Intersectionality and Older Adult Experiences of Homelessness:
A Social Justice Approach

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Aging in the Right Place | Vieillir au Bon Endroit
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Background: Housing Insecurity Among Older Adults

- 1/4 older adults in Canada live in core housing need (at least one of adequacy, affordability, suitability standards) (CMHC, 2019)

- Older households in Canada have a higher proportion of people in core housing need (14%) than younger households (12.2 %) (CMHC, 2019)

- Nearly 1/3 households living in subsidized housing are older adults (Puxty et al., 2019)

- Adults over 50 years make up 24% of shelter users in Canada (Gaetz et al., 2016)

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Methods

- Aging in the Right Place (AIRP) uses an intersectional lens to evaluate promising practices across the shelter/housing continuum and determine which promote AIRP

- Review and synthesis of existing literature on intersectionality and the multiple sites of oppression for older people with experiences of homelessness face

- Illuminate ways intersectionality, grounded in social justice praxis, can be applied to research and practice with older adults experiencing homelessness

Intersectionality

- Originated in the 1960s and 70s from the work of women of colour, social justice activists, and scholars who often identified as lesbian or queer and were heavily engaged in the civil rights movement (Collins & Bilge, 2021; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017)

- Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) legitimized intersectionality within academia as a method of critical inquiry and praxis

Intersectionality

- Views categories of social identity (i.e., race, class, age) as **interrelated and mutually shaping** one another (Collins & Bilge, 2021)

- Intersecting categories of social identity are **contextualized within broader systems** of power and oppression (i.e., racism, classism, ageism) (Koehn & Kobayashi, 2011)

- Aims to **centralize structural and systemic** critiques of social inequaliti~~~radi & Grzanka, 2017)

Intersectionality and Older Adult Experiences of Homelessness

- Understanding of aging that reflects the diversity and complexity of older adults' experiences and the sociocultural contexts they live in (Hulko et al., 2020)

- Linking of institutional policies and practices with the unique and varied lived experiences of aging and housing insecurity (Hulko et al., 2020)

- Strengthen understanding of macro, mezzo, and micro systems of power and oppression that shape experiences of aging and homelessness

Applying an Intersectional Lens

Classism

- Rising housing costs
- Poverty
- Unavailability of subsidized housing
- Economic volatility
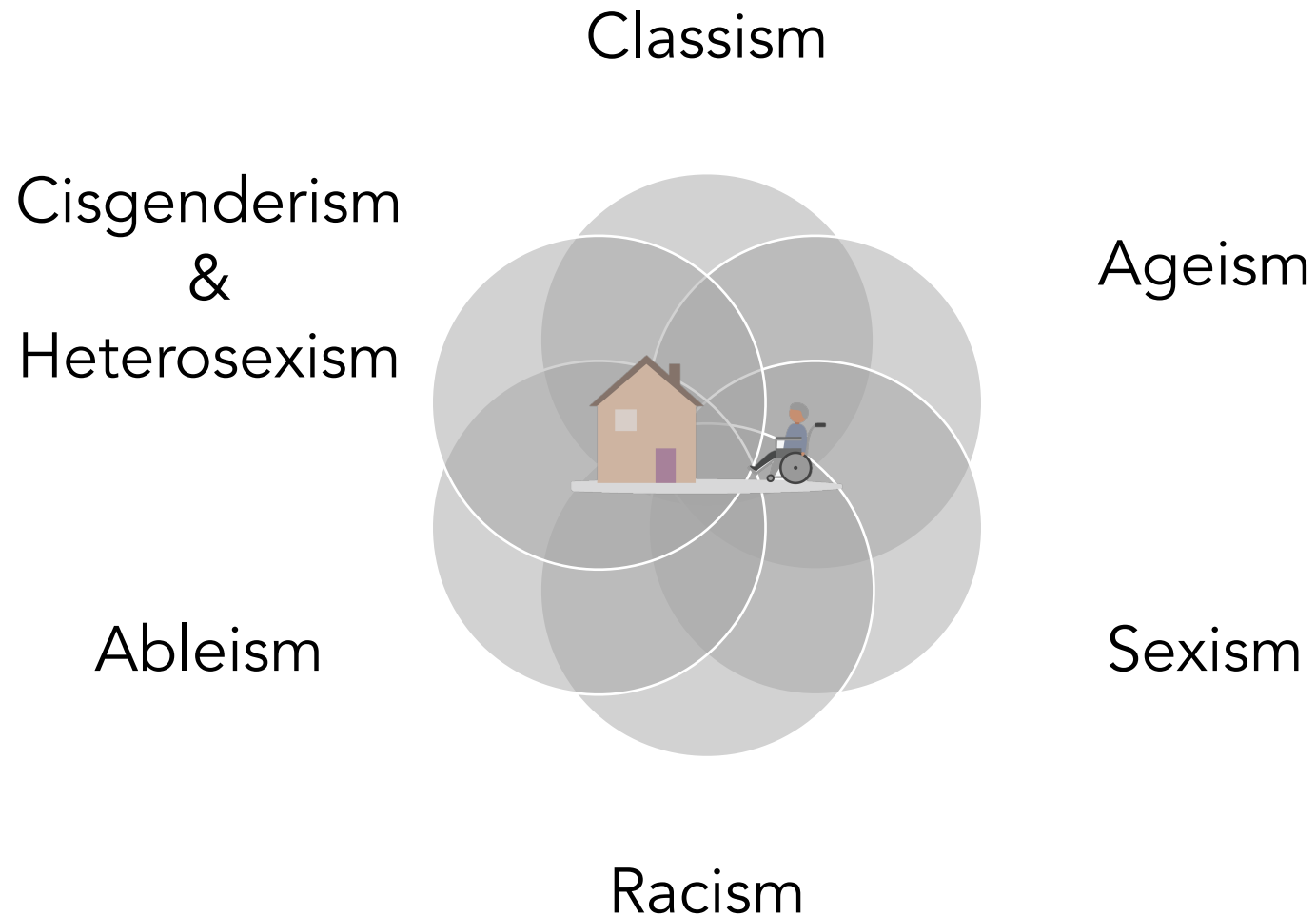
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Applying an Intersectional Lens

Classism

- Rising housing costs
- Poverty
- Unavailability of subsidized housing
- Economic volatility

Ageism

- Age-based discrimination
- Strict eligibility criteria for social assistance benefits
- Limited availability of health and social care

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Applying an Intersectional Lens

Classism

Cisgenderism
&
Heterosexism

Ageism

Ableism

Sexism
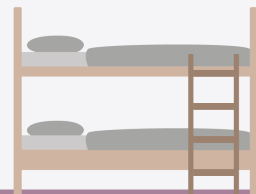
Racism

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Intersectionality Implications

Research

Informing research with the lived experiences of older adults, including their intersecting experiences of power and oppression
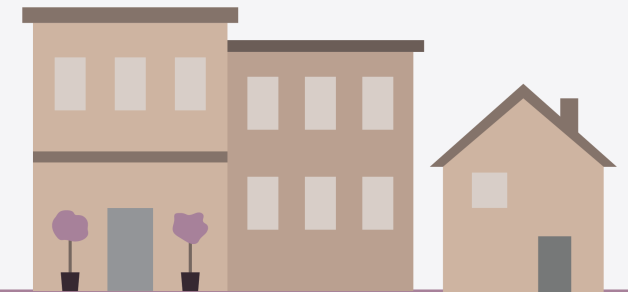
Practice

Acknowledging and responding to diversity of experience among older adults experiencing homelessness and the structural inequities that underlie it

Policy

Advocating for policy that responds to the multiplicity of social locations and lived experiences of older Canadians

To learn more or connect with us:

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https://www.sfu.ca/airp.html

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