age relationships (Calasanti, 2005) and intersecting relationships of inequality (Calasanti, 2007). Ageism operates at different levels, including the personal, interpersonal and structural domains of human life (Estes et al., 2003). Its prevalence is so profound that some question even the possibility of thinking about non-ageist societies (see McHugh,

2003). Ageism is a form of social oppression that produces a fear of the ageing process and uses age as a signifier of classes of people (Bytheway, 1995). Ageism is manifested through a number of processes, including systematic stereotyping, discrimination and the reinforcement of divisions between 'us' (the young) and 'them' (the old) that are founded on the assumption of homogeneity among old people (ibid.).

Ageism is enacted in social relationships and attitudes, and it always has negative connotations, unlike age discrimination, which may have both positive and negative characteristics (Macnicol, 2004, 2006; Palmore, 1999). Ageism, as a form of social practice, always refers to the aged body, and there are many arenas in which ageism operates (Laws, 1995). These include relationships in the labour market, welfare policies and culture (Laws, 1995). Studies examining ageism often focus on its enactment in text and talk, which is in line with the view that language plays a key role in preserving ageist ideas (Palmore, 2005).

A wide range of empirical investigations of ageism discuss its various enactments in popular culture. From birthday cards (Ellis &Morrison, 2005) to TV programs (Robinson et al., 2007), newspapers and magazines (Lewis et al., 2011), marketing strategies (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2000; Coupland, 2007; Williams et al., 2007), and the food and cosmetics industries (Vincent,2006, 2007), we learn about various prejudices against ageing and old people. However, as much as is known about the ageist ideologies permeating nearly all spheres of social life, little is known about people's experiences and responses to such ideologies and, in particular, old people's reactions (Giles & Reid, 2005). To address these issues, some scholars have attempted to examine old people's own perceptions of a variety of ageist messages. One strand of research has been oriented towards the introduction of measurement scales that would indicate the scope of ageism in a more precise manner. Examples of such surveys include the Ageism Survey (see McGuire et al., 2008; Plamore, 2004) and the Relating to Older People Evaluation questionnaire (see Allen et al, 2009; Cherry & Palmore, 2008), which measure the prevalence of ageism in everyday life. The main

objective of these instruments is to map the ageism phenomenon, which, in turn, will facilitate the introduction of more efficient responses to it.

Interactive ageism (Minichiello et al., 2000) is another example of a research approach that embraces the multiplicity and complexity of ageism. This approach focuses on people's experiences and interpretations of societal practices that convey ageist images. The lives of old people vary, as do their definitions and ways of responding to ageism. For instance, different ways of doing beauty work may be considered as a vital strategy for old women to combat ageist images (Clarke & Griffin, 2008; Ward and Holland, 2011). However, these responses are far from simple. On many occasions, old people themselves are found to convey and maintain ageist attitudes (e.g. Andrews, 1999; Hurd, 1999; Lund & Engelsrud, 2008; Öberg & Tornstam, 2001). Moreover, these examples show that age discrimination is intertwined with other forms of discrimination and that old age intersects with other societal categories.

3.3. It is not only about old age

One of the first differences among old people that was recognised in research on ageism was gender. Whether in gerontology, sociology or feminist studies, old women emerged as the key category exemplifying the experience of living within two systems of oppression (for overviews see Arber & Ginn, 1991; Estes, 2006; Garner, 1999; Krekula, 2007; Ray, 1999; Russell, 2007). The importance of the first studies examining the social conditions of being an old woman cannot be downplayed; yet, to a great extent, by opening the discourse of 'double jeopardy', they contributed to the objectification of old women, who were presented as agentless (Krekula, 2007), and researchers engaged in debates comparing the level of suffering between old men and women (Russell, 2007). In line with a call for new research approach to questions of old age (see McMullin, 2000), the intersectionality perspective, initially developed in feminist studies, was presented as a feasible response (e.g. Krekula et al., 2005). From this perspective, no social category is seen as stable and closed; on the contrary,

these categories are understood as constructed, contextual, and prone to changes.

The intersectionality perspective in research on old age and ageing provided a new venue for theoretical and methodological explorations. Although, this perspective initially focused mainly on researching intersections of age and gender and presenting gendered and aged oppression systems (e.g., Calasanti, 2007; Calasanti & Slevin, 2006; Calasanti et al., 2006; Hatch, 2005; Levy, 1988), research on other aspects began emerging. Age and gender have been researched in their intersections with class (see McMullin & Cairney, 2004; Zajicek et al., 2007), race (Mair, 2009), and sexuality (Ambjörnsson & Jönsson, 2010). This type of research brought to the forefront considerations of age embodiment (Laz, 2003) and social location (Grenier, 2005), showing that all aspects of need to be taken into account.

Research on ageing inspired by feminist studies not only changed the subjects and perspectives of research but also introduced new ways of conceptualising age and inequality. As described above, Laws (1995) and her concept of ageism as social practices affecting certain bodies drew attention to the importance of studying ageing. Positioning herself as a follower of Laws, Calasanti (Calasanti, 2005, 2008; Calasanti & King, 2005; Calasanti & Slevin, 2006; Calasanti et al., 2006) approaches age as a kind of political location and discusses age relations as a way of understanding the scope and depth of power structures. The concept of age relations accentuates three aspects of age: its role in organising society, informing groups' identities and their access to power, and intersecting with other power relations (Calasanti & Slevin, 2006; Calasanti et al., 2006).

3.4. Methodologies for research on old age and inequality

The complexity of old age calls for new research methodologies. It is important to find approaches to studying age that combat ageism instead of reinforcing it (Bythweway, 2005). One way of doing so is to perform studies composed of multiple perspectives and to use diverse methodologies. As Katz (1996; 2009) contends, we need a nomadic science that bridges gaps and enables researchers to free ourselves from ageism. In a similar vein, Ray (1999) advocates for empowering research on ageing that is personal and engaged and that builds and seeks new methodologies. This new kind of age studies implies a turn from chronologically oriented studies of old age (Bythweway, 2005) towards studies of age and all its imaginaries (Gullette, 2004). It is also a turn towards studies of diversity, in which age relations contribute to inequalities and are equally important to gender, class and race relations (McMullin, 2000).

The perspective of age relations described above provides a basis for this type of research. It encourages both macro- and micro-oriented inquiries and thereby it enriches our understanding of age-related and inequalities by stressing the importance of an interactional dimension (King, 2006). Instead of mounting various oppressions on one another, the age-relations approach aims at revealing processes that allow such inequalities to occur (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001). These processes display the ways in which inequalities are reproduced and sustained in the course of people's interactions (Schwalbe, 2008b). Importantly, this approach draws attention to local and cultural practices that constitute our everyday knowledge and, therefore, provide the bases for the ways in which we relate to each other (Pascale, 2007). Accordingly, Ray's (1999) empowering research strategy that calls for inquiry into language and the interplay between the self and social action interplay seems the most appropriate approach to explaining the processes and practices that make age-induced inequalities thrive in our societies. This approach reduces the impact of the victimhood perspective, according to which old people are mere victims of societal structures; invites questions of

how and why; and accentuates the interconnectedness of people, ideas, actions and structures.

When research on ageing incorporated the notion of experience to study the individual and her world, the body became an important reference point. The inclusion of the body in research on ageing resulted in a number of studies exploring the complexities of having a constructed body in the world of ageism (e.g., Calasanti, 2007; Holstein, 2006; Twigg, 2004; Woodward, 1999).The notion of embodiment not only provides the basis for an investigation of social practices and processes that construct diverse images of bodies but also acknowledges the role of emotions in people's lives. The concept of emotions as a source of knowledge have been a unique characteristic of feminist approaches to methodologies that develop notions of knowledge as contextual, situated, embedded and personal. Woodward (2009) was one of the first to discuss the cultural politics of emotions in relation to age. She refers, in particular, to the presence of anxiety (1991) and anger (2009) as emotions that are culturally evoked and that may be provoked towards old age. She aims to draw attention to emotions and their role in creating living spaces for people and to embark on a discourse of age and emotions that recognises the value of emotional experience and emotional standards (Woodward, 2009).

4.   Theoretical framework

Andersen (2003) asserts that it is difficult not to be a social constructivist within the framework of contemporary social sciences. The same could be said about contemporary life. Surely, this viewpoint comes with certain consequences. New questions keep emerging in the search for knowledges that are beyond the obvious, as do queries about why and how things

happen. Although there are moments when we would simply like to know *for sure that this is the way it is,* research and life are not that easy.

Theories are to be used, not lived by. This pragmatic view results from the understanding of knowledge as multiple and diverse arenas in which different points of views coexist and complement each other. Theories are such points of view; to use a theory is to look at a phenomenon from a certain position. However, the choice of theories is far more complicated than the commonly accepted metaphor of changing glasses would suggest. To understand a theory and its consequences is to examine the ontological, epistemological and methodological contexts in which it was developed. In other words, understanding a theory is about finding out where it came from and in which direction it is going. Still, there is more to theories than that. When research becomes a way of living and transcends all of our daily practices, the theories we use begin to gain new meaning in our lives. In my case, the theories upon which I drew in this study became more than tools that I use in my work. These theories began to accompany me in my everyday life, merging my research with my way of living. As a result, I could see the consequences and limitations of the theories more clearly. The perspective of everyday life enabled me to ask new questions in search of a broader outlook.

The discussion below (sections 4.1.-4.5) reflects my path through the field of discourse and related concepts, such as language, emotions and subject. At the theoretical level, there are many disputes between various approaches to discourse. However, once the down-to-earth perspective has been adopted, these disagreements tend to lose their significance. Research from the perspective of social constructionism involves uncertainty. However, this uncertainty does not need to be counteracted; in fact, it can be embraced to show that one way of explaining is not enough and that there is value in trying out various approaches. This type of "multiperspectival framework" enriches our understanding the researched phenomena (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2010[2002]).

The following discussion presents the framework that guided my research and understanding of the studied phenomenon. It allowed me to reconcile inequalities occurring at multiple levels. The concept of discourse was important for my understanding of the social reality, various social categories, and how they came about as objects of our knowledge. Because discourse is a consequence of various social practices, I decided to move towards language as an exemplary case. Critical Discourse Analysis allowed me to see how language may serve negative ends and how ideologies are conveyed in various uses of language. This approach has been particularly useful when tracing instances of ageism. Mediated Discourse Theory, focusing on explaining single social actions, showed that the way we use language is dependent on who we are and where we are. This theory made complexity its hallmark. Inevitably, my inquiry into inequalities, led me to questions concerning human beings and how we become. Theories of subject and subjectivity drew my attention to the processes of becoming rather than the final outcome. In this way, emotions became as an important aspect of understanding how things happen to us, and how we make them occur. Each theory gave me a hint about one part of the phenomena that I found interesting. No one theory could explain everything, but when several theories were combined within the framework of my research project, I saw them as leading me throughout the whole process and offering tools to understand and describe what I had seen.

4.1. Discourse

The field of discourse is challenging to comprehend. New perspectives on the concept of discourse and their methodological implications have been steadily introduced by scholars representing a wide range of disciplines from linguistics to political sciences. In this dissertation, my starting point were theories of discourse introduced within the social sciences that aimed to explain the processes involved in constituting social reality. While thinking about the social construction of knowledge and the importance of face-to-face interactions, I began to wonder about how close these 'faces' had to be. Is it always about direct contact between people and their communication, or

are other configurations possible? How does social reality change? What is the role of the individual in this? Does it matter where we are? With these questions in mind, I began exploring the area of discourse theory to understand the relationship between discourse and social reality.

According to Howarth (2000), the main thrust of discourse theory is that all objects and actions are given meaning, and this meaning is context-dependent. Discourses change as times and spaces change. For instance, the discourse on old age has been changing, and its different meanings have been produced across times and can be found in various paces. Therefore, no social phenomenon is ever complete in terms of its meaning; hence, apart from being context-dependent, meaning is also open (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2010[2002]). What we know about old age and how we feel about old age is bounded by the era we live in and the spaces we inhabit.

Discourse is understood as a symbolic system and social order (Howarth, 2000) that is composed of "meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects" (Howarth, & Stavrakakis 2000: 3-4). Everything we do has some meaning that is relevant for our way of living; yet, this meaning changes. In other words, "discourses have implications for what we can do and what we should do" (Burr, 2007[1995]:75), and whom we can become (Foucault, 2007[1972]). Discourse, hence, is not coterminous with a social practice; it is created as a consequence of various practices (Andersen, 2003). For example, the discourse of ageism is created at the axes of many different practices, such as the use of discriminatory language, the production of anti-ageing face creams, and the building of age-segregated housing, to mention just a few examples. These are ready-to-go practices that show what to do to fit in and to be included. In addition, institutions and social relations take part in (re)producing certain discourses and are shaped by them. The discourse of ageism produces a divide between old-bad and young-good, which affects the ways in which old people and young people interact. Likewise, the reference to the same discourse helps us to understand the view of elderly care institutions as different from other care institutions.

Discourses embody rules, principles, and values that, at a particular point in time and in a particular place, are crucial for the construction of social reality. These aspects of discourses are considered as normal, natural and standard. In the previous chapter, I showed that contemporary culture associates old age with the process of decline, misery and disease. Consequently, people tend to fear ageing and engage in various activities to stave off its appearance. The concept of discourse allows us to understand, for example, not only why people spend money on anti-ageing treatments but also why elder abuse has been presented as less dangerous than other forms of abuse. The discourse of ageism constructs ageing as worthless and hazardous to people. It also explains the attempts to build segregated living areas for old people, and it sheds new light on active and positive ageing policies. These examples also highlight that discourses have *real*-life and material consequences. They are highly political in nature because they convey the rules and criteria of power distribution and define social relations (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). Moreover, such discourses are built around nodal points that function as reference points for the construction of discourses (Torfing, 1999). These discourses are "a signifier without a signified" (Laclau, 2007:36). In ageist discourse, age can be seen as such a nodal point; it comprises t meanings and practices that differentiate among people, provide grounds for institutions and delineate social spheres. The concept of discourse indicates that the meaning is somehow fixed; therefore, discourse is always a reduced version of something that includes some elements and excludes others (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2010[2002]).

4.2. Language

The first generation of discourse theories saw discourse as coterminous with language; later, the second generation theories added non-linguistic practices to this concept, and the third generation theories presented discourse as contiguous with the social world (Howarth, 2000;Torrfing, 2005). Although the importance of language is reduced in the later approach, language is still perceived as a meaningful social practice. Moreover, there is at least one aspect of language that seems to transcend various approaches to discourse.

Language constitutes the reality rather than reflecting it (e.g., Blommaert, 2007[2005]; Burr, 2007[1995]; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2010[2002]; Pascale, 2007). In this way, language exhibits productive power.

Language is one of the prime modes of functioning in the world. The system of meaning and communicating with each other is, to a large extent, conditioned upon the language that we use. Understanding language helps us to understand the world. What does it mean to use language? It was Austin (1975) who introduced the speech theory that conceptualises speaking in terms of performing an action. His distinction between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, differentiated between acts of saying, acts in saying and producing consequences in the hearer's responses. The speech act theory stresses the consequences of the act of speech for the involved parties, showing that speaking is much more than a mere utterance of words and that it can be used to accomplish different goals.

However, language exceeds the frame of singular acts. Within the frame of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), language is seen as a social practice. The perspective of social practice includes the dialectical relationship between concrete locations/contexts and institutionalised, more general regularities (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2010[2002]). Language is an indispensable part of society, in the sense that linguistic phenomena are social and vice versa (Fairclough, 2001[1989]). Hence, "there can be no social man without language, and no language without social man" (Halliday, 1994:12). Halliday became a vital reference for CDA scholars; some insist that familiarity with Halliday's legacy is prerequisite for performing CDA research (see Wodak, 2001). Halliday's work on the functional grammar and systemic analysis of language made apparent the multiple functions of language in the social world, including: ideational, interpersonal and textual function (Fairclough, 1993). The use of language is, hence, considered to be constitutive of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge (Fairclough,2007[1992]). It is crucial in the system of social representations (Fowler, 1991) and political relationships (Lemke, 1995). Language may

serve good ends, but it may also hurt and oppress as a result of the power aspect that is inherent to language use (Lemke, 1995).

Within the CDA framework, power always has negative connotations, which is in opposition to, for instance, Foucault's concept of power as productive force (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2010[2002]). CDA borrows from Althusser's view of ideology as a social practice that influences the identification of social subjects and Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which explains the process of building societies as contingent upon constant power struggles (Titscher et al., 2002). The concept of ideology within CDA accentuates its role in establishing: social representations by group members (van Dijk); unequal power relationships (Wodak); and relationships of domination, the effectiveness of which is proportional to the degree to which social representations are considered to be natural and/or normal (Lassen, 2006). Discourses of sexism, racism, and nationalism are, hence, at the centre of the CDA agenda; similarly, media, political and institutional discourses and their power effects are among the most common research topics among CDA scholars (van Dijk, 2006). CDA emerges as a valuable framework when investigating the relationships between language, power and inequalities (Locke, 2004; Riggins, 1997). CDA focuses on revealing how language-in-use constitutes unequal power relationships, contributes to injustice and perpetrates discrimination; at the same time, it offers insight into particularities of social change through language use. CDA also attends to the questions of 'who' in language use and its implications for either sustaining or transforming social reality.

4.3. Social action

As I discussed above, discourse theories contend that everything we do has meaning and that "to produce and disseminate meaning is to act" (Torfing, 1999:94). Thus, action appears as another category that merits elaboration. It is accepted that actions are meaningful, but the meaning of action is a different question. Mediated Discourse Theory (MDT) takes its starting point in the concept of social action, which understood as any human action.

MDT aims to focus on particular moments when social actions occur, in an attempt to understand social life (Scollon, 2001).

MDT is built on the assertion that action and discourse (language-in-use) cannot be separated and must always be approached together (Jones and Norris, 2005; Scollon, 2001). Mediated action is the main concept developed within this theory, and it indicates actions that are communicated through meditational means to stress the connection between the action and the material (Scollon, 2001,2002). Mediational means are resources, cultural tools, and material objects that say something about the action. This action occurs in a particular time and space, which make up the site of engagement. An action taken repeatedly is called a practice, and various practices intersect to create a nexus of practice (Scollon, 2001,2002; Scollon & Scollon, 2004). Hence, the concept of social action developed within this framework includes three intersecting elements: discourses in place, the interaction order and the historical body (Scollon &Scollon, 2004).

Discourses in place are all discourses that can be identified within a particular space of action. Scollon and Scollon (2003) introduced the concept of geosemiotics to stress the social meaning of the material locations of discourses and signs. It does matter, then, when and where we are. Available schemes and structures change as we change our location. Our actions are contingent upon the social systems in which we live but also upon the surrounding material that may either facilitate or constrain our access to different discourses and resources used to create meaning.

The interaction order, a term borrowed from Goffman, entails an established and approved set of social relations that are operating at a particular moment (Scollon, 2001,2002; Scollon & Scollon, 2004). These relations influence the course of action, because they affect the way people behave. Whether one is alone or with friends, family or strangers changes one's actions and practices.

The historical body builds on the meaning of the interaction order, stressing the importance of particular bodies involved in actions. The 'historical' refers here to bodily memories that differ between individuals and that shape the course of action differently (Scollon & Scollon, 2004).

MDT aims at problematising social action by combining various approaches to illustrate the complexity of social actions as including places, people, discourses, objects and technologies (Scollon, 2001; Scollon & Scollon, 2004). The goal of this approach is to advance a type of analysis that would reconcile the macro-level societal structures and the micro-level attributes of people's everyday lives.

4.4. Emotions

The concept of social action, as presented within the framework of MDT, emphasises the complexity of the relationships between its different elements. The historical body, understood as an individual body, is brought to the forefront; actors and their usage of mediational means are central to MDT. The question is why historical bodies engage in these rather than other actions. MDT points at the intersection of the material and the semiotic as constitutive of any social action. Language, here, is not material, though it is mediated through material means. However, this separation between materiality and language may be seen as illusive. Language and the material merge when we take emotions into account to recognise their role in shaping the social world. Riley (2005) talks about the "emotional materiality" (p.7) of words to accentuate the work of language on us, or rather "with us" (p.3). She gives an account of the personal and impersonal function of language, describing the latter in terms of affect. Her point is that we do things with words and move because of the "affect-soaked power of language" (Riley, 2005:5). In this way, language not only evokes and provokes some actions but also can be used as a tool to achieve some goals.

The concept of affect has its roots in discussions pertaining to the body-mind divide, which has influenced Western thought about the nature of humans. "Affects, (…), pose questions about the links between the subjective and the cultural, individual and social, self and other, inside and outside," (Koivunen, 2001:8). Affect brings the human body to the forefront of social analysis, showing that energy and matter (Ahonen, 2010), intensity (Rossi, 2010; Henriques, 2010), and bodily sensations (Gould, 2010) need to be considered in the analysis of the social. Affect highlights qualities that are difficult to grasp but that aim at describing things that are happening to us. These qualities often appear as the 'it' to which we refer when trying to describe why we did or did not do something, stressing that we simply could not understand it at the cognitive level. Affect can, therefore, be seen as a capacity for activation (Masumi, 2002), a kind of motivational force (Gould, 2010) that pushes us in certain directions. However, it does not indicate any pre- or anti-social quality. Affect is deeply embedded in the social meaning and therefore, it has a great potential for enriching the analysis of the social (Hemmings, 2005).

Whereas affect is beyond the recognisable, emotions and feelings are not. Common-sense knowledge, which has its grounds in science, perceives emotions as psychological states that are in clear opposition to rational thinking. This 'Dumb View' of emotions has spread across various disciplines to stress the disturbing role of emotions in 'real' thinking and their need to be controlled (Jaggar, 1989). To be emotional is to display sensitivity, changing moods and a tendency towards uncontrolled outbursts. In this, emotions are built on "the presumption of interiority" (Ahmed, 2004:8); they belong to a person and reside inside her. An alternative model of emotions advances the view of emotions as contingent upon the societal context. Emotions are relational and intentional: they are not possessed, but they appear as a result of interaction; they move across bodies and make bodies to move in a certain way (Ahmed, 2004). At the same time, emotions are those qualities that are familiar, nameable and recognisable. Emotions are actualised, whereas affect is the very thing that "makes you feel an emotion" (Gould, 2010:27). In a way, affect goes beyond what language can describe (Henriques, 2010), whereas emotions do not. In this sense,

emotions become *our* at the moment of recognition and experience, when something is happening to us. Hence, the social view of emotions does not need to exclude the psychological aspect of emotions and feelings (Woodward, 2009). Apart from being socially constructed, emotions are also parts of our own constructions of the world, showing how we are in the world (Jaggar, 1989).

To be affected is, then, to be moved in a certain direction. This movement involves the emotions that accompany it, which may stay with a person for a long time. This movement has implications for our being in the world, our perception and experience of the social; it is also a political movement. Therefore, it is feasible to talk about 'cultural politics of emotions' that describes the effects of emotions (Ahmed, 2004; Woodward, 2009). This concept accentuates the public character of emotions. It also extends the debate on the nature of human thinking and being; thinking and feeling are not contradictory processes; on the contrary, they happen through one another (Woodward, 2009).

The perspective of the cultural politics of emotions opens an arena of empirical investigations that are based on understanding human experience as complex and multifaceted, which does not revolve around either reason or emotions but is conditioned upon the interactions of the two. Within this perspective, many attempts have made to demonstrate how emotions work for and against certain groups of people and individuals. Queer studies, in particular, reflect on the nature of various emotions in shaping and influencing images of and attitudes towards various sexual orientations by investigating the intersection of emotions and politics. For instance, Cvetkovich (2003) discusses trauma as an important element for understanding queer history and the interdependence of affect and sexuality. Love (2007) discusses the notions of injury and suffering that shape queer history. Predominantly, 'ugly feelings' (Ngai, 2005) are recurring in discussions about queerness; hence, shame, not pride, constitutes a new object of interest (Halperin & Traub, 2009).

4.5. Subject

I began this chapter by referencing discourse theories that describe discourses as constitutive of social systems and the identities of both subjects and objects. I also showed that everything we do has meaning, and that our being in the world is about meaning construction. The single act of meaning construction has been theorised within Mediated Discourse Theory to present a social action as a matrix of various elements that interact. The use of language is crucial within this frame. Language is important, just as any other type of social practice is. CDA drew attention to the oppressive and discriminatory aspects of language use that can be directed against certain groups of people to create and maintain inequalities. Language has been presented as powerful and as affecting people's being in the world. That being is also conditioned upon our bodies, which we use, and which are used. The concept of emotions and affect added another dimension to this discussion. It showed that emotions are crucial for understanding our actions and the directions we choose for our lives. Nevertheless, although emotions have a very strong individual dimension, they are also socially constructed in the sense that we grow into certain emotional reactions, and we learn how to feel things. Thus we can conclude that discourses as symbolic systems and social orders affect the way we act, think and feel. The question is, then, who are we as individuals?

This brief introduction may seem to be overwhelmingly deterministic: not only do discourses construct the social world, but they construct people as well. It appears that there is no way out. However, we can see that things are changing, that social systems change, and meanings are constantly altered. This observation does not stand in opposition to discourse theories; on the contrary, it exemplifies their main points. Because discourses are always open and because no meaning is ever fixed, the arena for new discourses is infinite. At the theoretical level, there is a difference between subject positions and political subjectivity. Subjects are dependent on discourses, and, as such, they are to be understood as "'subject positions' within a discursive structure" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001:115). In contrast, individuals

make choices and act; albeit within the constraints of various discourse; thus, the ultimate decision about how to relate to a particular subject position belongs to individuals. The process of choosing certain subject positions is referred to as a political subjectivity; it turns subjects into social actors who are able to account for a change (Howarth, 2000). The notion of subjectivity stresses the dialectical relationship between being subjected to discourses and acting on them; discourses present available options and subjects positions that we can choose to occupy (Staunæs, 2003). Imagination is very important here because it allows us to dwell on the way things they could be instead of the way they should be (Hall, 2004).

Moreover, at the individual level, many subject positions can coexist(Howarth, & Stavrakakis 2000:3-4). These subject positions, or identities constructed around certain qualities, interact with each other to produce differences among individuals. Moreover, the availability of certain subject positions is determined by our locations, both social and physical. For instance, the subject position of *international staff* and *immigrant* were not available to me when I lived in Poland. I also look at these subjects positions through the perspective of other subject positions that I brought with me: woman, Polish, rural, highly educated, and white, to name just a few. Laclau (2007) discusses the hybridisation as a necessary condition for forging change; hybridisation entails openness, the acknowledgment of contextual aspects, and the acceptance of new possibilities and redefinitions. It is not the universal that leads to the particular; the opposite is more relevant.

Touraine (2007, 2009) adds to the idea of the particular leading to the universal. His main claim is that the contemporary reality necessities a turn towards the particular. He, too, puts forward the notion of a subject, but he gives it a more ideational dimension. The subject is more of an idea than a concrete individual; it is a potential that may bring about change. The subject is then a resister, a freedom fighter who rebels against compelling structures (Touraine, 2007). The subject rejects dominant subject positions, which hinder its growth towards becoming a political actor; the subject

"consciously enters into conflict with dominant forces" (Touraine, 2007:111). The subject as a political agent acts on structures and responds to contingent discourses (Howarth, 2000). Certain qualities are necessary for the subject to emerge; creativity and reflexivity determine whether an individual will take an action or will be reduced to a subject position.

A focus on the subject opened a new era in sociological research, which had previously considered society to be most important (Touraine, 2007). Society can never be a society "because everything in it is penetrated by its limits, which prevents it from constituting itself as objective reality" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001:127); while people exist, society does not. Hence, subjects become the centre of attention (Dubet, 2004; Touraine, 2007). However, this is not true for all types of subjects: "the only type of subject is the rebel subject, divided between anger at what she suffers and hopes for a free existence, for self-construction-which is her constant preoccupation" (Touraine, 2007:97). The subject is both a force for and a movement towards finding ourselves (Touraine, 2009). She is a thinking and feeling subject.

A focus on subjectivity allows researchers to see the dynamism and the coming of a change; it also depicts the individual as immersed in various discourses (Hall, 2004; Weedon, 2003[1997]). The focus on subjectivity stresses the past, but it also shows the present and offers insight into the future. Certain processes and practices come to the forefront, and language that emerges as their vital aspect (Weedon, 2003[1997]). There is also the concrete lived experience of individuals, which is seen not as an essentialist category but as an outcome of moving towards discourses and subject positions (Staunæs, 2003; Søndergaard, 2002).

5.   Materials and methods

This dissertation examines processes and practices that keep social categories *real.* It is not about people but about relationships between people and times and spaces. This research design allows for a closer examination of the processes of social change (Pascale, 2011) and explains why no change is forthcoming. At the beginning of the research process, I oriented myself towards discourse theories, and I began using concepts such as language, social action, emotions and subjects to think about my work. The theoretical discussion presented in Chapter 4 allowed me to move across and above various concepts within the field of discourse to see how these complement each other and their methodological implications.

In this chapter, I will describe materials and methods that I used in all four studies. This description is not comprehensive; rather, I see it as a complement to the methodology sections presented in the different studies. My intention here is to describe those aspects that were not mentioned earlier and to argue for the use of various methods and their relevance for this dissertation and the type of research question it poses.

5.1. Materials

The main focus of this dissertation is on the social category of old age and its *real* life. For the purpose of this study, I collected various data from multiple sources. I used media articles from news magazines (Studies 1 and2), organisational documents and images (Studies 3 and 4), interviews with individuals (Studies 3 and 4), and observational notes (Studies 3 and 4). This choice of empirical material was not dictated by a desire to present a truer picture of the studied phenomenon. As I described in Chapter 1, the camera that I used during the research process had an impact on the type of photographs I took. Had I used something else, or had somebody else held the camera, these photographs would be different. My research design shows some of the possibilities that I decided to pursue and perhaps some that I did

not pursue. Similarly, the knowledge that these photographs produce is incomplete. Instead of drawing conclusions, my aim is to create a basis for the next photo session.

The welfare culture in Poland was the primary setting in which I took my photographs, and old age was the main aspect of it. I decided to look at media first because I saw them as an important ingredient, or rather as the co-producer of the welfare culture. Not only do media texts reflect the reality they purport to describe, but they actively construct it as well. Considering media as a type of public discourse, the attitudes expressed in media cannot be separated from those prevailing in other societal spaces. The media author cannot, then, be disentangled from the situation, in which the journalistic work is being performed. Therefore, I viewed media discourse as a part of the societal discourse that simultaneously reflects and shapes widespread norms and feelings towards old age and old people. The media materials used in this dissertation consist of 121 articles published across four major weekly news opinion magazines in Poland, namely *Wprost, Newsweek, Polityka,* and *Przegląd,* which represent various ideological affiliations. The articles were selected based on the following keywords: ageing, older people, old age, and elderly. The articles were published from 2004 to 2007, and I accessed them through web-based archives in 2008. This time span was chosen based on a desire to fairly present current media discourses on old age and old people. The starting year, 2004, is the year when Poland joined the EU, which had many consequences for Polish politics, including of social policy. The time surrounding Poland's EU accession was characterised by very vivid discussion concerning the future of Poland and visions of the Polish nation. Graff (2005), in her analysis of three Polish weeklies, shows how these debates were intertwined with gender discourse and related to issues of identity. These may be called turbulent times for (re)defining and (re)constructing many categories of social life in Poland. Hence, I used the year 2004 as the starting point of my data search. The articles that were selected for the analysis were of different types: editorials, short information articles and debate articles. These articles were written by different authors, who, among other things, may have been of different ages. However, my aim was not to look at discourses describing a particular age

group; nor did I provide a definition of old age or old people. Instead, I aimed at understanding how social constructs, such as old age and old people, are portrayed in the media, when and where people are defined as old, and what these definitions imply.

While studying media, I simultaneously observed social policy texts and institutions to understand developments at the level of the immediate organisation of welfare for old people. This task was far from simple. The two documents "Strategy of Social Policy for the years 2007-2013" and "Generational solidarity- actions towards the increase of labour participation among people aged 50+", were the first policy documents addressing issues of old age directly. These documents gave a good overview of the discursive sphere constructed around categories, such as post-productive age (for people above the age of 65) and immobile age (for people in their 40s), which were presented as unproblematic and rather self-evident. The spheres of media and social policy give insight into what is known about old age in Poland. They also introduce some of the feelings that relate to old age and old people.

From there, my attention was drawn to two different types of welfare organisations: a non-governmental organisation and a user organisation. These two organisations presented themselves as having a lot to say about old age and welfare of old people, and I decided to listen to them. I looked at each organisation as an individual actor and as a collection of individual people, places and times. I approached each of them with the aim of understanding their position and the type of work they were performing. I was interested in what type of old age they were focusing on, and what type of people they saw as their desired participants or members.

In Study 3, I centred my attention on the University of the Third Age (U3A) as an example of a user organisation in the field of social welfare for old people. The U3A has frequently presented itself as an authority on ageing and old people. My intention was to listen to stories of old age produced by

the organisation and its members. Hence, my material for this study includes both naturally occurring data, such as the U3A publications, documents and files, and researcher-elicited data, such as interviews. Within the field of discourse analysis, there is an on-going discussion about these two types of data and their relevance and appropriateness for the analysis of discourses (see Jørgensen & Phillips, 2010[2002]; Silverman, 2006). However, when I began using a discourse perspective to analyse organisational stories, it became more apparent to me that 'the actuality' of the naturally occurring data, stressed as the main advantage of such material, is rather problematic. The U3A emerged in a context in which old age and old people are, to a great extent, presented as useless. Its main goal is to change images of old people; in this way, the U3A responds to the dominant discourse of old age. When talking to the U3A members, I was foremost perceived as the young(er) and as clearly a non-old person. Moreover, I was seen as belonging to the same social space and being exposed to similar images of old age. As an individual, I also lived with and met similar discourses; I have never been above them. Organisational affiliations also affect the way members of the U3A talk, especially about issues that are crucial to the organisation's existence. I visited the U3A and its members to gain an understanding of their image of old age, which is the very reason the U3A was established.

In Study 4, I focused on one non-governmental organisation (referred to as Umbrella) that had been working on welfare questions concerning disability and old age. Umbrella was presented as a very successful example of social welfare work. On numerous occasions, Umbrella also stressed its own importance to the welfare of old people. When I first made contact with the organisation, I was very interested in its achievements. Because I was aware of the public social welfare situation concerning old people in the region where I conducted my study, I was very keen on understanding the conditions under which Umbrella worked, and how Umbrella affected its context. From the beginning of our contact, Umbrella introduced me to their new project that was specifically aimed at old people. Through frequent correspondence, the Umbrella staff gradually prepared me to study the new project and visit its main sites. I was introduced to the key people, taken to a

few sites involved in the project, and given access to all documents produced during and after the project. In the eyes of the Umbrella staff, their promotional video recordings and booklet were of crucial importance. This was the material I was given first, and it was presented as the key to understanding Umbrella's approach to old age. During my contact with Umbrella, I gathered material that its staff members wanted me to see.

When entering the space of organisations and organisational discourses, I also touched upon personal stories. I conducted face-to-face, open interviews with the staff at both the U3A and Umbrella and gathered written narratives from other members. Interviews at the U3A differed from those at Umbrella. When talking to female board members, I was approached like a fellow woman who shared an interest in education. When I met with these women, we usually sat rather close to each other. There were many instances when I was advised about life as a woman and how it changes with age. To a great extent, the experience of social class was also brought up to establish more commonalities between us. The use of "wie, Pani[2]"('you know') was common. When talking to a male board member, I was addressed with the phrase 'proszę Państwa' ('Dear Ladies and Gentlemen'). The use of this phrase in this context positioned me as a member of the press, and I was expected to ask concrete questions. Hence, my areas of interest were transformed into straightforward questions to produce one of the most structured interviews I have ever conducted.

Interviews with the Umbrella staff were less personal in the sense that they were more focused on work-related issues, regardless of the interviewee's gender or age. In general, I was addressed as 'Pani' ('Ms'), with the exception of the key informant, who took a less formal approach and called me by my first name. However, when staff members talked about issues concerning old people in general, I was included in the 'we' construct representing people aged approximately 30 years, with similar educational

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[2] Pani is a title used to address women. It is equivalent to the English 'Ms.' because it does not differentiate between married and unmarried women. Pani is a typical way of referring to female partners in conversations between strangers.

backgrounds, finding themselves at the beginning of their professional careers. That 'we' was clearly constructed in opposition to 'them´', meaning old people.

Apart from interviews with the U3A board members and Umbrella staff members, I tried to reach regular participants to whom organisations addressed their work. This was much more difficult. Overall, regular members and participants were very reluctant to take part in my research. One apparent difference between these two sites is that the U3A members were accustomed to research and to students asking them questions. In a way, my body was quickly seen as the body of another student who wants something. I remember one U3A member who, when agreeing to take part in the research, said that she understood my position because her daughter had been a student and was doing research. The U3A board members, for instance, showed me master theses written about the U3A, explaining that I did not have to collect new material, because everything was already written. However, I also met some people who enjoyed taking part in research and who were eager to talk about their experiences.

I decided not to insist on participation in research, but I listened to potential participants' reasons for refusal. In many instances, people were simply uninterested in the research project. However, there were other cases in which ideas about knowledge and educated people played some part. For instance, I recall a meeting with a U3A member who told me that she was not smart enough to be part of research and that I should rather talk to people who usually sit in the front rows during meetings or lectures. In addition to downplaying her abilities, this woman also indicated those who she believed were more suitable for the task. This might also have been also an indication of more complicated tensions or differences among the U3A members. I noted something similar when visiting one of Umbrella's sites and talking to the project participants. They wanted to talk to me, but they preferred that I take notes instead of tape recording. Tape recording was seen as something very formal and, to some extent, official; and again, as one woman said,

some participants were worried that their comments were not very intelligent.

I took notes while interviewing people and visiting various organisational sites. I tried to describe each meeting and encounter shortly after it finished. I described my general impressions and feelings evoked during such meetings. I also kept records of the material and non-material elements of each situation. A great part of my empirical material involved data that were produced without my intervention; these data took the form of written texts, videos, and photographs. In the case of images and videos, I made short descriptions to summarize them. However, during the process of analysis, I watched the original material as well. I transcribed the tape-recorded interviews verbatim. Like the videos, I often went back to the original recordings during my analysis. The transcription process is more than a simple act of writing down what one hears; it equally refers to the process of interpretation, which is related to another practice, namely the translation of data (Nikander, 2008). Although it is a demanding process, researchers should be encouraged to work on data in their original language and then publish internationally (ibid.). I worked with Polish data, and the analysis was performed in the original language of data. Excerpts and quotes that are included in articles written in English were translated from Polish to English after the analysis was finished. In Studies 1 and 4, which are co-authored, analysis was performed simultaneously on Polish and translated data. Although English has become my second language, I used the help of English-language editors to avoid potential misunderstandings and confusion.

5.2. Analysis

To a great extent, this dissertation describes common-sense knowledge about old age: the type of knowledge that appears to us as natural and obvious and is reproduced through a variety of social practices (Pascale, 2007). Similarly, the dissertation discusses common sense feelings towards old age. Therefore, the analysis involves moving "against the stream of what is taken for

granted" (Søndergaard, 2002: 191) and showing how we reached that point. Although I used different methods of analysing data in my four studies, language received the most attention in all of them. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, the concept of discourse indicates a variety of social practices that impart meaning in our lives, and language is one of them. Although language may not be the most important practice, its vast role in constructing the social reality cannot be denied. We learn to know and feel the world through language; thus, studying language is essential for understanding the social world (Burr, 2007[1995]; Pascale, 2007; Riley, 2005; Smith, 2005).

In the previous section, I reviewed the main sites at which I collected my data. That description gave an account of a diversified body of data produced by various collective and individual actors and serving different purposes. As Pascale (2007) states in her study of race, gender, and class, a focus on processes and practices of inequality (re)production entails research that can move freely between broader cultural contexts and local cultures. This approach allows us to look at the same phenomenon from different angles. This approach also has consequences for understanding the role that each individual plays in social life. It acknowledges that we live in discourses but that life appears differently to each of us (Bacchi, 2005) because the same discourses are realised individually (Søndergaard, 2002).

5.2.1. Discourse analysis

The distinction between discourse analysis and the analysis of discourses (see the next section) is related to the questions of human subjectivity and can be translated into a discussion on how people use discourses and how discourses use people respectively (Bacchi, 2005). I find this differentiation very helpful because it does not present different approaches as incoherent but as complementary ways of looking at the same phenomenon. As such, it allows researchers to see people as more than mere 'walking discourses'. In the course of my research, I tried to attend to both perspectives, very often simultaneously. However, in this section, I will try to present elements of each separately.

Discourse analysis (DA) is a research tradition that has evolved into a multidisciplinary field encompassing a variety of approaches to understanding discourse and methods of analysis. Broadly defined, discourse analysis is the study of language in the use and production of meaning (Wetherell, 2001). Thus, discourse is about language use, encompassing both linguistic and non-linguistic instances, and, hence, its meaning extends beyond the limits of the sentence (Schiffrin et al., 2006). I began my walk through discourse analysis with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This approach to discourse analysis is informed by a reliance on language as a main practice of meaning-making. However, the main objective of CDA extends the analysis of language use; it focuses on language to understand and explain society. In particular, CDA defines itself as a practice of revealing and disseminating the phenomena hidden behind everything that is labelled as 'natural', 'normal', and 'obvious'. Therefore, CDA invites a critical reading of the social reality, encourages thinking beyond established frames, and urges one to stop for a while, and to take nothing for granted. This perspective was very helpful at the beginning of my research process because it allowed me to confront many 'natural' and 'normal' aspects of social reality that I wanted to study. With a focus on old age and ageing, I started seeing things that were assumed to be true and were reproduced daily without any reflection; moreover, it appeared as if there was no other approach. CDA introduces the concept of ideology to discourse analysis, showing that language can be used to maintain inequalities and social injustice. Media is a prime focus in this tradition because of its role in the process of producing and reproducing the unequal power relationships that are observed in societies (Fowler, 1991).

In Study 1, I decided to look at affect through the perspective of the appraisal theory, which recognises the impersonal function of language in evoking various feelings and positioning people in different ways. The appraisal theory delineates the process of language in use that is constitutive of social relations; in other words, it is concerned with the interpersonal function of discourse (Martin & White, 2005). Appraisal is defined as "the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgments, and valuations"(Martin, 2000:145), and it is composed of three domains:

attitude, engagement and graduation. Engagement is concerned with the possibility of involving alternatives to one's voice, whereas graduation reveals one's degree of passion about certain stances (White, 2006). Attitude, according to the appraisal theory, has three essential elements, or "regions of feeling" (Martin &White, 2005:35): affect, judgment and appreciation. *Affect* is considered to include emotions and feelings of both positive and negative overtones, and it draws on emotional responses and dispositions. *Judgment* refers to attitudes towards behaviour, as seen through the perspective of a given norm system, and encompasses judgements of social sanction and social esteem. Social esteem addresses issues related to 'normality' questions (how special or usual something is), capacity (how capable someone is) and tenacity (levels of dependency). Social sanction deals with ethical and moral issues and constitutes judgments concerning veracity and propriety; it is founded on the concepts of truth and ethics. *Appreciation* focuses on the aesthetic site of evaluation and draws attention to ways in which different objects, people and phenomena are valued (White, 2002). A discursive study of attitudes entails a search for semantic resources that convey information about affect, judgment and appreciation. Although it is possible to identify concrete words, phrases and expressions that belong to each category (e.g., sad affect, bad judgment, captivating appreciation), in practice, the analyst is required to be attentive to the way and the situation in which words are enounced because these elements are also employed to stress one's own stance (Martin & White, 2005). In the media discourse, this system of attitudes is deployed by the author to predispose the reader/listener/audience "to favour a particular value position" (White, 2006: 65).

This perspective sees language as a tool that can be used to achieve different ends; in this way, it is close to the tradition of discursive psychology that sees language as a resource (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2010 [2002]). In Studies 3 and 4, I listened to stories told by individual and collective actors to understand their ways of meaning making. At that point, the tradition of discursive psychology drew my attention to the practices of categorisation, positioning and identity. These concepts are crucial to a study of meaning making in everyday life and people's identities, which discursive psychology

aims to advance (Burr, 2007[1995]; de Fina et al., 2006; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2010 [2002]). These concepts are based on the assumption that language can be used as a resource to create certain images of oneself and others and that its particular use is contingent upon situational aspects. When attending to stories, discursive psychology focuses both on the details of a story and on the broader social spaces that come alive in the story (e.g., Stanley & Billig, 2004) to be able to see both 'small' (local, micro-) and 'large' (global, macro-) identities (Georgakopoulou, 2006). This process connects personal identities with group identities; when telling a story about herself, an individual is also telling a story about those who are the same and those who are different, acknowledging various kinds of behaviours, beliefs and norms (de Fina, 2006). The concept of identity, achieved through the processes of categorisation and positioning, has an analytical character; it does not have an ontological value. In Study 3, I tried to move back and forth between what people were saying and doing, what the U3A was showing, and where we were to see the making of old age without recognising anyone's true identity. When I heard the word 'we', I was interested in who was included in and excluded from of this category. When I heard the proverbial phrase "if there is a will, there is a way" on multiple occasions, I became interested in understanding its use and function. Then, I began to wonder whether the same proverb would be used if we were living in a different time and space.

In Study 4, my analysis began long before I first corresponded with Umbrella, and it finished long after our last contact. I worked with different types of empirical material including textual, visual and audio data. All of these data were treated as mediational means that conveyed a message about discourses, actors and the relationships established among them. All of these data helped me to understand how Umbrella embarked on their Old Age project, which was focused on these particular values (activity, utility, and community), and addressed the project to this particular group of people (aged 50-65). The question that accompanied my analysis was why and how did this happen? Nexus analysis, with its three activities of engaging, navigating and changing the nexus of practice (Scollon & Scollon, 2004),

showed me how to look at social actions, how to see people, places, times and ideas interconnected; and how to find my own way in this matrix

Nexus analysis is a research approach that incorporates various ways of analysing discourse; it uses elements of CDA, motive analysis and psychology-inspired discourse analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). For instance, inspired by CDA, I engaged in a critical reading of the material. Focusing on modalities, word meanings, wording, metaphors, and transitivity enabled me to see ways of making old age a problem and delineating a clear-cut space for old people. I also drew upon a motive analysis, as developed by K. Burke. Burke introduced his approach to discourse analysis in the field of literary studies by identifying the main components of any human action. These components include act, scene, agent, agency and purpose. The aim of this analysis is to respond to questions such as what, where, by whom, how and why certain actions happened. Only then is it possible to understand the discursive motives of a given action (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). Motives are understood as types of worldviews and systems of ideas (Clapp, 2009; Williams, 2009). The analysis of motives allows a researcher to enter the space of accounts and justifications given in relationships to particular actions. This approach aims at showing how actors involved in a given action understand it, and how they decide to present it. The main task of an analyst is, therefore, to display a range of explanations for certain actions as provided by actors and to offer an alternative way of perceiving these actions (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). Umbrella's staff decided which material they wanted to show me, and I listened to their explanations and their understanding of their activity.

Because nexus analysis places a great value on discourses, it also involves elements of the analysis of discourses. In this way, nexus analysis connects micro- with macro- level aspects, showing that one cannot be understood without the other (Lane, 2009). Following various actions taken by Umbrella, I began to follow various discourses in place. Discourses of knowledge, old age, social work, and social welfare emerged as key aspects of Umbrella's actions. Apart from discourses, I studied various actions and

their relationships with Umbrella. There actors included individual people who worked for Umbrella as well as other organisational and institutional actors that either directly or indirectly influenced what Umbrella could and could not do. Finally, Umbrella acted in certain places addressed its actions to certain people.

5.2.2. Analysis of discourses

Unlike discourse analysis and its focus on how people use discourses, analysis of discourses focuses on showing how discourses constitute and people (Bacchi, 2005). The question underlying such analysis concerns the type of discourses that can be recognised in particular material. This approach puts forward the understanding of discourse as any meaningful practice, in which language is one practice (see Section 4.1.). Therefore, the material used in such analyses is very broad and may include documents, newspapers, interviews, and observations (Howarth, 2000). Its main objective is "to describe, understand, interpret and evaluate carefully constructed objects of investigation" (ibid.: 139). Overall, analysis of discourse may be seen as an investigation into frames of thinking and doing as exhibited by various social actors who operate in particular times and spaces.

As indicated above, among the methods reviewed in the previous section, nexus analysis is a method offering a space for connecting various ways of analysis at the micro- and macro-levels. One of its main objectives is to understand discourses that circulate in the space in which a particular social action takes place. Theorists of discourse, in general, agree that actions are not real; instead, they are constructed and need to be understood in terms of attributes (Andersen, 2003). Nexus analysis, in following Mediated Discourse Theory (MDT), introduces the term 'mediated actions' to stress that the interaction of actors, relationships and discourses is constitutive of social actions (Scollon, 2008). In this view, a social action is an analytical category rather than an ontological statement. The social actions performed by Umbrella, as described in Study 4, could therefore be approached as

results of various interacting elements, among which discourses played a great role. Attending to these discourses allowed me to propose new interpretations and understandings of socially constructed problems of old age. By drawing on various methods of discourse analysis, as mentioned in the previous section, I could identify discourses that were present in Umbrella's actions.

However, to be able to work with such discourses, it is necessary to translate the research material into text; even in this approach, the actual process of analysis is conducted on textual data (Howrath, 2000). The difference lies in the focus of the investigation. The steps of analysis include the application of concepts and theories and the use of diverse methods of discourse analysis (ibid.). For instance, in Study 2, I focus on the concept of discourse as a set of meaningful practices to describe the meeting of discourses of old age and gender. In both cases, these discourses were seen as built around nodal points such as gender and age, which, as empty signifiers, are ascribed a changing range of meanings. When re-reading media material from Study 1 and attending to political structures constructed around gender and old age, I came to understand what type of meanings were put forward, and what new meanings were created at their intersection. Intersectional analysis in this study aimed at understanding the hegemonic domain, in which subject positions, such as grandmother, retiree an old parent, were constructed. These subject positions were understood as constructed and relational rather than as absolute. This type of reading of the empirical material is very sensitive to any form of injustice and inequality and always attempts to make a positive contribution. It focuses on ways in which various categories and power systems interact to produce oppressive systems. As Crenshaw (1994) notes, the main problems addressed are not categories per se but the values attached to them, which include some people and exclude others. For instance, consider a category of *grandmother* discussed in Study 2. A careful observation of this category shows that it evokes patriarchal norms that designate the family as the only sphere accessible to women. At the same time, patriarchal norms and ageism create a category of *anti-grandma* to refer to women at 'Grandma's age' who devote their life something other than family. Intersectional analysis not only enables reading of discourses at

the moment when intersect to (re) create various categories, but also helps to grasp the dynamism and changing patterns of their interactions.

Another concept that triggered my analysis of discourses was that storytelling. Individuals, groups, and organisations all engage in storytelling. These actors have diverse characteristics, and their stories can have various repercussions. Within the discourse perspective, a narrative embodies context-specific ways of reasoning about particular phenomena (Jones, 2002). One of the prime functions of a narrative is to tell a story about the self. This kind of story is a point at which the individual meets the social (Reissman, 2008). As such, narratives illuminate the process of self-creation as it happens in particular situations (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). In this way, the act of telling a story can be viewed as a process of subjectification-in-action, when the individual actor interacts with the social world. It is a process of orienting oneself among various discourses and making choices and decisions about favoured subject positions. To look at storytelling from a discourse perspective is to see where the storytellers coming from and in which direction they choose to proceed. A discourse perspective focuses on both things that are said and things that are silenced and /or not present at all. It aims at showing a storyline that is collective but that is also accommodated by an individual as a set of cultural rules (Søndergaard, 2002). This perspective encourages a search for discourses and their role in shaping stories in a particular way. This concept accompanied my analysis in Study 3. While listening to stories told by the U3A staff and members, I was interested in discourses that affected the stories' content. In this analysis, I did not aim at describing the storytellers' identities; instead, I looked for ways of understanding the sources of their stories.

5.3. Ethical considerations

The prevalent view of research ethics equates research ethics with ethical codes and principles. This principalist paradigm (King et al, 1999), which gave rise to procedural ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004), if not predatory ethics (Cannella & Lincoln, 2007), focuses on a number of rules and

principles that researchers should follow. Consequently, it creates a kind of 'illusory' comfort among researchers who see these rules as fixed solutions to all possible ethical dilemmas that may appear during their work (ibid.). It may also run a risk of producing "empty ethics" (Corrigan, 2003), that is, de-contextualised ethics; hence, it presents "a sanitised picture of social sciences" (Calvey, 2008: 912).

In response to this dilemma, researchers have called for a more reflexive and critical approach. Ethics in practice (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) and dialogical ethics (Cannella & Lincoln, 2007) exemplify the relationship (in process) paradigm (King et al., 1999). Reflexivity and criticality are the two fundamental notions in this new approach. Research is a process composed of many steps, and this approach emphasises that ethics should accompany every part of the process (Shaw, 2003). For instance, the process of analysis is highly ethical; it is about getting close to the data and moving away, and deciding what to analyse and how to do it. The ideal situation is to 'enter' the data, to establish an intimate relationship with and discover its valuable character (Coleman, 2008). When I try to explain what analysis is, I often use the metaphor of falling in love and building a relationship. It is about meetings, during which you get to know your material and vice versa. As Jaggar (1989) says, the growth of new knowledge comes new emotions and feelings. There are positive feelings, such as love and trust, but there are also negative feelings, such as anger and disappointment. During my work, I experienced moments when I could not live without my material; I wanted to look at it and touch it all of the time. However, there were also moments when I had enough and I did not want to look at my material at all. On average, it took me one year from finishing my data collection to the point when I could start writing a longer text. I wrote notes, some sentences, and some single paragraphs on the way, but I always left time to get to know my material and vice versa.

Ethics in research implies "taking two steps back" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004:274) and reflecting upon one's actions as a researcher as well as the process of acquiring and disseminating new knowledge. This approach

demands a certain degree of criticality not only towards the data and results of our study but, foremost, towards oneself. To be ethical in research means to be able to scrutinise one's position and role in terms of morality and moral conduct (Cannella & Lincoln, 2007). Researchers carefully consider every decision and act that they perform and express their awareness of the complexity of the research process and its diverse aspects. Conducting research is all about ethics, understood as a process of *self-regulation* and *self-reflection* (Ferdinand et al., 2007).

In general terms, to conduct research is to apply various ways of thinking to understand what one studies. However, thinking encompasses much more than cognitive processes alone. "Thinking … is the skill that consists in developing a compass of the cognitive, affective and ethical kind. It is an apprenticeship in the art of conceptual colouring" (Braidotti, 2006: 178). As Woodward (2009) notes, thinking and feeling happen through each other, and cannot be separated. Although, from the very begging, I saw research as a part of my life, for some time, I separated the topic of my research from myself. As I became more engaged in various ways of doing research, I began feeling differently about my research project. I remember the feeling of the moment when I sat in front of my computer screen and I shouted to myself, 'Oh, my God! It is about me!' In beginning with CDA, moving to MDT and then examining theories of subjects and emotions, I began connecting differently with my research. The 'it's about me' exclamation did not mean that I suddenly centred my whole attention on understanding my own life; it simply made realise that similar things happen to us all. From focusing on a case, I moved to describing processes and patterns that make such cases exist. This process helped me to remove the boundary separating myself from the people about whom I was writing. I saw that it was because of our interconnectedness that I could understand what was happening in their lives.

One of the crucial dimensions within which a research process takes place is the power relationship in which a researcher is enmeshed (Wray-Bliss, 2003). The power structure related to a working place is one aspect of this

relationship, but the researcher, as the one who generates power within a research process, also needs to be taken into account (ibid.). The temptation to develop an ownership attitude towards the whole process is very high. I tried to become a 'modest witness' of practices and processes that make social categories real. Braidotti (2006) emphasises that the modest witness operates through empathy and affinity, combining modesty and imagination to produce new ways of looking at researched phenomena. This position does not aim at judging; instead, it centres on understanding, observing, and re-contextualising.

Pascale (2011) describes empathy and compassion as the prime feelings that enable a new type of relationship between the researcher and the researched person. As she (Pascale, 2011) says, these are very powerful emotions that may change the course of research. Therefore, when listening to the people I interviewed, I heard the stories of old age, but I also heard the stories of inequalities. I could understand the feeling when the whole world tells you one thing about you, but you simply do not agree with it. I could understand that, sometimes, it feels easier and more comfortable to start thinking about oneself as an exception from a disregarded category rather than trying to question the construction of the category itself. The idea of knowing and feeling subjects helped me to see that the terrain of inequalities is complicated, that it hardly ever offers simple answers, and that it rarely involves straightforward solutions.

In the poem that opens this dissertation, Maya Angelou writes: *"I note the obvious differences between each sort and type, but we are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike."* I recalled this passage when I was reading Braidotti's (2006) call for a new type of ethics that would meet the challenges of a new millennium, ethics that are based on the idea that "We are in *this* together" (p.85). Research is an ethical activity, and, as such, it needs to be conducted about *us* rather than a process of *me* conducting research about *them*. This argument pertains in a particular way to research on inequalities. Although the majority of my empirical material is public, and interviews constitute a small part of it, the topic of my dissertation is

relevant to each of us. The position that inequalities are perpetuated by every one of us, that there are no people who need to shoulder more blame for it than others do, and that we are all part of inequality is an ethical position.

6. Summary of the studies

What are the welfare spaces of old age? With this question in mind, I conducted four studies that aimed at describing the production and construction of *real* old age within the field of social welfare. In the previous chapter, I reviewed the main methodological approaches that I applied in the four studies that compose this dissertation. In this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of each study, including its location in the dissertation and findings related to the main research questions. Studies that are presented below offer insight into various aspects of making old age *real* in the lives of people, institutions and organisations, and its consequences. These studies inquiry into language, social actions, and emotions to show different means and scenes in which old age is defined as *real*. They present materiel and non-material consequences of such definitions and draw attention to people's role in making old age *real* and/or attempts to make it *unreal*.

6.1. Paper 1

"Classic ageism" or "brutal economy"? Old age and older people in the Polish media

The idea for this study was based on several premises, resulting from research recommendations concerning inquiries into the field of old age and inequality. First, the importance of everyday knowledge and various means used to construct it was of great interest. Second, I focused on the relevance of language and language practices for the process of re-producing inequalities. Third, I investigated the meaning of emotions in constructing new knowledges. This set of topics, combined with the welfare culture background, directed my camera to the media. I decided to take a photograph of attitudes towards old age that were evoked in news magazines.

The discourse in news magazines appears to both reflect and create attitudes towards old people, which, in turn, has implications for ageing policy. Media can be seen as both an important element of social reality construction and a powerful actor that affects our thinking about the world. However, the media does not exist above our social reality; the former is part of the letter, so the messages the media displays are part of our social reality construction. Such constructions not only make us think in a certain way but also tend to influence our feelings and, ultimately, our actions. The method of attitudinal positioning that I applied in this study allowed me to inquire into the ways in which the media evoked and provoked certain attitudes towards old age and old people. I selected the four largest Polish weekly news opinion magazines and analysed articles that appeared in the 2004–2007 period.

These news magazines that were selected for the purpose of this study had political affiliations ranging from left- to right-wing ideologies. The first finding of the study was that, in spite of these differences, the attitudes expressed towards old age and old people were similar. The types of subjects and the main images presented in those four newsmagazines were similar. The overall picture was similar in terms of negative and discriminatory attitudes. It seemed that the topic of old age was not pleasant; on the contrary, emotions such as fear, disgust and anxiety underpinned many of the analysed texts.

There were three main areas, in which old people and ageing were discussed: family, market and society. These spheres were distinguished based on the main referents used to talk about old people and old age. Consequently, grandparents, pensioners and older people (term used in the analysed material) were discussed. In this material, very strict and one-dimensional subject positions were produced: e.g., a grandparent is a person who takes care of grandchildren; s/he does not have any history, interests, or friends. In cases where one category was moved to a non-original sphere, for instance, a grandmother was moved to the sphere of society, such shifts provoked negative attitudes. Whereas, in the sphere of family, a grandmother was loved and admired, in the societal sphere, that was not the case. The term

'grandmother' was used there as a judgmental statement, reminding everyone that the character/person in question is out of her space and, moreover, that this space is highly inappropriate for her.

Another aspect of the analysed media material is the fact that biological age was not discussed. The age of old people was not a topic of discussions because everyone knew who old people were and, more importantly, how they were. This observation shows deeply rooted assumptions that are key to understanding common sense knowledge that is seldom questioned (Pascale, 2007). There were two exceptions to this observation: people in their 40s who decided to have a child, and people in their 50s who decided to retire. Whereas the former group was portrayed as far too old for parenting, the latter was presented as far too young to stop working. What united these examples was very 'loud' emotional and judgmental language. Both groups were clearly condemned, and their actions were described as egoistic.

Old people were presented as valuable and admirable when they could fully devote their lives to helping and caring for their grandchildren and/or when they could consume and contribute to the national economy through their occupational activity. In the article, I refer to these two processes as the familisation and marketisation of old age respectively Old people are presented with two choices: life for the family or life for the market. In both scenarios, great responsibility is put on their shoulders. The processes of the familisation and marketization of old age are accompanied by the process of the individuation of old age. If a person fails to meet these standards, it is her own fault; she is the one to blame. The standard presented in these magazines is unanimous: a young worker, preferably male.

The title of this article quotes a question posed in one of the texts that I analysed. Both phenomena, ageism and the economy, are ascribed characteristics that imply that their consequences are natural. In this way, their impact on individual lives is belittled; they are just like any other component of social reality. There is no one to ask for support; each

individual must deal with it. This belief is well inscribed into the dominant discourse of advanced capitalism that has been glorified in many post-socialist states as a way of breaking from their communist past. This article can also be read as an indication that old age in itself does not have meaning; old age and other categories and aspects together construct the *real* old age.

6.2. Paper 2

Because women will always be women and men are just getting older

The second study was a direct continuation of Study 1. In the course of studying media representations of old age and old people, I observed the importance of gender to the construction of various images of old people. Therefore, in this paper, I decided to look more closely at the intersections of discourses on old age and gender in the public space in Poland.

This study lays out the main arguments related to the concept of discourse and discursive construction of old age and gender that I use in this dissertation. It presents discourse as a type of framework that affects social relations and intuitions. It also stresses the political character of discourses, which is manifested in various allocations of resources, diverse access to power, divisions between insiders and outsiders, and relations existing between different people and groups of people. This study also discusses intersectionality as a research approach aimed at illuminating the processes in which various categories interact and at understanding the type of consequences these processes have for people's identities and lives.

The main focus of the article is on the interacting discourses of old age and gender in Poland. This study is based on a re-reading of the media discourse of old age from Study 1 and on observations of social policies addressing

issues of old age and gender. This approach enables a discussion of two different social practices that constitute discourses: language and institutions.

Intersecting discourses of old age and gender are found to produce three subject positions that I discuss in this paper: a grandma, a retiree and an older parent. These positions establish a set of rules and norms that old women and old men should follow. They not only function as indicators of preferred lifestyles but also emerge as bounded morality systems providing a basis for social judgments.

The category of *grandma* is constructed at the intersection of discourses of old age and womanhood in relation to family life. This subject position would not be negative if not for the fact that it is presented as the only choice available to old women in Poland. Old women, just like women of all ages in Poland, belong to the family, and family is the most appropriate space for them. The imperative of grandmother is so strong that old women who engage in activities other than childrearing and household work are referred to as *anti-grandmas*. They clearly step outside of the "normal and natural" order of things. Policies of public maternalism are built around ideas that women, throughout their lives, will be devoted to caring duties.

Whereas old women tend to have a clearly defined role, old men seem not to have any particular duties or obligations to fulfil. On the contrary, it seems that old men disappear with age. Men in Poland are delegated to the sphere of the labour market by default; old men are those who used to do something, used to work, and used to contribute. As retirees they seem not have any place in life. It appears that old men are defined by their past achievements, and it is the past that has a place for them, not the present. To give another example, male artists in their 60s and 70s are referred to as dinosaurs. They are figures from the past, where they enjoyed times of glory.

Another category that is constructed at the axes of the interacting discourses of old age and gender is that of an older parent. This category is evoked to demonstrate how family life is endangered by the current lifestyle. It has its roots in traditional values that place the family at the top of the moral hierarchy. The image of an older parent seems to disturb a vision in which everything has its place and, foremost, its time. However, this category is not only about age and family life; it is also about gender. Each discussion regarding this topic ends with blaming women. According to this construction, an older parent is a woman who had been so active in pursuing her career that she had forgotten about her right priorities of becoming a mother. The decision to become a parent later in life is seen as an attempt to deceive time and catch-up with the mother's role.

The title of the article mirrors the key discursive phenomena described in the articles, namely aged gender and gendered age. It shows that the lives of old women and old men are different, and each has certain guidelines to follow. In the case of old women, old age seems to strengthen gender roles that assign women to the family sphere. In the case of old men, it is old age that is strengthened by gender to exclude old men from the sphere of the labour market. These attitudes are intertwined with images of the perfect family and work and with ideas concerning the private/public debate that tend to shape the construction of social life in Poland.

6.3. Paper 3

Is there a place for an ageing subject? Stories of ageing at the University of the Third Age in Poland

The study of media and social policy discourse on old age in Poland, gave a rather pessimistic view. It seemed that there was no place for old age in this country. Therefore, my attention was drawn to the University of the Third Age (U3A), which claimed to have found the right place for old people. The title of my third study is based on this claim, and this study inquiries into the

ageing subject and its place at the U3A. The question about the ageing subject here refers to the idea of resisting dominant and, very often, oppressive images of old age, questioning them and offering a hope that conditions will improve. The main aim of this study was to find out about the role and position of the U3A in the social space of ageism.

The results of this study indicate that rather than resisting ageist discourses, the U3A simply rejects the idea of old age. The U3A characterises its members as exceptional people who have nothing in common with old people outside of the U3A. The U3A draws a very clear line between its members and the rest of society. The U3A members tend to refer to themselves proudly as 'we' and contrast this with people outside of the organisation who are simply old. Interestingly, this 'we' is hardly ever juxtaposed with any people outside; 'we' is positioned against old people in general. Their common-sense knowledge tells them that the negative images of old age and old people refer to them, that although no one mentions age, this is what is meant. One of the main criteria for being old is not working. The U3A members have reached retirement age or are younger and unemployed.

The idea of old age and old people appears to be scary and unacceptable. The reality of old age is maintained by both the fear of old age and by the longing for youth. Members of the U3A want to forget their age; they want to get back to yesterday. They see *real* old age in the media, they observe making old age *real* in social policy, and they do not want the reality that they see. However, instead of trying to see what is behind that *real* old age, they spend a great deal of effort on separating themselves from others, especially those of the same age. 'Those old people' become a reality that they want to avoid at all costs. The U3A and its members are, therefore, actively taking part in making old age *real.* Their role is to act against it; they always see it coming, and they defend themselves from the *real* old age. This role in enacted against the backdrop of images of old age as a *real* personal risk that, in the advanced economy, simply excludes one from social life.

Paradoxically, although the negative image of old age is presented as a main reason explaining why the U3A is needed, it also thrives as the result of the U3A. The main category used at the U3A is the category of third age: age that is not old. Discourse of anti-ageing is vital to the third age construction (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002, 2007). Third age is presented as positive, and the U3A members enjoy talking about themselves in these terms. It helps them to distance themselves from the *real* old age that, as they know and feel, refers to them as well. However, the category of third age is not only constructed as a contrast to old age; there are several aspects of social reality that can be seen in it. The processes of consumption and individuation pervade the ideal of the third age (Gilleard & Higgs, 2007). The U3A is affected by the power of choice ideology that gives individuals the main responsibility for their own life project. According to this vision of reality, everything is conditioned upon one's choices; there are no structural elements that may influence individual lives. This scenario is very appealing to the U3A members; it makes them feel better about themselves and convinces them that it is possible to master one's own life. People who do not belong to the U3A are, as a result, seen as lazy and narrow-minded.

The U3A actively reproduces negative images of old age, and it positions itself as an actor that can successfully counteract this type of *real* threat. In this way, the organisation falls into the trap of *real* old age, making it even more *real.* Apparently, this trap is also gendered. The majority of the U3A members are women, and many of the activities organised within the U3A frame are addressed to women. Being involved in multiple projects, performing volunteer to work voluntary, and being engaged and committed are qualities that are constructed as female. These are also the qualities that are presented as favourable at the U3A. Females are members of the U3A as part of the natural, normal course of life; male members are always exceptions to the general rule. When old men lose their jobs, they lose their social value; when old women lose their jobs, they simply have more time for engaging in other types of activities. The Mother Pole ideal requires women to work and perform unpaid jobs as well; when the Mother Pole retires, she goes on with her unpaid occupations. The reality of old age is

also deeply intertwined with the reality of gender, which makes each of these categories more *real.*

6.4. Paper 4

Old age identity in social welfare practice

In the fourth study, I decided to focus more closely on concrete social welfare practices addressed to old people. The main objective of this study was to examine the process of old age identity construction within a setting of social welfare work with old people. I sought to identify social welfare practices that construct and enforce certain old age identities. I decided to use the term 'old age identity' to stress the socially constructed nature of this concept and to note its intrinsic instability, flexibility and multiplicity. In light of the arguments presented so far, old age identity does not contain anything; it can mean everything and nothing. However, when old age becomes *real*, the meaning of the whole concept changes.

The empirical material analysed in this article is part of a study of a non-governmental organisation in Poland. The method of analysis was inspired by nexus analysis, which analyses social actions through an historical and ethnographic perspective. During the course of the study, I wanted to observe concrete actions performed by the organisation to see the interplay of various elements of the situation in which old age was ascribed its *real* meaning. At some point, the organisation with which I corresponded decided to include old age and the welfare of old people as part of its programme. My initial question was, why?

The results of this study demonstrate a complex process in which welfare professionals create the identities of preferred clients. The study shows that social welfare practice is often oriented towards imagined client identities that have little to do with real people. In the course of the analysis, I

identified the following practices that made old age *real,* not only to the organisation but also to the affected people: expertise, solutions, fitting in, and compliance. Each of these practices had different aims, and each of them drew upon various aspects of social reality. Hence, the results of this study show an intricate matrix of interacting discourses, places and actors and the relationships among them.

The organisation began with common-sense knowledge about old age and the type of social problem that old age constitutes in Poland. The problem approach to old age was not questioned then; it was simply taken for granted to provide a rationale for the organisation's actions. Old age was a negative phenomenon, old people were sad and miserable, and the organisation identified its own role as a potential solution. This view of old age was supported by other 'experts' who were invited for debates concerning the problem of old age and old people. Simultaneously, a research survey was ordered by the organisation to gain insight into *real* problems of *real* old people. A street-based, quantitative survey was addressed to people who looked old in the eyes of the researchers. The survey was used to confirm the unfortunate situation of the old.

The solution to the problem of old age included many initiatives taken in cooperation with local authorities. Moreover, the organisation designed a social welfare project that was addressed to old people in four communities. The project aimed at answering the *real* needs of old people, whom the organisation never met, and to establish an example of an exemplary practice that could easily be implemented to benefit old people living in different areas. Within the frame of the project, old people were those between the ages of 50 and 65 who were unemployed and living in impoverished, rural areas. In this moment, the concept of old age identity gained a new meaning.

However, the reality of old age was surprising to many, shocking to few, and unacceptable to the majority of the programme addressee, who eventually decided not to take part in the project. Those who participated did so for

different reasons; some wanted company, some were 'dragged' by their friends, and some were attracted by the activity discourse promoted by the program. At the end of the 6-month programme, participants were encouraged to participate in the production of short video-films that would promote the aims and the main forms of the programme. With these videos, the organisation produced valid evidence showing the relevance and importance of the project.

The story of this project would not be complete without acknowledging its spatial and temporal context and its relationships with different actors occupying the same spaces. First of all, the project designed for old people was a welfare project, in which professional power of social workers came to the forefront. Evidence-based practice and expert knowledge of objective facts affected the type of expertise and solutions that the organisation provided. Second, the financial aspect constructed a dependency web that caught the organisation between the influences of national and international actors. Third, the prevalent image of old age in Poland affected the types of actions that the organisation proposed. Because old age is equated with labour inactivity in Poland, the discourse of active ageing appealed to the organisation immediately. All actions were directed towards increasing the level of activity of old people. This activity specifically aimed at proving people's value for the communities in which they resided.

This article draws attention to various 'imaginaries of old age' (Gullette, 2004) that were put into action to create *real* old age. The reality of these imaginaries was intertwined with other imaginations relating to the concepts of knowledge, good social work practice, and community. People who were approached to join the project were pronounced to be old, and they were offered a solution to their *real* problems of old age.

6.5. Discussion of the results

At some point during the research for this dissertation, I came up with an idea for a title: Spaces of (non-)ageing. When looking at the empirical material that I had gathered, I began seeing that ageing, or rather, being old, is something that people may or may not be allowed to do. As the number of spaces for people 'of a certain age' increases, the spaces of old age seem to shrink. Spaces of (non-)ageing are to be found across various societal domains that show what needs to be performed in order not to grow old. Spaces of (non-)ageing repudiate the idea of old age as something terrifying and, on many occasions, immoral. What was startling about these spaces was their *real* character. Although they can be seen as social/discursive constructions, they tend to become very *real* in people's lives. The question then is not only how these spaces were constructed but what they do to people and why. Hence, the main issue is no longer the social construction of old age but the *reality* of old age.

Ahmed (2006) suggests that the concept of orientations is helpful to answer this type of question. She chooses to work with queer theory and phenomenology to elaborate on the concept of orientation as a tool to understand how bodies inhabit spaces by their tendency to lean towards some objects and not others. When we orient ourselves towards particular objects, we make these objects familiar. We turn to them, we take some directions, and, in this way, we reside in various spaces. Hence, spaces depend on the bodies that inhabit them. On the other hand, spaces tend to make room for some bodies while remaining closed to other bodies that do not fit. Some orientations and objects are more desirable than others. For instance, marriage and reproduction are two concepts associated with the discourse of heterosexuality, which show a straight line that should be followed. This line tends to be related to age, and its examination in this context sheds new light on understanding old age, gender and sexuality as well as the possibilities and challenges facing those who want to step outside the line (see Ambjörnsson & Jönsson, 2010) and beyond conditions of normativness (Sandberg, 2008).

In the course of this research, I observed the closing of some spaces and the emergence of two new spaces of social welfare that were designed for old bodies. To begin with the former, the media discourse on ageing, as discussed in Study 1, delineated a clear-cut division between spaces that were available for old people and spaces that were not accessible for them. There were two main spaces that old people could enter: family and market. Both of these spaces were, however, reserved for certain types of old people. The space of family was appropriate for grandparents, preferably grandmothers, who were healthy, happy and fully devoted to their grandchildren, and who, indirectly, could afford to be such loving grandparents. The space of the market invited healthy workers, preferably male workers, to work and/or to spend a lot of money. Healthy, able-bodied and active individuals were presented as desired inhabitants of these two spaces. Old people could go to work and take care of grandchildren, but they could not do anything else. For instance, the space of cultural life was not accessible to them. Examples of 'dinosaurs' and 'anti-grandmothers' drew attention to the forms of behaviour that were regarded as inappropriate during old age. Such descriptions and representations of old people created a deep feeling of being out of space, when approaching any cultural institution. There were no formal prohibitions, but the feeling of being outside of one's proper space was apparent. As, Hanna, one of the interviewees in Study 3, contested, the theatre and the cinema were such places where old age was inappropriate. To enter such places, Hanna continued, a person needed courage and self-confidence, and these were conditioned upon group membership.

In Study 3, I discussed the U3A. At first glance, the U3A could be viewed as an example of extending the social space of old age. In an ageist society that has no space for old age, the U3A could be seen as a move that extends some bodies into a non-existent space of ageing. Bodies that are not extended (Ahmed, 2006) can expand their social space by joining the U3A. However, what became visible at the U3A was an orientation not towards, but against or away from, old age. At this moment, old age became more *real* than ever. Just as race is an effect of racism (Ahmed, 2006), in the same way, old age becomes *real* as a result of ageism. The more the U3A stresses separation

from old age and old people, the more it contributes to making old age *real*. Why does this happen? Ahmed (2006) discusses two processes that accompany inhabitancies of spaces: becoming familiar with new objects and the pursuit of the 'at home' feeling. In the ageist environment, the objects of old age are constructed as disease, disability, despair, and shortage, and no one wants these objects. These objects provoke negative emotions, and they are not associated with the 'feel-good' atmosphere of home. Emotions affect us and move us in certain directions, and they stick to some objects (Ahmed, 2004). The repetitive practices of cultural reproduction shape some images and feelings that accompany them. Fear, anxiety, disgust, and shame are some of the emotions that got stuck to old age. The negativity of old age begins to be taken for granted with time; it becomes something that everyone knows and feels.

At the U3A, negative feelings towards old age combine with feelings related to work and activity. In post-socialist Poland, activity, particularly labour activity, is of primary importance. To have value, people need to produce and contribute. This attitude reflects a new of type of citizenship: citizen-entrepreneur in a capitalist Poland, where capitalism acquires the status of a socio-economic normality (Rukszto, 1997). The outline of the three Polands, presented by Marody (2007), serves as another example here. Marody divides Poland into three different worlds based on people's source of income: private Poland, public Poland and Poland on social benefits. Each of them is characterised by different institutional infrastructures and ways of coping with life. In the media discourse reviewed in Study 1, glorification of work and money is common. Old people are respected as long as they engage in labour activity and/or can afford to buy themselves out of this obligation. Then, they are not old. Institutions are like meeting points at which different lines come together to create new spaces (Ahmed, 2006). At least the anti-ageing line and the work line intersect at the U3A, and they create a space of (non-)ageing with activity at its centre.

Activity and utility are the main orientations of (non-)ageing spaces in Poland. Study 4, with its focus on a non-governmental organisation and its

social project addressed to old people, presents another example of creating a space of (non-)ageing. This space is to be inhabited by able-bodied men and women who live in rural areas and are unemployed. Activity, understood as labour activity, is an object to which the addressees of the project are expected to turn. Startlingly, in this case, old has an age limit, and there are many bodies that do not qualify because they are … *too* old. There are also many bodies that decide not to take part in the project. As Juhila and Abrams (2011) note, the project gives the organisation in question the role of an activator. The staff may, therefore, claim the right to save people by bringing them back to 'normal', which is an active life. The welfare project organisers approached potential participants in the project with the following aim: "We want to activate older people so they do not sit at home", as expressed by one of the staff members. They provided resources for people to orient themselves towards a new object: activity. At the same time, they also stressed that a particular object was not a proper orientation: home. The clear-cut division between the public and private spheres is the typical of classical liberal thought that permeates welfare discourse in Poland (Rukszto, 1997). The preferred model of a citizen-entrepreneur belongs to the public sphere and the private sphere is constructed as its contradiction (ibid.). The space of (non-)ageing is constructed as a public, desirable sphere. The private space, oriented around home and care, is presented as belonging to women (Rukszto, 1997). As Study 4 shows, the private sphere is also a space for people who are too old to be among the 'right' old people who can participate in the public sphere of the market economy.

Age matters but hardly ever on its own; age matters because of beauty standards, lifestyle regimes, gender, race, and social class, to mention just a few relevant aspects. Therefore, old age cannot be understood outside of the frames resulting from, e.g., politics and economies, bodily imperatives, gender orders, geographical and historical spaces. This is especially true when the area of interest revolves around the problem of inequalities. Intersections between gender and age orders are the most visible features of studies presented here. In Study 2, I began with a discussion of the subject position of a grandmother, and the type of consequences it had for assessing different behaviours exhibited by women. The grandmother is presented in

the media discourse as the most preferable, and the only, role for old women. It situates old women in the home space; in this way, it can be seen as an extension of the established gender order that delegates women to the private sphere and men to the public sphere. This separation becomes more visible when looking more closely at the category of a retiree. Retiree is not a gender –free category; in the Polish media discourse, it is a male category. The retiree figure puts forwards the process of ageing, showing that, when people (men) age, they stop working. Retiree, a category belonging to the public sphere, emphasises the value of past experience. The retiree deserves an attention because he used to contribute to the economy by working. In contrast, whereas old women are delegated to the space of family with the category of grandmother, the category of retiree indicates that a space of work has been closed, but no other has been opened. Similarly, when presenting old people who are engaged in cultural activities, old women are called 'anti-grandmas' and old men: 'dinosaurs'. The present prepares one space for old women but it does not offer anything for old men; they simply 'used to be', but are not any more. Because their presence is seen in terms of a 'return to the past', it even becomes difficult to refer to old men as 'has-beens', as Krekula et al. (2005) suggest. The connection between the past and the present is lost and these species are extinct. Old age puts an end to the productive man and makes him fade into oblivion. The discourse of the liberal market economy does not care about non-participants; it is focused on citizen-entrepreneurs who are active in the labour market. Old age does not belong to this sphere; similarly, old men are outside of the market sphere.

Although there is no space for the bodies of old men, the bodies of old women are welcomed, providing that they have the shape of a grandmother. The welfare policy of maternalism is built around the image of women as the main care providers and homemakers. The private sphere has been and continues to be presented as the main sphere that women of all ages may occupy. Norms of heterosexuality create a line to follow, the main orientations of which are marriage and reproduction (Ahmed, 2006). In Poland, this line is to be followed mainly by women. Moreover, this line is presented as the only line that women may follow. The values of the liberal market economy coexist with so-called 'Polish Catholicism' (Johnson &

Robinson, 2007; Kramer, 2007) to define what is female and male in Poland. The ideal of the Polish Mother is exemplary here; it places sacrifice at the core of women's existence, proscribing that they should devote their lives to the family (Hardy et al., 2008). In a similar vein, the analogy drawn between that Polish nation and the Virgin Mary is often used by right-wing, conservative political parties that oppose women's rights other than motherhood (Graff, 2008b). During one of the interviews with participants in the welfare project described in Study 4, Louise told me that ageing was much easier for women who had children. She mentioned her overall health condition, family situation and relations with her husband as areas that could have been better if not for the fact that she did not have children. Although she was married, she never said that 'we' did not have children; it was she who did not have a child. She also raised the idea of recording therapeutic stories for children that was introduced by the welfare project organisers; once again, she said: "you know, I do not have children, I do not have grandchildren, so this is not so…". To be an old woman in Poland and to have no children and/or grandchildren may feel like a loss.

The norms of heterosexuality place children and reproduction at the centre of human lives; a child must be always protected (Edelman, 2004). The examples from Studies 1 and 2 demonstrate how this principle can be activated in relation to old people. The idea of a biological clock and of a right time for having children demarcates the time of reproduction (Edelman, 2004). Parenting in old age seems to be outside of the regular time; it is unnatural and abnormal in the view of the discussed media discourse. Old parents are called 'grandparents', and their own children: 'grandchildren'. The figure of an unborn child is brought up to strengthen the severity of acting against the time of reproduction. However, the attack against old parents changes into an attack against women. Women are those who, instead of devoting themselves to family life, chose a career; women are those who are the egoist and do not care about the future. To be oriented towards one's future is to care about a child (Edelman, 2004). In these cases, old age begins in women's 40s.

Evidently, old age may begin at different ages. Within the frame of family reproduction, old age starts in a woman's early 40s; the minimum age to enter the U3A is 50; in the welfare project, old age has both a minimum and a maximum value, ranging from the age of 50 to 65; in the pension system, old age starts at the ages of 65 for men and 60 for women. Old age becomes a category that is evoked, when it is needed. Old age is associated with the negative when a body does something outside of the normal set of activities, e.g., have a baby at the age of 40, retire at the age 55, sing at the age of 70. Old age can be positive when an old body works, has money and/or takes care of the family. The picture drawn by these four studies, shows that old age may come at any time. The time of old age is conditioned upon one's gender, family role, and ability to work. The time of old age is additionally conditioned upon the geographical space one inhabits. Whereas participants in Study 3 lived in the city, those taking part in Study 4 resided rural areas. The minimum age of 50 at the U3A coincides with the age of early retirement that is available to some occupational groups; in this way, the U3A presupposes the participation of retirees. There is no maximum age because the U3A aims at staving off old age. Within the Polish policy discourse, a category of immobile age emerges as an explanation of the situation in which people above the age of 44 may find themselves: much worse prospects for finding new employment and a higher risk of unemployment. The social welfare project addressed to old people chooses to focus on people who may take up a new activity before they reach the age of 65. Because the preferred type of activity is a labour activity, people above the age of 65 are not proper participants in the programme. Moreover, the choice of a socially deprived area was made to ease the reception of the project message. It is the intersection of old age and the realities of rural Poland that gives rise to a definition of the project's participants as lost, miserable, and with no ambitions for life. A city-based organisation would find it much easier to help residents of poor villages than city dwellers.

7.   Description of the results

This dissertation has examined processes and practices that make certain social categories *real* in our lives. I chose the category of old age as an example to show how *real* is made. I conducted four different studies that illuminate various aspects of the social welfare system and contribute to making old age *real*. The discourse of media and social policy juxtaposed with stories told by one non-governmental and one voluntary organisation sheds some light on the practices and processes of *real* making. It draws attention to various knowledges and emotions on which these processes are constructed and which they evoke.

In this chapter, I will engage in discussion about my main findings across all studies and their relevance for the overall research aim. Each study was performed differently and from different spaces. This text grew out of these studies, but it also outgrew them. Each photograph that I took is different and shows something unique; each involves different thoughts and feelings. Similarly, four of these photographs, placed on the same table, create a new picture. This collage of images creates a different type of story, which I could not see when I took the first shot. Moreover, my present situation has also changed, and it differs from the one four, three or one year ago. This change creates a new location for this dissertation, a location that gives these four studies a new meaning. Knowledge is never singular within my perspective; knowledge is always plural, changing, fluid and unfinished. The four studies on which this dissertation is based display some knowledges about the researched phenomenon, but they do not exhaust them. This text proceeds with new knowledges and indicates the direction for future work.

The title of this chapter includes the word 'description', which is not accidental. Description as a mode of knowing in science, has recently received more attention. Love (2010) places it at the axes of two processes: the emergence of new interpretation theories that delineate limitations of the critical theory and the growing emphasis on personal engagement in science

and knowledge. She refers to Goffman and his style of turning to 'the ordinary' to name him as the precursor of the descriptive turn in social sciences. In particular, she accentuates how his two methods of exemplarity and abstraction coexist to open the door to understanding various phenomena. Koivunen (2010) pays tribute to another scholar who changes the way of thinking about research: Sedgwick. Koivunen locates her discussion within the concept of affect and presents Sedgwick's plea for reparative reading as an affect-based methodology in action that brings about positive, hopeful and promising perspectives. In this way, social science research does not need to be about revealing the 'bad guys'; as Koivunen (2010) notes, it becomes more similar to an act of wondering and being surprised about the world.

What is the problem with too much critique? Sedgwick (2003) advances a five-point discussion in which she presents key assumptions of critical research. Her main arguments can be summarised as follows: critical researchers know that things are bad; they do everything to show how bad things are; and, on top of that, they claim that the knowledge they produce is the only one that may change the world. She calls this approach paranoia. When taking the photographs for my dissertation, I also became paranoid at times. I was easily seduced by the power of critique and the value of revelation and denunciation. I started seeing 'bad guys' everywhere and weeping about the poor fate of their victims. I would complain about all of the misuses and abuses of power and then sit down and lament that there is no escape and that we are doomed. It takes time to see paranoia, and it takes even more time to try to change it. Sedgwick's (2003) call for reparative reading is a call for the presence of the positive in research. In the subsequent sections, I will try to 'repair' some of the text that I wrote and the studies I conducted. This reparation does not aim at getting better and more correct results; it aims at presenting a different side of them. The work on this research began five years ago; I took this dissertation to different places, and it also took me to some new locations. These changing locations do affect the knowledges presented, which is how this chapter came into being.

7.1. Belonging

During one of the interviews at the U3A, Julia[3] told me the story of her first meeting with the U3A. Shortly after she decided to retire, she went for a long holiday to spend time with her daughter, who lived abroad. After her return home, she began to panic. She saw her husband going to work; she looked out the window only to see gloomy November days that looked like nights, and, for the first time, she had a lot of free time. She said that she was not ready for that. New objects began to enter her field of vision: old age, depression and futility. One day, she called her daughter to tell her that she was about to go crazy. It was then that one of her colleagues told her about the U3A. Ahmed (2006) shows that moments of losing one's orientation can be revolutionary; they may open new spaces and display new directions. However, for this to happen, a person needs to have access to different types of resources, including social and emotional resources. For Julia, work had been her main orientation. As she admitted, she used to work overtime, she did not have time for personal interests, and she liked what she was doing. When work disappeared, Julia lost her orientation. She also started feeling that she was running out of space, or rather, that different spaces were getting rid of her. Her friends provided her with new resources and helped to direct her towards a new space, the main orientation of which was activity. Julia saw that there was a world outside of her former workplace, that things were happening, and she wanted to be part of it. She gladly replaced the work line with the activity line, which she called her hobby. As she stated herself, the U3A was a place where "I have found my way for the second time in my life"; the first time was when she decided on her occupation as a teacher.

Julia's story is about an emotional journey, it shows the great role of emotions in inhabiting spaces and directing oneself towards certain objects. It shows emotions that stick to certain objects and how these objects move bodies in different directions. This story also stresses the situational aspects of our orientations; what would happen if Julia's friends had not been there?

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[3] All names are fictional

How would Julia have felt if she came back from visiting her daughter and it was a sunny day in May instead of a dark day in November? These questions do not aim at imagining different scenarios of Julia's life; on the contrary, they illuminate those aspects of the situation that Julia brought up when I asked her why she joined the U3A. Her daughter and friends were part of it as much as nature and feelings of despair and loss propelled by the retirement decision and negative images of ageing were. In this particular situation, the U3A emerged as a safe harbour, a place where she could belong. Julia's friends wanted her to be happy; they wanted to help her overcome difficult times, and knowing her passion for teaching and learning, they directed her to the U3A. The U3A is an educational organisation, and educational goals are crucial to its self-presentation. Julia, who could not imagine life outside of school, found the U3A to be the right place for her. As she stated, she recovered and got her life back.

bell hooks (2009) writes about the notion of belonging that is mediated by the past. Her statement "Kentucky is my fate" (hooks, 2009:24) does not close her world. On the contrary, it reconciles her present with the past to enable a greater appreciation of spaces she has been inhabiting, and it opens a new world to her. It helps her to be open, to appreciate diversity and to welcome change. Julia's fate is school. When friends told her about the U3A, she was curious and eager to try it. She began attending lectures, seminars, and activities. It was not long until she was approached by the U3A president and asked to take on some of the organisational duties. From organising recreational trips, she went on to inviting interesting people to speak at the U3A and eventually to becoming a member of the pedagogical board that sets the curriculum for the U3A. Julia says "I like being with people, I like doing something for them … because it is important … selflessly, without any money, just like that". To her, the U3A and its activity have meaning, and she sees her own participation as the meaningful. "When the will to meaning is paramount, human life retains dignity" (hooks, 2009:29). Julia says that it means everything to her to hear that the U3A members enjoyed a lecture and said it was beautiful.

She continues that it is about a being part of a group and doing things together. "In a group, one feels better, more confident", adds Julia. Her reflection is akin to the one from Hanna's story about excursions to the cinema or theatre (Paper 3:13). These women's stories point at the meaning of collectives in extending the bodies of old people into different spaces. Hanna's story, in particular, shows that a group effort can reopen some spaces to old bodies, that a feeling of inappropriateness can unite people and help them to inhabit spaces with pride. When discussing the prevalence of racism in our societies, hooks (2009) writes about the creation of beloved communities that are open to difference and diversity and that make everyone welcome and enables one to belong. Stories of the U3A provided by its members were bursting with positive comments about the university, love for life and beauty.

"U3A is a rescue for energetic people who like life" and *"I think that U3A is a perfect form of building creativity in society and self-improvement in everyday life. It binds people to creativity"*

are exemplary statements showing what the U3A means to people and how they feel about it. Stories provided by members of the U3A offer a picture of people who are happy with their lives. At the individual level, the decision to join the U3A may appear to be an act of resistance against the dominant master narrative of ageing in Poland. The U3A members often use phrases including 'me' and 'mine', which may provide information about their personal struggles against the view of old people as being alike. Ageism does not differentiate between people; all old people are the same, and, moreover, their sameness is seen as a societal burden, including losing one's mental capacities and becoming ugly and sick. With an 'I' statement, people acknowledge their particularity; they show that there is no 'they, old people', but there are individuals whose lives vary. Hence, the U3A may be a community of people who want to be individuals in society that does not give them other opportunities to do so.

7.2. Passion

In Studies 2 and 4, I focused on two different organisations. As the results of these studies indicate, it appears to be particularly difficult to construct new stories of ageing that resist and counteract the oppressive master narratives of ageing. On the contrary, it seems that both organisations fit well into the ageist frame of the dominant discourses on ageing. However, in the course of my research, I met people who participated in organising different events, activities and initiatives within the structure of both organisations. Their stories show a different side of each organisation, presenting passion and commitment as the main aspects of everyday work.

I met Nancy at the U3A. I had known about her previously because she had received the status of legendary person who initiated the U3A. She was a co-founder of the U3A and had been involved in its activities from the very beginning. At present, she is not a sitting member of the board, but she is fully committed to the organisation and its mission. During our interview, she explained that the poor situation of old people in Poland prompted her to engage in various forms of activism for their well-being. Her story shows how hardship and life difficulties can give a person the strength to strive for a decent life. She has been goal-oriented and persistent in pursuing her dreams. When she talked about establishing the U3A, she said that the beginnings were extremely difficult, but

"such a bottom-up initiative was essential because it was not from the top, it came from the people … in fact, it came…. (…) it came from the X, where I was a vice CEO … and I said that it was not possible to talk about diseases all of the time, people need to be given a chance to develop, to pursue their interest … and this is basically how the U3A was born".

Nancy opposed a negative image of old people, according to which old age was associated with disease and disability. Looking at her own life and the lives of her friends, she saw the importance of having spaces that would

encourage and support various activities. By observing everyday life, she knew how badly old people are received, what types of comments they hear and how it feels, when access to many social spaces is being limited.

However, the struggle to receive support from the local authorities and the regular university was arduous. The idea was not so well received at the beginning; very often, she was rebuked and doors were closed in front of her. But, as Nancy says, "I used the window when people were closing the door" to find spaces where she could organise lectures or classes for members of the U3A. She persisted, believing that it was the right thing to do, that people needed such an initiative. She consistently responded to hostile reception that she did not want money; what she was asking for was respect for old people. On many occasions, she also stressed the U3A existed because people wanted to help each other and that the idea to establish the U3A was born "out of a good heart". Reflecting upon the later success of the U3A, she says the following:

"... why do people come here? Well, they come to realise themselves, they come ... not to be on the margin, ... to be up to date ... to have information about the world events and scientific achievements… not to remain excluded …because, honestly, no one cares about old people but the U3A"

In this way, the U3A provides a space for people who want to participate in social life, and the public sphere. It is a space for people who want to enjoy their lives at all ages.

Nancy stressed several times that childhood experiences determine what one's old age will look like; the values and norms instilled in children will guide them into good old age. She was one of six siblings in her family, where life was never easy. Yet, as she says, they always knew how to show respect to others, and how to be grateful. Therefore, she postulated that the most important thing was to prepare young people to grow old and to respect

old people. She tried to reflect on the situation critically and to participate actively in changing the situation. She was deeply involved in activities at the U3A and emotionally committed to affecting the lives of people around her. bell hooks (1994) discusses teaching as a practice of freedom, embracing the notion of passion as one of the key elements of teachers' work. Passion of experience and passion of remembrance (hooks, 1994: 90-91) are particularly built on suffering. Nancy's story was rich with various memories showing the everyday hardship and obstacles that old people face when they want to live and enjoy their lives. Her passion was also conveyed by the way she spoke, the way she looked at me, and the way I felt while interviewing this great educator.

The moments when such positivity is transferred from one person to another are unforgettable. A meeting with Nancy was one of these moments; a meeting with Adam was another. I met Adam during one of my visits to Umbrella's office. My contact person at Umbrella introduced Adam as one of the people who were involved in its diverse activities, and who inspired many initiatives. Adam was very receptive to an interview, in which he explained his work and his reasons for doing it. During the entire interview, his eyes were wide open, he was smiling, and I could see sparkles in his eyes. I commented on that, and he gladly explained to me the meaning of his work and how he felt about it. He said that it is mostly about the energy that comes from talking to people and being with them, energy that motivates him. He illustrated this with the following story. He used to take part in a social programme that included providing food to impoverished old people. Once, he received a letter from an old woman, who was asking him for help. He went to see her:

"(...) the first time we went there, she started crying... (...) she actually hugged me ...and anytime we are there, she comes ... and I am not so close with many family members the way I am with her ...(...) I try to give food, but also show that someone cares, because there are some very lonely people...but I also get a lot from them, because when I feel there is a need,...

there are often tears in their eyes ...this is...it is like charging batteries to be able do more..."

Adam follows a simple rule in his life: he wants to make people happy. Whatever he does, he fully commits himself to improve his work and improve the quality of people's lives. Over a period of several years, he organised many new initiatives. Each time, he started from the lives of people and their everyday struggles and needs. To him, the best way to measure success is to see a smile on people's faces. When he meets a person, nothing else matters. He can focus intensely on the moment and on the person with whom he interacts. This exposes one of his qualities: a desire to do well.

Desire, or the "art of living intensely" (Braidotti, 2006: 190) is seen as one of the prime forces of humanity. Braidotti (2006) talks about it in terms of a positivity that sets goals for the future. Nancy and Adam are among many who share a commitment to other people, who can imagine things that have never happened before, who can engross themselves in what they do to focus on unity with others rather on themselves. More than anything else, they create spaces of life for many who have been refused the right to be respected members of many public spheres.

7.3. Spaces of life

The previous section concluded by introducing the idea of spaces of life, as created by both researched organisations, which enable people to do things, to be respected and, foremost, to enjoy themselves. What comes through the examples shown in sections 7.1. and 7.2. are various emotions that move people in certain directions. These emotions are not individual, although they seem to underpin many of the activities pursued within both organisations. Braidotti (2006), reflecting on the notion of affectivity, talks about a Spinoza-oriented, positive "force that aims at fulfilling the subject's capacity for interaction and freedom" (p.148). She discusses affectivity in

terms of power but an affirmative type of power, power that comes as *potenia* (ibid.). She also identifies different types of artistic activity, such as dance, music, and literature as the main forces of affirmation. These activities nourish the process of becoming that involves being open towards others, connecting and interacting with the outside, which is also an ethical project.

When talking to the U3A members, I often heard stories of various artistic activities pursued there. Not only were formal classes centred on artistic activities, but there were also many informal groups and clubs focused on poetry, painting, and music. People talked about the creativity, positive energy, love and joy that they experiences at the U3A. Many juxtaposed these experiences with their previous impressions, contesting that a new world had been opened to them; or as one of the researched persons said, "I started my life when I entered the U3A". Nancy, who talked about her passion for the idea of U3A, also stressed the value of art in her life. She specialised in making floral collages, although she also enjoyed painting. She emphasised that art gives life its meaning, and it simply helps one to be alive. She not only referred to her own experiences but also shared a story of one U3A member:

"Mr Brian, who is blind ... I have already said: 'Mr Brian, you are so great!'...he comes out, recites poems, he needs to learn everything by heart and his colleagues help him (...), they write down when he dictates new poems (...), and ...there were suicidal thoughts, because he is blind, what will he do..."

Artistic activity was among the most promoted offerings at the U3A; most of the leaflets and folders produced by the U3A about its mission, contain images of people involved in some sort of art. Moreover, annual bulletins always include either a sample of a painting/sketch or poems written by the U3A members. In many stories that were told at the U3A, people talked about the possibility of realising themselves, about reaching for their dreams

and being open to new experiences and people. These were stories of becoming.

Both organisations, the U3A and Umbrella, appeared to create spaces where people could act. Although some of these activities can be viewed differently, it needs to be kept in mind that, thanks to these organisations people who were excluded from public life, could re-enter some of its spaces. For many, participation in one of the projects appeared to be the last resort. A case described in Study 4 presents a 53-year old woman who joined the programme because she sought people's company. Olivia stressed a few times during the interview that she was very willing to join the programme because she wanted to "break free" from the monotony of her everyday life. She became interested in the project, and she wanted to learn new things and meet new people. As she said, the participants of the project were very friendly, there was a good atmosphere there, and she found many people to communicate with. Olivia found some consolation and support in the group, and she said it helped her a lot in dealing with everyday life. She wished that the project would never end.

The theme of rescue, a safe harbour, or new life was very common among participants and members of both organisations. In several cases, stories of survival were described, where the activity of either the U3A or Umbrella, virtually changed someone's life and/or saved them from depression. To many, the moment of joining these organisations meant taking a new direction in life and changing their orientation. Vitality and intensity became qualities that people embraced and could transfer to others. The "Life is beautiful" phrase was very common among people taking part in this research. The affirmative force of this statement should not be downplayed. It appears to represent the moment of connection with the outside world, which has both ethical and aesthetic dimensions. Braidotti (2006) discusses spaces of becoming that are conditioned upon blurring the boundaries between the self and the other, which produce new meanings and are built collectively. The phrase 'spaces of life' accentuates the situation in which people are told that their lives have ended, but they do not feel that way.

They want to live. Thanks to U3A and Umbrella such spaces seemed to be opened for many. How did they come about? It was not the organisations themselves but rather various affirmative forces and emotions that moved people in different directions and oriented them towards new objects that seem to lie at the heart of their very existence.

7.4. Women's spaces

As the discussion advanced in Study 2 indicates, to be an old woman in Poland is to become a grandmother and to occupy the private sphere. Yet, this relegation to the private sphere refers to women of all ages in Poland. The public discourse clearly defines what women should and should not do. As presented in section 2.2.2. of this dissertation, women are consistently defined through the family perspective and the role of a mother is presented as the only 'natural' role for a woman. To be heard, women need to struggle to enter the public space at first. However, this does not stop them from entering the public spaces entirely.

In particular, the community/grassroots level provides spaces for women's activism. Studies investigating the situation of working women in Poland, show that women are very active in protecting and fighting for their rights (see Hardy, 2009). Similarly, feminist awareness and the number of feminism movement participants are increasing. Women do enter the public sphere and try to become comfortable there. As Penn's (2005) research on the Solidarity movement demonstrates, women do more than that; it is just that their voices and stories are silenced. During my visits to the U3A and Umbrella, I met mostly women; in both organisations, female participants constituted the overwhelming majority. Women were running the U3A, and without women's engagement, Umbrella would not have been able to conduct its project.

During interviews at the U3A, the women were proud to be women. They could present a number of positive qualities that characterised women and

explained their activity at the U3A. Curiosity, vigour, imagination, management skills, and multi-tasking are just a few of these positive qualities. As many said, it was more natural for women to take part in such activities because they are used to doing many things at once, often without financial benefits. They became engaged in various projects and programmes because they felt good about them. One of the women I interviewed was involved in both organisations; she was a member of the U3A, and she also worked as a volunteer for Umbrella and had a role in organising the Old Age project described in Study 4. Patricia said that she became interested in both organisations because, upon her retirement, she wanted to do something else, to try out something new and, maybe, to achieve some dreams that she could not fulfil earlier. She joined the U3A, and she initiated the Sabbath club:

"just like witches … (…) we decided that it would be a club for women, who would do things that they could not do earlier during their occupational career, or earlier life, that they would realise themselves".

Patricia said that the main thing that triggered her participation was a very negative image of old women, who were seen as grandmothers who could not dress beautifully and who did not care about their physical appearance at all. She did not agree with this image and decided to work towards changing it. In light of this, the name Sabbath can be seen as a very bold and brave statement that both challenges and provokes. The historical figure of a witch is not something that women need to avoid; on the contrary, they can build on it, embracing their independence and interdependence with other women.

Patricia came up with the idea of organising a fashion show in which members of the club would present different outfits for women. She said that the most important thing to show was that

"It is not that a grandma walks with a crutch, and she is useless; it is exactly the opposite, she is useful, she is active, she is elegant, pretty, nice, well-dressed, educated, and so on. This was our aim"

The show was very successful. It was also fully covered by the media, which was Patricia's main intention. Local TV and press took part in the show, interviewed models and commented on the new image of old women. Patricia said that she was surprised by the positive effects of the event. It was at that time that she was contacted by Umbrella to join a new project. After the first project, others came, and she has been involved with the organisation for over three years. She made many contacts when organising fashion shows, and she used them when working for Umbrella. She has always been interested in fashion; she enjoyed beauty and wanted to be surrounded by beautiful people. Her plea to change the image of old women did not involve any beauty standard that women should adjust to; on the contrary, she wanted to promote different looks that are positive and beautiful.

During one of my visits to the Old Age programme site, I met a stylist whom Patricia had invited to talk about clothes and make-up to one of the communities where the programme was running. Women who took part in the meeting complained that it was difficult for them to choose outfits that would suit them and make them feel comfortable. They wanted help with dressing their changing bodies in the way would accompany these bodily changes.

The women whom I met dared to be women, each of them a different type of a woman. They enjoyed this period in their lives because they were free, and they felt that they could do everything. They did not have to work anymore, they did not have to care for a family anymore, and they felt that they could conquer the world. The spaces of the U3A and Umbrella became spaces for women's activism and of embracing their womanhood. These women wanted to enjoy all aspects of their lives. What they protested against was a

one-dimensional way of perceiving the lives of old women. For instance, they enjoyed being grandmothers. Julia mentioned that the moment when she became a grandmother was one of the most important in her life. Likewise, Patricia enjoyed being with her granddaughter, and she treasured moments when her granddaughter asked her for advice. However, being a grandmother was only one of many roles for these women; with their stories they show that they have interests, ambitions, friends and husbands whom they love and want to enjoy time with. Similarly, the family sphere was important in their lives, but so were other social arenas.

This description presented in sections 7.1.-7.4. may at first seem to be at odds with my earlier discussion of the results. While the former appears to be very positive, the letter seems to be overwhelmingly negative. However, these two pictures complement each other in stressing the complexity and intricacy revolving around issues related to inequalities. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, my *immigrant* status was disturbing at the health care centre in Sweden, but at the same time, it was very pleasant in the community in which my parents lived in Poland. Moreover, the same fact of living in a foreign country enabled me to access the category of *international staff* with which I began identifying myself. This became a category that I wanted to belong to; I felt like being in the right place and doing work that I loved. With the category of *international staff* I could forget about all the discomfort caused by the category of *immigrant*, and I could end my story there. However, this story would be incomplete. As much as I enjoyed the category of *international staff,* the category of *immigrant* did not disappear from my life, neither did emotions associated with it. Both categories remained *real* in my life. As these different forms of interpretation indicate, inequalities thrive in our lives because categories on which they are built lead in some instances to positive consequences, and in other instances to negative consequences. People make choices about how to respond to different categories depending on the situation in which they are and resourses they have.

8. Concluding remarks

I recall the day when I received a questionnaire from the statistical office in Sweden asking me to fill out some demographic data about myself. The cover letter started with the following: *You, as an immigrant*…I had just gotten home, and these were the words that welcomed me. I was outraged, and I thought to myself: how dare you call me that?! More than that, the following day, when I went to work, I asked a colleague (a native-born Swede) whether she thought I was an immigrant. She was rather perplexed by my question, but she answered. She said that no, she did not think of me this way because I came to Sweden to work at the university and to do my PhD, I was well educated, and so on. It took time before I realised what had happened, and what our reaction meant.

First of all, it made me realise that we were in it together. The 'it' of that situation concerned the socially constructed image of an immigrant. International staff is good, foreign investment is beneficial, a multicultural society is described as an ideal for the future, but immigrants are a burden, and a major social problem. These messages are conveyed in the media, political debates, and everyday conversations. This is an image that becomes natural for those who are called immigrants, those who call people by this name, and those who witness such situations. Each party plays a role in reproducing and/or changing the image.

To hear the word *immigrant* directed at you in such an environment is to receive a slap in the face. It hurts; it burns the body, which wants to get rid of it as quickly as possible. The word *immigrant*, in this context, works like any other example of hate speech, which "constitute the subject in a subordinate position" (Butler, 1997:18). One can respond to such a call in different ways; yet, denial, anger, and shame appear to be the most common. These responses aim at separating oneself from the name, and making a case for one's exceptional status. I liked my international staff label, and I did not want to be called an immigrant, when immigrants are perceived as a social problem to solve. When I received that questionnaire, I knew that I was an

immigrant, but I did not like the emotions that often accompanied that word in the public space. My reaction was against all of the bad feelings constructed around the category of immigrants. Universities do not employ immigrants, but they are receptive to international staff; similarly, international residents are not part of a social problem, but immigrants are. In the same vein, a multigenerational society is a model, but an ageing society is a problem. Old people cause a societal burden, but active seniors do not. Whereas longevity has long been a dream, old age seems to be a curse. One is constructed as positive and good, whereas the other one is constructed as negative and bad.

It took time to understand that by my reaction, I simply strengthened the hurtful aspect of the word *immigrant*. It took time to understand that this very name creates the possibility for a reaction. As Butler (1997) expresses it: "The name one is called both subordinates and enables, producing a scene of agency from ambivalence, a set of effects that exceed the animating intentions of the call" (p.163). When I stood in front of a group of students to say, for the first time, "I am an immigrant", I could feel how this name became an enabling position, encouraging to a discussion about inequality and categorisations. So far, I have seen very different reactions to this statement: there were moments of absolute silence, with students' eyes wandering in different directions as if I had said something that I should not have; and there were moments of laughter as if I had told a good joke. Yet, each situation provoked a discussion, with questioning the normalising discourses and stereotypical images. I look forward to a day when someone replies, "So what?" Filling in negative categories with a new, positive meaning is just the beginning. The hope is that this change would lead to depriving such categories of any meaning. The hope is that we make such categories *unreal* in our lives.

When I spoke, I talked to students whom I had known and who had known me. I could rely on the 'we' feeling, and this 'we' feeling made the whole situation much easier, and more productive. It helped to find the agency within discourses surrounding us, and it was enabling to find out what is hidden behind the word *immigrant*. This word is not only a word. Such words are supported by a number of intuitional, political, and social practices

that create spaces for various groups of people. The word *immigrant* becomes a denominator of one's appearance, lifestyle and occupation. Such words name not only people, but spaces as well, and they shape them all. Spaces created by such words include physical environments, organisational establishments, everyday interactions and emotions. When I said, "I am an immigrant" at the university, I entered a space foreign to this word and I spoke through a body that did not look like an immigrant, did not sound like an immigrant, and did not do things that immigrants do; it was the body of an international staff member. When different-appearing bodies start referring to themselves as immigrants, the social relevance of the word *immigrant* gradually loses its effect. When the word *immigrant* appears in different spaces, it becomes less dangerous and frightening. Different types of emotions begin to be associated with this word.

Ahmed (2004) discusses the emotionality of texts, meaning "how texts are 'moving', or how they generate effects" (p.13). Different societal texts that have been described in this dissertation indicate a number of negative emotions that 'got stuck' with old age. Just as I did not want to be called an immigrant, the people who took part in my research did not want to be called old. At times, this word was seen as offensive, inappropriate, disturbing, worrying, and scurrilous. As the examples presented in this dissertation show, this word triggered many anti-movements to combat it. However, "against-ness" (Ahmed, 2004:176) only reinforces the strength of the despised category. It is the loss of a category that "opens up possibilities of action that are not constrained by what we are against in the present" (Ahmed, 2004:176). This is how the 'we' can be achieved because

"We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unalike."

Arenor för (icke-) åldrande

En diskursiv studie av ojämlikheter vi lever med

I denna avhandling studeras de processer och praktiker som gör vissa sociala kategorier *verkliga* i människors liv. Begreppet *verklig* syftar här på den enskilda människan och hennes erfarenheter av den sociala tillvaron, det syftar på en rad praktiker och processer som gör sociala fenomen *verkliga*. Det *verkliga* utgör en social konstruktion, det *verkliga* uppstår genom diskurser, men det är också individuellt och visar hur livet är. Samtidigt innebär det *verkliga* mer än en individuell erfarenhet; det har även institutionella, politiska och sociala dimensioner. Det *verkliga* gör skillnad på flera olika nivåer och i många olika situationer. Det *verkliga* är känt och upplevs av flera aktörer. Det är således inte erfarenheten så som den upplevs av den enskilda människan som utgör fokus för denna avhandling, utan de sociala kategoriernas *verkliga* liv.

En sådan kategori består av äldre människor och åldrande. I motsats till andra kategorier handlar åldrandet om en kategori som många människor, oavsett kön, ras, religion, bostadsort etc., kommer att få erfarenhet av eller själv uppnå någon gång i livet. I dagens samhälle som har fokus på bilder av ungdomlighet är åldrandet en särskilt utsatt kategori. Åldrandet passar inte in i de ramar som skapats inom dagens livsmönster och via bilden av de perfekta människorna. Åldrande likställs med nedåtgång och elände, och det som uppfattas vara gammalt är per definition dåligt. Huvudfrågan i denna

avhandling rör arenor för åldrande. Åldrandets arenor är de domäner i samhället där människor förväntas och/eller tillåts att bli gamla.

I denna avhandling har jag fokus på de arenor för åldrande som skapas av välfärdsstaten. Varje välfärdsstat gynnar vissa grupper av människor och slag av beteenden. Samtidigt finns det grupper av människor som är mindre gynnade och som anses ha lägre status och mer underordnade positioner. Välfärdsstaten skapar således arenor för olika grupper av människor och tillskriver dem olika uppgifter. I studien anläggs i detta sammanhang ett perspektiv som utgår från välfärdskulturer där den kontextuella, känslobaserade och föränderliga karaktären hos välfärdsstater som genomgår förändringar lyfts fram. Ett sådant perspektiv pekar på hur människor erbjuds och tillägnar sig normer och principer som styr hur de ska leva sina liv.

Begreppet ojämlikhet utgör ett bärande element i denna avhandling. Tankar kring ojämlikhet brukar vara formulerad på följande vis: Det finns onda element (människor, institutioner etc.) som skadar de goda människorna, och detta gör att de goda människorna måste hjälpas till ett gott liv. Detta är en fin berättelse, men det är ändå en typ av berättelse som jag inte tänker återberätta här. I stället kommer jag i denna studie att visa hur vi själva skapar ojämlikheter och konsekvenserna av detta.

Övergripande syfte och metod

Det övergripande syftet med denna avhandling är att undersöka de processer och praktiker som gör vissa sociala kategorier *verkliga* i människors liv. Den centrala fråga som ställs i avhandlingen är:

- Vilka välfärdsarenor finns för åldrandet?

Begreppet åldrande är av diskursiv karaktär och får sin mening av de rådande systemen för sociala relationer och praktiker. Våra liv organiseras genom diskurser, samtidigt som individen inte är dömd till maktlöshet, utan har möjlighet att välja. För att kunna undersöka välfärdssamhällets arenor för åldrande har jag genomfört fyra studier som fokuserar på olika välfärdsstatsscenarier och som belyser olika sätt att förhålla sig till diskursbegreppet. Dessa studier baseras på olika typer av uppgifter, bl.a. mediematerial, organisationsbundna så väl som personliga berättelser samt sociala handlingar. I avhandlingen beskrivs således vad som sägs om åldrandet, vad som görs åt åldrandet och vad som berättas om åldrandet inom välfärdskontexten. Forskningsmaterialet består av ett antal olika betydelsebärande praktiker och system för sociala relationer vilka påverkar identiteten hos de människor som berörs och/eller omtalas.

Avhandlingens studier

Syftet med *Studie 1* har varit att undersöka attityderna gentemot äldre människor och åldrandet så som de kommer till uttryck i mediediskursen. Medierna kan ses som kraftfulla aktörer vilka påverkar våra tankar om världen. Men medierna existerar inte utanför vår sociala verklighet utan är en del av den, och den information som medierna ger oss utgör därför också en del av hur vi konstruerar vår sociala verklighet. I studien analyseras artiklar som varit införda i de fyra största polska opinionsbildande veckotidskrifterna för samhällsfrågor under perioden 2004–2007.

I denna studie anläggs ett kritiskt perspektiv där medierna ses spela en viktig roll när det gäller att reproducera ojämlika maktrelationer. Metoden att inrikta analysen mot *attitudinal positioning* som jag tillämpat i denna studie har gjort det möjligt för mig att undersöka på vilka sätt medierna väcker eller skapar vissa attityder gentemot äldre människor och åldrandet.

I denna studie identifieras olika domäner inom åldrandediskursen, där endast domänerna familj och marknad framträder som de enda som beskrivs i

enbart positiva termer. Jag har kallat dessa två processer för åldrandets familje- respektive marknadsanpassning. Äldre människor ställs inför två val: att anpassa livet till familjen eller att anpassa livet till marknaden. I båda scenarierna läggs ett tungt ansvar på äldre personer. Vid sidan av familje- och marknadsanpassningsprocesserna finns det även en individuationsprocess för åldrandet. Om människan inte klarar av att leva upp till dessa normer är det hennes eget fel, skulden läggs endast på henne själv. Detta är något som finns tydligt inskrivet i kapitalismens dominerande diskurs. Denna studie kan även ses som en indikation på att åldrandet inte har någon mening i sig: Det är åldrandet och … som konstruerar det *verkliga* när det gäller åldrandet.

Studie 2 fokuserar främst på de interagerande diskurserna om åldrande och kön i Polen. Denna studie baseras på en omläsning av mediediskursen om åldrande från Studie 1 och på observationer av socialpolitiska åtgärder som rör områdena åldrande och genus. Detta har möjliggjort en diskussion om två olika sociala praktiker som diskursen är uppbyggd av: språk och institutioner.

I denna studie anlägger jag ett intersektionellt perspektiv och fokuserar på att lyfta fram det dynamiska förhållandet mellan diskurserna om åldrande och genus samt produktionen av särskiljande kategorier som följer av detta. Om man för samman diskurserna om åldrande och genus framträder tre subjektspositioner, som jag diskuterar i denna studie: en farmor/mormor, en pensionär och en äldre förälder. Dessa positioner skapar en uppsättning regler och normer som äldre kvinnor och män bör rätta sig efter. De fungerar inte bara som en fingervisning om hur livet bör levas, utan även som begränsande moralsystem för social kontroll.

Resultatet från denna studie diskuteras i form av två diskursiva fenomen: *Aged gender* och *Gendered age*. Det framgår att äldre kvinnors liv skiljer sig från äldre mäns liv och att de har vissa mönster att följa. När det gäller äldre kvinnor verkar åldrandet stärka de könsroller som hänvisar kvinnorna till familjesfären. När det gäller äldre män är det i stället könsrollen som stärker åldrandet som i sin tur utestänger dem från arbetsmarknadssfären. Dessa fenomen är sammanflätade med bilder av den perfekta familjen, det perfekta

arbetet och de idéer om debatten kring det privata kontra det offentliga som tenderar att forma hur det sociala livet konstrueras i Polen.

I *Studie 3* analyserar jag berättelser om åldrandet som inhämtats från senioruniversitetet University of Third Age (U3A). Huvudsyftet med denna studie var att ta reda på vilken roll och position U3A har i förhållande till ålderism. I studien har jag försökt fastställa vilken roll U3A har när det gäller att tillhandahålla en miljö som uppmuntrar framväxten av den åldrande människan som subjekt. I studien ses de berättelser om åldrande som tillhandhållits av U3A och senioruniversitetets medlemmar som olika sätt att orientera sig bland de olika diskurserna och komma fram till val och beslut om de subjektspositioner som föredras.

Resultatet från studien pekar på de sociala villkor och processer för reproduktionen av ojämlikheter som lett till att de studerande vid U3A förklarar "jag lär mig/jag har roligt trots min ålder". Resultatet från studien tyder på att U3A snarare än att värja sig mot ålderistiska diskurser fullständigt avvisar åldrandet som begrepp. Enligt U3A är de egna medlemmarna exceptionella människor som inte har något som helst gemensamt med äldre människor utanför U3A. Inom U3A drar man en tydlig skiljelinje mellan de egna medlemmarna och övriga samhället. U3A:s medlemmar tenderar att med stolthet tala om sig själva som ett "vi" och att ställa detta "vi" i kontrast till människorna utanför organisationen som helt enkelt är gamla.

Studien visar att U3A aktivt reproducerar negativa bilder av åldrandet och intar rollen som en aktör som framgångsrikt kan motverka denna typ av *verkligt* hot. Denna institution kan således sägas ha gått rakt i den fälla som *verkligt* åldrande utgör, genom att åldrandet görs ännu mer *verkligt*. *D*enna fälla har också visat sig ha genusdimensioner. Majoriteten av U3A:s medlemmar är kvinnor och en stor del av den verksamhet som organiseras inom ramen för U3A vänder sig till kvinnor.

I *Studie 4* fokuserar jag på sammanhang relaterade till social välfärd. Huvudsyftet med denna studie var att inom ramen för välfärdsarbete undersöka processen för hur en äldreidentitet konstrueras. Jag har försökt

identifiera de praktiker inom socialt välfärdsarbete som innebär att vissa äldreidentiteter konstrueras och förstärks. Jag har valt att använda termen "äldreidentitet" för att understryka att detta begrepp är socialt konstruerat och även för att lyfta fram den instabilitet, flexibilitet och komplexitet som finns inbyggt i detta begrepp.

Det empiriska material som analyseras i denna artikel har ingått som en del av en studie av ett projekt inom en icke-statlig organisation i Polen. Metoden har inspirerats av nexusanalys, som innebär att man analyserar sociala handlingar ur ett historiskt och etnografiskt perspektiv. En sådan analysmetod gör det möjligt att se sociala handlingar som något som konstrueras i interaktionen mellan diskurser, arenor och människor.

Resultaten från denna studie visar på en komplex process där välfärdsarbetare skapar en identitet för idealklienter. Studien visar att rutinerna inom välfärdspraktiker ofta är inriktade på föreställningar om klienternas identitet och har mycket lite med verkliga människor att göra. Under analysens gång kunde jag identifiera följande fyra faktorer som gör åldrandet *verkligt*, inte bara för organisationen, utan även för de berörda människorna: expertis, lösningar, att passa in, samt följsamhet. Var och en av dessa faktorer är förknippade med ett visst syfte, och var och en av dem bygger på olika aspekter av den sociala verkligheten. I denna studie betonas ett antal olika "föreställningar om åldrandet" som tas till för att skapa det *verkliga* åldrandet. Det verkliga hos dessa föreställningar vävs samman med andra föreställningar som har att göra med begreppen kunskap, god välfärdspraxis, samt gemenskap. De människor som blev tillfrågade om att delta i projektet var otvetydigt gamla och erbjöds en lösning på sina *verkliga* åldersproblem.

Slutsatser

De viktigaste resultaten från denna forskning tyder på att det saknas arenor för åldrande i en välfärdskontext. Människor förväntas att inte bli gamla.

Åldrandet är ett missförstått fenomen. I takt med att arenorna för människor "i en viss ålder" blir allt fler förefaller arenorna för åldrandet bli färre. För att vidareutveckla dessa processer åberopas därför arenor för icke-åldrande. Arenor för icke-åldrande identifierar olika samhällsdomäner och visar vad som krävs för att inte bli gammal. Arenorna för icke-åldrande gör att idén om åldrandet avvisas som något hemskt och i många fall omoraliskt.

Resultaten av denna avhandling diskuteras även i förhållande till de processer och praktiker som (re)producerar ojämlikheter. Den komplexitet och multiperspektivitet som krävs för att förstå sådana fenomen har beaktats. I studien föreslås att ett vi-perspektiv anläggs inom forskning om sociala ojämlikheter: ett "vi" som tänker och känner på samma gång.

Denna avhandling är skriven utifrån ett kunskapsperspektiv, där kunskap alltid är ett sammansatt, föränderligt, obestämt och ofullbordat fenomen. Resultaten diskuteras därför i termer av att viss kunskap presenteras om det studerade fenomenet, men att kunskaperna om detta fenomen inte är uttömda. I avhandlingens avslutande avsnitt diskuteras nya sätt att tolka och beskriva det resultat som presenteras i de fyra delstudierna. Avsikten är inte att få fram bättre och mer korrekt resultat, utan det är att visa på andra aspekter på resultaten. I denna diskussion hänvisas till andra tids- och rumslokaliseringar och hur dessa påverkar produktionen av kunskap.

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Paper I

"Classic ageism" or "brutal economy"? Old age and older people in the Polish media

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ABSTRACT

This article explores media discourse of ageing, taking the example of Poland and relating it to a broader discussion of ageing policy. The discourse in news magazines appears both to reflect and create attitudes towards older people, which in turn has implications for ageing policy. To reveal the nature of these attitudes, we use a method of attitudinal positioning. The study analyzes articles that appeared in the four largest Polish weekly opinion news magazines, in the 2004–2007 period. Various domains in the discourse of ageing are identified, yet only the family and market domains seem to be described in exclusively positive terms: the authors discuss the implications of this for ageing policy.

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Introduction

This article focuses on 'the context' of building ageing policy in Poland. Poland currently lacks a coherent and organized ageing policy; indeed, many scholars stress that it has never had one (Synak, 2003). Old age in Poland is associated with social exclusion, marginalization and overall socio-economic degradation (Halik, 2002; Trafiałek, 2003). An increasing body of research examines the poor conditions of older people in Poland and highlights the problems associated with ageing in Poland (Synak, 2003). However, there are still few studies that seek an understanding of the societal reasons for that situation; the present article attempts to fill some of this gap.

To examine the conditions under which Polish ageing policy is formulated, we take account of attitudes towards older people and ageing. Societal attitudes towards ageing tend to influence the social policy-making process becoming part of the 'assumptive worlds' that policy makers and service providers carry over into their occupational duties (Wilson,

1991). On the other hand, social policy and more specifically, ageing policy, may shape and substantially contribute to changing public opinion (Estes, Phillipson, & Biggs, 2003). Therefore, it becomes plausible to talk about a discourse of ageing which contributes to and is influenced by changes in social policy towards ageing. Discourse is a highly practical, social and cultural phenomenon (van Dijk, 1997), the study of which entails inquiry into 'language-in-action' in a given context (Blommaert, 2005). Discourse is an engine of social change; it fuels and is, simultaneously, influenced by it (Fairclough, 1992). Considering the situation of Polish ageing policy a study of discourse of ageing may offer a fresh insight into directions and perspectives for its development.

The biggest arena in which societal attitudes find their expression is doubtless the media. The study of media representation of older people has a long tradition dating back to the early 1970s (Atchley, 1997). Discourse analysis is relatively new in this area, however, though its popularity has been growing (Hamilton, 2006) since it has been found to be very productively applied in research on ageing. Discourse analysis goes beyond merely observing visible facts; it seeks to uncover hidden and less 'obvious' messages (Harwood & Giles, 1992). For example, the *perfect grandparents* stereotype is attributed a positive value by content and factor analyses of

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media representations of older people (Lee, Carpenter, & Meyers, 2007; Miller, Leyell, & Mazachek, 2004); while discourse analysis accentuates its negative and stereotypical aspects (Williams, Ylänne, & Wadleigh, 2007). It is now considered inevitable that discourse analysis will be used in highlighting how the lives of older people and their identities are constructed (Coupland, 2002; Coupland, 2007; Hamilton, 2006; Hvas & Gannik, 2008a,b; Lina, Hummertb, & Harwoodc, 2005; Nikander, 2000; Paoletti, 2004; Paulson & Willig, 2008) and in exposing the ideologies that contribute to ageist attitudes in societies (Coupland, 2003). Although there is growing interest in discourse analysis in studies of ageing, such research still needs to pay greater attention to the "socio-political dimension" of ageing (Coupland, 2004); media discourse on ageing and its relevance to social policy issues remains an underexplored research area.

The present study explores the media discourse on ageing in Polish weekly opinion news magazines, relating it to a broader discussion of ageing policy. We intend to expose prevailing attitudes towards ageing and older people and critically examine them with reference to ageism, and to the social spaces assigned to older people.

Older people in Poland

Poland is experiencing rapid changes in the social policy sphere, changes originating, on the one hand, from the remnants of the communist era, and on the other, from the influence excreted by global actors and EU membership. Consequently, the Polish social system is a combined familial and residual welfare state that is unique in comparison with other Central and Eastern European countries (Steinhilber, 2006). In general, the conditions of older people in Poland are far from good, particularly in economic terms. Older people became 'lost' in the transition from socialism to capitalism. In fact, their already poor situation deteriorated due to new policies implemented in the 1990s (Zajicek, Calasanti, & Zajicek, 2007).

Although the pension system has been the major concern of Polish social policy in recent years; the conditions of contemporary pensioners are still not good. Under the socialist regime, the pension scheme was based on a 'pay-as-you-go' model (Chlon, Góra, & Rutkowski, 1999. Moreover, starting in the early 1980s, a special scheme for some vocational groups was introduced which resulted in a sudden decrease in retirement age and difficulties in sustaining financial stability (Chlon, Góra, & Rutkowski, 1999). Pension Reform in 1999 introduced a "three-pillar" pension scheme system comprising the state system (the first pillar), individual accounts (the second pillar) and private or occupational accounts (the third pillar). The new system did not apply to those over age of 50[1] and to certain occupational groups such as police, military personnel and farmers, to whom pension are paid by the state according to the old system.

Preoccupation with the pension system and its reform led to the neglect of social security issues concerning older people in Poland (Orenstein & Haas, 2002) and only recently

has the need to set clear policy directives for old age[2] was acknowledged. Accordingly, ageing policy in Poland should focus on integrating older people into society and family, community and non-governmental organizations are cited as the prime actors responsible for the well-being of older people. Services available to older people are provided either via the health care system in response to ill health, or via the social care system in response to problems such as poverty, homelessness, and loneliness. People over age 75 are entitled to a flat-rate care allowance terminated by legislation.

Data

The primary data, used here, comprise articles appearing in four opinion weekly news magazines in Poland, over the four years, from 2004 to 2007.[3] *Newsweek Polska*, *Wprost*, *Polityka* and *Przegląd* are leading Polish opinion-weeklies with differing ideological orientations. *Przegląd*, published since 1990, has been overtly affiliated with left-wing parties were from the very beginning. *Polityka*, established in 1957, has a long tradition of socio-liberal thought and an economically influenced way of reasoning. It is currently the largest circulation opinion weekly in Poland. *Wprost* was launched in 1982 and has always been associated with the more conservative and traditional values of Polish society. *Newsweek Polska* is a Polish branch of the American news magazine *Newsweek*.

We identified 121 relevant articles. Instead of searching for key-words, we individually examined each issue to identify and select articles dealing, mainly, with one or several of the following topics: ageing, the ageing of societies and older people. The search was done on-line using the web-based archives of each magazine. The articles found included both news articles and features such as essays. The selected news articles dealt exclusively with issues of demographics and the pension system in Poland, and these are the shortest articles. Table 1 presents the proportion of news to feature articles and indicates the number of selected articles versus the total number of articles in each magazine.

Method and steps of analysis

In this paper, we use methodology developed in appraisal theory that among other matters,[4] elaborates on the study of attitudes. Appraisal theory is concerned with the interpersonal function of discourse (Martin & White, 2005), which refers to the process of establishing one's own identity and the identity of others via discourse.

Attitude, according to appraisal theory, has three essential elements, or "regions of feeling" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 35): affect, judgment and appreciation. *Affect* refers to emotions and feelings with both positive and negative overtones and draws on

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[1] As of the day the reform was introduced.

[2] The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in Poland published, in 2005, a document entitled "Strategy of Social Policy 2007–2013", which outlined social policy on old age for the first time.
[3] Those four years cover a period before, during and after the governmental publication mentioned above.
[4] The appraisal theory contains as well a study of engagement (is concerned with whether or not alternative voices to one's own are involved) and graduation (reveals the degree of passion about certain stances(White, 2006).

Table 1
Number of articles selected for study versus the total number of issues and articles in the four Polish opinion weekly news magazines over the four-year period, 2004–2007.

News magazine	No. of selected articles	An average number of articles per issue [a]	Total number of issues	Total number of articles
Newsweek Polska	20 (F[b]-19, N[c]-1)	41–53	205	8405–10865
Polityka	49 (F-30, N-19)	75–94	205	15375–19270
Przegląd	30 (F-29, N-1)	34–40	206	7004–8240
Wprost	22 (F-20, N-2)	44–49	205	9020–10045

[a] Based on four randomly selected issues (one from each year).
[b] F-feature article.
[c] N-news article.

emotional responses and dispositions. *Judgment* refers to attitudes towards behaviour seen from the perspective of a given norm system and encompasses judgements of social sanction; and social esteem. Social esteem addresses issues related to: 'normality' (how special and usual something is), capacity (how capable someone is) and tenacity (levels of dependency). Social sanction deals with ethical and moral issues involving judgments of veracity and propriety; it is based on the concepts of truth and ethics. *Appreciation* focuses on the aesthetic side of evaluation and draws attention to how various things, people and phenomena are valued (White, 2002).

This methodological approach is aligned with a tradition of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The origins of CDA are, on the one hand, traced back to early 1970s and development of critical linguistics (Blommaert, 2005); on the other, CDA owes its 'critical' dimension to the Frankfurt School and the tradition of critical theory of society (Titscher et al., 2002). The core of CDA is the concept of power and ideology and their embodiment in discourse is used to explain societal relations (Fairclough, 1994; Wodak, 1996). Ideologies convey rules concerning membership, activities, values, position and resources that are attributed to various social groups (van Dijk, 2005). They are built upon prevailing assertions, beliefs and norms commonly shared and thus, hardly questioned; their status reaches the point of 'naturalness' (Fairclough, 1994; Simpson, 1993). Therefore, the process of demystification and denaturalization of those presumptions is one of the prime tasks of CDA. Critical discourse analysts are required to reveal ways in which discourses contribute to (re) producing dominance relations and reinforcing privileges of the elite groups that have an exclusive access to power (van Dijk, 1993). Accordingly, in our study, we examine instances of ageism in the analyzed articles. Ageism, broadly understood as age discrimination, and anti-ageing attitudes, includes practices that affect mainly older people in a harmful way (Palmore, 1999). It comprises a variety of negative attitudes towards older people, attitudes that view the ageing process as something that renders people unattractive, unintelligent, asexual, unemployable and mentally incompetent (Atchley, 1997). We also attempt to identify the group of people who has actual power to define and describe older people and their lives.

The analysis had three main steps. First, articles from each magazine were analyzed in terms of their themes and main messages. Reading these articles repeatedly, we gradually started discovering various frequently recurring topics referring to a range of issues related to ageing and older people. This let us group the article into 11 thematic categories that we then classified into three "thematic clusters" (Karim,

1997): 1) ageing and older people in society; 2) older people in the family; and 3) older people in/on the market (see Fig. 1). We found that each of these three thematic clusters used its own characteristic term in referring to older people: 1) older person/people, the elderly, the old; 2) grandparents; and 3) pensioners. Notably, despite the divergent ideological orientations of all four magazines, their articles on ageing all evoked similar attitudes; therefore, the findings section is not organized according to the sources of the articles.

Second, we searched for linguistic forms conveying information about affect, judgement and appreciation (Martin & White, 2005). In the course of analysis, each of the 11 themes was approached separately. A distinction between attitudinal inscription and attitudinal tokens (White, 2006) was found to be vital at this point; the former way of expressing attitudes refers to explicit linguistic forms that convey information about attitudes, while the latter embraces implicit messages that evoke and/or provoke certain attitudes. Last, we focused on examining the ideological assumptions that underlined various attitudinal positions expressed in the articles.

Findings

Older people in the family

Older people are described, in the analyzed articles, as important to the family due to their role as grandparents. They are portrayed as respected and appreciated for their involvement and devotion to bringing up grandchildren. Their image is compatible with the earlier-mentioned *Perfect Grandparent* stereotype. The emerging picture is achieved, mainly, by means of appreciation; and the influence of grandparents is described as " huge, unprecedented" (Newsweek, 2005, 3a); "important" (Polityka, 2004, 32). In this stream, a special tribute is paid to grandmothers; and expressions of positive affect evoke feelings of security, well-being and comfort: "... (grandma) protects J. from all the evils; she pleases her, coddles her and boosts her confidence" (Newsweek, 2005, 3b). Now, it is important to explain one peculiarity of the Polish language. The Polish word 'babcia' corresponds to the English word 'grandma' if not 'granny'. *Babcia* lacks the formality and dignity that are conveyed by the word '*grandmother*'. *Babcia* is informal, soft, belongs to the family and lives for its sake. *Babcia* is sympathetic, and amiable. In the family sphere, the word 'grandma' evokes positive emotions; though its application in other domains of people's lives can express negative judgments. We found three descriptions of criminal activity

Ageing and older people in the society	Older people in the family	Older people in/on the market

• Ageing society
• Longevity
• Cultural activities
• Everyday experience of ageing
  • Old age and older people
  • Post-war babyboomers
• Pension system
	• Grandparents
	  • 'conventional'
	  • 'unconventional'
	• Parenting in later life
	• Care
		• Pensioners as a consumer group
		• Non-pensioners
		• Pensioners of special protection

Fig. 1. Thematic clusters and themes identified in discourse on ageing in the studied news magazines.

perpetrated by older women where this can be seen: in reports of arson (Polityka, 2004, 13), robbery of other women (Newsweek, 2005, 3c) and fraud (Newsweek, 2005, 34)—the women who committed those crimes are referred to as *grandmas.* The use of the word 'grandma' in those cases favours the social role system over moral and legal norms in judging the acts of those women. It is not the act of law-breaking per se that draws censure, but that perpetrators were not upholding the socially approved role for women of that age.

There is another instance, in the analyzed articles, where the word 'a grandparent' serves as a judgemental expression referring to the social sanction and social esteem system. The parental role of people who decide to have children in later life is delegitimized by recalling a role considered appropriate for that age group (Friese, Becker, & Nachtigall, 2008). Parenting in later life is portrayed as something undertaken by people who should rightly be grandparents; and the children of those people are called "grandchildren" (*Newsweek*, 2006, 38). Parenting in later life meets considerable opposition? "The egoism of a potential mother, which is excused by a desire to have a child is limitless" (Wprost, 2005, no 5); "It is difficult to refuse a woman the right to motherhood....And is it possible to take normal childhood away from a child?"(Wprost, 2005, no 5), and "It is possible to become a parent in later life. But the question is, why?" (Newsweek, 2006, 38). These judgmental statements clearly condemn such choices and a decision to have a child later in life is seen as irrational and not forward-looking; moreover, they are fuelled by drawing attention to the yet unborn child who may be harmed. Moreover, they are enhanced by a critique of a career- and money-oriented lifestyle that prevents people from parenting in young age; "It is very dangerous to think that it is possible to deceive passing time and catch up with everything that before there was no time for" (Wprost, 2005, no 5). How late is too late? Reference to medical reports on humans' fertility aims at establishing an age limit for having a child. Although there are stories of women who decided to have children through in-vitro method in their sixties (Wprost, 2005, no 5), it is implicitly stated that to have a baby a women should not be older than 38 (Wprost, 2005, no 5) if not 35 (Newsweek, 2006, no 38).

According to the analyzed material, older people can be parents of adult children, only but even so, the relationship between older parents and adult children is portrayed as rather difficult. Firstly, older persons are described as deteriorating through expressions of affect that evoke, on the one hand, empathy and pity, and on the other, disgust and fear; e.g. "Let's try to sympathize with the way of thinking of an elder person who is losing everything. She[5] used to work; now she cannot afford anything. She used to run, and now she stumbles as she goes shopping. She used to read; now she suffers from glaucoma. She used to be a gourmet, and now her dentures are clattering." (Newsweek, 2007, 11). Second, older people are discussed in terms of being burdens, which must be taken care of by their adult children. "Contemporary 40-years olds who have barely caught their breath after raising children face an even more demanding challenge (…). Parents. (…) So again, diapers, sleepless nights and devotion. Or remorse due to sending parents to the old age home" (Polityka, 2006, 36). Not only, is ageing compared to second childhood (Hockey & James, 1995), but the responsibility of adult children is clearly expressed. Intergenerational dependence and filial piety are discussed in terms of normal, socially expected behaviour, and alternatives to family care are deprecated.

Older people in/on the market

Older people, seen from the market perspective, are pensioners and people of post-productive age; two related themes aim to evoke clear attitudes towards pensioners. First, pensioners, who are expected to be rich, are respected for their contribution to the economy. "Pensioners are one of the most important consumer groups and the most important group of voters" (Wprost, 2004, 38), and "They are not only the biggest and steadily growing consumer group but the richest as well."(Wprost, 2006, 44). Expressions of appreciation emphasize pensioners as a stable and secure source of money "…a wealthy pensioner is a guarantee of good business" (Newsweek, 2007, 46). Second, similar appreciation is directed towards people of post-productive age who continue to work. "People who are formally classed as old are proving their usefulness in the society by being active in labour."(Wprost, 2005, 46). There is also a clear reference to

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[5] Personal pronoun 'she' is implied by the word 'person' that in Polish is female.

the social esteem system that, in this case, presupposes a division between people who contribute to the economy and those who do not, only the former category is being positively valued. One should note the marketization process by people and institutions are becoming commodified (Fairclough, 1993, 1995). Older people are referred to as 'people of post-productive age' in these instances. The social value of older people becomes reduced to pure utility, if seen from an economic perspective. "And they can rescue rich countries from bankruptcy. Simply, they will be working almost to the last days of their lives, they will increase the demand for services and goods and because of that they will not be dependent on others" (Wprost, 2005, 46). Older people are portrayed as heroes who by means of their work and consumption patterns contribute to economic growth. At the same time, lack of work and of money to spend leads to negative attitudes, due to the anticipated economic costs of the pension system. This position results in the conditional approval of people of post-productive age who decline their right to a pension. They are admired and respected as non-pensioners who do not burden society with high costs. Pensioners as such are a source of worry and concern due to the unbearable burden they create for the rest of society.

The pension system itself becomes an object of particular concern, as well. A great sense of harm and injustice is evoked by the following judgemental statements: "The Polish pension system does not provide a good life for citizens after the end of their occupational activity."(Przegląd, 2005, 25) and "Today, more and more people think that they were victims of the biggest financial fraud in the history of Poland."(Wprost, 2007, 35). The system appears to be dysfunctional, as it cannot give security to citizens of Poland. There is a clear indication that people have been deceived, and that the current policy is damaging and harming everyone. Strong judgments using the word 'fraud' are built on the social sanction system and emphasize the lawless behaviour of the state. Meanwhile, the word 'victim' stresses the innocence and vulnerability of the people, who are, in this way, clearly distinguished from the state and deserve sympathy. This picture is enhanced by several references to the current pension system as a "catastrophe" (Przegląd, 2007, 2) and a "disaster" (Wprost, 2007, 11), which accentuates the helplessness and exposure of people to great danger. This may contradict the earlier statement accusing pensioners of possibly, though not necessarily, being a burden to society. It is apparent that the main category of people here is that of 'citizens'; moreover there is no reference to the age of the citizens people. The all-inclusive notion of 'citizen'[6] blurs age differences and unites all the people against the state.

Those who take early retirement seem to provoke especially negative attitudes. Early retirement is depicted as another challenge that hinders the economy being described as "a dangerous wave" (Polityka, 2006, 27) that threatens society. People who retire before age 60–65 are accused of wasting resources and putting pressure on society. "The temptation to retire earlier, and in this way to burden others

with costs, is huge." (Polityka, 2005, 34) and "The fact, that we have so many young and energetic pensioners is naturally an unfavourable situation that calls for a change" (Przegląd, 2007, 25). The perceived abnormality of this situation also refers to the image of the pensioner as someone who is incapable of doing anything for him/herself, who remains inactive and lacks life energy. Overtly judgmental statements condemn not only people who decide on early retirement but the system as well, which elsewhere is referred to as childish (Polityka, 2006, 25). "Extraordinary pension entitlements … are the result of one of the original sins of the Balcerowicz plan." (Przegląd, 2005, 31)—a clear reference to the social sanction system in describing a situation that is unwanted and widely denounced.

Ageing and older people in society

The ageing of society is one theme that evokes very negative attitudes, arousing fear, despair and worry. The ageing of society is portrayed as happening at: "an appalling" (Polityka, 2004, 26) and "dramatic pace" (Newsweek, 2006, 10), and overall, is discussed in terms of "demographic recession", "demographical shortages" and "demographical problems" (Wprost, 2005, 48). These statements that convey information about affect not only paint a picture of ageing as something dangerous and terrifying; they also refer to economy problems such as recession and shortages that enhance the negative emotions. The ageing of society is described in terms of a natural disaster that is unpredictable, perilous, and unstoppable: "We are threatened by a malaise. The avalanche of old age is coming" (Polityka, 2006, 4). That metaphor reinforces the extremely negative perception of the ageing process, seeing it as akin to a natural disaster, that always brings destruction and threatens people's lives. Two other concepts are in line with this discourse of 'apocalyptic demography' (Vincent, 1996): "gerontocracy" (Wprost, 2004, 38) and "geronto-capitalism" (Wprost, 2007, 2). "And the new world in which the major economic conflict will not divide the workers and the enterprise owners any more, not even the poor and the rich, but it will divide the old and the young. The old will probably win. Geronoto-capitalism is coming" (Wprost, 2007, 2). This metaphor of social relations as a conflict, in which there is only one winner, sustains the division between two age-groups; older people's victory entails young people's defeat. Fear of old age, geronotophobia (Coupland, 2004), gains another dimension quite apart from physical fear, it becomes a socio-political anxiety caused by the 'imagined' (Hepworth, 2004) old age and older people's alleged dreams of conquering the world.

While an ageing society arouses fear, processes that are intrinsic to it, namely, life and longevity, are portrayed as highly desirable. Nevertheless, that desire belongs to the discourse of an anti-ageing ideology (Vincent, 2007); it rests on the construction of old age and ageing as processes of deterioration. Longevity, as a condition of long-lasting youth not of old age, is dreamt about. "We all want to live longer but everyone is afraid of getting older" (Polityka, 2006, 38). An elixir of youth, unique diet, and appropriate set of physical exercises—the main themes that relate to longevity are sought in hopes of "preventing" old age, postponing it, as their ultimate aim is: long-lasting youth (Polityka, 2006, 38),

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[6] Obviously, the term 'citizen' is not all-inclusive when looking from a broader perspective. However, due to the limited scope of this paper, it is considered here as being one.

"young forever" (Wprost, 2005, 52/53). Why does old age need to be prevented? The analyzed articles depict old age and the lives as miserable and harrowing. "The body stops responding, the brain rebels, society disdains one, the family does not remember, the smiling world is strange, the sense of security is limited to the level of one's own apartment and one's own body. That is the reality of old age" (Newsweek, 2007, 11). The everyday experience of older people is enmeshed in never-ending struggles and newly emerging problems. "They still help their children, though their smallish pensions make them scrimp and save" (Polityka, 2007, 7), they are "pushed into the margins of social life" (Przegląd, 2005, 21)—images evoke pity and compassion about older people's lives. As well, behaviour that is natural to human beings is presented as unusual and startling. The sexual life of older people is referred to as "geriatric eroticism" (Wprost, 2004, 6), which undermines the natural beauty of the sexual act. Their knowledge of HIV/AIDS is "positively surprising" (Przegląd, 2007, 37).

Likewise, performance of any cultural activity is not perceived as a 'natural' attribute of older people. Older people who do pursue such activities prompt "surprise" (Wprost, 2006, 41), as a result, old age is said to gain a new quality since it "may look different today" (Polityka, 2006, 47). On the one hand, older people as creators and participants in cultural life evoke positive feelings, but on the other hand, these feelings seem to be based on a supposition that, after a certain age, people are not usually involved in any artistic or educational endeavours. "Mass culture has got rid of many corsets that used to constrain it. It has made more room for fun, youthful gestures that suit mature, if not to say 'old' people (Newsweek, 2006, 10)—this is another quotation where a double meaning may be discerned. First, mass culture is appreciated due to its struggle against unfavourable conditions that have also negatively affected older people. Yet, the transformation that has occurred implies youthful behaviour for all, which in turn reinforces the division: young-good versus old-bad. Celebrities who are active in their mass culture profession are also admired for their level of activity, which is perceived as keeping them young. It is said that Woody Allen "is younger than himself" (Przegląd, 2004, 19), while Jerry Lee Lewis performs "with the verve of a young man"(Polityka, 2006, 43)—these words of appreciation belong to the discourse of 'age tagging' (Coupland, 2004) which, plainly, defines what is right for each age group; old age is being seen as the opposite of creative and innovative youth.

This logic of the precise old-bad versus young-good distinction underlies the picture of the post-war baby-boomers generation that is now reaching age 60. That group of older people is referred to as "bursting with energy..." (Newsweek, 2005, 42) and its members are proving that "old age is a very creative period" (Newsweek, 2006, 4). However, this positive appreciation appears dubious in light of other characteristics attributed to the baby-boomers generation; baby-boomers are called "young man with grey hair" (Newsweek, 2006, 10), "young-old" (Wprost, 2005, 46) and "anti-grandmas" (Wprost, 2006, 48). While the first two quotations exemplify appreciation built on the previously discussed distinction, the third is a judgemental statement. 'Anti-grandma' suggests the rejection of a role given by

society; it refers to someone who should be a grandma but is, instead, engaged in activities that contradict the world of the grandma. At this juncture, the argument about the 'roleless roles' of baby-boomers (Hanks, 2001) needs to be reconsidered. Although the window of possibility seems open to them, they are still subject to very strict moral scrutiny based on the established social esteem systems.

Critical reflection upon the main findings

This following section critically reflects on the main findings of study, discussing the societal consequences of the discourse presented in the preceding section. Table 2 offers an overview of the main findings and summarizes the key attitudinal positions found in the analyzed articles.

According to Polish media discourse, two main forces—moreover portrayed as mutually contradictory—appear to shape the life of older people: the family and the market. No other domain seems available. Yet, these two roles have certain limitations. As long as one is a grandparent and a rich pensioner, affirmative attitudes are overtly expressed. Stepping outside these two categories, however, entails a sudden and strict change in attitudes. Older people who want to become parents later in life are often disregarded, and parents of adult children may be perceived as a burden on the latter. Likewise, a pensioner without money to spend is accused of wasting resources; if an older person does not have money, only work can restore social acceptance. Furthermore, belonging to one domain automatically deprives a person of rights to participate in the other. Polish media discourse on ageing is largely built on stereotypes of social roles; it says nothing about the diversity and complexity of life. Therefore, grandparents are portrayed as living for the sake of their grandchildren; from start to finish, their lives are entirely devoted to their grandchildren—no other activities and relationships are mentioned. Likewise, in the market sphere, there are older people who are trapped by having work or rich pensioners who are completely captivated by spending money. Whole lives are portrayed in such way that suggests that those living them do nothing apart from fulfilling the requirements of a given role. Consequently, roles and activities that do not fit the above picture meet strong opposition, for example, parenting in later life and earlier retirement.

The ageing of society and old age are presented in negative terms in the analyzed data. A discourse of 'apocalyptic demography' (Vincent, 1996) seems to be compatible with an understanding of old age as a period of decline and ultimate loss which leads to the welfarization of old age (Thompson, 2005). This term implies a process of rapid decline in the social position of a person and her/his status due to age. In effect, old age becomes a problem as older people cannot manage on their own. In the Polish context, however, this welfarization process takes on an additional dimension the familization of old age. The ageing process occurs in the family, not in society. The life of older people in Poland is being 'domesticated' (Trafiałek, 2003). Most of the activities identified as natural to old age take place in the family. People grow older and become grandparents or their condition worsens and hence they need care which is provided by the family. Older people who are involved in

Table 2
Attitudinal positioning of older people and old age with respect to main themes.

Themes		Attitude		
		Affect	Judgement	Appreciation
Older people in the family	Grandparents	Grandparents are caring, attentive and amiable.	Grandparents are guardians of tradition and morality.	Their great influence and importance to grandchildren is stressed.
	Parenting in later life		This behaviour is condemned as being egoistical, illogical and against nature.	
	Care	Older people are frail and vulnerable. Care of older people is compared to caring for children.	It is intrinsic to the values of society that children should take care of their older parents.	
Older people in/on the market	Pensioners as a consumer group	Are portrayed as rescuers of states are on the verge of bankruptcy.	Are portrayed as rescuers of states on the verge of bankruptcy.	Their importance and wealth is emphasized.
	Non-pensioners	Are portrayed as rescuers of states on the verge of bankruptcy.	Their usefulness is accentuated.	Their usefulness is accentuated.
	Pensioners in need of special protection		Early retirement is seen as a waste of resources. Tensions between various occupational groups are reinforced.	
Ageing and older people in the society	Ageing society	Causes fear and alarm.	Threatens the social order.	
	Cultural activities		Old age is unproductive. Youth is productive.	Being creative keeps one young.
	Everyday life	Old age evokes fear, it results in suffering, disability and despair		
	Longevity	A common object of desire		
	Pension system	Pensioners are victims.	The state is portrayed as an enemy that deceives its citizens.	

activities other than these two are regarded to act against their age.

Whose perspective?

It is apparent that older people are not the authors of the discourse presented here. It is not a discourse about 'us' but about 'them'. Who is represented by 'us' remains unresolved, though examining each thematic cluster should clarify this. "Us' does not generally comprise grandchildren, because both grandparents and grandchildren are referred to as 'they'. The theme of care seems to provide the first clue: "Contemporary 40-year-olds ...-face an even more denuding challenge-parents" (Polityka, 2006, 36) or "our children will take care of us as well as we are taking care of our parents" (Newsweek, 2007,11). In the family context, then, the first person is that of adult children. The market domain, on the other hand, identifies people who involved in occupational activity as 'us'. This is particularly evident in the discussion of early retirement. The working part of society is endangered by the high cost and anticipated burden of this phenomenon. Similarly, themes in the 'society' cluster allude to the working population and to groups in power as 'us'. Old age is presented from the perspective of neither older people nor young people; rather, it is middle-aged people who define the conditions of and set limits on old age and older people. That is, surprisingly, manifested when touching on: longevity and the pension system—surprisingly, because in both cases it is about 'us', 'our' problems and what 'we' want. Take, for example, the statement "We all want to live longer" (Polityka, 2006, 38). This first person statement with 'we' as the subject

at first appears to manifest solidarity and unity with older people; a second glance, however, reveals that this is not the case. Longevity is a dream for people who are not yet old; and the discussion—in the analyzed articles—concerns various methods to preserve current vitality and activity. Debates about a pension system have an obvious enemy, which is the state, and the main category of people here is 'the citizen'. Nevertheless, the pieces of advice that follow a list of the state's failures are addressed to people who still work. All pensioners are victims, yet 'we' are those who are working and looking for a good way to save money for our retirement years.

Discussion

This paper has examined the context of ageing policy in Poland. The media discourse analyzed here displays discursive patterns linked to stereotypical and discriminatory attitudes towards older people and ageing; ageism appears to be a distinctive feature of welfare culture regarding older people. The study demonstrates that two main processes define the role and position of older people in the Polish society, namely, marketization and familization. According to the former, old age must be useful, must contribute, and must provide for itself. Old age is not something natural that in itself does not require any justification. Old age must be allowed to exist and that permission is granted because of financial contribution resulting either from the wealth of a given person (which is praised from the viewpoint of consumption) or the continuation of occupational activity. The latter, on the other hand, emphasizes the pushing of older

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people into the family sphere and all issues pertaining to their well-being are expected to be dealt with within the family. Thus, the family becomes the main arena in which the life of an older person is led.

The marketization of old age accentuates the individual responsibility of each person. This is consistent with the fundamentals of the Polish welfare system which builds on personal responsibilities due to its alignment with residual welfare regimes. Concurrently, the market is excused from the sphere of policy, which entails its independency and freedom, so any form of age discrimination in this area is portrayed as beyond the scope of social policy makers— "Actually it is difficult to determine whether there is classic ageism in Poland or brutal economy" (Polityka, 2006, 25). At this juncture, one can clearly recognize a discourse of neoliberalism entering the welfare state arena. Neoliberal rhetoric combined with a minimalistic view of welfare, which is manifested in an ideology of anti-welfarism, renders people docile; everyone is subordinated to the demands of individual responsibility and no one has any expectations regarding welfare state provision (Hartman, 2005). The reform of the pension system clearly reflected the rule that only one's own initiative and planning can guarantee good conditions during retirement. " A 1999 reform compels people to save more for their old age" (Przegląd, 2007, 4)—discussions touching upon the new pension system emphasize the fact, without own savings people will be left with 'pension allowance' during their retirement. Moreover, the state has not really moved beyond securing the pension system; so older people should not expect much attention or care from the state. The traces of neoliberal thought are also seen in establishing a "climate of intergenerational conflict" (Estes & Phillipson, 2002, p. 290), which stresses the costs related to providing for old-age pensions. In the analyzed material, a debate revolving around issues of early retirement serves as a great example of this link. In light of this, ageism and anti-ageing ideologies appear to be compatible with the ideas of neoliberalism.

The familization of old age reflects the family-oriented values of the Polish welfare state model. The reliance on the family has its roots in the socialist welfare system that was built in Poland after World War II. A prime feature of this system was 'public maternalism', which encouraged women to enter the labour market while simultaneously supporting their role as the main housekeepers. While the post-socialist transformation period, in Polish society, saw substantial welfare state retrenchment, the maternalism remained intact. The only difference now is its private character: Private maternalism does not support women's engagement in caring responsibility, but simply takes it for granted (Glass & Fodor, 2007). The media discourse of ageing analyzed here reveals a tendency of creating a policy for grandparents, if not grandmothers only. Gender occurs to be one of the crucial elements in understanding the puzzle of ageing conditions in Poland. Previous studies have found that older women and older men seem to be subject to different value systems and that the roles envisioned for them are dissimilar (Arber, Davidson, & Gin, 2003); due to the scope of this paper, however, we cannot fully elaborate on this issue. At this point, it is only feasible to indicate that, based on our findings, older women are subjected to greater social scrutiny and their behaviour is almost always judged from a family values

perspective. However, in light of new approaches that seek to explore the interaction between age and gender (Krekula, 2007), we think that this issue deserves greater consideration and further investigation. Gender cannot simply be added to the area of ageing research; the relationships and interactions between gender and age call for dynamic analysis that highlights and problematizes the nature of those two systems of power (ibid).

It is apparent, in the analyzed material, that chronological age was not the main object of a discourse of ageing. Older people and old age are applied as fixed social constructs which entail pejorative meaning. This adds to spreading ageist attitudes which portray older people as a mass of the same people. Not only is the lack of positive ageing visible here, but a concept of a person who grows old is missing, as well. Discourse analyzed here exemplifies a dominant discourse of ageing present in the Polish society. Media and journalists cannot be disentangled from the context they are in; they use the voice of middle-aged people who granted themselves right to decide about lives of older people. As long as older people are talked about as 'they', there is little hope for the genuine improvement in the societal conditions for ageing. Until the voice of people who grow old is heard, the possibility for a social policy change seems unlikely.

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Wprost, 2006, 41, @Seniorzy [@Seniors].

Wprost, 2006, 44, Emeryci kupują! [Pensioners are buying!].

Wprost, 2006, 48, Piękni sześćdziesięcioletni [Beautiful 60- year olds].

Wprost, 2007, 2, Gerontokapitalism [Geronto-capitalism].

Wprost, 2007, 11, Bomba w emeryturach [A bomb in the pension system].

Wprost, 2007, 35, Emeryci na sterydach [Pensioners taking steroids].

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Paper I
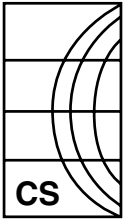
Because Women Will Always Be Women and Men Are Just Getting Older

Intersecting Discourses of Ageing and Gender

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abstract: The aim of this article is to examine a meeting between discourses of gender and age at the macro-level, applying an intersectional research approach. The discussion of intersecting discourses is based on empirical material from Poland. It refers to the condition of social policy towards age and gender, in Poland, as well as the media discourse. The results of the study indicate that the intersection between discourses of age and gender involves discriminatory practices that result in an establishment of one-dimensional and pejorative subject positions. Two main subject positions of grandma and pensioner exemplify the main mechanism of a dynamic relationship between both discourses where the order implied by one discourse is strengthened at the expense of the other. The phenomenon of gendered age and aged gender reflects the key rule for understanding subject positions which pertain to categories of older women and older men.

keywords: discourse of age ✦ discourse of gender ✦ intersectionality ✦ Poland

Introduction

My research on ageing and the pervasiveness of ageist attitudes in societies drew my attention to the prevailing interplay of gender and old age. I saw them as 'intertwining systems' (Krekula, 2007) that contributed to the growing diversity among people (Russell, 2007). I saw them as two discourses. From this perspective, neither gender nor age are seen as constant features of social life. Instead of gender, the practices and doings of gender are evoked (Marshall, 2000), stressing its discursive

nature. In a similar vein, ageing is seen as 'a site upon which power games are played' (Powell, 2006: 5), where social work, social policy (Powell, 2001) and medicine, in particular, are key-players (Biggs and Powell, 2001; Powell and Biggs, 2000). Both age and gender differences are inscribed onto the rules that govern contemporary societies. Moreover, they also affect each other. In other words, age is being gendered (Russell, 2007) and gender is ageing causing the construction of new societal positions and roles.

The main objective of this article is to discuss the implications of that interplay between the dominant discourses of gender and old age for the process of defining roles ascribed to older men and older women. My aim is to shed light on the dynamic aspect of a discourse of the gender and old age relationship. I strive to present those two systems as both independent and interdependent systems of power relations that affect the organization of and principles underpinning social life. Therefore, I refer to theories of intersectionality. An intersectionality perspective responds to McMullin's (2000) call for a new approach in studies of diversity and social inequality that would recognize the relational nature of social categories (e.g. age, gender) and their structural influence on the social. It offers a promise for a greater understanding of power relations and their dynamism with reference to age and gender (Zajicek et al., 2006). Yet, few scholars have thus far employed an intersectionality approach to age and gender. Krekula (2007: 163) states that the perspective of intersectionality offers a chance for overcoming the 'misery perspective', as she characterizes earlier attempts to connect gender and age. In a similar vein, Russell (2007: 174) criticizes earlier studies for establishing a 'competitive suffering paradigm', which juxtaposes the feminine and masculine experiences of ageing in order to expose the more disadvantaged group. Both authors strongly advocate micro-perspective research on gender and age, accentuating the importance of the voice of older people in understanding that phenomenon.

Contrary to their call for micro-level work, in this article I opt for a macro-oriented perspective. I draw on the concept of discourse and hence, I talk about the intersection of the discourse of ageing with the discourse of gender. These intersecting discourses create a background for the process of identity formation and, therefore, they require a closer examination. I support my discussion with empirical material from a study of attitudes towards ageing and older people in the Polish media. The media discourse belongs to a larger societal discourse that reflects and constructs attitudes towards older people. At the macro-level, it represents the intersection of the discourse of ageing with, among others, the discourse of gender that I seek to examine in this article.

Discourses of Ageing and Gender

In this article, I align myself with a perspective on discourse that follows discourse theory developed in the field of political sciences because both gender and age belong to politics, as their enactment always has political consequences.

In the political science perspective, discourse is understood as a symbolic system and social order (Howarth, 2000) that is comprised of 'meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects' (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 3–4). This vision of discourse expands the meaning of discourse and defines it as contiguous with the social (Torfing, 2005). Language is only one of its components (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987). Discourse embodies rules, principles and values that, at a particular time and place, are crucial for the construction of social reality. Discourse is a social reality we live in.

Discourses always have a political character, since they affect social relations and the distribution of power between those who are 'in' and those who are 'out' (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000). Their prevalence can be seen in the methods of organizing various sociopolitical systems, dividing and/or differentiating groups of people and establishing certain social spheres available to each. In fact, discourses are those systems. At the core of all discourses, in Laclau's theory, are nodal points around which meanings are constructed (Torfing, 1999). These nodal points are central to a given discourse; they are the reference points for constructing any system of meanings (Torfing, 1999). In the case of political discourses, they take the form of empty signifiers: 'a signifier without a signified' (Laclau, 2007: 36). For example, the signifiers 'god' and 'nation' are pure social constructions, invented by people and for people (Torfing, 1999). On the one hand, they make the discourse possible, while on the other, they contribute to the impossibility of closure of a particular system of meanings and, by virtue of the same, they open the possibility for change and transformation (Torfing, 1999).

Gender and old age appear to function as such nodal points; they are empty signifiers that consolidate a variety of meaningful practices within discourses of gender and ageing. Discourses of gender and ageing have a political character: they define relations between different groups of people, establish a power structure and play a determining role in assigning certain societal spaces to individuals. Gender and old age are constructs whose meaning is socially defined and hence invite a never-ending process of reconstruction. Nicholson (1999) described gender as a type of a 'coat' that is sewn and designed by society, and used to dress up the physical 'rack'. That 'coat' looks different in various times and places, but

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always plays an determining role in establishing social relations. Likewise, old age has been associated with a range of values, virtues and/or vulnerabilities throughout history (see Johnson and Thane, 1998; Minois, 1989); still, its role in defining one's position in society has remained intact. Age, similarly to gender, establishes a particular age order (Twigg, 2004), it determines one's political location and is one of the reasons for discriminatory and oppressive practices (Calasanti, 2007; Calasanti and Slevin, 2006). The existence of each discourse is conditional upon antagonistic concepts involved in discursive battles over which signifiers are supposed to be bounded to which signified, for instance: the woman/the man (Andersen, 2003); the young/the old. These discourses provide a huge range of subject positions, such as woman, man, elder and youngster, from which individuals are compelled to choose. They designate a system of meanings that changes over time but that nevertheless always has implications for social relations and access to power. Moreover, gender and age 'intersect in systems of inequality' (McMullin and Berger, 2006: 205) shaping and affecting many spheres of people's lives.

The variety of meanings and practices related to those subject positions may be exemplified by a reference to two academic disciplines that identify those two concepts as their core: feminism and ageing studies. A history of feminist thought can been seen as a struggle with the concept of gender and the two major subject positions embedded in it, woman and man. By studying the construction of a specific women's identity and placing it in a strong opposition to men's identity, feminist theory ultimately reached a point where it acknowledged the contextualized and contested nature of gender through which meaning is discursively produced (Calas and Smircich, 1996; Weedon, 1999). Women and men are today recognized as subject positions that may be undertaken and performed in an endless number of ways (Butler, 2006). Likewise, there is a growing body of research stressing the diversity of meaning ascribed to the concept of old age and ageing (for example, Hepworth, 2000; Öberg et al., 2004). Although in both cases the complexity of the main terms has been recognized, diverse theoretical attempts within both disciplines reinforce the importance of categories, even as they are put into question. For example, one of the latest branches within feminism, queer theory, which challenges the supremacy of a woman/man distinction (see, for example, Jagose, 2008; Morland and Willox, 2005), is incapable of operating outside this discourse. The position of queer is constructed within the same discourse of gender; the possibility of a queer position takes form against the backdrop of a woman/man distinction. Correspondingly, new conceptualizations of positive and active ageing are strengthening the distinction between the age categories of old (bad) and young (good). An awareness of the processes and intricacies related to the terms of

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gender and age does not entail a neglect of those categories. In a way, it contributes to the process of strengthening the discourses that one is critical of. This may serve as another indication of the pervasiveness of the discourses of gender and ageing, resulting in the impossibility of stepping beyond these discourses. In the final section of this article, I respond to this apparent paradox.

Intersectionality Perspective

The theory of intersectionality was born as a response to the limits of identity politics that called for the idea of 'sisterhood' among all who identified themselves as a 'woman' (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2008). It is rooted in postmodern and poststructuralist thinking about gender, which questions the idea of establishing one identity; it instead recognizes a plurality of identity projects (Weedon, 1999). Accordingly, gender is viewed as 'seriality' – a type of social collective that affects one's actions but it does not determine one's identity (Young, 1999); its meaning and content change and are conditional upon the immediate context. Theories of intersectionality open a possibility for diverse 'performances' of gender (Butler, 2006). Poststructuralist and postmodern approaches apply the notion of discourse, stressing the discursive aspect of gender and the positions it makes available to the individual. Moreover, these approaches recognize other categories that coexist with gender and therefore analyses stemming from such approaches provide a picture of multiple and fluid realities that structure people's lives (Calas and Smircich, 1996).

An intersectionality approach also stems from the Black feminist movement that provided the first strand of critique against an all-encompassing concept of 'woman' (Brah and Phoenix, 2004). In fact, in her seminal speech on intersectionality, Crenshaw used the term to accentuate the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by Black women on the labour market (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Intersectionality is not, however, about the interplay of gender and race only; it denotes the plurality of identity grounds and the array of frames organizing social life (Crenshaw, 1994). It highlights the role played by different intersecting categories in the process of stratification and social division (Hancock, 2007).

Intersectionality abandons additive practices of combining different categories defined through an essentialist perspective (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006). The aim of an intersectionality approach is not to place those categories on a scale of importance, but to present their dynamic interdependence, and their prevalence at the institutional and individual levels, which also has implications for policy design (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006). Two elements of research are fundamental to the intersectionality approach: a grounding of research in the lived experience of people

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whose identities scholars want to understand and a commitment to the creation of a just society (Thornton, 2002). An intersectionality approach may therefore be described as an analytical strategy that facilitates understanding the experience of marginalized people enmeshed in constant identity struggles (Thornton, 2002).

On the other hand, intersectionality is more than an analytic strategy. It evolves towards a research paradigm promoting problem-driven research of four domains of power: hegemonic, structural, disciplinary and interpersonal, and their presence in the lives of individuals and institutions (Hancock, 2007). This article is concerned with an analysis of the hegemonic domain, which stands for ideas and ideologies having a constitutive power over social life. In this way, I part from the main approach within intersectionality research, which involves a study of individuals and the formation of their identity projects. I conceive of societal discourse as having the main impact on the choices people make; therefore I see merit in exploring the intersection of discourses of gender and age at the societal level, and showing the background against which all identity, or rather subjectification, projects take place. The notion of subjectification recognizes the two-fold nature of human actors: they act on the surrounding context and the context leaves its imprints on them (Staunæs 2003). In this article, I am interested in exploring this context and the potential spaces it offers the gender–age interaction.

When Discourse of Gender Meets a Discourse of Old Age

In the study of attitudes towards older people and ageing in Poland I used opinion weekly news magazines as my data source (Wilińska and Cedersund, forthcoming). I selected the four largest of these magazines – *Newsweek*, *Polityka*, *Przegląd* and *Wprost* – which represented diverse ideological affiliations, ranging from conservative to liberal views of society and social life. Due to changes in Polish social policy towards ageing, which were introduced in 2005, I decided to cover a four-year period, from 2004 to 2007. Ultimately, upon the completion of a selection procedure, I ended up with 121 articles to analyse. I worked with my data in accordance with the principles of the attitudinal positioning method which was developed within the tradition of CDA (critical discourse analysis). I examined selected articles in terms of the three core components of attitudes that were invoked and/or provoked: affects (emotional component), judgements (moral and legal element; ethics) and appreciations (aesthetic element). I also searched for ideological underpinnings and implied messages.

The findings of my study indicate that the public discourse in Poland is replete with instances of ageism. The investigated discourse appeared to be devoid of positive representations of ageing or pictures of older persons as complex and unique individuals. Based on the categories employed in the analysed articles, I found that issues related to old age, ageing and older people were discussed within three main spheres: older people in the family; older people in/on the market; and older people in society. In the course of my analysis, it became evident that there were three roles assigned to older people that evoked positive attitudes: the grandparent, the rich pensioner occupied with a consumption and the person who stays active in the labour market 'till death do they part'. These roles existed in two social spaces, family and market. These two processes of familization and marketization of old age appeared to be distinctive features of the analysed discourse. At this juncture, however, I realized that the discourse of ageing affected, and was affected by, the discourse of gender. There were several instances when that interaction was particularly palpable. In this article, I refer to those moments – which are subject positions constructed at the intersection of gender and age – as examples of the intersection between discourse of gender and discourse of age.

Although I use media and its language to exemplify that process, my discussion goes beyond the analysis of language. Consistent with my earlier discussion of discourse, I regard language as an important component of discourse but not coterminous with it. I therefore support my discussion with references to another meaningful practice, which is social policy towards ageing and gender, that along with language, builds discourses of ageing and gender.

Discourses of Gender and Age in Poland: A Condition of Social Policy

In the case of Poland, it is rather difficult to talk about coherent social policies addressing the issues of gender and age. Researchers interested in topics of ageing provide robust arguments that allow them to conclude that Poland does not have and has never had an ageing policy (Synak, 2003). Old age and older people are associated with misery, poverty and social marginalization (Halik, 2002; Trafiałek, 2003). Older people are recognized as one of the social groups who 'lost' in the transformation from a communist to a democratic regime. Within social policy, ageing is addressed only in discussions of a pension system; social security issues are neglected (Orenstein and Haas, 2002). Furthermore, the pension reform introduced in 1999 has exacerbated the already poor situation of older people, among whom older women

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appear to suffer the greatest disadvantages and discrimination (Zajicek et al., 2007). In 2005, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in Poland published a document titled 'Social Policy Strategy 2007–2013', which, among other issues, outlined a social policy on old age for the first time. There has not yet been any governmental initiative directed towards the implementation of this strategy in relation to older people.

Gender relations changed in Poland after the fall of communism; the interpretations and meanings assigned to gender roles started to flourish, resulting in 'gender multiplication' (Johnson and Robinson, 2007). However, state policy has not reflected these broadened horizons of gender. A political debate on gender relations in Poland always leads to questions related to inequality between men and women; no other gender subject positions are discussed. Gender mainstreaming policy deals exclusively with goals related to securing an equal status of women and men, particularly focusing on the rights of women. Established in 1986, the Plenipotentiary for Women has undergone substantial changes over time, which in 2007 led to the introduction of a new governmental office called the Department of Women, Family and the Counteraction of Discrimination (Chołuj, 2008). Issues concerning women are rarely discussed apart from in relation to the family. The creation of a new social system and a welfare state is seen as one of the contributing factors to the worsening of women's well-being. The new welfare state is seen as the embodiment of the principle of private maternalism,[1] or policies that take for granted women's engagement in care responsibilities and provide no support for their labour participation (Glass and Fodor, 2007). Family policies take the family as their main unit, and all family benefits are contingent upon the family income (Steinhilber, 2006). Women belong, therefore, to the family, and family values are applied to negotiations of their position in society (Kramer, 2007). To a great extent, this situation is based on the morality of 'Polish Catholicism', which creates a core framework for moral judgements and distinctions between good and bad, undermining the relevance of the discourses of human and citizenship rights (Johnson and Robinson, 2007).

It's Time for You, Grandma: Gender-Woman[2] Meets Old-Age

The subject position of grandma is constructed at the intersection of age and gender, and it happens to play a significant role in defining the roles available to a group of people called 'older women'. It has been functioning in human society from society's beginnings. One may risk the statement that grandma gave rise to the phenomenon of grandparenting. Thomas (2007) describes the invention of grandparenting as a certain 'miracle' that

helped the human race to survive. Grandparenting was born at the moment when an older woman offered her help to a younger women by taking care of her child. Childbearing was a principal occupation of women in ancient times, and the position of grandmother evolved as a natural continuation of that fate (Balme and Bowdler, 2006; Hughes and Hughes, 2005).

'Grandma' seems to remain the only role available to gender-women who are ageing in Poland. The media depict grandmothers in line with a 'perfect grandparent' stereotype (Williams et al., 2007), always ready to help, devoting their time to grandchildren and enjoying every second spent with them. Simultaneously, other roles and positions for older women are disregarded. A Polish actress, in her sixties, in response to her interest in fashion, entertainment and a modern lifestyle, is referred to as an 'anti-grandma' (*Wprost*, 2006: No. 48). Her chosen subject position is described in terms of its negation of the socially accepted role for women of her age. Being at her age, she should think about other, younger women, who need her support in taking care of children. A policy designed around the idea of private maternalism provides a perfect fit for women of her age.

In fact, any activity that is inconsistent with the perfect grandma stereotype is continuously discussed in terms of this role. Building on such a picture of older women, criminal acts committed by older women are judged in the Polish media from a perspective of the grandma. 'Grandma on fire' (*Polityka*, 2004: No. 13) was a phrase used to describe a perpetuator of arson, while 'Grandma Wiesia'[3] (*Newsweek*, 2005: No. 34) was a main character in a fraud case. 'Grandma' indicates that a person is friendly, caring and people-oriented; to juxtapose 'grandma' with criminal activity seems to be the strongest judgement, and does not require any further reference to legislative and/or moral systems. It stresses that the event is unnatural and abnormal. According to the media representations, these people's biggest crime is a rebellion against their own nature. The act of law-breaking is less important.

Gender-woman is tied to familial life and caring responsibilities. At the point of meeting with old-age, the strength and prevalence of these ties are reinforced. A subject position of grandma is portrayed as not only the only socially acceptable form of behaviour, but also as a type of blessing for the life of gender-women. 'Menopause is a time of lost. . . . She [a woman] feels unwanted and not needed. In Poland, where there is still a multi-generational family, a middle-aged woman may fulfil herself in the role of grandma' (*Polityka*, 2005: No. 13). Other roles and positions that are taken by gender-woman at old-age are constructed in reference and/or opposition to that main category.

You Used to . . . : Gender-Men Meets Old-Age

A relatively large part of the media discourse on ageing revolves around issues of retirement and the pension system. The current pension system in Poland makes a clear distinction between men and women in terms of retirement age: for men it is the age of 65, for women, 60. Pensioners in Poland are usually discussed in the media as either a homogeneous group or as gender-man. At this juncture, it is important to mention that the Polish language is extremely gendered. Each name has both female and male form and the same rule applies to their plural forms. In the media articles I studied, there was no case of retirees being represented as both female and male; only males were acknowledged as retirees. *Emerytka* (the Polish equivalent of a female retiree, singular) and *emerytki* (the Polish equivalent of female retirees, plural) do not occur in the media texts. The subject position of a pensioner presupposes that of gender-man. Speaking historically, it is possible to say that the first old-age pensions were designed for men, since only men were active in the labour market at that time. In the case of Poland, time seems to have stopped at that historical moment. For example, the media speak of generational relations in market terms using the following language: 'Generation of children and grandchildren[4] sponsors old-age pensions of fathers and grandfathers' (*Wprost*, 2004: No. 5). Labour market participation is presented as a domain of men. Likewise, media representations of impending 'gerontocapitalism' (*Wprost*, 2007: No. 2) refer to an overwhelming power of older men over younger men. The term reinforces an ageist stereotype, according to which market relations between younger and older imply a fight.

The subject position of retiree has been constructed within the frame of market mechanisms. Any dictionary definition stresses the fact that a retiree is a person who has stopped working; the description of a retiree accentuates past events. The subject position of the retiree is built upon the past and has no reference to the present and/or the future. Gender-men in Poland who belong to the category of 'older' are retirees, they are people defined by their previous occupation, people who used to, but no longer, do/perform. As such, this position does not seem to offer many possibilities or prospects for organizing one's life.

The vision of gender-men who are in their old-age as unable to perform productive roles any longer underlines a discussion in the media about rock and movie stars. People such as Bob Dylan, Woody Allen, Leonard Cohen, David Bowie and the Rolling Stones are presented as those who used to do something, who used to be good and popular, and who are now offering people an opportunity to 'return to the past' (*Przegląd*, 2006: No. 36). For example, 'Jamie Lee himself, in spite of turning 70, bangs the keyboard and sings classic ballads and rock 'n' roll with verve of a young man, and he sounds as good as before' (*Przegląd*, 2006: No. 39). An ageist

scrutiny seems to be particularly vivid in reference to gender-men. The comparison to younger people and the reference to previous performances accentuate the fact that the present behaviour is unexpected and unusual. There is a clear practice of 'age tagging' (Coupland, 2004), which defines certain areas and modes of performance as typical of people referred to as 'older'.

Old-Age and Parenting?

One further topic evoked strong ageist attitudes in the media that gradually evolved into gender-woman discrimination. Parenting in later life and the use of new methods of fertilization, such as in vitro, meet with harsh critique in the Polish media. First, people who are considering parenting later in life are called 'grandparents' (for instance: *Newsweek*, 2006: No. 38). This is an example where the category of grandparents includes both gender-men and -women. The main argument advanced by the media is as follows: 'Regardless of medical advancement, motherhood and parenthood in young age is still, according to experts, the best solution since it is in line with nature' (*Newsweek*, 2006: No. 38). In this example, the category of older people is clearly separated from the category of younger people and it is implied that motherhood and parenthood are natural for the younger category, while those in the older category who parent are behaving in an unnatural or abnormal way. This division of normal/abnormal parenting is accompanied by a process of evoking negative attitudes towards new methods of fertilization. They are referred to as 'complicated and unnecessary' (*Newsweek*, 2006: No. 38). However, elsewhere, the same premise leads to an open attack on gender-women: 'the egoism of a potential mother . . . has no limits' (*Wprost*, 2005: No. 5). The same topic is framed here within the gender-women issue, where family and childbearing are choices made by gender-women only. Gender-woman is accused of egotistical behaviour devoid of any concern about the future of an unborn child, as in the statement 'and is it okay to take away a normal childhood from a child?' (*Wprost*, 2005: No. 5). Furthermore, gender-women are criticized for prioritizing the pursuit of a career over familial life, as in the following statement: 'It is very dangerous to think that it is, actually, possible to deceive nature and catch up with everything that one did not have time for before' (*Wprost*, 2005: No. 5). According to media discussions of parenting later in life, gender-women should not devote their time to a career, but instead should listen to the voice of nature and engage in the practice that is the most natural for them, raising children.

According to these discussions, people at certain age are not able to provide a stable life for their children because they are closer to death, and therefore put a child in danger of being orphaned. In this context, people are clearly those who belong to the category gender-woman, as it is they

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who are responsible for securing family life. This is also reflected by Polish family policy, which plainly defines the family as a women's issue. Analyses of public debates on reproduction topics in Poland have recognized a clear tendency to prioritize family and moral values over citizenship; 'Polish Catholicism' plays a fundamental role in establishing moral obligations and defining female/male spheres (Johnson and Robinson, 2007; Kramer, 2007).

Gendered Age and/or Aged Gender

The instances of the intersection of gender and age discussed in the preceding section pointed to three subject positions that exemplify a dynamic relation between both categories: grandma, retiree and older parent. They illustrate a moment of meeting between two discourses and two systems of power relations that has implications for the choices and possibilities of the people living in that system. One striking feature of that meeting is the fact that the categories at work are presented as rather unproblematic and obvious. A woman belongs to the family, a man works and old age renders people docile. These findings illustrate the process through which certain intersecting categories limit meaning, which is grounded in the use of single dimensions of the categories at stake (McCall, 2005). Configuring single dimensions of those three simplistic categories allows me to draw the following conclusions about their implications. These categories imply that women will be always women; when gender-woman interacts with old-age, the gender order seems to be strengthened and women-specific activities are more visible. The subject position of grandma entails caring duties and belonging to the family sphere. A policy of 'private maternalism' reinforces the meaning of grandma for the well-being of the family. Thus, a family argument, or perhaps one should call it a private sphere argument, underlines the position and role of gender-woman of old-age. The exact opposite situation takes place in reference to gender-man of the same age. A subject position of retiree stresses the old-age argument, and ageing happens to gender-men. They are portrayed as those who could produce in the past, but who cannot any more. Old-age is defined through the juxtaposition with the young-age category without reference to chronological age. Old-age is used as another unproblematic category that produces people who are 'older'. The subject position of retiree is oriented towards the market and the public social sphere. Old-age is defined by what it is not, and it is not public. Social policy in Poland does not discuss ageing; ageing is beyond the social public sphere, and is removed from the area of social policy concern. Ageing is not about doing something, it does not have any value in itself, but is about things that used to be, a memory of things that passed.

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When the discourses of age and gender meet, they are usually accompanied by two other discourses: one of work and one of family. Subject positions created at the intersection of those discourses bind people to these two spheres of life. Gender-woman, old-age and family are integrated into the subject position of grandma; gender-man, old-age and work constitute a base for the subject position of retiree. Family is a gender-woman's world, while work belongs to a gender-man's world. Old-age belongs to the family, and does not have any other space beyond it. While gender-women at old-age are constrained by the boundaries of a 'grandma' subject position; gender-men at old-age are left with only memories, in the subject position of 'retiree', which does not imply any actions and offers no roles. It is striking that the subject positions of 'older women' and 'older men' are not discussed; instead, grandma, retiree, older parent and mother are put forward in the discourse. As if a status of women and men was not accessible to people at a certain age (Calasanti, 2007).

One of the female interviewees in Krekula's study on the intersection of age and gender, described her partner as follows: 'He can do nothing at all in the kitchen, he's just old' (Krekula, 2007: 164). Krekula carried out her study in Sweden and she aimed at presenting older women through a perspective of intersectionality, using data collected at the micro-level. This quote fits perfectly, however, with the macro-level analysis of intersecting discourses of age and gender in Poland presented in this article. It seems to be consistent with my findings on the outcome of the meeting between gender-man and old-age, where the kitchen is part of the home domain that ageing gender-men know nothing about. Likewise, results from a study done in Australia (Russell, 2007), in which two groups of old-age people, gender-women and gender-men, were interviewed in relation to their experience of ageing, also appear to be in line with topics discussed here. In that study, gender-women identified themselves with home and family, while gender-men talked about their achievements and the things they had done. Those two micro-level oriented studies, which aimed at understanding the intersection of gender and age, done in two different countries, complete a picture drawn by this macro-level study conducted on discourses in Poland. The intersection of discourses of ageing and gender appears to produce similar subject positions; however, at this juncture it is rather difficult to claim the universality of these findings. On the other hand, this apparent tendency certainly merits further investigation.

One of the more important limitations of this article is its basis in predominately linguistic material. In order to reveal the nature of both discourses and their intersection, many more 'meaningful practices' have to be included, for instance organizations, institutions, ideas, historical events (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000). Comprehension of gender and old age as two discourses which, in terms of their effect on shaping the social, are of

the same kind provides another venue for research that crosses irrelevant boundaries between feminist and gerontological perspectives.

Concluding Remarks

The main objective of this article was to shed light on the intersection of discourse of gender and ageing, and present its dynamic character. Several examples of media discourse, complemented with a brief overview of social policy actions, have cast light on mechanisms which produce certain subject positions that embrace both discourses. This study has shown that those subject positions represent a combination of minimal versions of the possibilities offered within each discourse. Interestingly, interacting discourses were strengthening the social order implied by one discourse at the expense of the other. In other words, in some cases age is being gendered (Russell, 2007); in others, gender is ageing, causing the construction of new societal positions and roles. Nevertheless, the intersection between the two discourses always involved discriminatory practices; it 'was doing difference' (West and Fenstermaker, 1995), by 'reproducing inequalities' (Acker, 2006). Those 'doings of intersectionality' (Staunæs, 2003) between age and gender resulted in the production of subject positions that induced one-dimensional visions of the people who were forced to take them. Their pejorative character manifests itself in presenting those subject positions as complete identities; for instance, older women can be only grandmothers, no other roles are envisioned for them.

One of the underlying values and purposes of intersectionality research is a commitment to social change understood as a quest for social justice (Thornton, 2002). The intersectionality perspective facilities a revelation of the mechanisms that mutually create various inequalities but it does not address the possible ways out. Nevertheless, it becomes a first step towards the escape route. The act of identifying and recognizing categories makes them visible (Ahl, 2004). The deconstruction of emerging subject positions facilities an understanding of the mechanisms regulating social relations, which in turn provides a basis for anticipating equality and justice (Mouffe, 1999).

In the light of the discussion in this article, an earlier mentioned paradox of simultaneous critique and reinforcement of criticized categories ceases to be a paradox. While still operating under the same discourse, it is feasible to welcome the subject positions that have been imposed on us with howls of derision and to strive for their redefinition and change of meaning (Ahl, 2007). Subjects are not deemed powerless in this approach; the notion of political subjectivity[5] not only shows the emergence of a social actor, it illuminates the process of change. Subjects need to be open in order for such change to take place. When undergoing constant

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processes of redefinition, subjects need to welcome hybridization that offers a promise for new possibilities (Laclau, 2007). Such a subject becomes a political agent acting on structures and responding to contingent discourses (Howarth, 2000). Yet, in order to do so, one needs to be aware of mechanisms and logics underlying various subject positions. With this study, I join attempts directed at increasing awareness of the consequences of a meeting between discourses of gender and age.

Notes

1. This term has been constructed in opposition to 'public maternalism', which was typical of the communist regime. Women were supported in their occupational and caring duties, which, nevertheless, they had to perform simultaneously (Glass and Fodor, 2007).
2. As strange as it sounds, this expression, together with: gender-men, old-age and age-young, stresses the anti-essentialist position towards societal categories. It emphasizes the fact that subject positions of women, men, elders, youngsters designate some meaning only because our social is conditioned, among others, by age and gender systems of power.
3. Wiesia is a diminutive of a female first name, Wiesława.
4. The original word in Polish, *wnuków*, is equivalent to male grandchildren.
5. The process of choosing certain subject positions that turns subjects into social actors who are therefore able to stand up for a change (Howarth, 2000).

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Is there a place for an ageing subject? Stories of ageing at the University of the Third Age in Poland

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Abstract

The University of the Third Age (U3A) is an organisation widely recognised for its achievements in the field of adult education. However, little research to date has addressed the position of the U3A in the context of the societal discourse on ageing. The aim of this study was to examine stories of ageing told by the U3A in Poland and to place these stories within the contemporary discourse of ageing. The study sought to reflect on the role of the U3A in providing an environment that encourages the growth of an ageing subject. The results of this study indicate that rather than resisting ageist discourses, the U3A simply rejects the idea of old age. The U3A characterises its members as exceptional people who have nothing in common with old people outside of the U3A. Therefore, the U3A plays only a minor role in changing the social circumstances of old people in Poland

Keywords: the U3A, discourse of ageing, narratives, ageing subject

Paper III

Introduction

The University of the Third Age (U3A) is an organisation widely recognised for its achievements in the field of adult education. U3A began as a summer programme in France in the early 1970s (Huang, 2006) and quickly spread around the world. It has since flourished in various forms (Hebestreit, 2008; Morris, 1984). An increasingly large body of research has examined the role of the U3A in the lives of old people[1] and argued that the U3A has positive effects on their well-being and health (Gibson, 2000; Hebestreit, 2008; Kozieł & Trafiałek, 2007; Kreka, 1999; McMinn, 2009; Swindell, 1993, Swindell, 2002; Swindell & Thompson, 1995; Yenerall, 2003;; Zielińska-Więczkowska & Kędziora-Kornatowska, 2009). However, little research to date has addressed the position of the U3A in the context of the societal discourse on ageing. This paper aims to illuminate this aspect of the U3A's influence.

Many Western societies have become preoccupied with anti-ageing industries (Vincent, 2007). In these societies, the idea of the U3A appears to be particularly refreshing and appealing. The U3A embraces the ageing process and espouses the value of a meaningful life (Gibson, 2000). However, it remains to be seen if the U3A can support the notion of an ageing subject.

In discourse theories, a *subject* is one who rejects dominant discourses that impinge on one's opportunities to act as a political agent. A subject fights unjust structures and discriminatory discourses (Howarth, 2000). Similarly, a subject is a resister, a freedom fighter who rebels against compelling structures (Touraine, 2007; 2009). The concept of subject needs not refer to an individual; it may also describe a group or an organisation. The quality of being a subject is a potential that is built on creative and reflective thinking and results from discarding one-dimensional subject positions and a limited scope of choice (Touraine, 2009). An ageing subject would be aware of the dominant ageing discourses, critically assess these discourses and engage herself in the reflective and creative process of building new images of ageing.

This study explores the discourse of the U3A in a Polish context. Poland has a long tradition of U3A activity, and the number of U3A programmes has steadily increased since the first organisation was founded there in the mid-1970s. Currently, there are 180

U3As in Poland with over 60,000 members (www.utw.pl). The U3A in Poland has been influenced by the French model of the organisation, implying close linkages with traditional universities and participation of the academic staff in organised activities (Swindell & Thompson, 1995). However, the British model of the U3A, based on the ideas of self-help and voluntarism among old people (ibid), has been gradually adopted also in the Polish context.

In 2004, a Foundation for U3A was established to promote and coordinate the idea of the U3A in Poland. The Foundation defined the main goals of U3A as following: the popularisation of education; the intellectual, mental, social and physical activation of old people; the development of skills and knowledge; the provision of help and support; and the promotion of community engagement and open communication (www.utw.pl). Above all else, the U3A in Poland has been oriented towards improving the quality of life of old people and offering an example of good ageing (Ziębińska, 2007).

This study examines stories of ageing told by the U3A and places these stories within the contemporary discourse of ageing. The concept of discourse can be understood as "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002/2010, p. 1). Discourse affects identities, relationships between people, systems of knowledge and beliefs (Fairclough, 1992/2007). Therefore, any social change is linked to a change of discourse, and discourse propels social change (ibid). The study seeks to identify the position of the U3A within the discursive space of ageing and to reflect on the role of the U3A in providing an environment that encourages the growth of an ageing subject.

Master narratives of ageing

Ageing has been discussed in terms of various aspects; however, the biomedical perspective has come to dominate ways of thinking about ageing and old age (Hepworth, 2003). The "medical gaze" which associates ageing with the process of decline, has been applied to understanding and problematising ageing. It has influenced scientific inquiry into old age, the provision of welfare for old people and the construction of social

conditions for ageing (Biggs & Powell, 2001; Katz, 1996; Pickard, 2009; Powell, 2006; Powell & Biggs, 2000; Vincent, 2006). The "decline ideology", equating old age with illness and death, has spread throughout other spheres of social life to become an enduring part of contemporary culture (Gullette, 2004). Such perceptions of ageing make ageist stereotypes legitimate (Hepworth, 2003).

An ageist ideology is manifested in, for example, systemic stereotyping, discrimination, the reinforcement of divisions between 'we-young' and 'they-old', and treating old people as a homogeneous group (Bytheway, 1995). In effect, old age becomes a type of cultural trap (Haim, 1994) built on myths that are difficult to remove from cultural belief systems (Cruikshank, 2003). Ageism occurs within the personal, interpersonal and structural domains of human life (Estes et al., 2003) and is constituted by various social practices that have a direct impact on people's identities (Laws, 1995). However, the complexity of ageism (Coupland & Coupland, 1993) requires attention to various sites and faces of the phenomenon, including the ways in which old people exhibit ageism themselves (Giles & Reid, 2005). Although dominant narratives of old age delineate conditions of ageing, old people are not mere victims. People respond to and actively construct their visions of old age and ageing (Fox, 2005). To experience ageing is to move between various age-related positions (Hepworth, 2003) and be present within those narrative spaces (Tulle, 2004).

Like many contemporary societies, Polish society may be regarded as an ageist society; it does not presuppose the unconditional presence of old people with a variety of life experiences (Wilińska, 2009; Wilińska & Cedersund, 2010; Szatur-Jaworska, 2008; Tokarz, 2005). For instance, the story of ageing according to the Polish media presents roles that old people should take in order to gain social acceptance. Fully-devoted grandparents or hard workers and big spenders - these are the options available to old people; stepping beyond their scope causes societal disapproval (Wilińska & Cedersund, 2010). Within the social policy discourse, the main line of argument revolves around issues of productivity and utility in old age (author, 2009). Hence, social policy initiatives have been primarily focused on a pension system and the activation of older workers (Perek-Białas et al., 2006). Ageing is considered to be a negative phenomenon because it renders people inactive and makes them recipients of various social welfare benefits (Wilińska, 2009).

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That view constitutes one of major social 'panics' associated with old age in Poland (Mucha & Krzyżanowski, 2010).

Discrimination against old people and their marginalisation is noticeable not only in the media and social policy discourse; it is enacted every day in the functioning of the social system (Synak, 2005). Old age is a discriminatory factor (Halik, 2002), causing rejection and socioeconomic degradation (Trafiałek, 2003; Zajicek et al., 2007). Clearly, there are many instances of symbolic violence against old people in the structure of the social-welfare system (Wilińska, 2009). Many reports have shown that physical and emotional violence, especially perpetrated by caregivers, is also common (Tobiasz-Adamczyk, 2009). In light of the above, the U3A can thus be regarded as a direct response by old people to the ageist environment in which they live and is therefore an important object of study.

Methodology

The process of telling stories is fundamental to our social existence. Stories constitute our life experience (Czarniawska, 2004). "Narrating involves organising (...), organising makes narration possible" (Czarniawska & Gagliardi, 2003, p.VII). The U3A is an example of an organisation built on particular stories of ageing told by old people, and it simultaneously creates a space for certain stories of ageing. My analysis centres on identifying the images of ageing and old people produced by the U3A. Here, I take a socially-oriented approach to narrative research that conceives of narratives as types of discourse originating from the particular social conditions of a given location and culture (Jones, 2002; Langellier, 1989). When stories are (re)created, the meaning of local culture and levels of organisational embeddedness come to the forefront (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). The analytical focus is thus narrative embeddedness and the environment (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008; 2009) in which stories of old age are told.

The main objective of this study is to examine stories of old age told by the U3A and to assess these stories' roles and positions within the narrative environment of ageism. The investigation began by contacting a U3A association in one of Poland's larger cities. This U3A chapter was closely linked to the local conventional university and benefited from its infrastructure. The university staff were often involved in lecturing at the U3A, and

several scholars took active roles in assisting the U3A's work on its educational programme. The U3A was financed by membership fees; occasionally, it received grants for such activities as trips to health centres and integration meetings. The average U3A member in Poland is a woman aged 60 to 71 with at least a secondary education (Kulczycka, 2009). The demographics was similar at the U3A I visited; the proportions of men and women varied from 15 to 20% and 85 to 80%, respectively. In terms of educational level, people with secondary education dominated (over 50-55%[2]), followed by a group with higher education (40-44%).

I began communicating with a member of the U3A board who became my contact person. I made several visits to the U3A office where members of the board gathered and worked, and I attended some of the activities organised for U3A members. I was given access to a range of U3A publications, including occasional and annual bulletins, various leaflets about U3A activity, and the U3A statute. I conducted in-depth interviews with six members of the board about their view of the U3A and ageing. Each interview took approximately one and a half hours and was conducted within the U3A organisational setting. The opening question was about their involvement in the U3A. I also asked other U3A members to provide written narratives about their perceptions of ageing and third age. I was introduced to my research participants by my contact person, who invited U3A members to participate in my research. Following the U3A publications and my conversations with board members, I adopted the dominant discourse concerning age. Here, I did not use the term old age; instead, I asked U3A members to write about their perception of the third age. In total, I received 47 written responses; some participants chose to write them at home, whereas others decided to write them after a meeting during which I talked about my research. The length of the stories varied, ranging from a few sentences to two pages of text.

The analysis started with the textual data (U3A formal publications). That material gave me insight into the images of old age and the third age promoted by the U3A. I discovered that these two concepts were not synonymous; whereas the first one was addressed with a certain reserve, the second one was clearly celebrated. This pattern was recurrent in narratives provided by the board members. 'Third age' was the official term used to refer to the lives of the U3A members.

Although the textual data were naturally produced, the same cannot be said about individual narratives. In case of interviews, I often felt that board members wanted to persuade me that things were going very well. In a sense, they provided "stories of achievement" (Corveleec, 2003) of the organisation. Such stories are not merely accounts of what is happening in the organisation; they also indicate the process of sense-making and understanding in the organisation (ibid). Concerning written narratives, the situation in which people were writing may have had a great influence on their responses. Moreover, my own age might have biased their stories in a certain direction. On average, I was 30 to 40 years younger than the people I addressed. Perhaps they saw me as 'young' and wanted me to hear a specially designed story. Therefore, the analysis focuses on discourses that frame the production of certain stories. Using the members' accounts as data, not explanations, and learning to doubt common sense (Schwalbe, 1996), I tried to understand them in the context of ageist discourses. The analysis presents stories of old age on which U3A is founded and are invoked by the organisation.

Findings

Ageing does not happen here

"If you are interested in ageing and older people in Poland, this is not a good place; walk the streets of the city, visit some care centres...."[3] These were the first words I heard after entering the office of the U3A and introducing my research project. Ageing was not happening at the U3A and its members were not old. "As long as I am not aware of my age, I live with the same energy as 30 years ago" (Anna[4]). This denial of ageing and old age was central to the stories of ageing produced at the U3A. Members of the U3A were seduced by the ageist discourse of agelessness (Andrews, 1999), which offered the promise of moving beyond age. They engaged in a battle against old age (Öberg & Tornstorm, 2001) without realising that their actions reflected ageist attitudes. Their struggle, therefore, was not for liberation of a subject (Touraine, 2007) or against dominant images of ageing; their struggle was against ageing itself.

Their way to an ageless reality was to engross themselves in variety of activities to assure that "Students in their 'golden age' do not have time for boredom, loneliness and decline"[5]. The U3A expresses the anti-ageing discourse; its story of ageing reinforces dominant societal views about ageing as something negative and correlated with decline. The ideology of "prescribed busyness" (Cruikshank, 2003) has been institutionalised within the U3A. The organisation of a range of activities seven days a week leads a board member to say proudly:

> " we have a lot, really a lot... we have these lectures, which really embrace various topics ranging from politics to health... all themes are somehow incorporated... moreover, there are many hobby groups that if one... a week is too short in order to... I attended English, computer science... I was going to the swimming pool... I took part in the excursions, which were organised... well, as I said, it is not possible to attend everything" (Board Member: Cynthia).

The interviewee seemed to be glad to acknowledge that she did not have time. To have no time was an ideal because "we think, at least, at the U3A, that if one does not have time for it, one will not grow old" (Board Member: Barbra). The idea of time manipulation at will (Hoffman, 2009) was promoted at the U3A. Time had to be filled with variety of activities and occupations. Consequently, as Hoffman (2009) pointed out, it is not the significance that matters but rather the speed and multitude of things. Although it is difficult to name all of activities, the important message is that there are many. It is possible to see here elements of a consumerist syndrome that is based on three principles: speed, excess and waste (Bauman, 2007). The dominant point of reference is 'here and now' and the key is to make the best possible use of it. The past and future are not important as contemporary consumerism promotes the 'eternal present' (Bauman, 2007; Salecl, 2010).

Such attitudes towards ageing create an illusion of timeless living (Katz, 2001), where time can be simply deceived. The prevalent logic of 'solving' and 'treating' old age (Vincent, 2006) is displayed here as well. Consequently, U3A members are surprised and incredulous when they encounter disease or death:

"It happened to us on New Year's Eve. We were invited by a friend, four of us. We went and no one opened the main door for us... there were four families living on the same floor so we rang the bell to a neighbour. She opened the door for us; after knocking on our friend's door, we heard that she could not stand up; once we called the ambulance, we learned that she had had a stroke; she has been bed-ridden since then, what will happen next? No one knows.....we call and visit this sick one" (Dorothy).

What is striking about this story is the systematic effort to distance oneself emotionally from the reality of disease expressed in the last line: "(...) we call and visit this sick one". Language use is crucial for self- and group-representation, and people negotiate their own and others' group memberships by reference to certain categories (De Fina, 2006). These are context- and interaction-dependent processes, and they indicate how group members interpret various actions and events (ibid). In this example, we see how the same person is ascribed to different categories dependent on the situation. At the beginning of the story, she is "one of us", she is "a friend". However, as a result of her ill-health, she is gradually excluded from the group. "This sick one" belongs to the world of disease, hospitals and medical care. Discourse categories are used as resources to make sense of something and to interpret or understand different situations (Edwards, 1998). Therefore, the phrase "this sick one" is much more than a description of a situation; it indicates a particular identity assigned to a person who was formerly "a friend".

Hurd (1999) concluded that denial of old age requires constantly negotiating messages that undermine the images of 'active' and 'successful' ageing that constitute the vision of non-ageing. In the stroke example, the incident sparks an impulse to withdraw emotionally. A friend's ill-health is seen inappropriate and out of place; the shift in reference from a 'friend' to 'this sick one' represents detachment from or denial of the unpredictability and variability of human experience. Health, to old people who 'are not old', is more than a condition; it is also a commodity that enables them to achieve their desired lifestyle (Fox, 2005), which includes active ageing. The stroke incident, therefore, threatens their construction of third age. It also draws on another aspect of a consumerist culture where health, as with other aspects of human life, is seen as a personal

achievement; hence, ill-health is perceived as a failure, if not a sin (Salecl, 2010) against their desired way of living.

Within the discourse of agelessness, such an incident may disrupt one's worldview. The discourse of agelessness does not encourage reflection or consider various living situations, and it avoids the idea of physical decline. It, therefore, prevents the emergence of a subject. A subject must not only be reflective herself; a subject is born out of reflection and constant dialogue within a self-to-self frame (Touraine, 2009).

Third age belongs to us

Third age according to the U3A members is a "time for realisation of my own dreams" and "time for my own schedule", it is "time of freedom" and "time devoted to oneself", when one may design "life according to one's own imagination". These statements are representative of how members of the U3A conceive of third age. U3A members often say that this period of their lives is beautiful, mainly because:

> " it is only <u>mine</u>: 1) I do not need to do anything for anyone anymore, for instance for family (children are on their own) or for an employer; 2) I want to do something good for myself; to perfect and develop my interests, read literature, organise journeys, use travel agencies and benefit from cultural offerings: theatre, cinema, the philharmonic; to go on walks and go cycling" (Eve).

A feeling of freedom results from the end of occupational and care-giving duties; many people say that they simply did not have time for personal development before third age. "I started my life when I entered the U3A, because earlier it was only 'home-work-home' " (Louise). In the safety of the U3A, people tend to celebrate their existence.

On the other hand, they build their identities around the U3A; their membership in the group emphasises their separate status (Hurd, 1999). Their stories exemplify "personal exceptionalism" (Andrews, 1999), which aims to reassure and protect people from the despised image of ageing and old age. The U3A members represent a certain "level", and "some standard needs to be maintained"; they are the "elite". This elite quality is not linked exclusively to education level, as was argued in a study of a Maltese U3A (Formosa,

2000), it is also related to the image of a person at old age. They do not talk about themselves as old people; they talk about themselves as members of the U3A.

> "People of third age are very active according to my observations. They engage in the programme of the U3A, take part in the hobby clubs and learn foreign languages. They fulfil their dreams and help others. They are open. We are happy that we can be members of the U3A. People at the U3A are very interesting, they willingly attend interesting lectures that address various topics. (...) I take part in the 80% of the lectures, learn English, attend dance and gymnastic classes, and participate in excursions and social events organised by the U3A. Thanks to that I spend time actively" (Felicia).

The U3A offers more than a shelter; it offers a new identity to its members— identity of being in third age. The term "third age" is, in this sense, akin to categories such as active and successful ageing, which repudiate ageing and old age (see: Katz, 2001; Katz & Marshall, 2003; Torres & Hammarström, 2009;). Positive judgments of people are made based on activity; 'I am what and how much I do' recurs as a motto underpinning the U3A character.

That value was accompanied by frequent references made to the importance of personal responsibility; "if there is a will, there is a way" was expressed frequently in interviews and in the U3A's publications:

> "Working days are turning into Sundays—what to do when there are so many of them? You can sleep, clean, eat, you can wait for a surprise but you can also do something else, you can go out and search for happiness and yesterday's day... I do that—do it yourself".[6]

The issue of personal choice is expressed vividly in the above excerpt, which is a fragment of a poem written by a U3A member. Life becomes a manageable project solely contingent upon one's personal input. The idea of a perfect and successful life without ageing (Holstein & Minkler, 2003; Katz & Marshall, 2003) seems within one's grasp.

The stories of third age told by the U3A members often include an enumeration of activities and things organised within the U3A frame. This can be read as an example of

coaching, one of the main mechanisms of the choice ideology that dominates contemporary society (Salecl, 2010; Schwartz, 2004). The U3A coaches its members into a desired way of living, which is active (non-) ageing.

The influence of choice ideology, which applies economic and rational choice theory to all aspects of social life (Salecl, 2010), is pervasive in the U3A members' stories. Not only do they emphasise taking personal responsibility for a personal 'life project', but they also express a belief in the existence of a right choice: "We belong to the right place and our roles are appropriate"[7] This statement is a manifestation of the consumer choice ideology. It is possible to make the right choice, and furthermore, everything depends on the choices one makes (Salecl, 2010). Ageing is a problem but the U3A has a solution; all one has to do is to make the right choice. The logic underpinning consumerist culture stresses personal investment in one's social membership (Bauman, 2007). People who attend the U3A "consume" the social membership that the U3A provides to them. People seem to join the U3A for specific personal benefits; for example, they may need protection and help managing daily life. As a board member said: "People who are choosing to join consider the fact that, we... we may offer some help in daily issues" (Board Member: Barbra). It is not surprising then that board member noticed that "meetings that offer members an opportunity to ask for a piece of advice, to check something, have been the most popular"(Board Member: Hanna). These are meetings with medical doctors and lawyers.

Although members of the U3A participate in many events, few take the initiative. Instead, they seem to respond to various invitations, to join and follow. Members of the U3A board expressed their concern about a potential lack of support from fellow U3A students: "Because, what can we order?... we can ask them to come and help, and we do that sometimes but..." (Board Member: Hanna). The board members noticed that "Some people who sign in... have a consumerist attitude" (Board Member: Cynthia) and "They take what is given... some are very demanding"(Board Members: Cynthia and Irene). Although, the U3A is an association, members do not express feeling a sense of responsibility towards one another. To the contrary, their consumption of the lifestyle promoted by the U3A is based on a belief that one is responsible for/to oneself and no one else (Bauman, 2007). It is possible to read the stories of ageing at the U3A as stories

'about me and my choices' that concern only 'my life'. The third age ideal is based solely on consumption and individualisation (Gilleard & Higgs, 2007). The U3A members do not want to take group responsibility; instead, they seem to avoid it. They join the U3A for their own benefit. Board members explained that relationships among people attending the U3A are rather shallow; for example, one remarked,

> "People are nice… only that… you know… friendship is built at a young age … now it is only about acquaintances, it is not about friendships any more… moreover, everyone has some experience…and to change such an old person is very difficult" (Board Member: Julia).

When members discuss their experience with U3A, the term "acquaintance" frequently appears. There were no descriptions of deep personal relationships; stories of exchanging favours were more common. However, it is rather difficult to draw any general conclusions regarding the quality of interpersonal relationships among the U3A members at this juncture.

The U3A as a place of refuge

The participants in this study described the U3A as a safe and secure place; many respondents explicitly stated that the U3A was "a refuge" for them, the only place where they could feel at home. One of the interviewees said that "it is a group, you know, you feel differently in the group... one becomes more confident" (Board Member: Hanna). She mentioned organised trips to the theatre and the cinema. She concluded that one was alienated without a group, as these were not appropriate places for old people to go to on their own. It is in the nature of a subject to fight, to oppose, to rebel (Touraine, 2007; 2009); instead, U3A members withdraw and hide behind the walls of the U3A. The walls they build are not only physical; their function is, above all, social.

The theme of feeling safe in a group was expressed in U3A publications and leaflets; pictures always portrayed groups of people smiling into the camera, happily connected through group activities. The words 'us', 'we', and 'our' featured prominently in various essays and statements produced by the board as well as in the code of conduct. The latter was a set of rules, each beginning with "Let's" and stressing the importance of belonging

to the community. It emphasised building solidarity based on the norm of 'one for all, all for one'. The group not only builds a sense of security, but also organises activities to stave off "growing old": "We have to create something interesting for these people and fill the emptiness of old age, basically that is our main idea"(Board Member: Barbra). One board member said that "at the U3A, we have access to variety of activities, people here feel needed and younger" (Board Member: Irene). The U3A's main role seemed to be protection from ageing.

Members of the U3A feel a sense of shared experience and refer to themselves as a special social category, distinct from old people in the general population. The U3A becomes a sanctuary that protects people from the harshness of the external social reality. As one U3A member said, "Apart from the U3A, there is nothing interesting in life"(Kate). The U3A is described as a safe harbour where people can rediscover themselves. However, they also tend to become dependent on the organisation and perceive it to be a necessity. The U3A as an ageing coach "is thus a master whom the players choose to follow" (Salecl, 2010, p.33). Although values such as solidarity and community appear in the code of conduct, it is evident that members of the U3A are united by a common experience. The "order of morality" that a subject needs to take up a struggle is replaced by "the order of experience" (Touraine, 2007, p.102), which washes away potential ground for a rights-oriented movement.

Gendered story of ageing at the U3A

The story of ageing told by U3A members is, to a great extent, a story of old women. The phenomenon of the feminisation of the U3A and other voluntary organisations for old people is well-established in scholarly research (Williamson, 2000). As the majority of U3A members are women, the majority of participants in this study were women. Promotional materials and bulletins for the U3A included many pictures but hardly any were of men. Williamson (2000) suggests that a range of factors lead to such feminisation, and socialisation into gender roles and attitudes towards retirement seem to have a prime role.

Each board member I interviewed provided an explanation for why women outnumbered men at the U3A. The only man I was able to talk to suggested that it was a consequence of the simple fact that women were living longer than men. He supported his opinion with life-expectancy data. The women I interviewed, however, had other theories. Consistent with previous findings (Williamson, 2000), women described men as having more sedentary lifestyles. They characterised men as lazy and passive individuals who preferred "to benefit from things which are already done"(Board Member: Hanna). They saw men as "lost in life" (Board Member: Hanna) and "embarrassed" (Board Member: Irene) to try new things. Women, on the contrary, described women in general as curious, "with greater charisma and imagination"(Board Member: Julia), always "having some additional duties"(Board Member: Julia). They overtly stated that the activities of the U3A were primarily centred around women. Two interviewees mentioned that one of the reasons for U3A's feminisation was the fact that the U3A was based on volunteer work and men simply were not used to working without compensation.

In many stories, it is possible to find remnants of the ideal Polish woman—the Polish Mother. The Polish Mother stereotype, though established during the time of partition in Poland, was also particularly strong during the period of communist rule (Kowalczyk, 2003; Ksieniewicz, 2004). The Polish Mother ruled 'the kitchen world' but also worked outside the home; she could organise everything and complete a variety of tasks (Kowalczyk, 2003). The women I interviewed spent their youth and adult lives under communism, so they were exposed to such a stereotype on a daily basis. Men were expected solely to perform paid labour, while the remaining duties belonged to women.

Intersecting discourses of old age and gender shape the lives of old women and old men differently (Krekula, 2007; Rusell, 2007). Research on the relationship between masculinity and old age shows that old men represent the past in public discourse and there is no place for them in the present (Wilińska, 2010); there are those who 'have been' (Krekula et al., 2005). Within the context of the U3A, in addition to describing their own experience, old women accounted for old men's experiences, as well. They talked about men as others, usually in a negative way. Their critique was directed against the personal characteristics of men who were perceived as too weak to act. Such reasoning is in line with the choice ideology that advances the myth of mastering one's own life and destiny;

any kind of inequality or injustice is seen in terms of personal flaws and failures (Salecl, 2010). When people are unable to reflect critically upon their situation and the social forces that may affect their lives, they are unable to fight for rights or to become subjects (Touraine, 2007; 2009).

Discussion

The key objective of this study was to identify the position of the U3A within the narrative environment of ageism and to reflect on the role of the U3A in providing a space that encourages the growth of an ageing subject. The results of this study indicate that the U3A reinforces dominant narratives about ageing and helps preserve the image of old age as a time of decline. The U3A is drawn in by an ageist ideology; hence, its organising principle is to reject ageing and old age and to act against it. This study highlights the social conditions and processes of inequality reproduction that cause students of U3A to say: "I learn/I enjoy my life *in spite of* my age".

It seems to be particularly difficult to construct stories of ageing that resist and counteract the oppressive master narratives of ageing. Touraine (2007) contends that it is impossible for the subject to emerge if its core is unclear. The U3A emerges from a particular context that wields enormous influence in shaping the organisation. It is a context where old age and ageing are perceived as negative phenomena that must be avoided at all cost.

Contemporary societies create oppressive conditions for old age; hence, it is not surprising that people want to escape such a reality. Members of the U3A search for shelter from a society that disdains them. Their reaction is not unique; research on retirement communities in USA and New Zealand found a similar tendency among old people to separate themselves from others (McHugh, 2000; Simpson, 2009). They seem to follow a pattern of establishing an "untroubled brotherhood" (Shwalbe, 1996, p. 243) that does make participants feel better but simultaneously reproduces the oppressive forces causing them to seek such fellowship.

It seems that the potential rewards of 'side bets' (Schwalbe, 2008) resulting from separating oneself from the rest of society are much higher than taking the risk of fighting

back. The third-age identity seems to be beneficial for the U3A members, and they may see it as the only alternative. There is no doubt that the U3A plays a significant role in the lives of its participants and that U3A resists a negative stereotype of old people, according to which old people cannot learn and teach (Picton, 1990). The individual meaning associated with the U3A, the benefits and changes in life experienced by individuals joining U3A have been reported in many studies (see: Gibson, 2000; Hebestreit, 2008; Koziel & Trafialek, 2007; Kreka, 1999; McMinn, 2009; Swindell, 1993, Swindell, 2002; Swindell & Thompson, 1995; Yenerall, 2003; Zielińska-Więczkowska & Kędziora-Kornatowska, 2009; Ziębińska, 2007). However, the logic of third age promotes anti-ageing lifestyle (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002; 2007). Therefore, it cannot be read as an indication of "refreshing conflicts" (Touraine, 2009) regarding disparities that arise between the societal image of ageing and the lives of people who join the U3A. Discourse of third age does not reject the dominant ageist discourses; on the contrary, it seems to fit well into the frame of ageism.

People are aged by culture (Gullette, 2004), and it is only through culture that a change in attitudes towards ageing may occur. To change culture of ageing is to change discourses about old age. The educational aspirations of the U3A offer a perfect environment for social awakening where people could "learn how to grow old" (Cruikshank, 2003) and develop " a culture of solidarity" (Schwalbe, 2008). Such new discourse could embrace multiple ways of experiencing old age, introducing new ideas and protecting identity stakes. It could replace debates about setting the border between 'the young' and 'the old', and instead, focus on diminishing the importance of age as a social marker.

There are also the moral underpinnings of inequalities that need to be addressed to make a change (Schwalbe, 2008). 'The old' as a social category has been constructed around the idea of 'badness'. The difficulty with this is not only that 'the old' is associated with 'the bad', but more importantly, 'the bad' entails 'the old'. 'The old' does not have a clear-cut age limit, it is contextualised and changes in relation to a given situation. Societal ageism has become so pervasive that it is very often hard to recognise and name various societal practices that contribute to its reproduction (Hendricks, 2005). The U3A in Poland that aim at providing examples of good ageing has fallen into this trap. Within the ageist discourse, good ageing is about a denial of ageing.

Following Calasanti's (2004) discussion on the use of terms 'older people' and 'old people', I have applied the latter in my study. Whereas the former implies a risk of seeing old people as "more acceptable if we think of them as like the middle-aged" (Calasanti, 2004, p.305), 'old' opens a space for positive constructions and affirmation. Hence, the task is to engage in efforts that aim to fill 'old' with new meanings. This has yet to be seen at the U3A.

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<div style="writing-mode: vertical">Paper III</div>

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[1] Consistently with Calasanti's (2004) proposal, in this article, I will use the phrase 'old people' to highlight the socially constructed character and meaning assigned to people at a certain age
[2] Due to member rotation, the situation changes.
[3] A quotation from my field notes
[4] All names are fictional and, regardless of the actual sex, they were all given names with female connotations
[5] A quotation from one of the U3A's publications
[6] A quotation from one of the U3A's publications
[7] A quotation from my field notes

ARTICLE

Old Age Identity in Social Welfare Practice

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to examine the process of old age identity construction within a setting of social welfare work with old people. We sought to identify social welfare practices that construct and enforce certain old age identities. The empirical material analysed in this article is part of a study of a non-governmental organization in Poland. The method of analysis was inspired by nexus analysis, which analyses social actions through a historical and ethnographic perspective. The analysis focused on practices that produced, sustained and promoted particular old age identity. The results of this study show a complex process in which welfare professionals create the identities of preferred clients. The study shows that social welfare practice is often oriented toward imagined client identities that have little to do with real people.

KEY WORDS:

identity

nexus analysis

old age

social welfare

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INTRODUCTION

As part of a 'troubled persons industry' (Loseke, 2003), social welfare practi-
tioners have a tendency to categorize clients and often have difficulty acknowl-
edging client perspectives (Beresford, 2000; Beresford and Croft, 2004). From a
standpoint of professional power, they construct identities of clients that suit
their vision of a social problem (Joyce, 2005; Nikander, 2003; Urek, 2005). Old
age is one such identity.

Research has shown that social welfare for old people[1] has developed
under the belief that ageing results in dependency (Biggs and Powell, 2001;
Powell, 2001). In particular, case management is a popular practice that expands
welfare professionals' power to control and regulate old people by adjusting their
lives to a certain vision of ageing (Biggs and Powell, 2001; Pickard, 2009;
Powell, 2001; Powell and Biggs, 2000). However, research on old age identity
and social welfare work is very scarce. Aside from studies that report the under-
privileged position of old people in meetings with social workers (Cedersund
and Olaison, 2010) and in institutional eldercare settings (Aronson, 2002;
Aronson and Neysmith, 2001; Harnett, 2010), few studies have investigated
the influence of particular social welfare practices on old age identity.

Studies that have examined old age identity constructions focus mainly on
the linguistic accounts of old people. Research on old age identity negotiation
(Bythway, 2009; Coupland et al, 1991; Matsumoto, 2009; Nikander, 2002,
2009; Norrick, 2009) has illustrated old people's strategies to position themselves
within surrounding discourses of ageing. These studies have asserted that identity
is a process involving a variety of social practices, among which language is the
most significant (Blommaert, 2005; Coupland, 2009; Nikander, 2009). Rather
than focusing on identity, they have directed attention to the process of iden-
tification and its internal-external dialectic, which is embedded in a particular
context (Coupland, 2009; Jenkins, 2008). However, with respect to old age
identity, there is another aspect to bear in mind. As ageing is a socially con-
structed phenomena, the social category of 'the old' appears to be shaped more
by things that are done to/for old people rather than by old people themselves
(Green, 1993). Therefore, old age identity can be understood in terms of 'a
fictional unity' that may either enable or constrain certain actions (Bruner,
1996). With regard to old age, constraint seems to be the more relevant
aspect because 'to be one of the old is to be in a passively defined meaning
space' (Green, 1993: 82).

The main objective of this article is to discuss the process of old age
identity construction within a setting of social welfare work with old people.
Our aim is to enquire into the ways in which social welfare programmes adjust
real people to fit the client identities envisaged in these programmes. The anal-
ysis focuses on the practices that construct the identity of an old person. In doing

so, the study reveals the various actions that produce, sustain and promote a particular old age identity.

METHODOLOGY

The empirical material analysed in this article is part of a study[2] of Umbrella,[3] a non–governmental organization in Poland. The Polish model of welfare combines familial and residual influences. Welfare is a duty shared by governmental actors, social organizations, NGOs, churches and other associations. Umbrella has developed its position in the examined region as one of the most important actors in the welfare sector for people with disabilities and old persons. Because we were aware of the condition of public social welfare concerning old people in the region, we wanted to understand the conditions under which Umbrella worked and how it affected its context.

The study design was inspired by nexus analysis, which analyses social actions through a blend of historical and ethnographic perspectives. Nexus analysis is an analytical strategy that is grounded in the theory of mediated discourse, which reflects upon the discourse-social action relationship. The theory's main argument is that discourse (language in use) and social action intersect, and as such, one cannot be understood without the other (Jones and Norris, 2005; Scollon, 2001). The outcome of that intersection is a nexus of practice that embraces people, discourses, places and 'mediational means' (Scollon, 2001, 2002; Scollon and Scollon 2004). Scollon (2001; 2002) defined mediational means as material objects and other cultural tools that are used to mediate actions, because for an action to be social, it must be communicated/mediated. In nexus analysis, a mediated social action is a system comprised of a social actor (historical body), discourses in place, and relations between different actors (i.e. the interaction order) (Scollon, 2008; Scollon and Scollon 2004).

Nexus analysis aims to understand why and how certain actions occur as well as their social meaning (Lane, 2009). The method is used to study the interconnectivity of actions, discourses, objects, places and times that create 'micro-semiotic ecosystems' (Scollon and Scollon, 2004). Nexus analysis is often referred to as a form of ethnographic discourse analysis that is grounded in extended field research. It is conducted in three steps: engaging the nexus of practice, navigating, and changing it (Scollon and Scollon 2004).

Engaging the nexus of practice aims at identifying a social issue and the key actors and discourses surrounding it. In doing so, the researcher also takes a stance on the issue (Scollon and Scollon 2004). In our project, we were interested in old age within the context of social welfare. In the region where the study was conducted, Umbrella was the most important actor engaged in work with/for older people. After recognizing the field, we focused our attention on a particular Old Age[4] programme run by Umbrella. We wanted to see how, why

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and what type of old age identity was constructed within its frame. As we researched those questions, we saw the Old Age programme as a nexus of practice where people, discourses, spaces and objects interacted and contributed to old age identity construction.

The next step, navigating the nexus of practice, identifies the 'cycles of discourse' appearing at the moment of social action (Scollon and Scollon 2004). This step is the actual moment of data collection (Lane, 2009). At the beginning of the project, Umbrella guided us in our data collection. Our contact with Umbrella lasted for two years. During that time, our gatekeeper informed us about various organizational initiatives addressed to old people. In the process of following Umbrella, we collected multimodal data. We began by examining Umbrella's web page and the annual reports documenting several years of Umbrella's activity. Next we accessed a half an hour video recording and an 80-page-long publication that promoted Umbrella and its old age initiatives. The material pertaining to the Old Age programme included application forms, detailed descriptions and a working plan of the programme. We also received written reports from every meeting held within the Old Age programme. Moreover, our gatekeeper provided us access to four short movies recorded by programme participants. Umbrella also invited us for study visits where we talked directly to Old Age programme participants and made detailed field notes. We also conducted in-depth interviews with six Umbrella staff who were involved in the studied programme. Each interview was tape-recorded and, on average, was 60–90 minutes long.

In nexus analysis, a critical analysis of the actions is presented as the final step (Scollon and Scollon 2004). The key point is to offer an alternative to the actions and to affect discourses already in place (Scollon, 2002; Scollon and Scollon 2004). This step begins with an analysis of accounts provided by social actors. In this article, we focus on the various social actions performed by Umbrella that influenced old age identities. Therefore, we analysed different mediational means, such as texts and images, that communicated those actions and were used to account for them. We applied a critical approach to discourse (Blommaert, 2005; Lemke, 1995) in that we wanted to see how, why and what type of old age identity was constructed by Umbrella.

In the course of the analysis, we identified the following practices involved in the process of constructing old age identities: expertise, solutions, fitting in, and compliance. These practices reflect different steps that were taken in order to develop, supervise and evaluate the Old Age programme. These labels follow our critical analysis of the key words and actions that Umbrella used at different points of the programme. Some of those actions took place long before the Old Age programme began; nevertheless, we found them necessary for our goal of understanding discourses that made the Old Age programme possible.

The use of nexus analysis allowed us to identify various aspects of the social reality in which the organization was embedded. That helped us to understand actions and initiatives that Umbrella introduced within the frame of the Old Age programme. Through this process, we were able to identify the actors, discourses and interaction orders involved in those actions. The discussion presented below reflects upon the various linkages existing between Umbrella and its context. These linkages are visible in concrete mediated social actions and in the type of old age identity those actions construct.

FINDINGS

Expertise: Constructing Old Age Identity

The problem approach to old age began with the acceptance of ageing and old age as an object of academic study (Green, 1993; Katz, 1996) and developed over time to become a permanent feature of contemporary societies (Gullette, 2004). Umbrella follows the problem approach perspective. In its mission statement, Umbrella identifies old age as a problem that requires an 'effective solution'. The 'problematization' of old age accompanies a vision of social problems as solvable and a belief that there are effective methods to tackle those problems. This approach also hints at the spirit of evidence-based practice which adheres to positivistic and rational theory-inspired explanations of social phenomena (Van de Luitgaarden, 2009).

In order to 'solve' the problem of old age, Umbrella took a number of actions aimed at recognizing the field, making a diagnosis and introducing, 'concrete solutions' with a 'systemic character instead of incidental and disintegrated events' (spoken by the President of the organization). Umbrella's initial idea was to create directives that would govern work with old people in the entire region. The idea was accepted by the county council, and both parties eventually signed an agreement for the cooperation and unity of governmental and non-governmental sectors in realizing the project. As a result, representatives of various organizations participated in several workshops to delineate the exact plan of work. The workshops sessions began with the SWOT[5] (i.e. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of four 'problematic areas': health, social care, activity and the image of old age in society. All of these areas pertained to a group of old people whose identity was presented as unproblematic and straightforward. 'The group' was seen as socially excluded and forgotten by the rest of the society with members who felt lonely and were deprived of many things (Happy Ageing,[6] 2008: 7–11). Thus, the programme understood old age as a group phenomenon characterized by a number of 'evident' and constant features.

As a result, the Happy Ageing regional programme was introduced. The programme presented lists of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in

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the four main areas. Instead of analysis, it presented a description of the situation and 'a simple listing output' (Pickton and Wright, 1998: 105), which often characterizes SWOT analysis (Pickton and Wright, 1998: 105). Happy Ageing identified key 'strategic goals', and the success of those goals was to be measured quantitatively. For example, the success of health prevention promotion was to be assessed by the number of preventive programmes.

In describing work on the programme, a societal–expert method was invoked. The Happy Ageing programme explained the various parties involved (experts) and offered an overview of social debates (societal) in the region before work on the programme began. These debates were not entirely open to the public, as one Umbrella staff member explained, as invitations were sent to different organizations that worked with old people. This process occurred despite the stated guiding principle of the debates, which was a 'willingness to know needs and problems of older people' (Happy Ageing, 2008: 6). 'The professional gaze' (Powell, 2001) was dominant in the debates, ensuring that the shared knowledge came from those who, as the aforementioned interviewee stated, 'were good at the topic, who actively contributed'.

Work on the Happy Ageing programme was presented as one of Umbrella's greatest achievements. It was communicated through various medi-ational means, including leaflets, web page descriptions and video recordings. For example, a promotional video documenting Umbrella's activities concern-ing old age entitled 'Good Age'[7] stressed the importance of the Happy Ageing programme. The sequence that directly reports this begins with the voice of Umbrella's president discussing 'systemic' and 'concrete' solutions to the prob-lem of old age. The main scene that is presented while he is speaking involves a conference meeting where Umbrella's staff can be recognized alongside local politicians, university employers and members of social organizations. The image conveys a sense of collaboration and solidarity in pursuing that important endeavour as well as the seriousness of the matter through images that show people listening carefully, making notes and filling out documents. There are scenes from everyday life that show old people in different situations: reading the newspaper, sitting on a bench, walking with crutches, and making tea. Those images appear when the president talks about problem areas covered by the programme. However, it is rather difficult to clearly distinguish the faces of those people. The scene changes when the president finishes his speech and another staff member affirms the importance of the programme. Images of the smiling faces of old people follow, accompanied by a sound track of funk music. The marketing technique of 'before' and 'after' can be discerned here. Umbrella and the Happy Ageing programme are thus presented as the magic solutions to the problem of old age.

Interspersed with the president's speech is an acknowledgment of the role of researchers and the 'scientific base' of the programme. There are also a few

scenes that show old people answering the questionnaire in street interviews. The researchers talk about the significance of examining 'the real needs' of old people and 'reaching them'. The survey[8] they reference in the video was conducted in three diversely populated cities. Old people were asked to answer questions related to social services (8), activity (7) and health care (10). Twenty-three of the questions were closed and two were open-ended (activity questions). The research involved 628 persons aged 55 and older. As the Happy Ageing regional programme stressed, they considered this research project to provide a 'very precious diagnosis of older people' (Happy Ageing, 2008: 6).

Umbrella intended the Happy Ageing programme as a significant step to define the scope of future actions concerning old age in the region. Viewed through the lens of various actions performed by Umbrella, work on the programme revealed a process of knowledge production by those with access to power. Old age was a problem that required urgent action. Such action was undertaken on behalf of old people, who were portrayed as lost, miserable and in need of immediate help. Stigmatized identities (Juhila, 2004) of old age were constructed at the intersection of cultural norms and science. There was a clear pretence to 'expert' knowledge that was manifested in the search for 'ideas and recipes' (Umbrella, 2008: 5) and 'concrete model practices' (Umbrella, 2008: 5). Frequent references were made to the 'positivistic methods and technical rationality' (Webb, 2001) of evidence-based practice.

Umbrella was dependent on external funding, and work on the programme was conducted in close cooperation with local authorities. Relationships were therefore unbalanced. Umbrella adopted the predominant rhetoric of welfare, which embraces the power of statistics and factual presentation. Such 'politics of detail' identified mainly ageing in policy documents presenting facts and figures, manifests a desire to control and govern old age (Katz and Green, 2009).

Solution: Enacting Old Age Identity

Umbrella initiated the 'Old Age' social programme with the Happy Ageing programme as its backdrop. Old Age involved lectures, seminars and workshops divided into the following thematic sub-groups: health promotion, physical activity, skills development workshops, history, tourism, computer workshops, language classes and social studies. Meetings were held either once or twice a week, depending on the community.

Umbrella described the project as its 'newest enterprise', which aimed at the:

> social activation of older people and increase in their social integration with local community, particularly with youth.[9]

In the grant application, activation is described as having the character of labour. The target groups were described in the following manner:

> Those people are mostly lonely, passive, they can't relate to the contemporary reality of high technology and new social phenomena; there is a lack of initiatives addressed to them, and a lack of institutions and people working with them. Problems and needs of 50+ persons have always the lowest priority.

In the context of the Old Age programme, old people are defined as those aged over 50; that age marker is also highlighted in Umbrella's main publication that presents its activities, entitled 'The Age of 50'.[10] Given current debates in the field of ageing studies and in social welfare work with old people, this marker could be considered controversial. However, as identified in the previous section, discourses of evidence-based practice and welfare rhetoric are not the only discourses in place in this situation. For instance, a focus on activity in general and labour activity in particular reflects the official discourse of active ageing in Europe and Poland. Umbrella's initiative was greatly supported by the EU Social Fund and to some extent by the county council. Therefore, in terms of inter-action order, Umbrella has been greatly dependent on the actors and discourses that permeate their space.

At the EU level, the active ageing discourse is a natural outcome of socio-political trends that aim to improve the quality of life of old people in response to the demographic changes of contemporary societies (see Hartlapp and Schmid, 2008; Ney, 2005; Walker, 2006, 2009). Policymakers seldom conceive of it as an ideology that 'disciplines' old age and offers simplistic prescriptions for a good life (Andrews, 1999; Katz, 2000; Katz and Marshall, 2003; Sinding and Gray, 2005). In Poland, a country that does not have a tradition of ageing policy (Synak, 2003), and that is marked by a high level of unemployment, the activity discourse is dominant. Problems of old age are understood from a market per-spective. Thus, the age of 50 is a marker that separates those who can find a job easily from those who cannot. The governmental programme entitled 'Generational solidarity: actions towards the increase of labour participation among people at the age 50+' (2008) outlines the official social policy position, according to which people aged 50 and over 'should' work because the labour market needs their inputs. The discourse of apocalyptic demography is used to argue for this policy direction.

Another key phrase that appeared in Umbrella's discourse was 'local community'. The concept of local community is deeply embedded in the national discussion on civil society and civic engagement as well as in the general principles of the social welfare system. In Poland, where the principle of sub-sidiarity has always been invoked, community is often seen as the primary unit of awakening social forces. Umbrella's goal of integrating old people into the local community involved two aspects. First, this integration was related to

community forces and shared responsibility for community residents. To create this aspect of integration, Umbrella appointed so-called local coordinators whose task was to implement the Old Age programme. They were responsible for disseminating information, attracting people and supervising various activities. Such action was intended to awaken the 'community spirit' among community members. The participation of local coordinators was intended to show future participants that the initiative came from their local environment. Umbrella wanted to avoid being perceived as an external force, or, as one of the staff members said, as:

> some people from another planet that want to impose something from the top . . . no way, it would never work.

The local community had another meaning in Old Age. It was a space where old people could prove their 'usefulness', or, as mentioned in the regional programme, where they could show that old people can 'serve others' (Happy Ageing, 2008: 4). The public discourse in Poland is replete with instances of ageist attitudes that exclude the possibility of 'just being' for old people; old people need to justify their existence because social acceptance is conditioned on their input (Wilińska and Cedersund, 2010). Thus, Umbrella aimed to create an opportunity for old people to engage in such justification. For instance, in one of the communities that implemented Old Age, participants were asked to record therapeutic stories for children. CDs were distributed during Child's Day, which is celebrated in Poland on 1 June. The idea was to show that old people could do something for others in the community, and that they were needed.

Umbrella's actions reflected the involved actors and the interactional order established between them, as well as discourses of old age and social welfare practice. In the quest for 'permanent and systemic changes in the life model of seniors', Umbrella focused on the implementation of active ageing imperatives seen as 'the solution' to old age problems. The managerialist approach to social issues (Webb, 2001), which offers prescriptive and normative one-sided solutions and reduces the social to rationally managed events (Van de Luitgaarden, 2009), interacted with an ideal of old age that required old people to be active to be successful.

Fitting Real People into Old Age Identity

The communities that were chosen to participate in Old Age were located in impoverished parts of the region with a predominately rural character and a high level of unemployment. This was the case because public policies prioritized these problematic spaces. Local coordinators received instructions about 'preferred' participants who were to be unemployed and between the ages of 50 and 65. The recruitment process was dependent on the creativity of local

coordinators. As one coordinator admitted, in practice:

> We attracted more people through personal contacts (. . .) It is the easiest way, to persuade friends to come and join.

Another strategy to encourage participation in Old Age was to refer to existing forms of engagement. For instance, in one of the communities, the programme invited members of a senior club. From the perspective of Umbrella's staff, the senior club was a perfect target. It was seen as a 'coffee-drinking association', as one staff member described it, adding that:

> Of course, it is important for old people to meet, but the thing is that something should start happening, some developing activities are needed.

The senior club fit into Umbrella's understanding of old age identity, as passive. Although people met in this club, these were deemed mere coffee meetings. The senior club's existence was not seen as a valuable initiative, but instead confirmed a particular stereotype of old people.

The number of people attending the inaugural meetings exceeded 40, but subsequent gatherings were less popular. Activity reports from four communities documented the number of participants as ranging between 4–12 per meeting. Umbrella's staff members perceived this low turnout as proof of social passivity in rural areas and of the 'difficult' character of old people, who, as one of them said:

> are closed (. . .) there is some kind of competition among them . . . in this way . . . they are not even integrated among themselves.

This statement shows that a group-oriented identity was assigned to old people, under which they are all the same and should naturally like each other and thrive in each other's company.

In light of the above quote, the relatively low turnout at the Old Age meetings could also be understood as an act of resistance towards the old age identity constructed by Umbrella. Although Umbrella was well recognized in the current political discourse on ageing, its work may not have fitted into old people's images of their own lives. Through its clear-cut age range (50–65), Umbrella excluded many people who wanted to attend. As one local coordinator said:

> We have here [in the community] older people who would like to take part in it, but are somehow deprived of . . . by the fact . . . that . . . even if they are able to participate, they can't fill in the membership form because they are excluded since they are too old . . . That's true . . . So, they are rejected . . . And this project makes . . . some blood boil.

The old age identity constructed by Umbrella seemed to have limits, and people who did not fit into this identity were simply denied the opportunity to

participate. Some were too old for such an old age identity. However, one of the participants revealed the following to us:

> You know, honestly, that . . . I am surprised that I belong to old age . . . I was devastated . . . I thought that old age starts around the age of 80 . . . Really.

This participant was 53 and came to Old Age because she was interested in its psychology lectures. She was experiencing a difficult time in her life and wanted to get some help and to be surrounded by other people. At Old Age, she was told that she was old. Due to the prevalence of ageist attitudes in the society, she did not want to accept an old age identity. However, her desire to join a group of people made her come to terms with that identity. Old Age was a positive experience to her not because of its focus on activity, but because 'it's good to come here and to talk to people'.

The old age identity constructed by Umbrella also did not recognize gender or class; people were simply old. One of the participants said that he was the only man attending in A;[11] the rest 'they are old friends from school – retired female teachers'. He was not keen on attending but his best friend was a local coordinator and persuaded him to do so. Yet, the same local coordinator reflected on gender bias of Old Age. He said that the programme encouraged women's participation and prevented men from attending.

Old Age was addressed to people in their 50s, who had been socialized into gender roles during the communist regime. At that time, the role of a man was to work, and the role of a woman was to work and take care of the household and 'rule the kitchen world' (Kowalczyk, 2003). When the Old Age oriented its activities towards cooking, healthy diets, dancing, painting and embroidery; it indirectly defined its target group as women. This could be seen as an extension of the Polish Mother stereotype, which delegated to women all non-paid activities of daily life (Kowalczyk, 2003; Ksieniewicz, 2004). Because women were accustomed to performing unpaid caregiving duties, community work would seem to be a natural path for them.

Compliance with Old Age Identity

Many of the actions involved in the organization of the Old Age programme were based on the concept of evidence as both a leading principle and an ultimate goal. Old Age was assumed to provide evidence about its own appropriateness for dealing with problems of old age. Therefore, at the end of the programme, participants were asked to make a movie documenting their engagement in Old Age that would provide the necessary evidence of the programme's efficacy.

As a result, four 10–15 minute movies were recorded, coordinated by a professional. In some communities, students from the high school took part in

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the project. Their presence resulted from Umbrella's goals of integrating old with young people, as one staff member explained:

> So the youth does not think that an older person stays home and only sits there, gossips and grumbles and does not do anything else.

The movies were supposed to reinforce this idea and show that these two groups could work together for the betterment of their communities. This intended purpose of the movies is particularly visible in one community where the movie told a fictional story involving old and young actors. Though the latter group dominated the film, the scenes depicting old and young people meeting to discuss issues were highlighted to make the message of generational integration more 'evident'.

Although the project participants were able to decide how the movie should be made, they were provided with a topic: the community. Consistent with the old age identity enacted in the process of organizing and implementing Old Age, old people had to demonstrate that their existence could be useful to the community. Old age was thus 'managed' in a way that could be accepted, and therefore, was successful. As such, two of the four movies focused on communities as places where different people thrived. Various events from a community life were recorded. To a great extent, those two movies resembled promotional videos designed to attract tourists. However, it was possible to notice a pattern in the movies' depiction of events: each venue was associated with one group of people. For example, a motorcycle rally involved young people; school involved children and teachers and Senior Day involved old people. Although the idea of community for everyone was present, the community was for everyone at different times and places.

There was one movie that clearly stood out. In contrast to the presentation of images of places and groups of people, that movie focused on five individuals and their stories. Their narratives were separated by the following messages displayed on the screen: 'what do you do?'; 'what makes you happy?'; and 'what would you like to do?'. The questions and answers concerned a variety of activities ranging from riding a bicycle to gardening. The interviewees smiled and happily discussed their activities. The focus of the film was on presenting what 'I do' and 'what else I could and/or plan to do'. The fact of 'doing' was presented as important and valuable. The movie ended with an interview with an Old Age participant who talked about her experience of attending various programme activities. Among other topics, she talked about an excursion to a famous tourist destination in Poland. However, the excursion was not available to all Old Age participants, because, as she stated, only 'the most active members could take part'. Thus, the activity paradigm was deeply inscribed into Old Age; the project was organized around that concept and

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various means were used to make participants fit into the prescribed behavioural pattern.

DISCUSSION

This article sought to identify social welfare practices that construct and enforce certain old age identities. The findings show a complicated process in which welfare professionals create the identities of preferred clients. The study shows that social welfare practice is oriented toward imagined identities that have little to do with real people. The 'fictional unity' (Bruner, 1996) of the old age identity produced within the frame of the analysed organization was constraining for the old people affected by it but enabling for organizational actions designed to fight old age. Therefore, the logic of a success story permeated the organizational discourse. The problem was constructed, the solution was designed, and convincing results were produced.

The nexus analysis that inspired our research process enabled us to inquire into the dynamic and versatile process involved in constructing identities of welfare clients. The application of this method to a social welfare setting and to questions around old age identity facilitated a greater understanding of the processes' intricacies and complexity. The focus on specific social actions broadened the perspective of the research by examining not only various actors, but also diverse discourses, spaces and objects. Through this process it was possible to observe discourses of evidence-based practice, active ageing and social policies interacting with geographical spaces and the actors that inhabited them. The research drew attention to the financial aspect of welfare work, including the question of sponsorship and the interactional order established between various parties. Together, those elements created an interactive web of influences that affected the old age identity work. Thus, this article adds another dimension to studies on identity in the social welfare context that advance knowledge about the processes embedded in specific settings (for an overview of this discussion, see Mik-Meyer, 2010).

The finding that expertise, solutions, fitting-in and compliance were the main practices involved in the process of producing client identities should be understood from the perspective of discourses, historical bodies and interaction orders. Current debates within the field of social welfare practice concern both evidence-based practice and the voices of clients and their local knowledge. The study shows what happens when the former aspect dominates the practice and the latter is not taken into account. Rather than acknowledging diverse and multiple identities, evidence-based practices present identity as a fixed category that encompasses all aspects of people's lives. Further, the quest to age successfully is preoccupied with deceiving time and not ageing at all (Andrews, 1999; Cole and Thompson, 2001; Torres and Hammaström, 2009). Together, these

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two discourses place normative requirements on old people. Ageing, or preferably non-ageing, becomes about personal responsibility, self-investment and self-discipline (Katz, 2000; Sinding and Gray, 2005). When the managerialist approach is applied to that imperative, only certain voices are given the opportunity to speak.

Therefore, this article also joins the debate surrounding the question of knowledge in social welfare practice. Although we discuss old age identities here, the voices of any welfare clients are often seen as unimportant in a practice that is devoid of reflection. There is an urgent need to acknowledge multiple ways of knowing (Humphries, 2003), which would facilitate relation-based practice (Butler et al, 2007). Only then may social welfare practice defy dominant discourses on social problems and rise to the challenge presented by Juhila (2004) of embarking on the formation of a collective resistance involving both professionals and clients.

Notes

1. Consistently with Calasanti's (2004) proposal, in this article, we will use the phrase 'old people' to highlight the socially constructed character and meaning assigned to people at a certain age.
2. The study was designed and conducted by the first author (MW). The second author (CH) was a supervisor.
3. A pseudonym.
4. A pseudonym.
5. SWOT is a method of strategic planning that is based on analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats; it was designed for use in corporations and management (Pickton and Wright, 1998; Piercy and Giles, 1989).
6. A fictional name.
7. A fictional name.
8. The survey was financed by Umbrella, and it was delegated to a group of university scholars, who also wrote a final research report. Information presented here comes from that report and personal communication with its authors.
9. This and subsequent excerpts were translated to English. The original language of data was Polish.
10. A fictional name.
11. A pseudonym for a community name.

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