

# **THE WORK-RELATED ROLES AND IDENTITIES OF OLDER CANADIANS**

**STÉPHANIE KENNEDY**

Thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Master of Arts degree in Sociology, Specialization in Political Sociology.

School of Sociological and Anthropological Studies  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
University of Ottawa

© **Stéphanie Kennedy, Ottawa, Canada, 2018**

## **Abstract**

Western society highly values work, and is structured in such a way that people have to be involved in the paid labour force to live. Forms of work that are unpaid are often not recognized as “real” or “meaningful”. Consequently, populations that are not involved in the paid labour force can often be conceptualized as unproductive, which is often the case when discussing retired seniors in Canada. Despite the wide-spread social expectations that older people should be retired and the public programs that enable their retirement, ideals about the makeup of meaningful social roles have not changed very much, and so are applied to this population in a similar manner as to their younger counterparts. In other words, people are not generally seen as socially productive or as having meaningful social roles if they are not active in the paid labour force. For this reason, many sociologists have come to characterize older people as being a “roleless” population. If not characterized as roleless, “retired” in itself has also been classified as a role for elderly people, but the social function of a retired person has not been clearly defined either. Because of this, this Master’s thesis endeavoured to learn more about the work-related roles and identities of retired seniors. Through discussions with seniors about the different work activities they have been involved in throughout their lives, the social expectations projected onto them, and how they conceive their own roles and identities, this study unravels classic definitions of work, leisure, and retirement.

## Acknowledgements

*I worked too much while pursuing this degree, and it might never have gotten done if it were not for the encouragement and support from the people in my life.*

*Thank you to my thoughtful and encouraging parents, Jacinthe Béchar-Kennedy and Dan Kennedy, who pushed me to be ambitious, never lost faith in my academic potential, and provided me with all the support and tools I could ever need to succeed.*

*To my mentors at ADM(Pol), especially Riley Hennessey, Charline Leduc-Marcoux and Philippe Lafortune, thank you for supporting me in my career development and in finishing my master's degree. I probably worked too many hours to ever assume I could finish this thesis on time, but our team is wonderful and I would not have done anything differently.*

*And to my thesis supervisor, Professor Maurice Lévesque, thank you for all the guidance you provided me throughout the process of piecing this thesis together. Your high standards and your patience and understanding about my other obligations fueled my commitment to producing something I could be proud of. It took me longer than anticipated, but I am glad of all the re-writes, additional reading and notes you've given me, because they guided me toward writing something worth reading.*

## Table of Contents

| <b>Ch.</b> | <b>Title</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>Page</b> |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>1.</b>  | <b>Introduction</b>                                                                                                              | <b>1</b>    |
| <b>2.</b>  | <b>Retirement</b>                                                                                                                | <b>3</b>    |
| 2.1.       | A Brief Explanation of retirement in Canada                                                                                      | 3           |
| 2.2.       | Pensions in Canada                                                                                                               | 6           |
| <b>3.</b>  | <b>Defining the Relationship Between Work and Retirement</b>                                                                     | <b>13</b>   |
| 3.1.       | What it Means to Work                                                                                                            | 13          |
| 3.2.       | What it means to be Retired                                                                                                      | 16          |
| <b>4.</b>  | <b>Work and Identity</b>                                                                                                         | <b>20</b>   |
| 4.1.       | Identity and Role Formation                                                                                                      | 21          |
| 4.2.       | Work-Related Roles and Identities                                                                                                | 22          |
| 4.3.       | Dissident Opinions                                                                                                               | 27          |
| 4.4.       | Work-Related Experiences and Making Sense of Retirement                                                                          | 28          |
| <b>5.</b>  | <b>Research Project and Objectives</b>                                                                                           | <b>34</b>   |
| <b>6.</b>  | <b>Theoretical Framework</b>                                                                                                     | <b>38</b>   |
| 6.1.       | Sociology of Work                                                                                                                | 38          |
| 6.2.       | Role Theory                                                                                                                      | 39          |
| 6.3.       | Life Course Perspective                                                                                                          | 44          |
| <b>7.</b>  | <b>Methodology</b>                                                                                                               | <b>46</b>   |
| 7.1.       | Method                                                                                                                           | 46          |
| 7.2.       | Ethics Approval                                                                                                                  | 48          |
| 7.3.       | Sample                                                                                                                           | 49          |
| 7.4.       | Interview Questions                                                                                                              | 50          |
| 7.5.       | Analysis                                                                                                                         | 51          |
| <b>8.</b>  | <b>Data</b>                                                                                                                      | <b>54</b>   |
| 8.1.       | Formulate clearer understanding of how older people perceive their own work-related roles and identities                         | 54          |
| 8.1.1.     | Centrality of Work                                                                                                               | 55          |
| 8.1.2.     | Finalities of Work                                                                                                               | 57          |
| 8.1.3.     | Managerial Norms                                                                                                                 | 61          |
| 8.1.4.     | Work-Related Roles and identities                                                                                                | 63          |
| 8.2.       | Learn about the work-related social expectations that retired seniors feel are projected onto them, and how they respond to them | 65          |
| 8.2.1.     | Finalities of retirement                                                                                                         | 65          |
| 8.2.2.     | Social Expectations During Retirement                                                                                            | 67          |
| 8.3.       | Develop an understanding of people's diverse life experiences and retirement experiences                                         | 69          |
| 8.3.1.     | Transition into Retirement                                                                                                       | 69          |
| 8.3.2.     | Activities After Retirement                                                                                                      | 71          |
| 8.3.3.     | Work vs. Leisure                                                                                                                 | 74          |
| <b>9.</b>  | <b>Analysis</b>                                                                                                                  | <b>77</b>   |

|            |                                                                                                                                  |           |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 9.1.       | Formulate clearer understanding of how older people perceive their own work-related roles and identities                         | 77        |
| 9.2.       | Learn about the work-related social expectations that retired seniors feel are projected onto them, and how they respond to them | 79        |
| 9.3.       | Develop an understanding of people's diverse life experiences and retirement experiences                                         | 80        |
| 9.4.       | What are the work-related roles and identities of retired seniors?                                                               | 81        |
| <b>10.</b> | <b>Conclusion</b>                                                                                                                | <b>83</b> |
| Annex      | I. Call for Volunteers                                                                                                           | 85        |
|            | II. Research Participant Consent Form                                                                                            | 87        |
|            | III. Interview Guide                                                                                                             | 93        |
|            | Bibliography                                                                                                                     | 103       |

## 1. Introduction

In light of the baby boomer generation reaching the age of retirement and their successors producing fewer offspring, the demography of the Canadian population has shifted toward a different composition, one in which older adults (aged 65+) represent a much larger proportion. Canada's population has been aging, and this trend will be quickening its pace for another 20 years. In 1971, 8% of the population was over the age of 65. In 1996, it was 12%. Now, 15% of the population is over 65, and this number is projected to go up to 23% by 2031. This would be one of the fastest aging rates ever recorded in any economically developed country, and it is largely due to Canada having had one of the world's strongest baby booms, followed by a quick and sustained baby bust (Carrière & Sabourin, 2016, p.94). Because people are expected to retire in their old age, our aging population has sparked many debates relating to labour shortages and the sustainability of the public pension system. There is no evidence of there being national labour shortages due to population aging though, because delayed retirements, higher female participation in the workforce, and higher immigration intakes should allow for continued growth in the workforce. Therefore, there is actually no consensus on what the economic consequences of population aging might be (Carrière & Sabourin, 2016, p.95). Despite the social expectations that older people should be retired, ideals on the constitution of meaningful social roles have not changed very much, and so are applied to this population in a similar manner as to their younger counterparts. In other words, people are not generally seen as socially productive or as having meaningful social roles if they are not active in the paid labour force. For this very reason, many sociologists have come to characterize older people as being a "roleless" population. If not characterized as roleless, "retired" in itself has also been classified as a role for elderly people. Unfortunately, the social function of a retired person has not been clearly defined either.

Common sense might lead people to the assumption that after one retires at around the age of 65, they lead quiet, unproductive lives filled with relaxation and leisure. People would abruptly stop having a worker role and continue their lives with their social and familial roles intact and perhaps enhanced. This project took issue with the idea of unproductivity in old age and with the idea that working disappears because a person is older and retired. It also took issue with the

generalized social expectations surrounding old age and the life of a retiree, particularly relating to work.

That being said, retirement has become so prevalent and normalized in Western society that it can be considered as another phase in an individual's life course. Today, people retire for a great many number of reasons, and so their experiences in being retired in old age can be very diverse. This study attempted to provide a better definition of the social expectations projected onto retired older people, as well as a clearer idea of the work-related social roles and identities they occupy. Additionally, it expands on what older people's social roles and identities entail, through studying their interpretations of their own roles and identities. Consequently, this project provides a better definition of the work-related roles and identities of elderly people within Canadian society.

For the purpose of this study, I have interviewed seniors residing in retirement homes in Ottawa, asking them about their experiences with work and retirement, and how those experiences affected their work-related roles and identities. They gave me overviews of their life courses, providing me with background on how they arrived to their current retirement situations, as well as their perspectives on the meaning of work and retirement in different phases of their lives. Through those discussions, the main question my thesis discusses is: what are the work-related roles and identities of retired seniors? It is important to note that the focus of this study is micro-sociological, as it has been based on the personal reflections, experiences and perspectives of its research participants. If the focus were expanded to a meso- or macro-sociological perspective, the findings might be very different.

The following dissertation will first provide a literature review of the existing theories that discuss work, retirement, roles and identities, and seniors. Afterward, the purpose and objectives of this research project will be presented, followed by its theoretical framework, methodology, primary data, analysis and conclusion.

## 2. Retirement

The literature surrounding retirement is largely incomplete, fueling many misconceptions about the lives that people lead after they decide to officially end their working lives. As such, in order to properly discuss the effects of work and retirement on older Canadians, I must first try to deliver a more fulsome definition of retirement, as it exists within Canada. In this respect, I will first outline the story of retirement in Canada and its normalization, going over the development of pensions, the political motivations that influenced the forms it took, and the ways this influenced how people retire. This will provide proper background for the format of retirement within Canada and the way it impacts people's life course and decisions relating to work and retirement. Afterward, I will discuss retirement itself, its assumed association with old age, and the social expectations and roles it comes enveloped with.

### 2.1. A Brief Explanation of Retirement in Canada

The modern situation of older people has changed a lot in recent history, as human beings' life spans have significantly increased. Retirement is now an expected condition of old age, as the third phase of most people's life course after their stint in the paid work force. This has an immense impact on the ways that people lead their lives (Verrill, 2002). Despite its normalization, in comparison to human existence, retirement is an extremely recent phenomenon. People used to work until the end of their lives, or until they were no longer physically able to work (Joseph, 2005). Retirement's infrequency was due to a number of things. First, most work environments were flexible enough to accommodate older workers, and virtue, wisdom and experience were highly valued, so the positives were seen as outweighing the negative attributes that might come with aging (Atchley, 1982). Second, there were no income sources outside of one's labour. As such, the idea of living without work did not seem to be viable or imaginable (Gee & McDaniel, 1991, p.463). If people were no longer able to work, they might be cared for by their children and relatives, or they might be left to live in poverty (Guest, 1995, p.39).

Nearing the end of the XIX century, Canada underwent massive urbanisation. Its population had more than doubled and the government began encouraging initiatives that would promote industrialization and urbanization. A series of government studies in 1882 discovered the horrible oppression and lack of protection and security that workers had to endure. Men, women and

children were exploited, worked long hours for meagre pay, and worked in dangerous and dirty work environments. Because of the recession, many would also lose their jobs during this period as well. Public opinion had an upheaval. Doctrines that promoted individualism and laissez-faire governance were put into question, and these notions started being replaced by those of social justice instead, privileging the wellbeing of the collective and promoting the interests of the population (Guest, 1995).

Retirement only became widespread in the twentieth century. The acceleration of industrialization at the turn of the century saw new ideologies emerge that had a massive influence on the development of retirement as a social institution. (Atchley, 1982; Mattern, 1993; Minnich, 2012). According to Atchley, there were three major trends during this time that led to greater rates of retirement. These were: (1) the emergence of industrial work organizations and labor unions; (2) the emergence of mandatory retirement rules; and (3) a new ideology of retirement (Atchley, 1982, p.269). Work then became more rationalized, pressuring job standards away from flexibility and more toward uniformity. There was a growing emphasis on “scientific” management, which promoted a bettering of efficiency, productivity and progress in work environments. Also, new theories about the negative biological effects that come with aging were being developed, leading to the opinion that fast-paced industrial work was wearing older people out. Attitudes toward older workers were therefore changing and being shaped by the budding belief that older workers were useless and expensive and should be replaced by cheap migrant labour. Technological progress also had its effects on the growth of retirement with the development of rapid automation. During this period as well, unions were trying to secure shorter work weeks. They achieved this by managing to increase work rates, encouraging acceleration of the work that employees had to accomplish. All of these things put older workers at a disadvantage in the labour market (Atchley, 1981, p.269). As retirement became popularized, a demarcation was made more clearly between the second life stage (work) and the third life stage (retirement) (Araiza, 2004, p.11). Attitudes toward older workers thus began to change, becoming shaped by the rising belief that older workers were less useful, more expensive, and should be replaced by cheaper migrant workers and younger labourers.

According to Myles (1989), the two main changes that led to the modern development of retirement were the emergence of the “retirement principle” and the creation of the “retirement

wage”. The retirement principle developed in an economic system that was based on wage labour, capital concentration, and a deskilling of the labour process. The new economic mindset began to value the contribution of younger workers over older workers, because although they were unskilled, they were also cheaper and supposedly faster. As such, older, skilled workers were encouraged to retire so that they may be replaced by younger, cheaper, and less skilled ones. Atchley, in his 1982 study, confirmed this progression of events:

“A social ideology developed that devalued the contribution of older workers compared to other elements of the labor force, that served as the basis for age discrimination in employment and that included a pro-retirement attitude. As a result of poverty among those who were forcibly retired and a new ideology about the role of government in securing the welfare of workers, large-scale systems for financing retirement were developed.” (Atchley, 1982, p.274)

The rationale behind mandatory retirement (i.e. a constraint within the workforce that entices or forces older workers to retire or leads to their dismissal) leaned on the understanding that older workers were unfit to work. This development led to widespread unemployment and poverty among older populations, urging the government to take on a new role and provide retired elders with financial support via pensions. The Great Depression influenced retirement in major ways as well, but most importantly, it triggered a logical shift away from the laissez-faire relationship between the economy and the government, so that the government started putting in place retirement programs. From then on, retirement became a social norm and expectation, and additional pension programs were developed as people were no longer expected to work for the entirety of their lives. By the 1950s, the image of retirement had improved. It was seen as a widely prevailing individual act, an earned right and reward, with many wanting to have it as soon as possible (Atchley, 1982).

In Canada, the normalization of retirement is directly linked to the development of pension programs. If the Canadian government had never tackled the issue of senior poverty through developing public and semi-private pension programs, retirement would not have transformed into a reasonable and desirable living situation for seniors. Additionally, as pension programs have changed a lot over the past century, the ways in which people approach retirement has changed a lot too. People’s pensions directly influence their retirement.

## 2.2. Pensions in Canada

Retirement is a mild kind of social institution that focuses on transitioning older workers out of the labour force with minimal financial hardship (Atchley, 1982). In Canada, the evolution of retirement went hand-in-hand with that of the welfare state. The State needed to address the issue of elderly poverty and forced retirement.

Income security programs (like old age pensions) are programs and tax provisions by which the federal government transfers sums of money to its citizens as a means to minimize the consequences of losing their income in the case of sickness or loss of work (Bernier, 2003, p.10). Social security is one of the most important forms of redistribution of resources; it is at the heart of the welfare state in Canada. The federal government plays a large role in it and the provinces intervene so that they can improve the help given by Ottawa. Income security programs all have four common objectives: to alleviate poverty, to help improve the quality of life for those who have lost their means of income, to ensure a minimum of goods and services, and to reaffirm the legitimacy of the federal government in demonstrating that its endeavours are directly linked to its citizens (Bernier, 2003).

The role of the state really started expanding significantly after World War II. Since then, countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have had the tendency to increase the rights of retirees, whether they were currently retired or would be in the future. This has been the case for Canada as well, whose pension system is public and semi-private, and for which the expansion has been particularly significant since 1975. The constant growth of such programs is due to the constantly growing clientele, to the indexation of public pensions, and because people have more and more rights to such things (Bernier, 2003). The Canadian retirement system is composed of three main pillars: (1) programs administered by the government, (2) programs managed by employers, and (3) savings managed by individuals.

First, the government is responsible for two types of systems: one that is contributory, and one that is not. The non-contributory system is composed of three programs: Old Age Security (OAG), the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), and the Spouse's Allowance. OAG is a quasi-universal system that people over the age of 65 are entitled to, as long as they have lived in Canada

for at least 40 years, from the time that they were 18. People whose net income is high need to reimburse 15% of their net income in excess of the threshold established by the tax system. The GIS is a supplement for people with lower incomes. The Spouse's Allowance is for people with lower incomes, aged between 60 and 64, who are married to a beneficiary or are widowed (Bernier, 2003). The contributory system, on its part, is composed of 2 programs that have many similar features: the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) and the Québec Pension Plan (QPP). These are for people who work; paying into these systems is mandatory for people 18+. The amount paid in is based on a percentage of the person's income, can go up to a maximum given amount, and is equally paid in to by employees and their employers. Five provincial governments and two territorial governments also offer supplemental income programs for less fortunate seniors (Bernier, 2003).

The second category of pension system, those administered by employers, includes the Registered Pension Plan (RPP), the Group Registered Retirement Savings Plan (Group RRSP), and the Deferred Profit Sharing Plans (DPSP). RPP is financed by both employers and employees. Group RRSPs are saving plans for groups to save money for retirement on their own. DPSPs are programs in which only the employer would contribute. These three programs are mainly for employees and are designed to replace incomes once the employees retire (Bernier, 2003).

The third category of pension plans are systems governed by individuals. These are Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSP, or just RSP). They help individuals save money for retirement on their own, and the amount that is placed in an RSP does not get taxed until it is taken out. The systems administered by employers and individuals are not universal, because employers and individuals are not required to contribute to them (Bernier, 2003). RRSPs are very important sources of retirement income, especially for people who don't have an employer-sponsored pension plan (Brown, 2011, p.393).

The three categories of pension systems in Canada have a complementary and interdependent relationship. An expansion in the contributory systems would lead to a retreat in the non-contributory systems, which is increasingly the case today. For a while now, the state has been becoming disengaged from income security programs in various ways. Disengagement refers to the body of activities accomplished by the federal government that resulted in the immediate or

imminent regression of the role of the Canadian state in ensuring income security for Canadians. This includes reducing expenses, compressing budgets, developing legislative measures that result in the reduction of present and future rights, and dispositions leading to programs' gradual erosion. Disengagement is a process, so a number of phenomena lead to this development. According to Bernier, there has been a sort of continuity in how the federal government has become disengaged from its responsibilities toward citizens' income security. Since the 1990s, like at the beginning of the century before state intervention in the matter, it has been personal savings, and not public funds, that people began to rely on more heavily for their retirement. This is because of the appearance of so many different public and semi-private programs for retirement over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even so, Canadian pensions have long been marked by a market ideology in which the individual is mainly responsible for their own well-being and must therefore earn their retirement over the course of their working life. This mindset prioritizes individualism and autonomy and is founded on the idea that assistance from the State should not encourage dependence, but rather limit itself to aid when necessary. As such, even though there have been universal systems in place, those universal rights and entitlements have always remained modest, so that citizens with middle and higher wages could rely more heavily on CPP and RSPs. The Universality of the OAG is only the product of specific historical forces, but it does not correspond to the preferences that encompassed the development of Canadian pension systems over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bernier, 2003).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sir Wilfrid Laurier said that non-contributory pension systems were a type of public charity that discouraged motivation toward saving and encouraged fraud. 20 years later, R.B. Bennet also confirmed that pensions needed to be earned, and that pensions that were not earned would destroy the moral fibre of the nation. It was therefore with wariness that the first old age pensions were adopted in 1927. These ones targeted individuals over the age of 70 and whose individual and familial resources were insufficient. Even though the mindset was appropriate for a contributory pension system, such a system did not come into being until 1960 for three reasons: (1) the government did not have the necessary administrative capacities for managing such a system; (2) leaders needed to find a solution that would have immediate results and help those in need right away; and (3) federal government action was limited to the division of powers provided by the Act of the British North Americas, which prevented the Canadian government, until 1951, from levying a specific tax, and until 1962, from considering

an insurance plan (Bernier, 2003). In 1951, a change was made to the existing pension system: it became universal for those aged 70+, and it could also be applied to those 65-69 who had insufficient resources. Next, the administrative issues that had made it impossible to have a more complex pension system continued until the mid-1960s, but two big things happened that helped trigger such reforms: (1) a report was published by the Glassco Commission in 1962 that incited the huge administrative reforms that would take place over the course of the next decade. They advocated for efficiency in public administration by encouraging that managing be left to the managers, and that staffing and controls be streamlined so that managers had greater freedom when making decisions. (2) Additionally, a wave of young university graduates joined the public service between 1965 and 1975, and they greatly contributed to the administration's reform by helping expand government activities and utilising new procedures and managing tools (Bernier, 2003). Consequently, the new federal public service had, for the first time, the administrative capacities that were necessary to envision an insurer-type public pension plan. The judiciary limitations that previously existed were resolved with two constitutional amendments, legally allowing the federal government's instatement of contributory pensions. In 1950, Article 95A of the Act of the British North America was changed, recognizing the Canadian Parliament with the right to adopt laws relating to old age pensions in Canada, and allowing it to envision a relevant tax. It was also designed in a way that no federal laws could impede on the functioning of provincial laws relating to old age pensions. The second constitutional amendment was done in 1962 with Diefenbaker, allowing him to envision a contributive insurance plan. This amendment enlarged the authority of the federal government so that it could pour supplementary funds into someone's pension, regardless of the age of the recipient (Bernier, 2003).

Today, the Canadian pension system is characterized by high levels of income inequality and relative poverty in old age. Other countries allow for greater reliance on public pensions. Since the 1970s, various disengagement measures and initiatives were put in place to erode the importance of OAS, the only universal pension program. From that time on, we could observe a move away from the universal principle that characterized it, in favour of a more selective program. This led to the expansion of semi-private retirement programs and retirement savings. The Canadian regime today distinguishes itself from other programs by targeting needing populations, rarely having universal programs, and by having social assistance programs that are not that generous. Pension politics have been thrust toward privatization by the federal government (Gee & Daniel, 1991). By

doing this, it encourages those responsibilities to be picked up by private pension plans (Bernier, 2003).

Progressively, as the benefits improved, rather than wait to become eligible for public pensions, people started using their savings to help them bridge between their last job and the age at which they became eligible for Social Security (which is 65 years old in Canada) (Gee & McDaniel, 1991, p.464). By the 1990s, there developed a trend of early retirement. This is because people began preparing well in advance for retirement, and because public sector cut-backs and the restructuration in numerous private sector industries forced them into retirement. Older workers would get displaced and then would retire rather than find a new job (Carrière & Sabourin, 2016, p.99). Since then, participation rates of Canadians aged 55-59 have significantly increased. There is no longer a downward trend in work life expectancy; the trend has reversed. Almost one in three men aged 65-69 is in the labour force. It was one in four in 1976, and one in five in 1990. There has been an even higher increase in workforce participation among women (Carrière & Sabourin, 2016, p.96).

This trend reversal could be explained by the present public Canadian retirement income system, which focuses more on meeting minimum retirement income needs, and therefore does not give very strong incentives for early retirement. They are especially small in comparison with other OECD countries. According to Bernier, since 1975, the welfare state underwent many legislative changes, and this led to the retreat of its only universal program, Old Age Security. From that time on, there has been a move away from the universal principle that once characterized it, favouring a more selective program and leading to the expansion of semi-private retirement programs (Bernier, 2003, p.74). The rules that dominated during the expansion of the welfare state are the opposite of those that have been dominating during its shrinking phase. The Canadian pension system tries to ensure that everyone has minimum revenue, no matter who they are (Bernier, 2004, p.40). Gee and McDaniel argued that the pension politics that took place in the early 1990s had negative effects on retirement, saying that income levels in retirement were lower, and that income disparities would increase (Gee & McDaniel, 1991, p.457). They said that the Canadian pension is characterized by high levels of income inequality and relative poverty in old age. Other countries allow for greater reliance on public pensions, and what our public pension systems lack are not picked up by private pension plans (Gee & McDaniel, 1991, p.458). Brown

also noted that even though Canadians are doing pretty well in ensuring that they have enough savings for their retirement for the time being, this might not always be the case in the future, since pension coverage is falling with younger workers (Brown, 2011, p.296).

Retirement keeps evolving, and so it is difficult to gauge how accurate research conducted in its regard can be. Initially, retirement was a reward for older workers, encouraging them to maintain a lifelong attachment to the firms they worked for. When a recession hit, retirement started being used as a mechanism to remove older workers from the labour force through early retirement programs. There is an underlying premise that retirement, as a social institution, removes workers out of the labour force in an organized way according to their age (McDonald & Donahue, 2011). Membership to employment pension plans has been steadily declining since the 1970s, going from 46,1% in 1977 to 38,3% in 2007. Private pension plans, on the other hand, have been growing since the 1990s, going from 23% in 1992 to 32% in 2006. Also, private pension coverage has been shifting from defined-benefit to defined-contribution plans. This has been occurring in both public and private sectors. At the end of the 1980s, there was a great pension debate that focused on expanding the earnings-related CPP. In 1989, Old Age Security (OAS) benefits were “clawed back”. By 2010, the debate became focused on reforming the private pension system or registered retirement savings plans, opposing defined-benefit and defined-contribution plans. Early retirement is becoming less and less common, and McDonald and Donahue (2011) suggest that the first wave of baby boomers will be strengthening their labour force participation.

McDonald and Donahue (2011) argue that retirement is always in flux, just like the economy and wider society. They enumerate four ways in which retirement has transformed: (1) First, non-standard work has been on the rise since the 1990s, and individuals in non-standard work are less likely to ever retire because they do not have access to employer-sponsored pensions or C/QPP. (2) Second, the nature of work has changed; there has been a continuous increase in demands in jobs that are mentally stressful. (3) Third, there are more mature workers than ever before because a flooding of women into the labor force began in the late 1960s. The female baby boomer cohort will represent the first female cohort whose labour force participation will have spanned for most of their adult lives, qualifying them for their own retirement pensions. This will undoubtedly have an immediate impact on the overall structure of retirement. (4) Fourth, there are many fiscal

implications in having an aging society, and this has finally infiltrated public and corporate consciousness. The cost of government programs that are age-sensitive will expand. The fact that people are also expected to spend more time in retirement is not helpful. These major transformations in retirement also coincide with the worst worldwide economic downturn since WWII (McDonald & Donahue, 2011, p.402).

In sum, changes in the Canadian pension system's structure not only change the benefits that Canadians receive once they retire, but they also have effects on the ways in which people retire. The long-existing mindset that promotes individualism and individual autonomy also encourages people to be responsible for their retirement savings. As such, retirement living experiences are not standardized. There is no universal retirement experience in Canada. There is an increasing diversity in the ways people retire, simply because retirement savings can vary a great deal, from person to person. This makes it so that the divide between retirement and working life is not as clear-cut as originally defined. As people retire differently, they undertake a wide variety of activities. This diversity can help create an image of how retired life is not so different and cut off from working life. By taking a look at individuals' experiences, it is possible to see how people have varying relationships with the work they accomplished before they retired, the work they accomplish once they have retired, and how these diverse forms of work contribute to their identities.

### 3. Defining the Relationship Between Work and Retirement

The concept of retirement is intrinsically work-related. It relates directly to people's relationship and participation in the paid work force. As such, the ways in which people interpret their own retirement is related to their relationship with the workforce; retirement can take on multiple forms, and the form it takes helps define individuals' relationships with the work force, as well as their work-related identity. The purpose of this study, as previously mentioned, is to develop a better understanding of the work-related roles and identities of retired seniors in Canada. This highly depends on people's individual experiences with work. This study is therefore looking at personalized definitions of work and retirement, as it relates to individuals' experiences in these phenomena. This next section will discuss the fundamental importance of work in society, its effects on retirement, and our impressions of it. Through these explanations, I will hopefully provide a better definition of what it means to work and what it means to retire.

#### 3.1. What it Means to Work

In order to properly understand the significance of work-related roles, it is first important to recognise how fundamentally important work is in Canada, as well as throughout the Western world. Why do we work? Work seems to be a central preoccupation in people's lives. Everyone below retirement age is expected to work and get paid in order to contribute to their community, the economy, to support themselves and their families, etc., and after a certain point, they earn the right to leave the paid workforce. This chunk of their lives spent at work plays an intrinsic part in identity and role formation. Before entering into a discussion about the effects that work has on individuals' roles and identities, I would like to briefly discuss the *work ethic*, a morality that encourages people to place greater importance on their work-related roles and identities. The social significance of work is important to understand in this study because it could affect the ways that people distinguish or value the work accomplished before retirement, and the work accomplished after retirement. Work is not just an economic necessity and social duty; it is also seen as an individual moral practice and collective ethical obligation. Traditional work values promote work as a source of individual growth, status and self-fulfillment (Weeks, 2011).

According to Nona Glazer (1993), enabling people's capability to work is the central goal of school, welfare policies, unemployment programs, psychiatric treatment, the prison system, and

many other social programs. Enforcing work is a function of the state, and a preoccupation of the neoliberal state (Glazer, 1993). The product of an individual's work contributes to shared wealth. The work ethic individualizes their contribution and ascribes it with meaning, but waged work, as an individual responsibility, has more to do with the socially-negotiated role of work (Weeks, 2011). One of the powers that manufactures our consent to work so much is the official morality of the work ethic (Mills, 1951). In the past, magical and religious forces and the ethical ideas and duties that resulted from them were a powerful influencer of conduct. As Weber originally theorized, the Protestant work ethic promoted the individual as a moral figure that was responsible for achieving their own salvation. Progressively, this mindset separated itself from religion. The free labour market, in itself, was seen as a way that individuals could seize control over their own fate. It became the individual's moral responsibility to take care of themselves, and not the community's. This imaginary became more concrete over the course of the industrial and post-industrial eras, as every household was expected to become involved in the work force. There developed fewer instances of actual economic or political dependence within communities, so such a dependence became viewed as a fault of the individuals. Independence was less perceived as a type of relationship with others, and instead as a quality of the person's character. The work ethic became an individualizing discourse; people were willing to work because work was treated as an end in itself (Weber, 1958; Weeks, 2011). The essence of human beings would therefore rest on what is produced through their work, as well as how they produce it. Simply put, the work that people accomplished for wages became indicative of their identities and the economic classifications they held within society (Mills, 1951; Weeks, 2011).

“Waged work remains today the centerpiece of late capitalist economic systems; it is, of course, the way most people acquire access to the necessities of food, clothing, and shelter. It is not only the primary mechanism by which income is distributed, it is also the basic means by which status is allocated, and by which most people gain access to healthcare and retirement. After the family, waged work is often the most important, if not sole, source of sociality for millions.” (Weeks, 2011, p.6).

The wage relation does not only generate income and capital, it is a key site where people become classified into broad identities. Class identities and relations are generated and regenerated as some people obtain certain types of work. The work ethic is a force that promotes the powerful identification with work, as well as the acceptance to make it an object of desire and field of aspiration (Weeks, 2011).

Work, throughout our lives, is therefore promoted as a social responsibility for all community members. It relates to the role that we play within a society and identifies us with the functions we fulfill within the society. Additionally, it has ethical connotations. It is morally important that people take part in the paid work force. The important significance of work within our society is the reason why a lot of emphasis is placed on our work-related role and how it affects our identities. Even though society has changed a great deal since the first theorizations about the work ethic, it still greatly affects our day-to-day lives.

According to Mercure and Vultur (2010), the growth in the economy of knowing, new communications technologies, a liberalisation of the market, a growing economy, and an ever-greater move toward globalization have changed the workplace throughout many parts of Western society. Because of this, workplaces have transformed a great deal, as they seek out workers that become more personally and emotionally involved in terms of the tasks they accomplish. These workplaces demand greater flexibility, and because of this, there is greater heterogeneity in work, changes in the social relationships within enterprises, an intensification in the time spent at work, and greater recourse to atypical work (Mercure & Vultur, 2010). After Fordism, a new productive model was put into place called postfordism. Postfordism places a central value on work and employees' subjective implication in their work, their commitment to flexibility, and their personal investment of resources in work. The competences of workers are more highly valued than in the past, and there is greater individualization in terms of remuneration and management of careers. This is all done within a movement that promotes the value of realizing oneself through one's work. Because of all of these things, the relationship that workers maintain with their work, in terms of the meaning they ascribe to it and its affiliation with other aspects of their lives, has changed quite a bit over the past few decades (Mercure & Vultur, 2010).

Mercure and Vultur (2010), who studied the significance of work in Québec, have argued that the work ethic today is not an ethical doctrine, like one founded on morals that distinguishes between right and wrong. Instead, it refers to values, attitudes and beliefs that work should be central in individuals' lives. Additionally, they argued that the work ethic will vary depending on the context, the generation, the workplace and the individual's life outside of work, their cultural and socioeconomic belonging, their manners of socializing, and their singular personal experiences. Studying the work ethic therefore means studying, within a specific context, the

values that identify what is important in life, that orient a person's life course, and that prioritize certain preferences. It is also about looking at people's attitudes, cognitive as well as affective (Mercure & Vultur, 2010). Many Western societies have a deeply rooted understanding that independence is associated with work, resulting in workers seeing themselves as "free agents" that are in control of their own circumstances (Kirk & Wall, 2011).

All this is to say that the ethical importance of work is an important factor to consider when studying work's effects on individuals' role and identity formation. In a more macro-sociological sense, it is evident that people's engagement in the paid work force is highly valued, and remains a widespread social expectation for active citizens within most Western societies. This being said, the work ethic affects people differently at an individual level, depending on their personal experiences with work. As such, this study focuses on retired seniors' personal experiences, as well as their individual roles and work-related identities. This angle provides greater insight on the diverse effects that generalized social expectations relating to work can have on individuals. In this respect, participants' understanding of work inform their interpretation of retirement.

### 3.2. What it Means to be Retired

Many studies have been done on the transition into retirement, but few seem to discuss whether retirement is associated with any sort of explicit role. Many recent studies focus on individuals' experiences in retirement, depicting the heterogeneity in forms it can take. In 1982, Atchley wrote that retirement, in itself, was a role. Therefore, people would pass from a worker role to a retired role. The purpose of being retired was economical. People who are retired have also been described as "roleless" (Riley & Riley, 1989) due to their un-involvement in the paid workforce. Nowadays, retirement has become so normalized that its function is no longer really in question. It is another step in the life course, and can take on a multiplicity of different forms, depending on the individual. As a consequence, the meaning of retirement has somewhat dissolved, and people's interpretation of their social roles as retirees has blurred. It is for this reason that a clearer understanding of retirement and the ways in which people's work-related roles have translated into retirement has become the main interest of this research project.

Even though a person's transition into retirement does not automatically entail their transition into old age, a person's old age carries the assumption that they be departed from the paid work

force. This is one of society's expectations of this populace. Individuals' relationship with retirement is affected by their relationship with the work force. According to Atchley, retirement can have two basic meanings. For the individual, it means removing oneself from the workforce. For the employer, it means removing a position of employment from someone that is eligible to retire. "As a social institution, retirement influences the size and composition of the labor force, both for society as a whole and for particular industries and employers" (Atchley, 1982, p.263). Retirement would therefore be a mild sort of social institution that focuses on transitioning older workers out of the labour force with a minimum of financial hardship (Atchley, 1982).

In Silver's research (2016), many participants understood their retiree identity as related to decisions made with their *spouse*, or changes in their spouse's work status or of people within their social network. For people that were in bridge employment, retirement was more seen as a work status describing a time to generate important work. Such participants saw retirement as a time to finally engage in satisfying, productive and intellectually stimulating work. It is significant that retirement is a context-driven subjective status, as well as an identity-shaping concept that reflects and defies social norms (Silver, 2016).

Barnes and Parry (2004) made note of the importance of *gender* in retirement, as people generally have varying degrees of attachment to the work they performed throughout their lives, and traditional gender roles and identities affect these degrees of attachment. Men tend to have stronger occupational attachments and fewer non-work routines and networks than women, so their adaptation to retirement is oftentimes more difficult. Men's retirement is often characterized by many mixed feelings, and these feelings are generally affected by health, meanings attached to jobs, time in retirement, time use in retirement, and relationships with friends and families (Barnes & Parry, 2004, p.214). Currently, dominant cultural values prioritise paid work, and give it a central role in identity formation. Therefore, moving into retirement is often accompanied with feelings of loss, tension, reluctance and failure, especially for people who are more strongly attached to their occupation. Since women are often less attached to their jobs, their adjustment to retirement is often seen as more smooth. Women's relationship with work in general, whether they feel attached to their careers or not, has been characterized by different elements than men. Barnes and Parry (2004) found that women who miss work tend to refer to more social aspects of it, and have a greater tendency to stay in touch with their former colleagues. A minority of women that

express a strong identification with their work found it painful to retire (Barnes & Parry, 2004, p.219).

People's attachment to work also has effects on their social networks. If women are less attached to their jobs, the social networks they create throughout their lives are more likely to persist once they are officially retired. Men typically build most of their social networks around their workplace, and so when they retire, this is a shock to their social network. Further, men's friendships have a tendency to be more sociable than intimate, and therefore focuses on shared activities. Women's friendships, on the other hand, tend to be characterized by self-disclosure and emotional intensity. This gender difference was found in Barnes and Parry's study:

"The women interviewed tended to have more intense friendships that emphasised affective dimensions, mutual support and reciprocity. Men's friendships were more often played out in the public sphere, and they depended more heavily upon children and partners for emotional support [...] Further, women were less marked by the context of their social activities, since their friendships were generally conducted in the private sphere." (Barnes & Parry, 2004, p.222)

Of course, there are numerous factors to take into account that could be affecting older Canadians' take on retirement. Even without considering the policy that makes it possible, retirement is a very complex process for which the definition and operationalization are always subject to interpretation. The average age for retiring depends on occupation and economic sectors. Employees working in the public sector tend to retire earlier and are less likely to return to work than private sector employees. Self-employed workers tend to have more flexible trajectories than salaried employees, and are less likely to retire early (Gomez, 2011; Carrière & Sabourin, 2004). Additionally, financial factors are central when making the decision to retire or return to work after retirement. Being covered by a registered pension plan is important for financial readiness. Socio-demographic factors are also variables that affect the working behaviours of older workers, notably age, sex, education, income before retirement, whether the person is an immigrant, the domestic domain, work-related factors, health, work ability (training possibilities) and motivation are all factors that influence the manner in which older people approach retirement (Carrière & Sabourin, 2004). All in all, retirement can take on many forms, because it is affected by a great many number of factors.

Retirement in Canada no longer really has an assumed, universal format. It can vary a lot, from person to person. It depends on their work history, their pension, their gender, their social networks, their race, their class, and the list goes on. I have tried to briefly provide an idea of this diversity with a summary of the existing literature. The matter of this diversity is primarily why this study is looking at the individual experiences of retired seniors: there is no way that considering statistics will provide proper insight into people's work-related roles and identities. Their rich and diverse life experiences can better inform how they relate to work in their senior years.

#### 4. Work and Identity

It is important to remember that a person's identity is multifaceted. Since the 1980s, the concept of identity has been pluralized, meaning that people have multiple identities rather than just one. According to Stryker (1980), the self should be understood as "a set of identities organized by salience in order to account for some consistency in behavior and well-being, while acknowledging that individuals hold multiple and potentially different identities." (Reitzes & Mutran, 2006, p.336). There are many different types of identities that people can have, but "work identities" are not always considered: "Studies on identity have not centred to any consistent extent on the importance of work, or the place of work in the context of identity formation and practice." (Kirk & Wall, 2011, p.77). Work and identity intersect with other identities, but they are certainly linked to a certain extent, to economic positioning and means of production. For Paul Willis, the relationship between class, work and identity were fundamental in shaping experiences (Willis, 1977). People's identity is therefore not only influenced by their work, but also by their class, gender, race, etc. Social positions are relational, so identity is a lot more complex than it seems.

Work is unlike other key aspects of individuals' identities. When we think of identity, we might first think of something stable or fixed. But in reality, as we look at it more and more, we can see that identity is very unstable and fluid (Chandler, 2017). People put effort into their work, and work, in turn, bears an impact on individuals and the lives they lead. Much time has already been spent on my explaining the importance of work within Canadian and wider Western society, so I will now dwell on explaining how fundamental work can be at the individual level, through people's work-related roles and identities. Ultimately, work affects how people see themselves, which translates into retirement. The questions I am considering are: how does work play into identity? How does it affect the way people see and understand themselves when they are retired? In the following section I will discuss: (1) identity and role formation, (2) how work comes into play in identity formation, (3) examples of authors that did not believe in the central impact of work in identity formation, and (4) how work-related roles and identities translate into retirement.

#### 4.1. Identity and Role Formation

There are two ways of seeing identity: self-identity (how we see ourselves) and collective identity (how we're identified within a collective). Additionally, who we feel as a unique self relates to our belonging within a collectivity; the two facets of a person's identity interrelate (Chandler, 2017). According to Chandler:

“The concept of identity is a bridge between the individual and the social or collective, although we might usefully distinguish self-identity (you or me as an individual) from collective identities (you or me as a manager or man, etc.). A similar but more commonly used distinction is that between personal and social identity.” (Chandler, 2017, p.2).

The concept of collective identity is similar to that of a role. When we use the term identities though, it is seen as more fluid than the set and stable expectations of a role. The idea of identity, in its respect, evokes ideas of similarity and difference, and belonging and exclusion. An identity names a person and distinguishes them from others, but it also depends on identification. An identity depends on a process of recognition, association, differentiation and categorization: “This identification is in part a recognition of what it is that is the same or different, based on categories which are socially available or become available, but it is also [...] a process in which individuals (and I would add groups) can think, feel and act themselves into identification.” (Chandler, 2017, p.3). Because identification involves recognition of identity, it can start off with internal processes (from the self or from the collective) or by interactive processes (internal or collective). For example: a manager will act like a manager, and others will also identify them as a manager and respond accordingly. As they interact with each other, their behaviours will be affected, and they can then build a relationship based on separate identities and roles (Chandler, 2017). Taking all of this into account, Chandler (2017) identified identities as socially constructed. Even identities that seem to be biologically given, like sex or skin colour, are always subject to interpretation because of varying social contexts.

In the case of roles, different theories have developed varying definitions of how they are constructed. In functional role theory, roles are understood as shared, normative expectations that explain and determine behaviours. Social actors within a given social system will have been taught certain norms and should be counted upon to conform to such norms on their own accord and sanction others to conform to them as well (Biddle, 1986, p.70). Symbolic interactionist role

theory, on the other hand, stresses the importance of the roles of individual actors, the ways that roles can evolve through social interactions, and the cognitive processes through which social actors come to understand and interpret their and others' behaviour (Biddle, 1986). Cognitive role theory has focused on the relationship between role expectations and actual behaviors. Within this theoretical tradition, Biddle assumed that role expectations can appear in terms of norms, preferences, and beliefs. These manners of expectations are learned through experiences and may or may not be shared with different actors, can affect behaviour, and can help generate a role. Role taking is a concept referring to the practice of adequately developing oneself and participating in social interactions requiring a person to take on the role of the other. Some authors have suggested that successful role taking is due to the accuracy of one's expectations, while others have said that successful role taking is due to the sophistication of their social thought (Biddle, 1986).

#### 4.2. Work-Related Roles and Identities

Different authors have different ideas about the impact of work on roles and identities. The objective of this section is to discuss the multiple ways that work impacts people's work-related roles and identities. Work can take on multiple different forms, whether it be through participating in the paid work force, volunteering, or taking care of family members. Because of the many formats of work, its effects on individuals' roles and identities are diverse. I will therefore explain different theories on the effects of work on identity formation, the finalities of work, how organizations affect their employees' identities and work-related roles, and how non-paid work can affect individual perspectives of their work-related roles and identities.

I will first focus on self-identities and individual understandings and perspectives on roles. Mackenzie et. al. (2005) believed that work should return to the centre of the discussion on identity formation. They argued that the shared experience of work acts as the basis of collective identity. This would be especially the case when work is demanding, dangerous or highly skilled, because then people are typically really invested and emotionally attached to their work. This condition often leads to community ties (Mackenzie et. al., 2005). Kirk and Wall (2011), on their part, argued that work is a key player in people's commitment to seeking recognition:

“A location in which the need and desire to commit and relate oneself to work is not uncommon, and is indeed sometimes a central performative act. It is pertinent to the feelings

and affects of ‘recognition’, where work and identity practice foregrounds feelings of fairness, respect, dignity and recognition [...]. We would argue that when people seek recognition for the work that they do, for instance, this recognition is not always demanded in terms of monetary reward alone: self-respect, and the place of recognition – from fellow workers in particular – may be the primary motivation for those involved at the workplace.” (Kirk & Wall, 2011, p.87)

This would be a way in which they would be looking to fulfill a collective identity. Mercure and Vultur (2010) also noted that identity is a key aspect of the work ethic. Work itself is supposed to be very important for the individual. It is supposed to be central in our lives, a big part of our identity, and a substantial area of personal investment. For these authors, work’s principal finality should be marked by a feeling of self-realization, allowing for many ways to express oneself and accomplish oneself through work. Workers are expected to value work itself, as an activity, and feel morally engaged toward their employer and their objectives (Mercure & Vultur, 2010).

As I have endeavored to better define people’s work-related roles, identities and expectations, I also have to define the meaning that work can have in their lives. Mercure and Vultur (2011), in their study, delineated foundational dimensions of the work ethic that helps in better defining the meaning that work has in people’s lives. There are three of them: (1) the centrality of work (the degree of importance of work in individuals’ lives, both in terms of its intrinsic value, as well as in comparison to other spheres of a person’s life); (2) The finalities of work, which refers to the significance of work to a person and a person’s model of ideal work. It demonstrates the sense that a person gives to their work, what work’s function is in their lives, what is important to them in their work, and what they are looking for from their work. This dimension of work has two sub-dimensions: the principal and second finalities, and aspirations. The principal finality refers to the central priority of work for the individual, and the peripheral finalities refer to the subsidiary or complementary priorities that help elaborate upon the meaning of the principal finality of work. There are generally five main finalities given to work: economic, personal self-realization, quest for recognition at work and the status and prestige that would come with it, personal links and social life, or altruist nature and helping society. We can also look at whether the finalities given are intrinsic to the tasks that would be accomplished at work or extrinsic, as well as whether they are merely social or statutory (Mercure and Vultur, 2011). Mercure and Vultur ultimately proposed a binary classification between the different types of finalities: economic finalities vs. experiential finalities. The first is an instrumental finality, in which work is a tool for obtaining material

exchange. In the second case, the finality is nonmaterial. It would focus on the essence of people's work experiences, which rely on the development of affirmation of self through work. The experiential finalities can again be divided into two kinds: personal development and a valued life experience/contribution to society (collective order, participate in the collective, giving sense to the activity of work) (Mercure & Vultur, 2011). I want to depend on these classifications to define the purpose that participants give to the different types of work they accomplish; (3) Mercure and Vultur's third dimension refers to the attitudes toward managerial norms in the workplace (Mercure and Vultur, 2011). Managerial norms refer to one of many codified systems of expectations relating to work and employment. These refer to cultural models that value work or not, as well as precepts of action, valued behavior models at work, and rules. There are two main avenues for classifying such norms: the classic model, which evaluates differentially based on contribution and retribution (comparing employers' expectations with those of employees). The second way to classify norms is to look at the degree to which people interpret and interiorize the principal norms of work that are espoused in contemporary managerial ideology (Mercure & Vultur, 2011). There are three different levels of general managerial norms: (1) valorizing work and moral engagement toward the employer (the value that is given to work regardless of its content. This would allow you to establish whether work is a fundamental value to the person); (2) adhering to the company's objectives for flexibility in regard to work (this refers to the company's willingness to adapt their production to different demands. There are three types of flexibility: functional (components of tasks), salarial (salaries' flexibility depending on intensity of work) and numeric (adaptation of workforce fluctuations of the market); (3) investment of personal resources of the employee in order to reach work objectives, especially in terms of investing time and money in work (Mercure & Vultur, 2011). Asking questions about managerial norms will help better define participants' expectations of work.

Weeks also added that people are supposed to feel subjectively invested and identified with their work, as well as have a sort of affective distance from it. They need to perform the work they are tasked to accomplish, immerse themselves in it, and identify with the work (Weeks, 2011). This exemplifies work's importance in self-identity, through it being a personally fulfilling engagement.

From the viewpoint of the organization (workplace), the concern lies in ensuring that the individual does the job that is expected of them, that they conform to the norms of the organization, and that they work well with their coworkers. From the point of view of the individual, we need to look at how the person comes to understand the organization they work for. Schwartz (1987) suggested that organizations have an ontological function for individuals – they help create a sense of being. They do this by presenting an organizational ideal, and an idea of what it means to be a ‘good’ member of the organization. Schwartz also thought that working toward the organizational ideal would be a way of answering people’s psychological needs. Even if this is not the case, it would make sense for the sake of conformity, as conformity to norms is generally rewarded, while deviance is seen as damaging and more likely to be punished (Schwartz, 1987). According to Foucault (1977), particular forms of knowledge regulate people. Knowledge leads us to think in specific ways, and this is what governs our conduct. Gouldner (1957; 1958) brought up the idea that people’s organizational identity, the extent to which they will try to conform to organizational ideals, depends on whether they have Cosmopolitan orientations or local orientations. Cosmopolitans are not very loyal to their employers, are committed to developing their role skills, and are likely to use an outer reference group to orient themselves. Their commitment would be oriented toward their occupation or career rather than the organization itself. Locals, on the other hand, are typically very loyal to their employers, not very committed to developing specialized role skills, and are more likely to use an inner reference group orientation (Gouldner, 1957). In sum, even though organizations might have well-integrated and homogeneous identities, those working within them can find themselves taking on different forms of identification (Meyers, 2006).

This being said, if a person’s identity is so closely tied to their occupational identity, what happens if they are unemployed? To what extent is a person’s identity tied to work if their work does not come with monetary compensation? A person’s non-participation in the paid workforce does not just mean they will not receive a salary. It also takes away shared experiences, structured experiences of time, collective purpose, elements of status and identity, and required regular activity. Experiences of unemployment might depend on class, ethnicity, disability, gender and age, as well as the meaning of employment, and the history of employment of the group (Chandler, 2017). According to Gershuny (2003), there are four different uses of time: paid work, unpaid work, leisure time, and personal care. Some distinctions are contentious and are made based on

subjective feelings – there are a lot of grey areas, and our feelings might change from moment to moment (Gershuny, 2003). There is a relationship between unpaid work and paid work though: a person's paid work will often affect the type of unpaid work they do, because they might be able to hire help, their work schedules might affect the type of work they can accomplish during their leisure time, etc. (Chandler, 2017). Non-paid work raises questions about duty and obligations based on social norms. The work of childcare, for example, can be difficult and monetarily unrewarding, but it can also be an expression of love. There are culturally specific ideas about what it means to be a good mother, and what it means to be a good father. These notions impact the paid and non-paid work that parents embark in. Unpaid work may or may not be significant in terms of a person's self-identity: "Our self-identities are negotiated through our positioning ourselves within a range of possibilities given by income, paid work and social settings, negotiated with those others we encounter in the course of our everyday lives (including partners and children)". (Chandler, 2017, p.24). For example: mothering might be a non-paid work-related role that bears a heavy impact on an individual's identity, whereas fathering might not have the same bearing. Also, because a lot of work is unpaid, it can often be confused with leisure. Leisure (or play) corresponds to free will, and takes place depending on temporal and spatial limitations. Leisure is unproductive in the sense that it is not expected to create objects of wealth. This does not mean that the work/leisure distinction is clear cut; we can enjoy work, and leisure activities can serve a purpose. In this respect, it is important to expand the definition of work to consider unpaid work and productive leisure as well, as they can also have an impact on people's work-related roles and identities. In brief, when considering the work-related roles and individuals, it is important to equally consider the non-paid work they accomplish, as these can affect their work-related roles and identities as well. The definition of work needs to be expanded in order to fully appreciate the different facets of people's work-related roles and identities. This is especially important for this research project, which will be encountering a demographic that is not socially expected to work for pay. The types of work they engage in may be very different from more classical or mainstream definitions of work.

Another factor to consider when looking at work is the realm in which it takes place: the public and private realms are understood as separate, but they influence each other significantly nonetheless. A significant type of unpaid work that is accomplished in the public sphere is volunteer work. Unpaid volunteer work can adopt a lot of forms and is generally seen as a way to

contribute to society, as working to provide a service (rather than obtain a paycheck). Feminists have emphasized that unpaid work in the public sphere is important in provisioning, which relates to volunteer activities in community organizations that help create and maintain social networks and establish visits and social gatherings. A lot of unpaid work in the public sphere involves working with others and participating in community activities. Batson et al. (2002) distinguished four motivations to volunteer: egoism (increasing one's own welfare), altruism (increasing the welfare of others), collectivism (increasing the welfare of a group) and principlism (upholding one's own moral principles and sense of justice) (Batson et al., 2002). Volunteering is affected by gender, ethnicity, class and age (Chandler, 2017). The context of work shapes our social interactions and daily exchanges and contributes immensely to people's sense of self.

Throughout this section I have tried to explain how work, in all of its various forms, affects individuals' self-identities. Even though different forms of work bear different levels of impact, it cannot be dismissed that work continues to be a central factor in people's daily lives, and many elements contribute to people using work as a cornerstone of their identities. Following this, certain authors have tried to dismiss the impact of work on people's identities. I am considering their perspectives, even though this research project is arguing the opposite.

#### 4.3. Dissident Opinions

Some authors have lessened the degree of impact that work has on people's identities, arguing that work is more related to consumption than it is to personal identity and individual fulfillment. This section will discuss some of these opinions. Even though they counter the basis of this study, it is important to take them into account to better justify the actual impact of work on seniors' perspectives of their work-related identities and roles.

According to Richard Sennett (1988), the modern working life is very flexible and precarious, making identity deriving from work diminished. To him, the precariousness of work means that people do not form strong, long-term ties with their co-workers, nor do they feel as certain about the work they accomplish or develop a sense of place within their workplace. Their work would only be tied to the acquisition of salary. If this were true, work would no longer have a significant role in shaping identity. The work ethic would no longer be as important either, as people would not approach work as a life project; they would merely want to obtain the fruits of their labour

afterward. With this mindset, work is only seen as a means to enrich oneself economically (Sennett, 1988). Bauman, on his part, identified changes in late capitalism that altered the structures of work, making the option for a steady, continuous and durable working career nearly impossible. Because of this, lasting social relations and identity formations would diminish (Bauman, 1998). Sayer (2001), on the other hand, argued that class, rather than work, matters in identity formation, because it is what distinguishes our material wealth and economic security, as well as our access to things, relationships, practices, experiences, and chances to living a fulfilling life (Sayer, 2001).

Although this study maintains the assumption that work-related roles bear an important impact on identity formation, these ideas provide additional depth to the analysis, highlighting the importance of class and consumption that intermingle in people's economic considerations. The arguments that do not believe work to be central in identity-formation are valid and important to consider for this study, because they make note of other factors, notably class and consumption, that work closely with work in impacting identity formation. Even so, identities and roles are multi-faceted, and the importance of work cannot be discounted or neglected in considering the many facets of identity formation. Although work is functionally necessary for living in a capitalist, consumption-based society, it would be foolhardy to dismiss its meaning in people's everyday lives.

#### 4.4. Work-Related Experiences & Making Sense of Retirement

Work (and its absence) is crucial in identity formation. Everyday life is a central part of what makes our actions meaningful. The roles that we fulfill at work play a large part in people's understanding of themselves, and the purpose they have. And throughout people's lives, they are, for the most part, expected to work, and have work be a central part of how they identify themselves. So what happens when people are no longer expected to work? What happens when work is no longer seen as part of a person's identity? This section will discuss the work-related social expectations of seniors, the continued importance of work in its many forms, and how work affects people's everyday lives and identities. It will also outline the different factors that affect people's departure from the paid workforce and how work can affect people's retirement experiences.

First off, older people are typically socially expected to retire, and this is largely because of their age. We track our lives chronologically, so we often identify ourselves as kid, young adult, middle-aged, or older adult (Chandler, 2017). Consequently, there are specific social expectations associated with age. According to Bodily (1994), we use age in three ways: we project it inwardly toward ourselves, outwardly toward those older than us, and outwardly toward those younger than us. According to Chandler (2017), we also use age in a fourth way: outwardly toward those of a similar age; this projection would be the basis of identifying with others. According to Bodily (1994), the phenomenon of ageism demonstrates the assumption that time has a causal force, meaning that we associate certain attributes with age (Bodily, 1994). The interesting thing about ageism, in contrast with other forms of discrimination, is that we change ages. Sometimes we are positioned at the “right” age, and sometimes we are at the “wrong” age: “If we take participation in the labour market as a sign of social inclusion and enhanced opportunities for consumption, then those over 50 or so would seem to be a disadvantaged group.” (Chandler, 2017, p.145). Old age is sometimes viewed negatively in Western society, and it is often because it is associated with impairment and decline. Many portrayals of the life course present it as a pattern of ascent trailed by a decline. In terms of work, ageing is associated with ascent to higher levels of pay and responsibility, followed by decline and then retirement (Chandler, 2017). In sum, older people’s age can entail an assumption that they are not physically fit to work, which leads to the social expectation of retirement. Many structural factors also lead to the facilitation or inevitability of retirement in old age, as I’ve already discussed, but there are social assumptions and prejudices that push older people toward retiring in old age, rather than continue working, even though they might be able and willing to work.

Second, even though seniors are not always involved in the paid workforce, their pre-retirement involvement can often still bear an impact on their present identities. Different authors have tried to understand the impact of preretirement identities on present identities of retired seniors. Reitzes and Mutran (2006) have said that preretirement identities and social background characteristics affect people’s initial adjustments to retirement, as well as the later changes in retirement adjustment. Further, lingering preretirement worker identities also influence people’s self-esteem in retirement. In their research, Reitzes and Mutran (2006), looked at (1) how people use past roles and identities to situate themselves in their new circumstances. Preretirement worker identities would therefore have lingering effects on a retiree’s retirement adjustment; (2) how

preretirement identities may be less influential later on in the retirement adjustment; (3) how, as time passes, people's retirement adjustment affects their sense of self-esteem; and (4) what factors influence men and women in their retirement adjustment (Reitzes & Mutran, 2006). The ending of the role therefore does not mean that the role no longer exists. Role-identities continue to influence people's present and future: "[...] an identity refers to cognitive and affective meanings that an individual attributes to one's self in a role; and identity theory [...] suggests that the desire to confirm an identity motivates individuals to seek out identity-confirming behaviors and responses from others." (Reitzes & Mutran, 2006, p.336). Individuals may therefore not necessarily create a new role for themselves, but instead use their previous roles and identities to create a symbolic identity that links their past with their present. The circumstances that people are in has a massive effect on their retirement adjustment and self-esteem in retirement. As such, a positive preretirement worker identity should lead to a positive identity in retirement. Reitzes and Mutran (2006) found that retirees tend to think of themselves in terms of their former careers, so even when they no longer occupied a worker role, their former worker identity lingered.

Third, retired seniors' identity-formation is complex; many different processes are at play in when considering seniors' sense of self. The studies mentioned up until now did not really discuss older people's new work-related roles in retirement. They saw retirement as more of a situation in which people find themselves and need to adjust to. Moreover, roles of the past seemed to have a greater influence on retired folks than present roles. With this being said "[...] retirement is a far cry from the "roleless" characterization of an earlier era. It reflects diverse and complex self and identity processes. Retirees actively mingle past and future to provide order and meaning to present." (Reitzes & Mutran, 2006, p.356). The past influences the present, and new experiences can change the way we see ourselves too. It is also often assumed that aging and retirement entail role exiting, and that this in itself is a very difficult process, but it is actually much more complicated than that. People's understandings of their individual past, as well as society's structural past, helps them understand and interpret the present. Mead (1934) suggested that it is not role occupancy itself that provides reference for self-identification, but rather actively selecting social meanings when occupying a particular role. Mead also discussed the importance of time, and how our understanding of the past affects the choices and opportunities that are available to us in the present. Consequently, the ending of the worker role does not mean that the role no longer exists. Role-identities continue to influence people's present and future. Individuals may not

necessarily create new roles for themselves once they retire, but instead use previous roles and identities to have a symbolic identity that links their past to their present (Mead, 1934). According to Verrill (2002), the three most meaningful roles for people are their work role, their spousal role, and their family role. Retirement corresponds most directly with an individual's work role but affects their other role-identities as well. Further, many others say that people associate themselves most strongly with their work role, especially in Western societies. Miller had suggested, in 1965, that retirement creates an "identity crisis," because the role of the worker is the most important source of self-worth and social status. Atchley (1982), on the other hand, provided a different perspective: retirees occupy multiple roles that exhibit more continuity (family, friendship, religious roles), and retirement only contains rights to economic support and the expectation to manage one's own affairs without help. The retiree is still subject to social expectations outside of the workforce, and so they still have to fulfill social expectations relating to roles that do not have to do with their worker identity. Thus, the "identity crisis" would not be as pronounced as was previously assumed (Atchley, 1982). Simply put, preretirement work identities can bear varying degrees of impact on retirees' current identities. It really depends on how significant those identities and roles were. Additionally, retired life involves new work-related expectations, roles and identities. These intermingle with existing work-related identities.

Fourth, there are many different factors that come into play in older people's adaption to retirement. Barnes & Parry (2004) explained that the loss of paid work places pressure on people's roles and identities. They also said that currently, dominant cultural values prioritise paid work, and give it a central role in identity formation. Therefore, moving into retirement is often accompanied with feelings of loss, tension, reluctance, and failure, especially for people who are more strongly attached to their occupation. Different genders' relationships with their work-related identity is central in their transition into retirement. Men tend to have stronger occupational attachments and less non-work routines and networks than women, so their adaptation to retirement is oftentimes more difficult. Women, on the other hand, typically have more fragmented employment biographies than men. Because of this, their adjustment to retirement is often seen as smoother (Barnes & Parry, 2004). To that end, older people's social are essential in their adaptation to retirement. Men typically build most of their social networks around their workplace. Studies have shown that men's friendships have a tendency to be sociable rather than intimate and focus more on shared activities (Barnes & Parry, 2004). Women's friendships, on the other hand, tend

to be characterised by self-disclosure and emotional intensity. In older age, women's relationships therefore tend to be more extensive and meaningful. Barnes and Parry found that:

“The women interviewed tended to have more intense friendships that emphasized affective dimensions, mutual support and reciprocity. Men's friendships were more often played out in the public sphere, and they depended more heavily upon children and partners for emotional support. [...] Further, women were less marked by the context of their social activities, since their friendships were generally conducted in the private sphere.” (Barnes & Parry, 2004, p.222).

The social networks women tend to create throughout their lives are therefore more likely to persist once they are retired. Additionally, they have a greater tendency to remember the social aspects of their workplaces and stay in touch with former colleagues, although many women emphasized that work was a financial necessity above all else (Barnes & Parry, 2004).

Finally, Barnes and Parry found that those who adapted well to retirement had a tendency of framing their experiences as “moving into retirement” rather than “leaving work – they distinguished the two stages less dichotomously. The central element in positive retirement transitions was to look at retirement as an opportunity to lead life in a way that is unfettered by the demands of a career (Barnes & Parry, 2004).

Thus, there are structural differences that affect men's and women's retirement experiences. Personal relationships often undergo qualitative changes during retirement. A partner or a husband's retirement often leads to a woman retiring herself. Many studies have shown that simultaneous retirement often results in mutual satisfaction. If a woman does want to remain at work though, this could cause problems, especially if they feel pressured to retire (Barnes & Parry, 2004). Barnes and Parry found that single people felt fulfilled in their retirement, expressing a sense of being in control. Some single interviewees discussed the problem of loneliness though. This was especially the case for women, who had spent most of their lives caring for others.

Golembiewski (1978), in his work, discussed the mid-life transitions that women and men might experience. According to him, men's transitions often revolve around a gap between their aspirations and achievements, a growing sense of mortality, and pressure from their families. In general, these transitions have the capacity for personal crises and insecurities, based on relations in households with complicated interdependencies (Chandler, 2017). Consequently, men and

women's relationships with their work-related roles and identities are highly dependent upon the relations they hold outside of work.

Many studies have been done on the transition into retirement, but few seem to discuss whether retirement is associated with any sort of explicit role. Consequently, the meaning of retirement has somewhat dissolved, and people's interpretation of the social roles of retirees are blurred. It is for this reason that a clearer understanding of retirement and the ways in which people's work-related roles have translated into retirement is the main interest of this research project.

## 5. Research Project and Objectives

Elderly people represent an incredibly diverse group of people. Their lives are distinguished by many factors, notably: gender, race, socio-economic status, marital status, and most particularly, their participation in the workforce. Despite their heterogeneity, elderly people are brought together by the common social expectation that they be retired and not participate in the paid workforce. In the past, retirement held social connotations of unproductivity or “rolelessness”, but it has undergone many structural changes since its inception and now can take on a variety of forms. Today, old age distinguishes a phase in the life course where individuals are no longer expected to take part in the paid workforce. Moreover, a retired individual may have a multiplicity of work-related roles and identities, but their connotation changes as they come from a different place than for someone that is expected to build a career, support a family, and save for retirement. As such, a big difference that separates retired seniors from non-retirees are the work-related roles and identities they are expected to fulfill.

Western cultures socialize their citizens to educate themselves, so they may join the paid workforce and build a career. Their participation in the paid workforce is understood as their contribution to their society and community and can be very diverse. As people age, they are expected to retire and leave the paid workforce. The social function they used to fulfill through work would be replaced by emptiness instead. This is of course not the case, but the work-related roles of retired older people have only ever been vaguely defined by social scientists.

The first definition of older people’s role in society is that they are instead “roleless” (Riley & Riley, 1989). According to Riley and Riley, older people do not really have any sort of specific social role within our society, and because of this, they receive mixed signals in relation to who they should be and what they should do. Apparently, there is a structural lag within our society, making it so that the age structure of social-role opportunities made available have not kept pace with the ways in which people age. In short, there are no role opportunities available for this population, since our society is not set up in such a way that older people have a role to play. There are many faults in this line of thinking. First, it assumes that individuals’ social roles are solely related to their involvement in the paid workforce. Although participation in the paid workforce is a meaningful way of contributing to society, role theory has long proven that this is not the case,

and that people have many social roles for different contexts of their lives (Atchley, 1982). Second, this reasoning limits the definition of work. Paid work is not the only type of work that exists, so people's work-related roles and identities are not only tied to paid work. As was previously explained, work comes in a variety of forms, paid and non-paid. So work-related roles and identities manifest themselves through many different types of activities, and do not simply disappear with retirement. Furthermore, retirement does not necessarily mean to stop working. We are seeing more and more that people are using their time in retirement to take on various activities and endeavors that they might not have been able to do in younger years. This indicates that older people do not necessarily stop working once they are retired but may take on types of work that they had not previously done, for whichever reason, when they were younger. It is also important to note that even though seniors are expected to stop working for monetary compensation, it does not mean they do. Many people continue to work for pay regardless of their age. Briefly put, older people are not a "roleless" population.

Older people have also been described as having the role of "retirees" (Atchley, 1982). The role of retiree is simply to "be retired". Atchley defined this role as limited to an individual being removed from the workforce and subsequently receiving a pension, opening up a position of employment for younger workers. He further explained that retirement is a mild form of a social institution that focuses on transitioning older workers out of the labour force with minimal financial hardship, and subsequently creating opportunities for younger workers, reducing the cost of labour, reducing the size of the labour force and of unemployment, containing the cost of labour increases, and improving worker morale by creating old-age income security. This definition is no longer adequate for understanding the function of being retired, especially because of the numerous forms that retirement can take.

As retirement is evolving and taking on a multitude of forms, it would be objectionable to maintain its simplistic definition of "exiting the paid work force". First, this idea ignores the fact that many people's working life does not entail involvement in the paid workforce (i.e. stay-at-home parents). Second, there are multiple forms of retirement in which people do continue to participate in the paid workforce. In short, even if individuals do not participate in the paid work force, the social expectations and norms of retirement are transforming, and so the role of retiree is multifaceted, and requires a less simplistic definition.

Overall, the definitions of retirement and work need to be expanded to more wholesomely comprehend the work-related roles and identities of seniors in Canada. A social role entails answering social expectations and following norms. This research looks to better describe the evolving norms amongst retirees and social expectations projected onto this population. It has questioned older people in an attempt to gain their perspective of their roles and identities as retired individuals. As such, this study's main research question has been: *What are the work-related roles and identities of retired seniors?* The answers to this question will be based on the individual perspectives of retired seniors.

The perspectives that are useful in analysing this topic are the sociology of work, life course theory and role theory. Sociology of work helps in posing questions about participants' individual relationships and perspectives about work. Life course theory helps contextualize people's present experiences of retirement through gaining a longitudinal understanding of their background. Role theory helps understand the roles and identities that people have associated themselves with, according to the function that they may (or may not) play in society. Through developing an understanding of the social expectations that are projected onto older people, the norms that they feel they follow, and the work-related role-identities they have in retirement, this study has developed a better understanding of older people, as social actors.

I delineated three primary objectives for this research project:

1. Formulate a clearer understanding of how older people perceive their own work-related roles and identities;

It is not generally expected that older people take on work-related roles because of social expectations and assumptions that they be retired. As was previously mentioned, although retirement can take on a multitude of forms, there remains an assumption that it inherently refers to a person's departure from the paid workforce. However, this assumption and the existing vague definition of retirement are insufficient in properly representing the work-related roles of retired seniors. Research has already shown that retirement can take on a multiplicity of forms, which can involve work, and work itself can take on many forms. This study therefore sought to challenge the existing suppositions about the work and productivity accomplished by older people by enlarging the definition of work and looking at people's everyday experiences.

2. Learn about the work-related social expectations that retired seniors feel are projected onto them, and how they respond to them;

A big part of understanding social roles and identities means understanding what social expectations a person is fulfilling. This study aimed to not only better understand the work-related roles and identities of the research participants that will be interviewed, but also what norms presently exist in this respect. It has already been mentioned that retirement takes on many different forms and that people remain active in many ways, so I was interested in seeing what roles and expectations are promoted to retired seniors, what they think of them, and whether they meet them or not. Obviously, these social expectations reflect the perspectives of the interviewees. Social expectations depend on the person that is concerned. This study simply reflects individual interpretations of social expectations participants feel are projected onto them, and how they personally respond to them.

3. Develop an understanding of people's diverse life experiences and retirement experiences.

It has already been said numerous times, but retirement takes on many different forms. Although the knowledge about this diversity is entering common knowledge more and more, there are still many assumptions and simplifications about what life as a retired senior might mean. Consequently, by conducting semi-directive interviews with retired older people, I could provide a better picture of the types of lives they lead and the contextual factors that have affected their life course.

## 6. Theoretical Framework

The theories that help in analysing the issue of work-related roles for retired seniors are sociology of work, role theory and life course theory. These theories help better understand the context of interviewees' lives that have affected their work and dissect the different dimensions of interviewees' roles and identities. The next section will provide a brief overview of these three theoretical perspectives, as well as explanations of how they have been used within this research project.

### 6.1. Sociology of Work

The sociology of work can be defined as the application of the sociological mindset in analyzing work. Sociology looks to understand and explain the conditions of life in society, particularly the links that unite individuals and collectivities. Wanting to use a sociological method to study work supposes that work covers a social dimension, meaning that it brings together collectivities of people. The social dimension of work can be studied at the microsociological level as well as at the macrosociological level. "Microsociological" refers to the individual scale and the scale of smaller work groups, the ones that come together within an enterprise. "Macrosociological," on its part, refers to the societal scale as a whole (Tremblay & Alberio, 2014).

The study of work is at the heart of sociology's traditional preoccupations as it allows us to develop a critical understanding of the industrial capitalist society. Even so, there does not exist one single industrial sociology or sociology of work. This is because sociology encompasses an array of different theoretical currents. Additionally, sociologists that have been interested in work have had a tendency to specialize in more distinct domains, like the organization of work, professions, industrial relations, behaviours at work, and attitudes toward work. This diversity of approaches can be good, but it can also be confusing if people are trying to use sociology to narrow down a coherent perception to treat contemporary issues relating to work and its organization. In order to remedy this situation, the researcher needs to narrow their analysis to a theoretical current (Tremblay & Alberio, 2014). For this study, I am making use of the interactionist perspective for understanding work.

The interactionist doctrine was elaborated in the United States, at the University of Chicago. They place emphasis on individuals, small groups and significations. This perspective specifically understands the relationship between individuals and society as interdependent, rather than unilateral and determinist, wherefore humans understand their reality based on the interactions they have with other humans. They then create their identities based on their interactions with others. According to symbolic interactionism, we use reference groups to orient ourselves through life; all interaction and communication depends on the use of symbols like work, gestures, clothes, skin color, etc. As we progressively create our identities, we pursue careers. This perspective somewhat denies the existence of an objective reality when it comes to social phenomena, believing that social phenomena exist within the minds of society members, which they use in order to lead their daily lives. Organizations are therefore creations felt by ordinary people rather than scientific concepts, and we should focus on how people use these concepts, in order to better understand their intentions (Tremblay & Alberio, 2014).

Making use of a symbolic interactionist perspective of the sociology of work helps me in fulfilling my first and second research objectives. First, in questioning participants about their work experiences, I could gain knowledge about their personal understandings and perceptions of them. This knowledge is based on their daily interactions, and the reference groups and symbols they use to give meaning to their participation in work-related activities. I could then piece together a more coherent understanding of how they perceived their own work-related roles and identities by using this perspective in my line of questioning. Second, in discussing their work experiences, participants made use of social symbols and reference groups to make their answers logical and coherent. The coherence and logic they attributed to their own lives made sense of the work-related social expectations they felt were projected to them, and how they responded to them.

Making use of this perspective within the sociology of work was ideal for better understanding people's individual experiences and perspectives on work and how it affects their roles and identities.

## 6.2. Role Theory

At its core, role theory attempts to explain why human beings behave differently because of the social identities and situations they find themselves in. At its inception, role theory was expressed with a theatre metaphor: social participants could be seen as performers that are playing

out their roles and fulfilling expectations through re-enacting the scripts they've been given (Biddle, 1986). People can therefore be seen as social actors that behave in certain ways because of the contexts they are in, whose behaviours correspond to social expectations. There are many diverse assumptions within role theory, but the three main concepts in all interpretations of role theory are still: role, social position, and expectation (Biddle, 1986, p.68). A role therefore refers to the expected behaviours of status occupants. Most of role theory has focused on studying role conflict, role taking, role playing, or consensus. According to George (1993), role theory is also very useful in the study of life transitions. The major transition that is addressed within this research project is that of retirement. Even though the study is not studying the transition itself, it is key to have a clear understanding of the possible effects of transitioning from one role (full-time worker) to another (retiree). This research in particular has been inspired by *symbolic interactionist role theory* and *cognitive role theory*.

The *symbolic interactionist role theory* perspective stresses on the importance of the roles of individual actors, the ways that roles can evolve through social interaction, and the cognitive processes through which social actors come to understand and interpret their and others' behaviors. "Actual roles, then, are thought to reflect norms, attitudes, contextual demands, negotiation, and the evolving definition of the situation as understood by the actors," (Biddle, 1986, p.71). Some writers within this perspective have continued to look at the implications of role theory's theatre metaphor by focusing on specific elements of role enactment, and the effects of enactment on the social actor and observers. This led to significant discussions on self-presentation, impression and identity management, involvement, deviancy, and the impact of social labeling. Isabel Araiza (2004) remarked that symbolic interactionists remind researchers that the reality of the work does not just exist but is created by individuals as they act in a social world (Araiza, 2004, p.16). People's understanding of their individual past, as well as society's structural past, helps them understand and interpret the present. If this is true, a past in which retirement in old age was not the default could still be affecting people's understanding of old age, retirement, and social roles today. Mead suggested that it is not role occupancy itself that provides reference for self-identification, but actively selecting social meanings (Reitzes & Mutran, 2005, p.335). This perspective is beneficial to studying the roles of older retirees, as it can help extract the meaning and personal interpretations of individuals' roles. It can help discover how they understand

themselves and their role, what they believe is expected of them as older retirees, and the ways they adhere to such expectations.

The *cognitive role theory* perspective, on its part, has focused on the relationship between role expectations and actual behaviors. It focuses on the social conditions that facilitated the rise of certain expectations, the methods for measuring expectations, and the effect of expectations on social conduct (Biddle, 1986, p.74). Many cognitive role theorists also look at the ways in which people perceive others' expectations, and how this affects their behavior. Biddle did a lot of work in cognitive role theory, assuming that role expectations can appear in terms of norms, preferences and beliefs. These manners of expectations are learned through experiences, and may or may not be shared by different actors, but can affect behavior and help generate a role. This perspective is especially useful in determining what expectations older people believe feel they need to answer, as retirees. Consequently, understanding what social expectations exist can help inform the rationality behind the behaviours of retirees, in terms of their work-related functions.

There are several key concepts in role theory research that must be considered. These are: *consensus*, *conformity*, *role conflict* and *role taking*.

*Consensus* refers to an agreement on expectations held by various people. This concept was originally put forward by functionalists, who argued that social roles exist because people within a same social system share the same norms for how socially positioned members need to conduct themselves. Therefore, people know how they should behave, and everyone within a same social system support those norms and have sanction for those that do not respect them. As such, social systems can be well integrated, and interactions within them proceed smoothly because there is consensus relating to the norms that are to be followed. Two interesting consensus-related questions can address the degree to which people agree on norms and why, and whether the integration of social systems is actually facilitated by normative consensus and how. Most existing research confirms the idea that "preferential consensus promotes social integration" (Biddle, 1986, p.77). This effect is not as generalized if the studied persons have significantly different social statuses, or if the studied behaviour is disliked. When people share preferences, they are more likely to respond similarly to shared stimuli and coordinate their activities easily. This is not the case if people differ in status or are reacting to a stimulus they dislike. Sociologists have typically assumed the presence of normative consensus in their studies, and this is a serious deficiency,

because they need to provide more evidence to properly argue their theories on normative consensus. Many social theorists find that roles typically involve normative consensus and find it difficult to think about role phenomena that would violate this assumption.

*Conformity*, in its regard, refers to behaviour that complies to a pattern. It is a matter of modeling one's behavior on others' behavior, so it is a form of social imitation. Most realists say that conformity comes from people watching others' behaviours, and this leads them to forming expectations of them. There would therefore be a relationship between behaviours and expectations. This being said, the past few decades have started favouring non-conformity and creativity, questioning traditional expectations.

“The argument for normative conformity goes something like this: Others often hold norms concerning the behaviors of persons. People are led to verbalize norms or to bring pressure to bear on others for conforming to them. As a result, those persons become aware of others' norms, and they conform thereafter either for instrumental reasons or because they internalize the norms. Instrumental conformity appears because persons perceive that others are powerful and are likely to sanction them for noncompliance. Internalized conformity, in contrast, results because persons accept others' norms as their own and conform because they believe it “right” to do so.” (Biddle, 1986, p.79).

Most conformity is instrumental: it serves a purpose, and people conform to avoid sanctions. But people can also conform to norms for moral reasons. This general assumption doesn't really deal with several issues though: (1) there is very little existing evidence that people receive sanctions for nonconformity, or even that assumptions of sanctions are required for instrumental conformity; (2) little is known about the effects or determinants of internalized conformity; (3) no evidence shows instances in which people fail to conform to norms. Some theorists argue that conformity is associated with beliefs, others argue that it can occur due to preferential processes. This is when people are exposed to another person's actions, and the first person might form preferences for behaviour, inducing conformity – so preferences affect conduct. Preferential conformity is not a certainty though; it occurs most likely when preferences are somehow socially supported.

*Role conflict* refers to the concurrent appearance of incompatible expectations for a person's behaviour. It is often associated with existing stress in a context. Unfortunately, role conflict research has had a lot of conceptual and methodological confusion. Role conflict might only be one of several structural issues that cause problems in social systems. There is also role ambiguity,

role malintegration, role discontinuity, and role overload. Further, someone might have difficulties in performing a role for various reasons. All of these conditions could cause stress for an individual. Unfortunately, these phenomena have often been mistaken for role conflict in a lot of different studies (Biddle, 1986, p.82).

*Role taking*, as a final concept to consider within role theory, refers to the matter of adequately developing oneself and participating in social interactions that require a person to take on the role of another. Successful role taking can be due to the accuracy of one's expectations, while others have said that it is due to the sophistication of their social thought (when a role taker considers other people's expectations of people's actions) (Biddle, 1986, p.84).

The ending of the role does not mean that the role no longer exists. Role-identities continue to influence people's present and future (Reitzes & Mutran, 2006, p.335):

“[...] an identity refers to cognitive and affective meanings that an individual attributes to one's self in a role; and identity theory [...] suggests that the desire to confirm an identity motivates individuals to seek out identity confirming behaviors and responses from others.” (Reitzes & Mutran, 2006, p.336)

Consequently, even when exiting a role or identity, individuals do not abandon it entirely. Rather, they use their previous role and identity to have a symbolic identity that links their past with their present. People's identities can also differ in varying social situations. Social roles outside of work will have a stronger impact on adjustments to retirement (Reitzes & Mutran, 2006, p.336). In this study, it will thus be important to formulate a coherent understanding of the meaningful work-related roles that participants will have held in the past, as well as hold in the present. Additionally, by asking questions about issues like conformity and role taking, I will be able to answer my first and second research objectives in learning about people's individual perceptions of their work-related roles, identities and social expectations. According to Kirk and Wall (2011), people create narratives about their lived experiences of work about how work makes them feel, and this helps them confirm their identities:

“Within structures of feeling – those ‘meanings and values that are actually lived and felt’ dialogically shape understandings of self and other, produce alignments and commitments to ways of being, within hegemonic structures and processes. This is bound to ‘feelings’ and experiences of work; it constitutes utterances expressing how working-class people manage the resources found to handle such experiences.” (Kirk & Wall, 2011, p.228).

People's narration of their personal experiences is central in their identity construction. The ways that a person perceives or conceives an event always varies from person to person, as well as the ways they identify themselves with it (Ludvig, 2006). This perspective is useful for my research, as I am basing my knowledge on participants' explanations of their own personal experiences relating to work and retirement, as well as roles and identities.

I have previously spoken about the distinction between identities and roles. Both of these concepts have been all throughout this study, but the theoretical insights from role theory are much more useful at helping define and categorize the different ways that work impacts a person's understanding of themselves. Identity, although it has been heavily studied and discussed within sociology and the social sciences, remains to be a more fluid concept that relies on individual perceptions. Role theory, a less fluid theoretical perspective, has helped clearly formulate questions about both roles and identities and categorizing different types of answers. Role theory has also helped in explicitly addressing my first and second research objectives, as asking questions about roles, identities and social expectations helped me in (1) formulating a clearer understanding of how older people perceive their own-work-related roles and identities, and (2) learning about the work-related social expectations that retired seniors feel are projected onto them, and how they respond to them.

Symbolic interaction theory and life course theory say that retirement is a long-term role process in which people anticipate and then adapt to new circumstances. The circumstances that people are in have a massive effect on their retirement adjustment and self-esteem in retirement. It is therefore important to understand people's individual stories, in order to understand the conditions that led to their present lives. Because of this, I have also made use of the life course perspective to conduct my study.

### 6.3. Life Course Perspective

This research project also made use of a life course perspective, and therefore not only looked at the retirement situation in which participants found themselves, but also tried to see how the structural and social contexts in which their lives unfolded led to the present. This approach helped provide an extensive background for participants' lives, enabling a better understanding of how they interpret their roles as retirees. According to Silver (2016), the context in which people

transition into retirement is key in understanding its implications on individual perceptions of the meaning in being retired.

According to George (1993), there are three common principles that are shared within the life course perspective: (1) life course is a social phenomenon that is different from a life span. A life span refers to the duration of one's life, whereas a life course refers to the intersection between social and historical factors within a personal biography. For this reason, life courses reveal patterns, which are also expected to vary depending on time, space and populations. (2) a life course perspective focuses on socially recognized sequences of transitions. (3) Life course perspectives need a dynamic and longitudinal perspective. Transitions that are very prevalent and predictable are called life course markers. Retirement would be a life course marker, because it has become a predictable and nearly universal transition in the Western world (George, 1993, p.360). Studying the life course of older people's lives in a longitudinal way enabled this study to better understand the perspective of individuals, the contexts in which they found themselves, and how their personal lives are affected by larger social structures.

The life course perspective therefore allowed me to gain a clearer understanding of research participants' lives, and the experiences and events that led to their retirement. It also enabled me to take consideration of the Canadian context and how it affects individuals and helped me understand the ways in which individuals approached the third big stage of their life course, the retirement stage, in their own unique way. Finally, it helped me address my third research objective of developing an understanding of people's diverse life experiences and retirement experiences.

## 7. Methodology

### 7.1. Method

The appropriate method for this study was that of semi-directive in-depth interviews with older people. Semi-directive interviews was an appropriate method of inquiry for the study at hand because they can directly obtain personal interpretations and perceptions of the social ideals and expectations that circulate within our society, and how this population has come to interpret them. Additionally, through discussing people's experiences with and perceptions of work and retirement, I was able to learn about their individual relationships with the concept of work, as well as how it becomes represented in people's roles and identities. Asking participants to discuss concrete experiences that are related to the themes of this study enabled them to speak about how they are social actors with specific roles and identities.

This method also provided me with a semantic view, which is a type of explanation that translates one phenomenon from one sphere of knowledge to another, until having reached a final realm with which you are intuitively satisfied (Abbott, 2004). Participants' explanations of their experiences allowed me to compare their lives and perspectives with the patterns that emerged throughout the study sample. I could then explain the complex social reality of work-related roles and identities by abstracting from participants' experiences. Relating back to the data obtained from their interviews help simplify the complex social world and reduce the many descriptions that come up through conducting interviews.

It is important to note that an ethnography would have also been suitable for answering my research question and objectives. In addition to speaking with participants directly and obtaining their opinions and perspectives on retirement and work-related roles and identities, an ethnography would have given me the opportunity to observe and experience the daily lives of retired seniors living in retirement homes. It would have allowed me to witness the different interactions they are involved in on a daily basis, and see what social expectations are projected onto them. Unfortunately, due to seniors being considered a more "vulnerable" population, it would not have been feasible to obtain ethics approval for an ethnography in retirement homes. I had to obtain approvals from various levels to get the chance to speak with my participants alone, so the process

to conduct an ethnography would have been a lot more extensive and complicated. That being said, an ethnography could be an ideal methodology for a follow-up, longer term study.

This method was also best suited for addressing the research objectives that have been set out. To reiterate, my first research objective was to formulate a clearer understanding of how older people perceive their own work-related roles and identities. This means that I was looking to find out about the work that retired seniors accomplish, what roles they fulfill in accomplishing this work, how it affects their identity and understanding of self, and whether previous work-related roles still bear an impact on their identity as well. Semi-directive interviews were best-suited for fulfilling this research objective as they allowed research participants to tell their stories and discuss their opinions and perspectives about work-related roles and identities with their own words and analogies. I could gently probe them about the different issues and topics of interest for my thesis, but ultimately, it was up to the participants to elaborate upon their perspectives of what their work-related roles and identities were. This research method allowed me to ask specific questions relating to research participants' work experiences before retirement, as well as the work they accomplish as retirees. Also, the loose structure of semi-directive interviews allowed participants to define their relationship to the workforce themselves. Having them define their work-related roles and identities themselves helps in destabilizing the prejudices and wide-held beliefs about older people's and retirees' relationships with work and encourages new definitions. Overall, this research method was best suited for formulating a clear understanding of people's work-related roles and identities as they knew them.

My second research objective was to learn about seniors' work-related social expectations and how they respond to them. This involves discovering more about the social pressures that retired seniors are subject to in relation to productivity and work, what specific kinds of work they are expected to become involved in, and how individuals decided to respond to those social expectations. After having established participants' work-related roles and identities in retirement, I could ease into discussing the broader topic of social expectations, what these might be, and how they responded to them. This research objective was motivated by the impression that: although there may be vague wide-spread impressions of seniors' work-related roles and identities, the people that are best-suited for discussing this issue are seniors themselves. Additionally, as studies

have not yet thoroughly defined seniors' work-related roles or identities, obtaining research participants' impressions of what they feel is expected of them helps in informing this definition.

Third, the informal structure of semi-directive interviews encouraged participants to discuss their personal retirement experiences more freely, allowing them to define their lives in their own terms, and enabling me to fulfill my third research objective in obtaining further data on the diverse forms that modern retirement can take on. I wanted people to give detailed descriptions of their life stories, leading up to their current living situations. This helped me in fulfilling my third research objective in developing an understanding of people's diverse life experiences and retirement experiences. This entailed obtaining information on people's life stories, the sequence of events that led to their retirement and their current living situation, and the main factors that affected their life course. Additionally, hearing research participants' personal accounts of their life stories provided insight into the diversity of their experiences, as well as their commonalities. This facilitated answering the central research question: *what are the work-related roles and identities of seniors?* Considering research participants' varying life experiences and retirement lifestyles, as well as the things they have in common, facilitated pinpointing a clearer description of retired seniors' work-related roles and identities, and the key factors that can influence the forms that retirement can take.

## 7.2. Ethics Approval

Before seeking out research participants, I first obtained ethics approval to conduct this study, as it would be conducted with human participants. I first obtained approval from the retirement homes where I would be conducting research, by having members of their administration sign consent forms. Afterward, I submitted these signed consent forms, my Call for Volunteers, Interview Guide, Research Participant Consent Form, Thesis Committee Approval, and Ethics Application to the Ethics Committee. After several weeks, the Ethics Committee gave me approval to conduct my research. Research participants gave consent to participate in this study after viewing the Call for Volunteers posted in their retirement homes and signing a consent form before participating in an interview.

Bilingual copies of the Call for Volunteers can be found at Annex I, and bilingual copies of the consent form given to research participants can be found at Annex II.

### 7.3. Sample

This study was conducted with a sample of 6 participants, all of which identified as retired and residing within the Ottawa area. Participants over the age of 65 were targeted for two reasons: first, because the current age at which people are entitled to their C/QPP is 65, and second, because people aged 65 or older are more likely to be retired. This is important because they should no longer be embodying the same work-related social role and identity they used to fulfill when they were younger (Government of Canada, 2016). It is important to note that one participant was under the age of 65 (63) but had been retired for a number of years and could therefore speak a lot on the issue of retirees' work-related roles and identities. The participants were obtained through posting ads and flyers in retirement complexes throughout Ottawa. The flyers asked for potential research participants that were over the age of 65 and interested in talking about their experiences with work and retirement. Those interested were asked to contact me directly. I would then check in with the activities coordinators of the participants' retirement homes to make sure that the participants were well-suited for my study. I also maintained contact with the activities coordinators of the retirement homes so that they could do their best in promoting the research project to their residents on a daily basis. The study conducted convenience sampling to acquire these participants, meaning that all participants who were willing to participate in the study were accepted. Originally, my intention was to conduct purposive sampling to acquire research participants; this sampling technique attempts to create a sample composed of a diverse set of individuals. People's diverse backgrounds would contribute in providing more encompassing perspectives of the multiple experiences of older people regarding their social role and their work-related role-identities. Unfortunately, there were not enough participants putting themselves forward to conduct veritable purposive sampling. Consequently, my research accepted all willing people residing in retirement homes that self-identified as "retired older people".

My interviews were conducted in both French and English, depending on the maternal language of the participant. Two people had semi-directive interviews with me in English, and four had them in French. The interviews lasted between 45-80 minutes, except for one participant whose interview lasted three hours. There were two male participants and four females. One participant was in his 60s, one was in her seventies, and four were in their eighties. All of them were retired and had participated in the workforce when they were younger. One participant had

retired when he was in his thirties, one retired in her fifties, and the rest retired when they were in their 60s. The participants all had diverse experiences of work, as well as different levels of commitment toward work and work-related goals. Additionally, their activity level in retirement varied a great deal, some accomplishing a lot of work since having retired, others devoting themselves to leisure.

#### 7.4. Interview Questions

Asking individuals questions about their roles and identities is not really the most evident task, as it is not a subject upon which people actively reflect. As such, it was important for my interview questions to first discuss the lives and experiences they have had that related to work, and then also ask about how those activities made them feel. As such, I divided my interview into three sections. First, I asked participants general questions to establish their socio-demographic characteristics (ex: gender, age, marital status, information on partner, presence of kids, time at which they retired). This information allowed me to define, in a more fulsome way, the different socio-demographic factors that could be affecting the ways they lead their lives. I could also use this information later on in the interview to probe them about certain points. Gathering socio-demographic data allowed me to fulfill my third research objective of further understanding people's diverse life experiences and retirement experiences. This type of information outlined key factors that affected their lives and their retirement, easily distinguishing one participant from the next. Second, I asked them questions about their life course and retirement. During this part of the interview, I wanted to know about their lives before and after retirement, and the different factors that affected the way they approached retiring. I wanted them to create a coherent narrative about their lives, one they could look back on and deconstruct when further discussing the issue of work-related roles and identities. Through having people describe the work-related experiences, I could better identify the key factors that have affected their lives today. This line of questioning will help me in fulfilling my first and third research objectives. First, through having people create a timeline of the important events in their lives, especially the work-related ones, I can better gauge their perspectives on work, the priorities they've held throughout their lives (i.e. how important work was to them, how it compared to other facets of their lives), and the logical series of events that led them to having a particular life now. Next, enabling people to discuss their life course helps me fulfill my third research objective by clearly outlining the important factors that affected

their lives. This will facilitate comparing and contrasting the different participants' life stories and retirement experiences in a chronological way. Third, I discussed the issue of work-related roles, identities and social expectations of retired seniors. Basing my questions on the previously established information found in the narratives of their life courses, I probed participants on their roles as workers, the different social expectations for seniors, and the role of work after retirement. This line of questioning helped me in fulfilling my first and second research objectives. First, my asking direct questions about people's work-related roles (i.e. their meaning, their importance, their centrality), I facilitated formulating a clearer understanding of how older people perceive their own work-related roles and identities. Second, by asking people about the specific work-related expectations they have in retirement, I was able to hear their perceptions of what was expected of them, how they answered those expectations, and how they were different from when they were younger and engaged in the workforce.

Bilingual copies of the interview guide can be found at Annex III.

## 7.5. Analysis

After the semi-directive interviews have been finished, their analysis is accomplished through inputting their transcriptions into the qualitative software *NVivo* and coding the themes that arise, taking into account the themes already identified within the existing literature. The type of analysis is small-N analysis, meaning that I looked at similarities and contrasts in a small number of cases. The small-N comparison investigates from three to a dozen cases and is typically used in ethnographies or historical research. They combine the "advantages of single-case-analysis with those of multicase analysis, at the same time trying to avoid the disadvantages of each. On the one hand, it retains much information about each case. On the other, it compares the different cases to test arguments in ways that are impossible with a single case. By making these detailed comparisons, it tries to avoid the standard criticism of single-case analysis – that one can't generalize from a single case – as well as the standard criticism of multicase analysis – that it oversimplifies and changes the meaning of variables by removing them from their context." (Abbott, 2004, p.22).

A coding scheme was prepared that corresponds to my three research objectives and centers around the three main concepts for this study: work-related roles and identities, social expectations,

and life course. In focusing on how participants approached the topics of work-related roles, social expectations of retired individuals, and personal experiences of work (before and after retirement), I equipped myself for answering my research question and formulating a clearer understanding of the role-identities of older retired Canadians.

My coding scheme is based on my research objectives. Consequently, the first main theme is about Work-related roles and identities. This theme was then divided into four sub-themes: centrality of work, finalities of work, managerial norms, and work-related roles and identities. “Centrality of work” relates to how central work is in participants lives. This theme allowed me to distinguish participants priorities, in seeing how central work was in comparison to other facets of their lives. “Finalities of work” helps determine the purpose and reasoning that people gave to their work. This is applicable to work before and after retirement and looks into how people understand the work they accomplish. “Managerial norms” relates to participants’ expectations of their employers and the organizations they work with. Figuring out their expectations of work-related norms helps determine how dedicated they are to their work and their employer, and how much extra they are willing to put into their work, just on the basis that they value work. “Work-related roles and identities” relates specifically to the first research objective. It delimitates how work, before and after retirement, has affected participants identities and understandings of self. The data obtained within this theme and its sub-themes will be analyzed based on the existing data and research on the meaning of work and the work ethic, on the meaning of retirement, on identity and role formation, and the specific impacts of work-related experiences on roles and identities.

The second theme in the coding scheme corresponds to the second research objective: Work-related social expectations. This theme was divided into three sub-themes: finalities of retirement, social expectations in retirement, and work vs. leisure. “Finalities of retirement” relates to the purpose behind retirement. As people no longer saw themselves as required to work, focusing on the finalities of retirement helped distinguish what the purpose behind their current life situation might be. “Social expectations” relates directly to the research objective: in determining what retired seniors feel is socially expected of them, we could better determine what their current work-related roles and identities are. “Work vs. leisure” is a theme that arose throughout the course of conducting interviews. In defining what was socially expected of them, participants strayed away from traditional concepts of work (that came attached to ideas of salary) and discussed work-like

activities they identified as leisure. Discussing expectations in retirement therefore results in many discussions of leisure activities, which can sometimes be like work. This theme will be interpreted with the assistance of existing theories on identity and role formation and the impact of work on roles and identities.

The third research objective relates to formulating a better understanding of retired seniors' life experiences and retirement, and it is dissected through the third and final main theme in the coding scheme: Life Experiences and Retirement Experiences. This theme relates to the idea of better understanding people's diverse life courses in order to more thoroughly understanding their present lives. The Life Experiences and Retirement Experiences theme is divided into three sections: work life course, transition into retirement, and work after retirement. I did this division to separate the different eras of people's lives. "Work life course", somewhat self-explanatory, discusses people's work experiences. "Transition into retirement" discusses the major transitory events that participants went through in their adjustments to retirement and old age. "Work after retirement" discusses the different forms of work that people participate in retirement, to better understand the different ways that work still takes place in retirement. This data will be interpreted with the help of existing data on how work-related expectations affect retirement, the factors that typically affect retirement, and trends for transitions into retirement.

In order to create a more fulsome understanding of older people's work-related roles and identities, I will be looking to analyze the relationships they have had with work before and after retirement, and the meaning they extracted from it during different periods of their lives.

## 8. Data

This research project involved interviews with six retired seniors residing in Ottawa. All participants had varying experiences in the paid workforce, and now resided comfortably (for the most part) in retirement homes on the East side of the city. The participants' diverse professional backgrounds included military service, public service, nursing and teaching. Although most participants worked full-time for the majority of their preretirement lives, several of them also discussed experiences outside of the paid workforce, accomplishing other types of work. In addition to preretirement work, all participants engaged in multiple forms of non-paid work after having retired, including accomplishing volunteer work, taking on caregiver positions, housework, and community outreach. In discussing the work they accomplished, participants also outlined different kinds of leisure activities they participated in, key priorities and roles that affected their identities and were not classic examples of participation work-related roles (travelling, parenting, religion, community involvement), and important life events that affected and modified their life course.

This next section will recount the data that was collected through semi-directive interviews. As the interviews were structured and based on the three research objectives, the data is organized by research objective as well: older people's work-related roles and identities, the social expectations projected unto them, and their life course and retirement experiences. Each research objective will be clearly outlined and followed by an explanation of the relevant data collected from the semi-directive interviews.

8.1. Formulate clearer understanding of how older people perceive their own work-related roles and identities.

This research objective is about better understanding the work-related roles and identities of retired seniors. In order to fulfill this objective, I asked participants various questions about their work experiences, the meaning they ascribed to their work, and how it affected them. The following themes were what arose in this line of questioning that allowed me to better understand how people felt about work, how they took on different roles that were work-related, and how their work-related roles affected their identity and understanding of self.

### 8.1.1. Centrality of Work

The idea of centrality of work relates back to Mercure and Vultur's (2011) definition about the foundational dimensions of the work ethic, which help define the meaning of work in people's lives. The concept of "centrality of work" refers to the degree of importance of work in individuals' lives, both in terms of its intrinsic value, as well as in comparison to other spheres of a person's life (Mercure & Vultur, 2011). In the context of my interviews, I broached this issue by asking participants to hierarchize their main priorities when they were in the workforce, the main ones being work, family and social life, but also considering whatever other priorities they had delineated throughout their interviews, like volunteering and travelling. First, we discussed the hierarchy that would have existed during their working lives, before retirement.

For most participants, family was always most important, and work was a means to support them. Eve, for example, who worked on and off throughout her life as a French as a Second Language (FSL) teacher, always put family first. She did not question leaving work if it was needed to take better care of her family. She said :

« Non c'était pas la principale chose parce que quand mes enfants étaient jeunes j'étais à la maison. J'ai commencé réellement à retourner au travail quand mon plus jeune était à l'école. Alors mon travail était important, je me donnais beaucoup à mon travail, mais ma famille était première. »

Although work was important to her and she put a lot of herself into it, her family was always most important. This theme was reiterated in most of the other participants. Nathalie, who been widowed in her forties and needed to work to support her family, always prioritized her kids. Because she was a single mom, she had to wrestle with the dual obligation of making enough money to support her children, but also be as present as she could in their lives. She noted that when she went to find work, she immediately established her ground rules for working hours: she would take time off when her kids were sick, when they had days off from school, and whenever else they needed her. Since her kids had just lost a parent, she knew it was more important that she be present in their lives and offer as much support as she could. She even emphasized that work purely had an economic function to her, and that she was not at work "to be there". Annabelle, who was a nurse and spoke at length about her schooling, the importance of her work, and the different life-changing experiences she had had as a nurse, maintained that her family came first

as well. She took summers off in order to take care of her kids when they were out of school, and in terms of establishing a hierarchy of priorities, she said that work was tied in second with travelling. Margaret, a former special education teacher, loved her work. She found a lot of meaning and satisfaction in the work she did and spoke about her accomplishments with great pride. When asked to establish a hierarchy of priorities from when she was working, she said:

“It was important. I mean, my family and so on were always more important, but it was important. So if you put it in a wheel, in the centre was God. That was the top priority. And then out of there you’d guide your life. And so my family had that, a big chunk. And then work. But then friends and so on are all in there, but the two big chunks, of course, were work and family. And the thing that was keeping those in balance.”

Therefore, even though work was important to her, her family was most important, after God. She also noted that her relationship with her husband was incredibly important to her, explaining that “couple time” was vital to them. In brief, although work was highlighted as very important to all participants, most of them noted that family was always fundamental.

This being said, it was impossible to establish a hierarchy of priorities for one participant, Paul. When asked about how important work was, he immediately answered that it was important, without reflecting upon it. When asked about how it compared to family and social life, he started telling stories about his social life and the friends he made at work. It seemed that he wanted to please me and tell me things he thought I wanted to hear. Even so, when he spoke about the work he accomplished before he retired, it seemed to generate a great sense of pride in him, much more than other accomplishments.

This theme did not completely apply to retired life because the type of work accomplished in retirement is very different, and the definition of work seems to become more ambiguous. Notably, five of the six participants, although continuing to accomplish various kinds of work in their day-to-day lives, identified themselves as free from work, especially the type of work that establishes strict routines, like when one is working full-time. For example, Margaret, who became a published author after retirement and received financial compensation for the distribution of her books, did not consider writing to be her “work”, even though it is a legitimate career for many. Work after retirement was never seen as central. Instead, people prioritized family, friends and leisure. It is important to note that many leisurely activities could fall under the category of work,

even though they do not have the routinized quality that many people associated with work. Several participants noted that retirement gave them the freedom to choose how much work they wanted to accomplish, what kind of work, and how much of themselves they wanted to put into it. They always had the freedom to take on whatever projects they wanted, and often would move from one project to the next, rather than continuously doing the same thing. For example: Nathalie, who knit for various causes, did not feel exceedingly pressured to produce more items – she worked at her own speed. Overall, in terms of establishing a hierarchy of priorities, no one identified work as important in retirement.

### 8.1.2. Finalities of Work

The sub-theme of finalities of work refers to the significance of work to a person and a person's model of ideal work. It demonstrates the sense that a person gives to their work, what work's function is in their lives, what is important to them in their work, and what they are looking for from their work. This dimension of work has two sub-dimensions: the principal and peripheral finalities. The principal finality refers to the central priority of work for the individual, and the peripheral finalities refer to the subsidiary or complementary priorities that help elaborate upon the meaning of the principal finality of work. In my interviews, I asked participants questions about the meaning and the purpose they gave to their work. More specifically, I asked them about their work-related objectives, why work was important to them, what work-related accomplishments were meaningful to them, and the reasoning behind their choice to work in a particular field. Essentially, I wanted to gauge the meaning they attributed to their work. The answers I was given were very varied. Although most participants spoke about the monetary importance of working, most of them also enjoyed the work they did and obtained other fulfilling satisfactions from it.

When I asked Marc about his work-related objectives in the military, he spoke about the importance of professionalism and obtaining promotions. It seemed like when he was working, his goals related more to moving forward (in contrast to staying put in one job). He gave himself goals of always getting better and improving himself. Remarking that he had not received a lot of education, his work helped him fulfill his aspirations to expand his knowledge and abilities.

Both Eve and Margaret worked as teachers, and they both remarked that seeing their students learn and grow was very fulfilling. For Eve, the purpose of her work was to see students

blossom under her tutelage. Further, she highlighted that her students were people that became an important part of her life, remarking that as a teacher, you are not working with instruments; you are working with hearts and minds, with living beings:

“Dans l’enseignement, c’est de voir les enfants « blossom. » [...] C’est de voir les enfants s’épanouir, et puis, étant dans la même école, tu les vois d’année en année après qu’ils ont passés dans ta classe. Tu les vois développer, puis tu vois leur succès. Aussi, tu fais partie de leurs soucis, ils te racontent leurs soucis, leurs problèmes, leurs maladies, leurs chats, leurs chiens ; ça fait partie de leurs vies. [...] Alors tu fais partie de leurs vies comme eux ils font partie de la tienne réellement. On n’est pas... malgré que le soir, quand je rentrais chez moi, je pensais pas à mon école. Mais les enfants étaient partis de ma vie. Ils faisaient partie de ma vie à l’école. Oh oui. Tu travailles pas avec des instruments, ou quoi que ce soit, tu travailles avec des cœurs, avec des cerveaux, avec des êtres vivants. Tu sais, c’est bien intéressant.”

Margaret, on her part, enjoyed the experiential finalities she got from teaching. She said that she liked seeing the impact she could have on students and being able to mold their minds. She had wanted to be a teacher since she was a little girl, and so she was accomplishing exactly what she wanted in life. She noted that teaching came with a lot of great benefits as well; in addition to a teacher’s salary, she got summers off, which she spent taking care of her kids. But even with these benefits, what she enjoyed most was teaching her students and watching them grow.

The primary finality of Nathalie’s work as an executive assistant for the federal government was economical; as a widow, she worked so that she could provide for her family. She later distinguished her work for the Government from work volunteering; she worked for the government because she needed the money, but she volunteers because she enjoys it. She enjoyed some of the work she accomplished with the government as well, but she did not do it for that reason.

Annabelle’s work as a nurse was very important to her. She noted that she would not have been satisfied as a housewife – she had stopped working briefly while her kids were very young, and she could not stand it – she needed to fulfill herself in other ways. Additionally, it was important to her that she do work she enjoyed. Before beginning her studies as a nurse, she had worked at a magazine and left after one year because she did not enjoy it. She was not passionate about the work and could not see herself working there as a career. She then began her studies in

nursing because the program was free, and found that she really enjoyed the work, ending up working in different fields of nursing all throughout her life and finding out different elements she enjoyed and excelled in:

« J'ai fait le choix qui allait avec ma conscience. Je vais pas endetter mes parents ou les rendre... qu'ils se sentent coupables de pas me l'offrir parce qu'ils peuvent pas. Alors j'ai choisi d'aller où ça coûtait rien à mes parents. Et c'est comme ça que je m'ai retrouvé infirmière. Mais dans le fond, j'avais une âme d'infirmière. Alors je me suis retrouvée quand même très bien dans mon élément là-dedans. »

Paul, on his part, seemed to take great pride in the work he accomplished before retiring. At the Ministry of Justice, he prepared case files for judges, and he was proud of explaining how important a role this was. Even so, Paul retired when he was 33, which is a fairly young age to retire. He said that it was because of health problems; overall, he seemed to have an erratic life course. It was difficult to track and understand the sequence of events he went through. Regardless, he still, at the age of 64, spoke highly of the work he accomplished as a younger man, especially at the Ministry of Justice. He remembered his work as an environment in which he was happy: "Oh, I was happy. [...] And no matter where I was, I was happy. I was always serene, you know? Serene."

Despite these varied answers, every single participant remarked on the importance of money, and everyone except Paul noted that family was their priority and that work was tied to providing for their families. Even so, it was evident that many participants enjoyed their work. They worked because they had to, but they also enjoyed a lot what they did.

The theme of finalities of work was most applicable to people's descriptions of the work they accomplished before retiring, as many did not classify the work they accomplished post-retirement as "work". When reflecting upon their lives before retirement, they had very clear and specific ideas of the work they accomplished. After retirement, the distinction was less clear. Moreover, if they did classify their post-retirement accomplishments as "work", it did not have the same routinized and obligatory qualities as work before retirement. Because of this, there was a change in the dominating themes of what kind of finalities people found in the work they accomplished after retirement. Before retirement, many people characterized their work as having a financial necessity – they always sought payment for the work they accomplished. After retirement, the monetary expectation from work disappeared for the most part. Nathalie, who volunteered a lot by knitting hats and socks for various causes said she did it to help and because

she enjoyed it:

« Bin, c'est pour le plaisir, puis si y'a de quoi que je peux donner, je peux aider à quelqu'un. Tsé, c'est ça là. C'est pas grand chose, les chapeaux, mais quelqu'un qui a froid, puis qui savent pas crocheter. [...] Ça fait que tsé, c'est triste, moi qu'est-ce que c'est, moi ça me prend une heure, peut-être deux heures pour faire un chapeau. Puis pour eux c'est beaucoup. Et puis si c'est pas eux autres, les femmes battues encore, puis les itinérants, encore aussi. »

Nathalie enjoyed knitting and the feeling of helping people that were in need, so she knit one or two things per day as a volunteer. The most meaningful aspect of her volunteer work was the fact that she was helping people. She had said that what was most meaningful in her previous work at the government was having money. Annabelle also did volunteer work in retirement; she went to spend time and read with a blind man at a hospital. He was very sick though, and questioned the things his doctor would tell him, so he asked Annabelle questions about his treatments and the different justifications his doctor had given him. Annabelle's nursing background brought a lot into this relationship; he appreciated her friendship, and he could also trust her guidance in terms of the treatments he was undergoing. Like Nathalie, Annabelle enjoyed volunteer-work because she was helping someone. The principal finality of people's volunteer-work was therefore experiential.

Two of the research participants, Annabelle and Margaret, presented interesting cases of post-retirement work, as they became published authors after having retired. So interestingly, they still partook in work that involved some sort of monetary compensation. Funnily enough though, neither one of them was really "in it for the money". They wrote books because they felt like they had stories to tell. Annabelle explained that she felt she had lived a lot and that she wanted to share her life with others. It was not a serious literary undertaking, but she wanted to share her stories. Even though there were economic finalities involved in publishing a book, it was clear that she had done so for the experiential finalities that result from writing and sharing personal stories. Margaret, on her part, wrote three books: two non-fictions and one fiction. Her first book was about the experience of living with a loved one with Parkinson's disease. She had realized that not many books existed that spoke about this experience, so she decided to write one herself, drawing from her experiences of caring for her late-husband who had Parkinson's. Later, one of her family members suggested that she get published. So she wrote her book, got a friend to edit it, and then someone else helped her publish it. Her second book was about grieving after a spouse had died.

This book also related to her personal experiences and feelings, which she felt needed to be told. Her third book, which was released in 2017, is a fiction and about a dog, inspired by her real-life dog. Similar to Annabelle, Margaret did not always qualify her books as work. She also did not qualify herself as an author or writer. All of the books, articles and poems she had written were things that she felt like writing about, so she did. When I asked her about the work of writing, she explained that she had always written stories and poems; these were things that she had always done in her free time, so they were things she also did as an adult now.

In sum, for the most part, the principal finalities for the work that people accomplished in retirement were more experiential in nature, rather than economic, like was the case before retirement. People did not associate their work as necessary to support their family or themselves at all, after having retired, which was an ongoing theme for pre-retirement work. Even those who did receive financial compensation for work accomplished after retirement did not specifically discuss it – that was not why they had done the work. They did it because they wanted to.

### 8.1.3. Managerial Norms

The third dimension of work that that was discussed with participants came from Mercure and Vultur's idea about people's attitudes toward managerial norms in the workplace (Mercure and Vultur, 2011). Managerial norms refer to one of many codified systems of expectations relating to work and employment. They relate to cultural models that value work or not, precepts of action, valued behavior models at work, and rules. They especially influence how people invest time and money in their work (Mercure & Vultur, 2011). Asking participants questions about managerial norms helped better define their expectations of work as well as how much they felt morally engaged to it and their employer. In order to find out more about this issue, I asked participants questions about how morally engaged they felt to their work and their employer, whether they were flexible in what they put into their work, and whether they ever invested personal resources in their work.

Most participants answered that they were willing to work overtime and invest personal resources into their work, and that they felt morally engaged toward their work and their employers. This being said, most of them still remarked that when they would arrive home after a day's work, they stopped thinking about work. Marc, whose primary finality in work was the financial compensation it came with, was still very devoted to his employers and his work. He was

in the military and he respected his bosses and was willing to stand by them when they were in a bind. Even so, he noted that there were times where he was less confident in them. This decline in confidence took place when his superiors demonstrated inappropriate behaviour in the workplace, especially inebriation, necessitating that Marc reprimand them. When I further pressed whether he felt loyal to his employers for most of his career, he answered yes. As such, even if there were authority figures that demonstrated less than admirable qualities at times, he still felt loyal toward them because they were his superiors. In terms of whether he invested additional personal resources in his work, whether it be extra time, money, or supplies from home, he answered that he would bring in flowers for female coworkers' birthdays and that he would work overtime when special occasions were taking place. He had also worked "on call" on a number of occasions and was available to come in and do extra work when other employees were absent. Eve highlighted that she tried to keep her work and her home life separate. When she had to do additional work, she did not bring it home with her. She invested personal resources in her work as well by buying small gifts as rewards for her students. Nathalie remarked that when she was at work, she wanted to do her best, but her first priority was always her family. Even though she wanted to accomplish good work for her employer and was happy to work for them, she was not quite so morally engaged to them that work became a primary priority. She did not invest personal resources in her work either. Margaret, who loved her work as a teacher, invested a lot of personal resources in her work, and worked many extra hours. Even so, she always distinguished her work life from her home life and made sure to prioritize her family when she was at home. Overall, the participants respected their employers and wanted to put in good work for them. Nevertheless, most participants continued to prioritize their families over their work and were not more engaged to their work than they were toward their families.

In terms of expectations of work, most participants did not feel like they had to invest personal resources into their work or work additional hours. They were willing to put in a little extra, but the reasoning behind their work (money to support their families) was always clear.

Participants' expectations from work were very different in retirement. In the type of work that participants accomplished after retirement, it was less a question of being morally engaged toward employers, adhering to companies' objectives, or investing personal resources to reach work objectives. In many cases, participants' post-retirement work made them only accountable

to themselves, so the question of “expectations from employers and work” did not really apply. They had expectations from themselves, and oftentimes that expectation ended when they accomplished the job. For the participants who volunteered or participated in different community organizations, their expectations of the organizations or communities were very different, because the intentions behind their work were very clear. There was never any economic gain. They were looking to improve their lives and the lives of others, so they were not especially dedicated to those organizations in the same sense that they might be in paid work. There were no employers or authority figures involved. If ever the organization had shortcomings, like Annabelle felt at times with “Retraite en action”, they worked toward making things better. It was not a question of respecting authority figures or anything like that. It was more a question of finding a worthwhile cause and investing time and effort into it. For example, when I asked Nathalie whether she was morally engaged to the organizations for which she knit hats and scarves, she said that she did not really know them. She gave them what she knit, but she did not really talk with them. The work was more seen as a pass-time.

#### 8.1.4. Work-Related Roles and Identities

The purpose of this project was to determine how work-related roles and identities came into play in retired seniors’ current understanding of themselves (i.e. *What are seniors’ work-related roles and identities?*). In addition to probing participants on their diverse work and retirement experiences, I also asked them straightforward questions about their work-related roles and identities. There are two angles to this line of questioning. First, I asked participants how their previous occupations still come into play in their current identities. Second, I asked participants how work accomplished in retirement (i.e. work-related roles) affects their identities.

In terms of the first line of questioning, half of the participants did not feel like their former careers or jobs affected their identities today. When asked about whether they still talked about their former careers, most of them answered no. Marc, for example, no longer discussed his military work. He said he completely let go of that life. Eve, on her part, explained that she left her work identity behind once she retired:

« Quand j’ai pris retraite, c’était fini. Oui j’ai bien joui la retraite. J’ai joui d’enseigner, mais là c’était fini. Vivre dans le passé c’est pas moi. »

She was not the only participant to make those points (living in the moment, enjoying retirement, and not living in the past). Nathalie also noted that she left the past in the past. Even so, participants always noted that their work experience affected them deeply, even if it did not influence their current identity. Eve pointed out that her work as a teacher made her less shy; Nathalie learned a lot about insurance; Margaret learned about working with people with disabilities. These were all skills and lessons they brought with them into retirement. Nonetheless, Eve and Nathalie did not relate this change in skills back to their current identities. They enjoyed their retirement and chose to do different things with their time than what they did when they were working.

Moreover, other participants still identified strongly with their past careers. Annabelle, who had been a nurse, noted that it was something that always stays with you, saying: “Quand on l’est un jour, on l’est toujours.” Margaret made a similar reflection, affirming that her experiences as a special education teacher inform her interactions with many people in her retirement home. Also, she asserted that her experience in special education prepared her for taking care of her husband when he was experiencing increasingly serious health issues from Parkinson’s disease. With all this being said, these participants also noted that they did not frequently talk about their former careers. Even though their careers affected their identities today, they did not discuss them on a daily basis, as they were no longer relevant to their current lives. Margaret remarked that this was because being teacher is a feeling that she carries with her:

“It’s a feeling. I was a teacher. I will always be reaching out to people. So more than talking about being a teacher, it’s more about eluding or giving the impression that I’m a helper, that I’m open.”

Next, I asked participants about their work-related roles as retirees and how it translates to their identities. Many participants noted that retirement held a quality of “freedom”, especially freedom from work and routines. As such, when people spoke about their most significant roles and identities in retirement, they usually did not relate to work. Nathalie’s identity, for one, was most influenced by her being a mother. Other participants, on the other hand, described their retired identity as heavily influenced by the freedom that retirement brings. Annabelle explained:

« Être retraité c’est être libre. Là, être retraité c’est la liberté de choix d’activités. Tu fais ce que tu veux, comme tu veux, quand tu veux. C’est vraiment la liberté, être à la retraite, pour moi. T’es plus soumis à des patrons. T’es plus soumis à des règles et des

choses – bin oui, il y a toujours tes règles personnelles, la société, mais je veux dire... bon. »

Overall, retirees' current work-related roles did not influence their retirement. Instead, participants highlighted that the freedom of retirement characterizes their retired identities. In terms of work-related roles stemming from previous working lives, retirees were split as to whether they influenced their current identities; some participants remarked that they did, others that they did not. Even so, they all noted that their previous careers heavily impacted them.

8.2. Learn about the work-related social expectations that retired seniors feel are projected onto them, and how they respond to them.

My second research objective is to learn more about the work-related social expectations of retired seniors. This line of questioning is important because it helps better outline the social roles that people are expected to meet, as they understand it themselves. Many participants had very clear ideas of the activities they did and their own reasons for doing them but asking about whether they were answering “outside” expectations often changed their perspective on the issue. To better understand the finer tunings of this research objective, this section will discuss two main themes that emerged: (1) finalities of retirement, and (2) social expectations.

#### 8.2.1. Finalities of Retirement

In line with the sub-theme of “finalities of work”, this theme discusses the purpose and meaning that people attribute to retirement. As was previously explained, retirement exists because of our work-based society. It is a phase of life in which people can stop participating in the paid workforce. Even so, retirement does not necessarily represent non-work. It is just another stage of life - one in which people continue to participate in different kinds of activities, interact with people, and contribute to their communities. As such, I asked participants about the meaning of retirement and the meaning behind being a retiree. Participants came up with all kinds of enlightening answers relating back to what they expect from their retirement experiences.

Some participants characterized retirement as filled with ennui or loneliness. For Marc, Annabelle and Margaret, this was mostly due to the death of their spouses. Several participants recalled instances in which other people living in their residences were overcome with ennui and

did not look forward to their days. In line with this idea of ennui, one participant spoke of the importance of remaining occupied and finding activities to fill one's time. Although most participants did not suggest remaining occupied as a means of combatting this ennui, all participants had activities that occupied their days, that gave meaning to their lives.

Eve, on her part, characterized retirement as a stage in which people should be proud of their accomplishments. More specifically, she said:

« Bien d'abord c'est une personne qui est certainement accomplie dans sa vie. Ça veut pas dire qu'il n'y a pas eu des hauts et des bas, souvent beaucoup de bas. C'est une personne qui devrait être fier, jusqu'à un certain point, d'avoir accompli quelque chose dans la vie, si c'est d'élever sa famille, ou d'avoir éduqué des enfants, ou d'avoir pris soin des malades, quoi que ce soit la profession. C'est un stage dans la vie qui identifie une personne. Mais pour moi, je suis fière d'être rendue à ce point ici. J'ai été très chanceuse dans ma vie, malgré encore qu'il a eu des bas. Mais, comment les choses sont maintenant ? Je peux pas demander mieux. »

Reflecting back on her happy marriage, her grown kids, and her other accomplishments, she spoke of retirement as a time in which people can reflect upon their life accomplishments, highlighting that despite the fact that life involves both highs and lows, it is possible to look at the big picture and appreciate everything a person has been through. Finally, Eve remarked that retirement arrived once she acknowledged that it was time for her to stop working and start enjoying life. As such, retirement was characterized as an opportunity to rest and appreciate the time she was given. Many participants characterized retirement as a time for rest. Eve, for example, explained that her body was getting older and that her body parts continued getting used up, and that retirement came in at the perfect time for that. She was very cognisant in her body's limitations, and retirement allowed her to take advantage of her abilities without getting hurt.

Finally, the biggest qualifier for retirement involved the notions of freedom and liberty; freedom from restrictive schedules, liberty from accountability to a job, and independence from employers. Participants enjoyed the fact that they could determine their schedules and the ways in which they filled their days. They enjoyed the fact that they did not need to report to anyone, that their actions were only accounted to themselves. Retirement also offered opportunities to do things individuals have never done before. Annabelle explained:

« Être retraité c'est être libre. Là, être retraité c'est la liberté de choix d'activités. Tu fais ce que tu veux, comme tu veux, quand tu veux. C'est vraiment la liberté, être à la retraite, pour moi. T'es plus soumis à des patrons. T'es plus soumis à des règles et des

choses – bin oui, il y a toujours tes règles personnelles, la société, mais je veux dire, bon. Le vieillissement c'est autre chose. »

She also qualified old age as a stage in which people got rid of all of their “paperwork”, meaning they got rid of all of the extra things they carried along with them. Over the course of a lifetime, people accumulate a lot of stuff, and old age is the time at which to get rid of all of the accumulated stuff. Ultimately, getting older means arriving at what is essential. Then, it becomes possible to live day by day and not project oneself too much into the future. It's possible to appreciate the little things once you let go of all of the excess. You begin to accept giving up all of the excess, you accept all of the losses you've had.

Moreover, I also asked participants whether they found that retirement was important or necessary, and participants had mixed responses. According to Nathalie, if older people are interested in continuing to work, they should be allowed to work, even if they may not be as efficient as younger folk. Margaret related retirement to a vacation: it is something to look forward to. When you are younger and working, you look forward to the chance to go on vacation, and retirement is like that. It is the big vacation after a lifetime of work. Paul, who had retired at the age of 32, indicated depression as a reason for his retirement. He was unable to work because he was depressed, and he was also unable to work because his medication made him unable to work and be active. Therefore, for him, retirement was necessary.

### 8.2.2. Social Expectations during Retirement

When discussing the general topic of work, the social expectations shift dramatically after retiring. So in addition to asking participants questions about the purpose of work and the work they accomplished after retiring, it was important to discuss the social expectations projected onto them. Before retiring, participating in the paid workforce is a significant and meaningful social expectation. Although this expectation does not disappear in retirement, it changes. So in addition to asking people about whether they were expected to accomplish work in retirement, I also wanted to ask them about the general social expectations projected onto them as retirees.

I asked participants about what was socially expected of them; what society expected from them, and what the residential community expected from them in terms of work. In many interviews, participants noted that their residences expected them to be involved in their community. They were encouraged to participate in group activities and outings as well as resident

meetings. Marc noted that he always went to meetings; that he is part of the team. This contributes to the community's life because in those meetings, residents give their comments and suggestions to the residential staff on how things are going and how they could be improved. Eve, in this same line of thinking, discussed the numerous activities held by the residences that helped keep the residents active. Contrary to this, both Margaret and Nathalie noted that people expected and wanted them to slow down. This expectation related more to the individual participants' demeanors though, as both of them remained very busy and active. Nathalie noted afterward that seniors who were not very active were expected to more:

« Bin moi, non. Ils disent tranquillises-toi. Mais pour les personnes qui bougent moins, disons, ils s'attendent qu'ils fassent quelque chose. Les voir assis dans un fauteuil une journée de temps là, comme à la résidence, ça, ils aiment pas ça. »

Margaret echoed this opinion as well, saying that seniors were expected to slow down, and not do 10 things/day. Even so, she noted that expectations from her were distinct, based on her character. People that knew her did not expect her to slow down, because she was the type of person to accomplish a lot in a single day. Margaret remarked that this was not an expectation that was projected onto everything; it was based on her character. She also noted that her best friend warns her to slow down at times too, but this is when she seems to be exhausting herself. Additionally, Margaret noted that society expected retired seniors to travel or do nothing. She had no interest in either. Also, when I asked her whether she was expected to do work-related things, she answered that people expect her to do creative things; this is an expectation that has been based on her character, rather than wider social expectations of retired seniors

When asking participants about how retired seniors should behave, they gave a wider variety of answers. Eve eluded that people thought retirees were lucky, because they no longer worked. Besides from that, she couldn't say what people thought of retired seniors. Nathalie did not think that people expected anything from older people. She remarked that younger people were always polite and accommodating, and that they understood that it was seniors' time to rest. Annabelle also did not believe that much was expected of her and other seniors living in her residence. She noted that they did not want her to be a troublemaker or someone that complained too much. They only wanted her to be a good tenant.

8.3. Develop an understanding of people's diverse life experiences and retirement experiences.

As my literature review demonstrated, people's experiences of retirement have become extremely diverse. Although the knowledge about this diversity is becoming more common, there are still many assumptions and simplifications about what life as a retired senior might mean. This diversity is due to many things: (1) the Canadian pension system, which affects the benefits that retirees are entitled to; (2) the long-existing mindset promoting individualism that encourages people to take responsibility over their retirement; and (3) the lack of standardization in retirement experiences. Since it is so individualized, individuals are the masters of their own retirement. This section will therefore discuss the many particularities that differentiated participants' retirement transitions and activities in retirement, as well as the blurred distinction between work and leisure, which emerged when discussing post-retirement activities.

#### 8.3.1. Transition into Retirement

The lives that people build for themselves, as retirees, is not only a result of their previous working lives. Their lives are dependent on numerous factors and changes that take place, making their retired lives different from their working lives. For this reason, I asked participants about major transitory events that affected their lives.

The first sub-theme in this line of questioning is how people's life situations immediately changed with the beginning of retirement life. Several participants took on caregiving roles not long after their retirement, giving them a different sense of purpose than when they were active in the workforce.

People's lives also immediately changed with retirement because of the activities they began participating in once their schedules were no longer overtaken by their careers. Several participants took retirement as an opportunity to travel more, and a few also pointed out that it was also an opportunity to begin spending more time with their spouse. Annabelle and her husband, for example, began participating in an organization called "Retraite en action", which promotes active living in retirement. This organization hosts a wide array of social activities for retirees, including dinners, outings, sports and weekend trips. More specifically, participants noted that

retirement presented itself as an opportunity to do the things they didn't have time to do when they were working. They took on new initiatives and hobbies.

Another consideration in people's transition toward retirement was finances. People's finances are a key indicator of the timing and mode of retirement. Most participants retired between the ages of 55 and 65 and noted that their finances were precisely what enabled them to retire. Marc, for example, who had been working at the RCMP at a job that he did not really enjoy, explained that he retired when his lawyer told him his house was paid off. Paul, who differed from the other participants by having retired at 32, explained that he exhausted every resource available when he retired: vacation pay, sick leave, employment insurance. When he could not make it work any longer, he moved in with his parents. Consequently, finances significantly affected his retirement and life course after he stopped working.

Participants were also asked to discuss how they had foreseen retirement, to better highlight whether their transition into retirement was most affected by long-term plans or short-term circumstances. Most participants' plans for retirement did not bear a significant influence on their actual retirement transition. Instead, signs (like finding out they could afford retirement or the birth of a grandchild) indicated the right moment and context to retire. Annabelle, for example, interpreted the birth of her first grandchild as an opportunity to retire, so that she could take on a caregiving role instead. Several participants also realized they had been tired, explaining that this tiredness indicated the proper time for retirement. Once Nathalie realized this about herself, she sold her house in order to make retirement a possibility at the age of 58. Before then, she had not really given much thought to retirement. When she had been younger, she had not thought out her retirement because she had been focusing on founding a family with her husband.

Another major transition that I suspected to often accompany participants' retirement was a change in living situations. This was true in the case of two female participants, for whom the sale of their houses enabled their retirement. Besides from that though, retirement did not have an immediate significant effect of participants' living situations. Moving into smaller houses and apartments and eventually retirement homes was not interpreted as due to their retirement, but instead to changes in needs. For example, the fact that participants no longer provided shelter to their children affected their change in living situations far more than their retirement. Additionally,

participants' move to apartments or retirement was often triggered by a spouse passing away, rather than their retirement. Most participants' life partners were still alive when they retired, and they continued to live in the same house in which they raised their families for a while. But once the spouse passed, people moved into different and smaller homes. One of the first things Annabelle and Margaret did when their husbands passed away was move.

Although many participants took retirement as major transitional event, many also highlighted other major events that took place in old age and majorly affected their lives. The most notable life-altering event that took place in participants' lives in old age was the death of a spouse. Except for Nathalie and Paul, all participants highlighted the loss of their spouse as having a major impact on their lives. The loss of a spouse, in addition to being an extremely emotional and difficult change in and of itself, was often accompanied with other major changes, including changing homes, change in activities, and a different outlook on life. Several participants highlighted how this loss marked an extremely low period in their lives. Annabelle, for example, kept herself extremely busy immediately after her husband's death, and the second she stopped, she found it extremely difficult to get going again, feeling depressed and losing the will to continue living. She no longer knew what the meaning of her life was, without her husband by her side:

« J'étais... comme, quel sens a ma vie, maintenant ? Parce que tout ce qu'on faisait c'était ensemble, avec toujours des petits projets. On menait notre vie agréablement ensemble. Là, je pensais qu'à mourir. Là je me disais, si je pouvais juste faire ça (claquant ses doigts) puis mourir, je serais donc contente. Libérée. Je serais comme lui, libéré. »

In sum, it is important to note that even though retirement itself is a major transitory event that generally takes places in old age, it is not the only major transitory event. Major events like the death of a spouse and changing living situations were also highlighted as key events taking place that greatly affect life in old age.

### 8.3.2. Activities After Retirement

Retirement is fundamentally associated with the concept of work. If people did not work, they would not need to retire. Consequently, one of the most interesting things about retirement relates to the activities that people take up, now that they no longer have jobs. The following section will therefore discuss the types of activities that people accomplish once they are retired,

especially the ones that could be characterized as types of work. Most participants' interpretations of work were associated with paid work. As such, they often did not characterize their daily activities as work. Without trying to force a definition onto anyone, I asked participants about the work they accomplished in retirement. Marc characterized his painting and gardening as work, because they were his main priorities now, and required labour in order to be accomplished/maintained. Eve also painted, although she did not characterize it as work. It was an activity she had always wanted to undertake.

All participants characterized volunteer work as work, even though a lot of them did not volunteer. Eve, for one, who had always volunteered, did a lot of work with the Church and with a faith-based organization called "Pastoral Care". She was also the treasurer for a Catholic women's movement. She also qualified her projects to get her files and memorabilia organized as "work". That had been a project that she had been working on for four years, and now that she was done, the next project she wanted to undertake had to do with getting all of her affairs in order in case she passed away. I also asked her questions in terms of responsibilities she had taken on, and she related her experiences of reading at Church on Sundays and organizing services so that they could be bilingual. Additionally, she was part of the Welcome club, a club that welcomes new residents when they arrive. Nathalie also did volunteer work, by knitting hats and socks for different organizations. She knit for cancer patients, beaten women and homeless people, and explained that she did it because it helped those people. She qualified this as work, but it took on a different character from the work that she did before retirement. Before retirement, she associated work with economic gain. This type of work, she associated with causes she cared about, and she also used her personal funds to continue doing the work (i.e. she would buy her own yarn for knitting). The most significant thing about that work is the fact that she is helping people. She also qualified it as a pastime that she enjoyed. Annabelle, on her part, volunteered with an organization she was a part of, "Retraite en action". She had been part of this organization since she was in her 60s. Most of her involvement related to participating in the group's activities, but she also created a welcome committee, once the organization had grown significantly and warranted a welcome committee. Nathalie did volunteering by visiting an older blind gentleman, and keeping him company.

Another type of work that several participants engaged in was care. Eve, Nathalie,

Annabelle, and Margaret all talked about dedicating themselves to the care of a loved one at some point or another. Eve, whose daughter was developmentally delayed, depended on her a lot, even though they no longer lived together. She remarked that she was still very busy taking care of her daughter, and worried about how things would be after she passed away. Nathalie spoke about her daughter who is currently undergoing cancer treatments. She did not characterize caring for her sick daughter as work, but discussed how she tries to provide her with as much support as she can by visiting her and listening to her. She also took care of some of her grand-children for a series of months, if ever her kids needed the extra help. Sometimes this was a full-time undertaking, sometimes it was only part-time.

Another category of work that seemed to reoccur in most participants' interviews was that of housework and chores. Most of the participants I interviewed lived in apartments, and were responsible for cleaning them themselves. They characterized cleaning, organizing and "de-junking" as types of work. Even so, they did not really treat housework in the same way as they would have a paid full-time job, meaning they did not give themselves strict schedules to adhere to. Margaret, for one, remarked that she would usually have a list of things to do, but did not stress herself about accomplishing everything on her list. Paul, who placed a lot of value on work, wanted to do more housework within his residence, giving the impression that it would make him feel useful.

The final category for work related to community involvement. Several participants explained their efforts in engaging in their retirement communities, and their feelings of responsibility to do so. Marc, for example, who did not participate in many activities hosted by his retirement home, always attended the residents' meetings. Annabelle, Nathalie, Eve and Margaret all made special efforts at welcoming newcomers in welcome committees, whether it be at their retirement homes or in different organizations they were a part of. Annabelle, on her part, explained:

« Mais là maintenant, à partir de maintenant, on fait de l'accueil. Une fois par mois, les nouveaux-venus, on va prendre un repas de groupe et puis on va faire connaissance avec eux pour leur dire qui on est, qui ils sont, puis qu'ils peuvent venir nous voir. On offre des personnes ressources s'ils ont des questions à se poser en dehors de la direction pour se sentir partie d'une société différente. Alors moi je veux travailler à ça. C'est mon but ici. »

Annabelle, in addition, worked with her floormates at decorating their floor, to make it more welcoming and homey, and give it a greater sense of community. She was also working with her friends at encouraging other floors to do the same, so that the building did not look at sterile and “hospital-like”. Margaret, on her part, took the lead on more seasonal activities; activities associated with different holidays. She enjoyed those activities because it would not circumscribe her to a long-term schedule like a job would; it was more sporadic.

Finally, both Annabelle and Margaret became published authors after their retirement. This could definitely be seen as a type of work, but neither one of them qualified their writing as work, even though they received money when books were sold, and “writer” is a legitimate career. They wrote their books because there were things they wanted to write about, so they did. It was not as menial as a pastime, but they did not treat it as work.

As such, retired seniors busy themselves with many different activities. Sometimes these activities are qualified as work, for oftentimes, they are not. Even so, it is evident that the freedom that seniors have with their time enables them to take on many different activities.

### 8.3.3. Work vs. Leisure

In trying to better define the concept of work in retirement, a new theme emerged: work vs. leisure. Before retirement, the definition of work seemed to be more rigid. It was primarily associated with the paid workforce. Although forms of unpaid work could also be identified as “real work” (like parenting and volunteer-work), they were secondary forms of work. In retirement, when paid work is no longer expected, other forms of work come to the forefront in terms of importance. Even so, pre-existing understandings of work do not disappear. As such, the separation between work and leisure becomes less definite. This section will cover similar issues as the previous section on “Activities After Retirement,” but rather than describing the different activities that participants became preoccupied with post-retirement, it will engage on a discussion on the definitions of work and leisure and how they are affected by the context of retirement.

As it was previously explained, several participants identified freedom and liberty as fundamental characteristics of retirement. Despite still accomplishing work, they had control over

their schedule and the freedom to choose what kinds of things they would spend their time doing. I asked participants about how they distinguish work from fun, and Margaret notably answered:

“Housework is work. Anything – I was going to say, anything you get paid for – anything you get paid for, that you go to every day, like a job. That’s work. Cleaning the house is definitely work. But sitting down and writing a book, I don’t consider it work. But I’ll say to people, “I’ve got to get back to work”.

In this answer, Margaret displays how the definitions between work and leisure are fluid. Things that are seen as fun or leisurely may also be identified as work. When I asked Eve about different activities she began participating in since retiring, she discussed her volunteer-work with the organization “Pastoral Care”. She did not identify this as work though. She had also been treasurer for a Catholic women’s movement, but did not identify this as work either.

Another way in which I asked participants about the work they accomplished in retirement was by asking them about projects they had, or goals they wanted to achieve. The concept of work was often associated with projects that people wanted to undertake. For example, Eve had the project of labelling and organizing her pictures. After having accomplished this project, she began organizing all of her documents. In this same line of questioning, she answered that she had taken up painting, as it was always something she wanted to do. Although painting seemed to fall into the same lane as her organization projects, she did not use the term of “work” to describe it. Remaining active and participating in social activities was also, at times, treated like work, in the sense that participants would be rewarded with forms of compensation. Eve, in her interview, explained that people that participated in activities hosted by the residence were given tokens that could be used to participate in other activities:

« [...] il y a peut-être trois mois passé, ils ont commencés un système de quand on fait partie aux activités, ils nous donnent un coupon, qui vaut dix dollars « royales ». Et puis avec ça, t’accumules ça, tu vas au bingo, bien tu donnes des coupons plutôt que donner de l’argent. »

This example also demonstrates the blurred lines separating work and leisure because individuals can receive compensation to participate in leisure activities, as they would for work. Nathalie, on her part, remarked that the goal of remaining active and participating in activities is to stay active and not sit in boredom, or dwell over sad events. Participating in activities is part of a goal to keep busy, and keeping busy is an important goal in retirement. Margaret would lead many projects that resulted in community-building, like the Remembrance Day celebration and a

Christmas play. She took on these projects in a similar way as she would when she was a teacher. Her approach to such activities was similar as her approach used to be when she was a teacher. The main difference was she was not tied to a schedule or any long-term commitment. She could take on whichever project she wanted, without having to respond to managerial demands or regular schedules. Paul, in his own right, had many projects that he wanted to undertake. He seemed to treat these projects in a similar fashion as work, as he associated them with the idea of accomplishing something. He wanted to get better with computers, become better at drawing. He also noted that he would be interested in taking on chores within the residence, giving the example of vacuuming, saying that he could do things for the staff for free.

In sum, the freedom that comes with retirement further blurs the line distinguishing work from leisure. Consequently, many activities that take place during retirement could be both classified as leisure or work, depending on individuals' perceptions of the activity.

## 9. Analysis

Before this research project, there already existed many studies that discussed seniors' experiences of retired life. Those studies revealed many trends and shared experiences among older people, which served as a basis for my assumptions and expectations of this research project. The following section will highlight the major lessons learned from this study as well as answer the three research objectives. Afterward, this research project's general research question will be discussed.

9.1. Formulate clearer understanding of how older people perceive their own work-related roles and identities.

This study's first research objective was to develop a clearer understanding of how seniors perceive their own work-related roles and identities. It is not generally expected that older people take on work-related roles because of social expectations and assumptions that they be retired. This study therefore wanted to challenge the existing suppositions about the work and productivity accomplished by older people by enlarging the definition of work, looking at people's everyday experiences, and determining how these everyday experiences have an impact on how seniors understand themselves. This issue was discussed in many different terms and revealed several lessons.

First, participants would typically not involve themselves in types of work they associated with obligation or routine. The concept of strict routines was seen as undesirable. They had the freedom to choose what activities would play a central role in their lives and could determine how much of themselves they wanted to put into it. Most participants chose to continue accomplishing things, but for reasons of personal fulfillment and fun, and would avoid getting involved in activities that had strict routines or schedules. Instead, they would live day-by-day, determining which fulfilling activities they wanted to participate in the moment.

Second, the finalities of work after retirement are typically more experiential than economic. Although participants identified money as having been a key finality of work before retirement, this was no longer the case for post-retirement work. Many of them treated retirement as an opportunity to participate in activities they did not have time for when they worked, so were

seeking out greater personal fulfillment in the types of activities they engaged in. Several participants noted the importance of keeping themselves busy and doing things they enjoyed, comparing themselves to individuals who might do very few activities and become depressed as a consequence. This coincides with Silver's (2016) findings, in which retirement was seen as a time to engage in satisfying, productive and intellectually stimulating work.

Third, in terms of work-related roles and identities (pre- and post-retirement): as people were no longer obligated to work after retirement, participants did not see themselves as having work-related roles they needed to fill. Based on Biddle's 1986 study, I believe this is because roles are associated with social expectations. As it was already discussed, most participants felt like there were not many work-related social expectations projected onto them, making it so there were no work-related roles to fill. The types of work they undertook post-retirement were done at their own volition and out of personal interest rather than out of necessity. True, there were types of work that involved obligation, such as caring for family members or housework, but most forms of work were self-assigned, such as community involvement, volunteering and new hobbies. Because those types of work were self-assigned, they would not give as much of an impression of "filling a role". Moreover, participants' identities continue to be influenced by the work they accomplish post-retirement, meaning they have clear post-retirement work-related identities. Their identities were definitely affected by the different work- or leisure-related activities they participated in, but those activities were not interpreted as roles participants had to fulfil. People's interpretation of the term "role" corresponded more with the idea of responsibilities and obligations. Consequently, seniors do not always have clear work-related roles when they are retired, because the work they accomplish is not as routinized and is not always expected of them by others. Even so, they can easily have work-related identities, based on work they decide to take on.

Fourth, although participants' former careers may have been very significant and fulfilling, they do not always remain significant to people's identity after retirement, in the long run. Even though this study's participants were split in terms of having had careers motivated by experiential or economic finalities, most participants noted that they let their former lives go once they retired. Despite the fact that they all learned a lot throughout their careers, most of them having enjoyed the work they did, participants' retired lives were focused on new activities and lifestyles. This

finding does not coincide with those outlined by Reitzes and Mutran (2006), who found that retirees tend to think of themselves in terms of their former careers, so even when they no longer occupied a worker role, their former worker identity lingered. Based on my participants, I found that previous work-related experiences affect the way retirees interact with the world, but people do not always continue to think of themselves in terms of their former careers. That would really depend on the individual having gotten significant experiential finalities out of their career, which is not always the case.

9.2. Learn about the work-related social expectations that retired seniors feel are projected onto them, and how they respond to them.

This study's second objective was to better understand what norms presently exist in terms of work-related social expectations projected onto retired seniors. More specifically, I wanted to see what roles and expectations are promoted to retired seniors, what they thought of them, and whether they met them or not.

First, in seeking out a clearer definition of retirement and the expectations it holds, I found that the finalities people were seeking out post-retirement were a lot more short-term than those they sought before retirement. Seeing as the busy routines of paid working life are no longer in place after retirement, people would instead spend their time establishing more immediate goals, seeking short-term pleasures. In this respect, several participants highlighted that retirement should be spent enjoying oneself. In the wider spectrum of things, it seems like the purpose of retirement is enjoyment of life via indulging more heavily in leisure activities than would be possible before retirement. It is certainly not limited to "leaving the workforce," like was previously theorized.

Second, in terms of work-related social expectations, most participants had the impression that not much was expected of them. They saw their retired lives as full of liberty and freedom instead. The only social expectations that were identified related to their health and either speeding up or slowing down their manners of living. These expectations are based on (1) ageist prejudices that older people are/should be slower; and/or (2) preoccupations with older people's health. One participant also noted that individualized social expectations were projected onto her, and these were based on her character instead of wide-spread social expectations of seniors. This demonstrates that even though widespread and stereotypical social expectations have some effect

over the ways people are treated, people's individuality also influences others' expectations of them. Fitting into a box is not necessary.

9.3. Develop an understanding of people's diverse life experiences and retirement experiences.

There are many assumptions and simplifications about what life as a retired senior might mean, and this research objective aimed to put together a better picture of the types of lives retired seniors lead and the contextual factors that have affected their life course.

What is most notable within the topic of this research objective is the different transitory events that deeply affected research participants in old age, besides from retirement. Retirement was certainly a major event, but participants remembered other events as more or equally significant. Those different events held an impact on their retired lives just as much as retirement itself, and required just as much adjustment. Such major transitions came coupled with major changes in daily activities and concerns. Moreover, the major transitory events most identified by participants as having major impacts on their lives in old age were the death of a spouse and retirement. In terms of the death of a spouse, people discussed how they had difficulties in adapting to living in a world without their life partners, noting how they had wanted to spend their retired lives with their spouse. The death of a spouse typically brought on other major transitions for participants, including changing homes, taking on roles that had been previously preoccupied by the spouse (finances, parental roles), and reconfiguring how to spend time. This last transition was the most significant for participants. They highlighted the difficulty in living in the world without their lifelong partner and taking on new challenges without them.

In terms of retirement, people tend to take up activities they never did before retirement, such as volunteering, travelling, community involvement, and painting. Retired life involved fewer obligations overall and more leisurely activities. Even obligations that were not tied to paid work, like housework and parenting, often no longer had the same undertone of obligation and need as pre-retirement life. It seemed that participants' retirement and termination of highly routinized and regimented daily lives came accompanied with new approaches to life in general. As work no longer dictated people's routines, people's routines took on a more loosey-goosey character.

Additionally, the distinction between work activities and leisure activities seemed to become a lot blurrier after retirement. Although people's strict distinction between work and leisure remained distinct when assessing pre-retirement forms of work, this was not the case when they would discuss post-retirement activities. Pre-retirement work was characterized by routine and obligation, but many post-retirement forms of work that did not have those features, and were there not always characterized as work. This means that retired seniors' work-related identities do not have the same spirit as their pre-retirement work-related identities. Pre-retirement work-related identities come from activities that are more motivated by obligation, duty, and financial compensation, whereas post-retirement work-related identities typically come from activities that are pursued for the purpose of personal fulfillment.

#### *9.4. What are the work-related roles and identities of retired seniors?*

A social role entails answering social expectations and following norms. But individual understandings of sociological terms are not always limited to their formal definitions. Instead, they are influenced by impressions and personal experiences and perspectives. Consequently, the first part of my answer to my research question is: retired seniors' work-related roles are not really significant. They do still have meaningful work-related roles, like caregiver, volunteer and community leader, but the term "work" often continues to have the connotations of "routine" and "obligation" after retirement, and people are no longer obligated to work and circumscribe to a routine. Consequently, when they accomplish work, even work they've always defined as work, like household chores, they do not necessarily see themselves as fulfilling a role.

Second, the work-related identities of retired seniors are influenced by work-like activities that are more associated with leisure, and that are accomplished for more experiential finalities. If retirees approach retirement as an opportunity to do the things they could not when they were working, the meaning of the work they participate in takes on a tone of personal fulfillment. The most common and significant work-related identities that retired seniors took on post-retirement were caregiver, painter, author, volunteer, and community organizer.

Third, although pre-retirement work-related roles and identities bear significant impact on people's personal development and perspective on many issues, they do not remain as significant through retirement. It can be assumed that right after leaving the workforce, those roles and

identities are very vibrant, but as time wears on, they become less part of how individuals identify themselves. Moreover, retired folks are more concerned with things happening in the present moment, and events and activities from upwards of 10 years in the past do not routinely come up in conversation.

## 10. Conclusion

This study began with an interest to undo the prejudices surrounding the productivity of seniors by presenting alternative forms of work that are accomplished post-retirement, and the significant impact they bear on individuals' identities. A key part in that was presenting that there exist work-related social roles for retired seniors and that significant work-related roles can exist despite non-involvement in the paid workforce. Although I did find that important work exists for retirees, I found that the term "role" is not always well-suited to discuss them. The term "identity" is a lot more suitable. This is due to the fact that work after retirement is not an obligation. In fact, my participants felt like there were very few social expectations of them associated with work. This unravels my supposition that seniors are fulfilling a role. Consequently, this made it so that the term "identity" became extremely significant for seniors. Since identity is more fluid, many different things can become entangled in it. People have many different kinds of experiences, and different identities that follow different parts of their lives. As such, I found that looking at how different forms of work affected seniors' identities was an insightful approach for discussing the types of work participants had and how different parts of their lives helped them understand and categorize themselves. I am therefore glad that I made use of this concept as well, on top of the term "role", because I could have easily limited the breadth of my study otherwise.

Nonetheless, this study found that retired seniors accomplish ample work, work that has significantly different connotations from types of work accomplished before retirement. The types of work that are accomplished most frequently involve caregiving, community involvement, volunteering, and, most notably, leisure activities. Leisure activities, in their right, often involve creating something that requires skill (writing, painting, singing). There are therefore many activities that seniors accomplish once they are retired that many folks do for careers. The difference is that seniors take on such tasks for reasons of personal fulfillment and enjoyment, rather than economic finality. Nevertheless, seniors accomplish many different types of work post-retirement, and these affect their post-retirement identities.

If future research were to be conducted on this subject, a key consideration would be the importance of terminology and context. Many words take on different connotations after retirement, simply because the social expectations of retired folks are different (i.e. types of work

become leisure, and types of leisure become work). Consequently, an interesting follow-up study would be to discuss not only the transfer of identities from before and after retirement, but also the change in the connotations of words used to discuss different kinds of work. In addition to this, it could also be interesting if such a study were to minimize the use of the words “work” and “leisure”, which hold very strong connotations, and instead favour more neutral terms like “activities”. Such a study would enable interesting discussions on different forms of productivity and accomplishment, and avoid the need to confront specific biases and connotations that I encountered when discussing work. Following this, I think it would be interesting if such a study were to focus on seniors that have been retired for 15+ years, as they are less attached to their former career-related identities, and have had more time to build work-related identities that are not associated with the paid labour force. Most existing studies that have discussed work and retired seniors relate to people’s transition into retirement and focused on people that were in their 60s and early 70s. By limiting such discussions with people that had only recently left the paid workforce, participants’ conceptions of work would have still been heavily influenced by their recent involvement in paid work. Such studies are missing out on older retirees’ more complete removal from the paid workforce.

A significant limitation in this study would be the small number of participants. Unfortunately, this made it so that most of my participants came from similar backgrounds, were in similar age groups, and were living in similar retirement situations. This made it so that my research sample was far from representative of seniors in Canada, and did not demonstrate the rich diversity in retirement experiences I was seeking out for my third research objective.

To close, conducting this research project was highly insightful as to the importance of context on the choices people make, the priorities they develop, and the ways they see themselves. As more and more people will be retiring in the coming years, this study demonstrates the importance of their experience and contribution to Canadian society – contributions outside the paid workforce.

## ANNEX I



### CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

---

Looking for volunteers to participate in an unpaid research on the role of retired seniors in Canada.

---

#### Selection Criteria:

1. Being aged between 65 and 85.
2. Identify as retired.

#### Nature of participation

You take pride in the work you've accomplished in your life, and you are now retired. Your experiences in work and retirement are rich and interesting. You are invited to participate in an interview that would allow you to share your views and experiences relating to retirement, work, and identifying above the age of 65. If you would like to discuss your experiences, you can participate in research being done at the University of Ottawa for a masters thesis. This interview would last approximately one hour, and would be held in a location of your choosing. If you are interested, please communicate directly with the researcher, who would be pleased to provide you with more information and schedule an appointment.

I look forward to meeting with you and sharing with you.

#### Contact

Stéphanie Kennedy

Telephone:

E-mail:



## **PARTICIPANTS ET PARTICIPANTES À UNE RECHERCHE**

---

À la recherche de volontaires pour participer à une recherche non-rémunérée concernant le rôle de la retraite pour les personnes âgées au Canada.

---

Critères de sélection:

1. Être âgé entre 65 et 85.
2. S'identifier comme retraité.

### **Nature de la participation**

Vous êtes fier du travail que vous avez accompli dans votre vie et vous êtes maintenant à la retraite. Vos expériences de travail et de retraite sont riches et d'intérêts. Si vous souhaitez parler de vos expériences, vous pouvez participer à une recherche entreprise à l'Université d'Ottawa dans le cadre d'un projet de maîtrise. L'entrevue à laquelle vous êtes invité vous permettra de partager votre vision et votre expérience de la retraite, du travail et de l'identité après 65 ans. L'entrevue durera environ une heure et se tiendra dans un lieu de votre choix. Si vous êtes intéressé, communiquez directement avec la chercheuse, qui sera heureuse de vous fournir plus d'informations et de fixer un rendez-vous.

Au plaisir de vous rencontrer et de partager avec vous.

### **Contactez :**

Stéphanie Kennedy

Téléphone:

Courriel:

## ANNEX II



uOttawa

Faculté des sciences sociales  
Faculty of Social SciencesÉcole d'études sociologiques et  
anthropologiques / School of  
Sociological and  
Anthropological Studies

## Consent Form

### Participation in Thesis Project

#### *The Role of Seniors: Social Expectations after Retirement*

##### *Principal investigator*

Stéphanie Kennedy  
School of Sociological and  
Anthropological Studies  
120, University street, Ottawa,  
(ON) K1N 6N5, Canada

##### *Thesis Supervisor*

Maurice Lévesque  
School of Sociological and  
Anthropological Studies  
120, University street, Office  
3001K, Ottawa (ON) K1N 6N5,  
Canada

##### *Invitation to an Interview*

I have been invited to participate in an interview conducted by Stéphanie Kennedy, as part of a research project entitled *The Role of Seniors: Social Expectations after Retirement*. The purpose of this research is to develop a better understanding of the views and experiences of seniors in relation to retirement, work, and identifying above the age of 65. The purpose of this form is to express my consent in participating in this research, confirm that I understand the objectives of this research and the nature of my implication.

##### *About the Interview*

I understand that the purpose of the interview is to develop a better understanding of older Canadians' work-related roles after their retirement. I have been informed about the objectives of this study, and all the questions I had in its regard have been answered to my satisfaction. The information that I will be providing for this research project is necessary for the principle investigator to acquire a Master of Arts (M.A.) in Sociology at the University of Ottawa.

##### *Risks*

I have been informed that the risks of participating in this interview are minimal, but that there still is a possibility that the information I share might make me feel emotional or uncomfortable, as they might relate to things I wouldn't ordinarily discuss. If ever I feel any type of discomfort, I may ask the researcher to pause the interview. If I do not wish to continue the interview because of a discomfort I feel, I may ask to halt the interview completely.

*Conservation of Data and Anonymity*

I have been assured that all of the information I provide will be documented through audio-recordings, transcriptions and notes. The information that I share will be treated confidentially, and used only by the primary researcher and thesis supervisor, for the purpose of this research project. The information retrieved from my interview will be made anonymous, as my name will not be used or associated with my answers. All of the information I will provide will be conserved on a USB key and kept in a locked room. The data will be password-protected as well. All of the data will be deleted five years after the research project has been completed.

*Duration and Location*

I have been informed that the interview will last approximately one hour, and will take place in a location of my choice.

*Voluntary Participation*

I understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary. I am free to answer or refuse answering any questions, or stop the interview at any time without any repercussions. If I decide to no longer participate in this research project, all of the data acquired from my interview will be destroyed immediately. I understand that the researcher has no affiliation with the retirement home where I live, and that participation, or lack thereof, will have no impact on their services or my living situation at this residence.

*Benefits*

My participation in this study will give me a chance to talk about my personal experiences and allow a student researcher to gain experience in conducting research.

By signing this consent form, I am authorizing the use of information I provide during this interview for the purposes of this research. I understand that my anonymity will be completely preserved. A pseudonym will be used to designate me in the interviewer's notes and in the interview's transcription. The subsequent publications of this research project will not include any information that would reveal my identity. If I identify people by name during my interview, those names will be altered as well. Additionally, quotes that would reveal individual identities will not be included in the publication of this research project.

If I have any questions, worries or complaints about this research project, I can always contact the principal investigation Stéphanie Kennedy. M.A. candidate (Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_, e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_) or her thesis supervisor, Maurice Lévesque, PhD (Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_, e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_).

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Tel.: (613) 562-5387

Email: [ethics@uottawa.ca](mailto:ethics@uottawa.ca)

Please sign your initials:

\_\_\_\_\_ I authorize that my interview be audio-recorded.

.....

By signing this document, I accept participating in the research project described above and conducted by Stéphanie Kennedy, University of Ottawa. I understand that there are two identical copies of this consent form, one for me and one for the researcher.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



uOttawa

Faculté des sciences sociales  
Faculty of Social Sciences

École d'études sociologiques et  
anthropologiques / School of  
Sociological and  
Anthropological Studies

## Formulaire de consentement Participation dans un projet de thèse

### *Le rôle des personnes âgées: attentes sociales après la retraite*

#### *Chercheuse principale*

Stéphanie Kennedy  
École des études sociologiques  
et anthropologiques  
120, Rue Université, Ottawa,  
(ON) K1N 6N5, Canada

#### *Thesis Supervisor*

Maurice Lévesque  
École des études sociologiques  
et anthropologiques  
120, Rue Université, Bureau  
3001K, Ottawa (ON) K1N 6N5,  
Canada

#### *Invitation à une entrevue*

J'ai été invité à participer à une interview menée par Stéphanie Kennedy dans le cadre d'un projet de recherche intitulé « Le rôle des personnes âgées: attentes sociales après la retraite ». Le but de cette recherche est de mieux connaître les expériences et les perspectives des personnes âgées en ce qui concerne la retraite, le travail, et l'identité après 65 ans. Le but de ce formulaire est d'exprimer mon consentement à participer à cette recherche, de confirmer que je comprends les objectifs de cette recherche ainsi que la nature de mon implication.

#### *À propos de l'entrevue*

Je comprends que le but de l'entrevue est de mieux comprendre les rôles liés au travail des personnes âgées après leur retraite. J'ai été informé des objectifs de cette étude, et toutes les questions que j'ai eu concernant cette recherche ont été répondues à ma satisfaction. L'information que je vais fournir pour ce projet de recherche est nécessaire pour que la chercheuse principale acquière une maîtrise en arts (M.A.) en sociologie à l'Université d'Ottawa.

#### *Risques*

J'ai été informé que les risques de participer à cette entrevue sont minimes, mais qu'il existe une possibilité que l'information que je partage soulève des émotions ou me fasse sentir inconfortable, car elles pourraient concerner des choses dont je ne discuterais pas habituellement. Si jamais je me sens inconfortable, je peux demander à la chercheuse de faire une pause dans l'entrevue. Si je ne veux pas poursuivre l'entrevue en raison du malaise que je ressens, je peux demander d'arrêter l'entrevue complètement.

*Conservation des données et participation anonymat*

On m'a assuré que toutes les informations que je fournirai seront consignées par des enregistrements audio, des transcriptions et des notes. L'information que je partage sera traitée de manière confidentielle et utilisée uniquement par la chercheuse principale et le directeur de thèse aux fins de ce projet de recherche. Les informations obtenues resteront anonymes, car mon nom ne sera pas utilisé et ne sera pas associé à mes réponses. Toutes les informations que je vais fournir seront conservées sur une clé USB et gardée dans le bureau verrouillé du directeur de cette thèse à l'Université d'Ottawa. Les données seront également protégées par un mot de passe. Toutes les données seront supprimées cinq ans après la fin du projet de recherche.

*Durée et lieu*

J'ai été informé que l'entretien durera environ une heure, et aura lieu à un endroit de mon choix.

*Participation volontaire*

Je comprends que ma participation à cette recherche est entièrement volontaire. Je suis libre de répondre ou de refuser de répondre à n'importe quelle question, ou d'arrêter l'entrevue à tout moment sans aucune répercussion. Si je décide de ne plus participer à ce projet de recherche, toutes les données acquises lors de mon entretien seront détruites immédiatement. Je comprends que la chercheuse n'est pas affiliée avec la maison de retraite, et que ma participation, ou mon absence de participation, n'aura aucun impact sur leurs services ou sur ma situation de vie à cette résidence.

*Avantages*

Ma participation à cette étude me donnera l'occasion de parler de mes expériences personnelles et de permettre à un chercheur étudiant d'acquérir de l'expérience dans la recherche.

En signant ce formulaire de consentement, j'autorise l'utilisation des informations que j'ai fournies au cours de cette interview aux fins de cette recherche. Je comprends que mon anonymat sera complètement préservé. Un pseudonyme sera utilisé pour me désigner dans les notes de l'intervieweur et dans la transcription de l'entrevue. Les publications ultérieures de ce projet de recherche ne comprendront aucune information qui révélerait mon identité. Si j'identifie des personnes par leur nom pendant mon entrevue, ces noms seront altérés également. De plus, les citations qui révéleraient des identités individuelles ne seront pas incluses dans la publication de ce projet de recherche.

Si j'ai des questions, des soucis ou des plaintes à propos de ce projet de recherche, je peux toujours contacter la chercheuse principale, Stéphanie Kennedy, candidate de maîtrise (Téléphone: \_\_\_\_\_, courriel: \_\_\_\_\_) ou son directeur de thèse, Maurice Lévesque, PhD (Téléphone: \_\_\_\_\_, courriel: \_\_\_\_\_).

Si j'ai des questions concernant la conduite éthique de cette étude, je peux communiquer avec l'Agent de protocole pour l'éthique dans la recherche, Université d'Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154, Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5

Tél.: (613) 562-5387

Courriel: [ethics@uottawa.ca](mailto:ethics@uottawa.ca)

S'il-vous-plaît indiquez vos initiales:

\_\_\_\_\_ J'autorise que mon entrevue soit audio-enregistrée.

.....

En signant ce document, j'accepte de participer au projet de recherche décrit ci-dessus et mené par Stéphanie Kennedy, Université d'Ottawa. Je comprends qu'il y a deux copies identiques de ce formulaire de consentement, un pour moi et un pour le chercheur.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Non du participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature du participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Nom de la chercheuse: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature de la chercheuse: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Interview Guide**

This research has three primary objectives in trying to better understand the work-related roles of Canadian seniors.

- Develop a more wide-ranging understanding of the diverse retirement experiences of seniors, and see how they correspond or adapt to the Canadian context;
- Advance a clearer understanding of work-related role-identities of older people;
- Gain an inside perspective of the kinds of social expectations projected onto these people, and how they react to them;

### ***Mention importance of audio recording***

#### **Obtain participant's socio-demographic characteristics:**

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Marital status
- Information on partner (age, occupation, retired or not, time of retirement, etc.)
- Presence of kids or not (their age, residence, occupation, etc.)
- Time at which they retired/how long they've been retired for

#### **1. Retirement & lifecourse**

We want to know about:

- Retirement

- o Description of the context that affected the ways in which people entered retirement (what sort of factors affected the manner in which they retired).
- o Age at which they retired.
- o Work situation they left to retire / understanding of their work situation before retirement.
- o Description of how they planned their retirement or decided to retire i.e. process by which they approached retirement.
- o Financial considerations that affected the way they retired.
- o Other factors that might have affected their decision to retire (family, health, work, age).
- o Living situation, and how it might have changed with retirement.
- Life before retirement
  - o Description of person's professional lifecourse.
  - o Description of their families and social lives.
  - o Influential social networks before they retired.
- Life after retirement
  - o How influential their social network is in their lives now, as seniors (how often do they see their family members? Do they have a partner? How often do they see their friends? Were their friends their work colleagues? Do they maintain amicable relationships with them since having retired? Have they made new friends since they retired?).
  - o How financial considerations affect the ways they lead their lives now (What retirement situation they are in? What their living situation is? What kinds of activities and expenses they have/can afford?).
  - o What health concerns they have now (how that affects their daily lives, their work, their retirement).
  - o Living situation, and how it has changed since before their retirement.

Example questions:

- Tell me about how it happened when you thought about retiring.

- How old were you when you retired? How did you go about retiring? Were you looking forward to it?
- What kind of things influenced your decision about retirement?
- How is your health? Do you have any health issues that limit the activities you undertake? If yes, which ones, and how so?
- Do you have kids? How involved are they in your life? How often do you see them? How has your relationship with them changed over the years?

## **2. Work related roles and social expectations of retired seniors**

We want to know:

Worker Role:

- How older people's work-related roles (before retirement) affect their identities today, and develop a clearer understanding of seniors' present identities as retirees.
- See how older people understand the worker role, and how that affects their daily lives, and the way they live as retired folks.
- Find out about the centrality of work for the individual (i.e. the general importance of work in individuals' lives, regardless of its finality).
  - o See how important working was to them, in comparison with other spheres of their lives.
  - o Try to define a hierarchy of values for the individual by comparing the importance of work with the importance of priorities outside of work.
- Find out about the significance of work for the person, and their model of ideal work (the finality of work). What sense do they give to their work, what was work's function in their lives, what was important for them in their work, what were they looking for from their work.
  - o What is the central priority of work, what are the secondary priorities, and what are the person's aspirations.
  - o Economic finalities vs. experiential finalities.
- Find out about what was expected of them in their work, how that affected them

- o Were they morally engaged toward their work? Toward their employer?
- o Would they try to be flexible in regards to their work?
- o Were they be willing to invest personal resources in order to reach work objectives? (ex: extra time)

#### Social Expectations for Seniors:

- Better define what people think is expected of them as older people, in terms of being active or being productive members of society (i.e. how do they respond to those social expectations).
- If people want to be retired and why they are retired.
- Try to see whether there is a correlation between old age and retirement (is retirement necessary?).
- What activities they would rather spend their time doing.
- Find out about what sort of activities are promoted for seniors.

#### Role of Work After Retirement:

- Whether or not people have goals to achieve in their retirement, if they have a main purpose or project to pursue.
- Try to better define what it means to be a retiree, from seniors' perspective, see how the term "retiree/retired" affects how people see themselves, how other people see them, and what retirement means to them (try to identify any responsibilities or norms).
- Find out about work accomplished after retirement, and what its significance is for the person, their model of ideal work (the finality of work). What is work's function in their lives, what is important for them in their work, what are they looking for from their work.
- Find out about whether there are work-related expectations directed toward them in retirement, and how that affects them.

#### Example questions:

- What were you before you retired? How has that affected your retirement?
- Was retiring a difficult adjustment? What kind of things take up your time now, instead of going to work?

- What does retirement mean to you? What does being retired allow you to do? If you could do anything with your time, what would it be?
- Do you participate in any sort of activities? If yes, what kind of activities?
- What sort of things are you responsible for taking care of in your day to day life? What hasn't changed since you've retired?
- Are there any sort of projects that you're able to work on, now that you're retired, that you couldn't when you were working?
- Is there anything that you'd consider coming out of retirement for?
- What kind of activities are popular for seniors? What kinds of activities are promoted?
- What kind of responsibilities do you have? What do you think is expected of you?

## **Guide d'entrevue**

Cette recherche a trois objectifs principaux pour mieux comprendre les rôles liés au travail des aînés canadiens.

- Développer une meilleure compréhension des diverses expériences de retraite des aînés et voir comment elles correspondent ou s'adaptent au contexte canadien;
- Obtenir une meilleure compréhension des identités de rôle des personnes âgées liées au travail;
- Obtenir une perspective subjective des attentes sociales projetées sur ces personnes, et comment elles y réagissent;

### ***Mentionner l'importance de l'enregistrement audio***

### **Obtenir les caractéristiques sociodémographiques des participants:**

- Genre
- Âge
- Origine ethnique
- Religion
- État civil
- Information sur le conjoint ou la conjointe (âge, profession, retraité ou non, durée de la retraite, etc.)
- Présence d'enfants ou non (âge, lieu de résidence, profession, etc.)
- Le moment où ils ont pris leur retraite / depuis combien de temps ils sont retraités

### **1. Retraite et parcours de vie**

Nous voulons savoir :

- Retraite
  - o Description du contexte qui a affecté la façon dont les personnes ont pris leur retraite (quelles sortes de facteurs ont affecté la manière dont ils ont pris leur retraite).
  - o Âge auquel ils ont pris leur retraite.

- o Situation de travail à partir duquel ils ont pris leur retraite ; appréciation de leur emploi avant la retraite.
- o Description de la façon dont ils ont prévu leur retraite (ou non) - le processus par lequel ils ont abordé ou décidé de prendre la retraite.
- o Considérations financières qui ont affecté la façon dont les gens ont pris leur retraite.
- o Autres facteurs qui auraient pu affecter leur décision de prendre leur retraite (famille, santé, travail, âge).
- o Situation de vie, et comment cela aurait changé avec la retraite.
- La vie avant la retraite
  - o Description du cycle de vie professionnelle.
  - o Description de leur famille et de leur vie sociale.
  - o Réseaux sociaux influents avant leur retraite.
- Vie après la retraite
  - o À quel point leur réseau social influence-t-il leur vie maintenant, en tant que personnes âgées (à quelle fréquence voient-ils les membres de leur famille ? Ont-ils un conjoint ou conjoints ? À quelle fréquence voient-ils leurs amis ? Les amis étaient-ils des collègues ? Maintien ou non des relations amicales après la retraite ? Nouveaux amis ?).
  - o Comment les aspects financiers influencent-ils la façon dont ils mènent leur vie maintenant (comme leur situation de retraite, les activités et dépenses qu'ils se permettent).
  - o Ont-ils des problèmes de santé (comment cela affecte leur vie quotidienne, leur travail, leur retraite).
  - o Situation de vie, et comment elle a changé depuis leur prise de retraite.

#### Exemple de questions:

- Parlez-moi de comment cela s'est passé lorsque vous avez pensé ou décidé de prendre votre retraite.
- Quel âge aviez-vous lorsque vous avez pris votre retraite? Comment avez-vous pris la retraite? Vous l'attendiez avec impatience?

- Qu'est-ce qui a influencé votre décision de prendre votre retraite ?
- Comment est votre état de santé? Avez-vous des problèmes de santé qui vous limite dans vos activités ? Si oui, lesquelles ? Comment ?
- Avez-vous des enfants? Comment sont-ils impliqués dans votre vie? À quelle fréquence les voyez-vous? Comment votre relation avec eux a-t-elle changé au cours des années?

## **2. Rôles liés au travail et attentes sociales des aînés retraités**

Nous voulons savoir:

Rôle de Travailleur :

- Comment les rôles de travail que les personnes âgées avaient avant de leur retraite affectent leur identité aujourd'hui.
- Développer une meilleure compréhension des identités des personnes âgées en tant que retraités.
- Voir comment les personnes âgées comprennent le rôle du travailleur, et comment cela affecte leur vie quotidienne et la façon dont ils le perçoivent en tant que personnes retraitées.
- Découvrir à propos de la centralité du travail pour l'individu (ex : l'importance général du travail dans la vie de l'individu, peu importe sa finalité).
  - o Voir combien le travail était important pour eux, en comparaison avec les autres sphères de leurs vies.
  - o Essayer de définir une hiérarchie de valeurs des individus en comparant l'importance du travail avec l'importance des priorités à l'extérieur du travail.
- Apprendre à propos de la signification du travail pour la personne, et leur modèle de travail idéal (la finalité du travail). Quel sens donnent-ils à leur travail, c'est quoi la fonction du travail dans leurs vies, qu'est-ce qui est important pour eux dans leur travail, et que cherchaient-ils dans leur travail.
  - o Quelle est la priorité centrale du travail, quelles sont les priorités secondaires, et quelles sont les aspirations de la personne ?
  - o Finalités économiques vs. Finalités expérientielles.

- Découvrir à propos de ce qui était attendu d'eux dans leur travail, et comment ceci les a affecté.
  - o Étaient-ils engagés moralement envers leur emploi ? Evenrs leur employeur ?
  - o Essayaient-ils d'être flexible par rapport à leur travail ?
  - o Étaient-ils prêts à investir des ressources personnelles dans leur travail, afin d'atteindre leurs objectifs ? (ex : travailler extra).

#### Attentes sociales pour les personnes âgées :

- Essayer de mieux définir ce que signifie d'être un retraité, du point de vue des personnes âgées, voir comment le terme « retraité » affecte la façon dont les gens se voient, et voir ce que la retraite signifie pour eux (essayer d'identifier les responsabilités ou les normes).
- Une meilleure définition de ce que les gens pensent être attendue d'eux en tant que personnes âgées, dans le sens d'être actifs ou d'être des membres productifs de la société (comment répondent-ils à ces attentes sociales).
- Si les gens voulaient être à la retraite et pourquoi ils sont à la retraite.
- Essayer de voir s'il existe une corrélation entre la vieillesse et la retraite (la retraite est-elle nécessaire?).
- Les activités favorisées pour les aînés.

#### Rôle du travail après la retraite :

- Si les gens avaient ou non des objectifs à atteindre dans leur retraite, s'ils ont un but ou un projet à poursuivre.
- Découvrir ce que ça veut dire d'être un/une retraité(e), de la perspective des personnes âgées, voir comment le terme de « retraite/retraité » influence comment les gens se voient, et comment les autres personnes les perçoivent et voir ce que la retraite signifie pour eux (essayer d'identifier des responsabilités et normes associées avec la retraite).
- Apprendre à propos du travail accompli après la retraite, et quelle est sa signification pour la personne. Quelle est leur modèle de travail idéal (la finalité du travail). C'est quoi la fonction du travail dans leurs vies maintenant, l'importance du travail pour eux, qu'est-ce qu'ils recherchent dans leur travail.

- Découvrir s'il y a des attentes sociales reliées au travail dirigées envers les retraités, et comment ceux-ci les affecte.

Exemples de questions:

- Que faisiez-vous avant votre prise de retraite? Comment cela a-t-il affecté votre retraite?
- La retraite a-t-elle été une adaptation difficile? Quelles sortes de choses faites-vous avec votre temps maintenant, au lieu d'aller au travail?
- Qu'est-ce que la retraite signifie pour vous? Qu'est ce que la retraite vous permet de faire? Si vous pouviez faire quelque chose avec votre temps, quel serait-il?
- Est-ce que vous participez à des activités? Si oui, quel genre d'activités?
- Quelles sont vos responsabilités dans votre vie quotidienne? Qu'est-ce qui n'a pas changé depuis que vous vous êtes retraité?
- Existe-t-il une sorte de projets sur lesquels vous pouvez travailler, maintenant que vous êtes à la retraite, que vous ne pouviez pas faire quand vous travailliez?
- Y a-t-il quelque chose que vous envisageriez d'accomplir lors de votre retraite?
- Quel genre d'activités est populaire pour les aînés? Quels types d'activités sont promues?
- Quel genre de responsabilités avez-vous? Que pensez-vous qu'on s'attend de vous? Si vous pouviez travailler, que feriez-vous?

Bibliography:

- Albert, S. & Whetten, D.A. (1985). Organizational identity. *Research in Organizational Behaviour*, 7, 263-297.
- Araiza, I. (2004). How Alternative Definitions of Retirement and Social Class Shape Conclusions about the Retired Population (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Information and Learning Company. (UMI Microform 3135959).
- Atchley, R. (1982). Retirement as a Social Institution. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 8(2), 63-87.
- Atchley, R. & Robinson, J. (1982). Attitudes Toward Retirement and Distance from the Event. *Research on Aging*, 4(3), 299-313.
- Barnes, H. & Parry, J. (2004). Renegotiating Identity and Relationships: Men and Women's Adjustments to Retirement. *Ageing & Society*, 24, 213-233.
- Batson, C. D., Ahmad, N. & Tsang, J.A. (2002). Four motives for community involvement, *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(3), p.429-445.
- Bauman, Z. (1998). *Work, Consumption and the New Poor*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Biddle, B. J. (1986). Recent Developments in Role Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12, 67-92.
- Bodily, C.L. (1994). Ageism and the deployments of "age": A constructionist view in Sarbin, T.R. & Ritsuse, J.I. (eds), *Constructing the Social*. London: Sage.
- Brown, R. L. (2011). Economic Security in an Aging Canadian Population. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 20(3), 391-399.
- Chandler, J. (2017). *Identity at Work*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Desmette, D. & Gaillard, M. (2008). When a "worker becomes an "older worker": The effects of age-related social identity on attitudes towards retirement and work. *Career Development International*, 13(2), p.168-185.
- Dubin, R. (1956). Industrial Workers' Worlds: A study of the Central Life Interests of Industrial Workers. *Social Problems*, 3: 131-142.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Allen Lane.
- Gee, E. M. & McDaniel, S. A. (1991). Pension Politics and Challenges: Retirement Policy Implications. *Canadian Public Policy*, 17(4), 456-472.

- George, L. K. (1993). Sociological Perspectives on Life Transitions. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, 353-373.
- Gershuny, J.I. (2003). *Changing Times: Work and Leisure in Postindustrial Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Golembiewski, R.T. (1978). Mid-life transition and mid-career crisis: A special case for individual development. *Public Administration Review*, 38(8), p.215-222.
- Gomez, R. & Gunderson, M. (2011). For Whom the Retirement Bell Tolls: Accounting for Changes in the Expected Age of Retirement and the Incidence of Mandatory Retirement in Canada. *Canadian Public Policy*, 37(4). 513-539.
- Gouldner, A.W. (1957). Cosmopolitans and locals: Toward an analysis of latent social roles: I. *Quarterly*. 2(3), 281-306.
- Gouldner, A.W. (1958). Cosmopolitans and locals: Toward an analysis of latent social roles: II. *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 2(4), 444-480.
- Kirk, J. & Wall, C. (2011). Work and Identity: Historical and Cultural Contexts. *Identity Studies in the Social Sciences*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Distribution Ltd.
- Ludvig, A. (2006). Differences between women? Intersecting voices in a female narrative. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(3): 246-257.
- Mackenzie, R., Mark, S., Chris, F., Ian, G., Robert, P., & Jean, G. (2005). All that is solid melts into air: Class, identity and the maintenance of a collective orientation amongst redundant steelworkers. *Sociology*, 40(5), 833-853.
- Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and Personality*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Mainiero, L.A. & Sullivan, S.E. (2005). Kaleidoscope careers: An alternate explanation for the "op-out" revolution. *Academy of Management Executive*, 19(1), p.106-123.
- McDonald, L. & Donahue, P. (2011). Retirement Lost? *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 30(3), 401-422.
- Mead, G. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Méda, D. (2004). *Le travail*. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France.
- Mercure, D. & Vultur, M. (2010). La signification du travail: Nouveau modèle productif et ethos du travail au Québec. Québec, QC : Les Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Minnich, D. G. (2012). Ideal Versus Reality: A Phenomenological Inquiry Into the Lived

- Experience of Retirees Achieving Retirement Expectations (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (UMI Number: 3504370).
- Myles, J. (2000). The Maturation of Canada's Retirement Income System: Income Levels, Income Inequality and Low Income Among Older Persons. *Canadian Journal On Aging*, 19(3), 287-316.
- Pompper, D. (2011). Fifty years later: Mid-career women of color against the glass ceiling in communications organizations. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 24(4), p.464-486.
- Reitzes, D. & Mutran, E. (2006). Lingering Identities in Retirement. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 47, p.333-359.
- Renault, E. (2013). Autonomie et identité au travail. *Travailler*, 2(30): 125-145.
- Riley, M.W. & Riley, J.W. (1989). The Lives of Older People and Changing Social Roles. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 503, 14-28.
- Sayer, A. (2005). *The Moral Significance of Class*. London: Routledge.
- Schwartz, H.S. (1987). Anti-social actions of committed organizational participants: An existential psychoanalytic perspective. *Organizational Studies*, 8(4), 327-340.
- Sennett, R. & Cobb, J. (1977). *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Silver, M.P. (2016). An inquiry into self-identification with retirement. *Journal of Women & Aging*, 28(6), 477-488.
- Tremblay, D. & Alberio, M. (2014). *Travail et Société*. Montréal, QC : Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Verill, L. A. (2002). Changes in Role-Identity Meanings and Well-Being During the Transition to Retirement: Comparing Early- and Later-Retirees (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Information and Learning (UMI Number: 3057041).
- Whyte, W.H. (2002). *The Organization Man*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to Labour: How Working-Class Kids Get Working-Class Jobs*. London: Routledge Kegan Paul.