

ELDERS IN ASSISTED LIVING: EXCAVATING  
HOSPITALITY FROM WITHIN

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Council of  
Texas State University in fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
with a major in Adult, Professional and Community Education  
May 2015

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this entire journey to my father, James Timothy Kirkpatrick.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This entire doctoral experience and research endeavor would not have been possible without the expertise and encouragement from my dissertation chair and committee members, the faculty in my doctoral program, as well as the unending support from my family, classmates, mentors, friends and supervisors. I wish to thank each of them by name. Most importantly, I also want to thank the elders and staff at my research site for such a transformational experience—you have changed my life forever.

I begin with special thanks to Dr. Michael O'Malley, my dissertation chair, and one of the first faculty members I had in my coursework. Not only did he move me beyond my second-wave feminist self, he also taught me more about postmodern education philosophy than I could ever dream. I have learned to think more deeply and critically through his mentorship. I am also grateful for his understanding of spirituality and theology in education. While that is my passion, I never dreamed I would find such a talented scholar in my midst that also claimed excitement about the topic!

I also want to thank my committee members. Dr. Joellen Coryell, thank you for your guidance and for introducing me to Kwame Anthony Appiah! Dr. Robert Reardon, I think I enrolled in every organizational development class taught by you that I could find! Your engineering mind and your educator stance combined made my entire experience at Texas State so very meaningful—and, of course, you re-introduced me to Peter Senge, another inspiring scientist and social activist. And, Sr. Martha Kirk from the

University of Incarnate Word, who I first met at the Whitehouse during President Obama's interfaith initiative: thank you for modeling a Catholic feminist way of being and seeing that only inspires me more each day! While Dr. Ann Brooks did not serve on my committee, she introduced me to qualitative research and invited me to see myself as a co-creator of knowledge—I essentially found my own *voice* and my dissertation topic in her classroom (and at Kerby Lane) and I will always be grateful for her guidance and mentorship! Also a very special thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Belasco for her unending patience with editing this research study with me!

I want to thank my family as well! My father's inspiration, sheer will, role modeling and constant encouragement set the stage for my return to higher education in my 40s. Thanks dad, for making it possible for me. Mom, thank you for passing along your resilience, hopefulness, and positive attitude, even when times get tough. And, I offer a special and broader thanks to the rest of my family (Amy Castillo, Tom Washam, Uncle Mike and Aunt Joy, Uncle Jim and Aunt Laura) for tolerating my absence for the past six years as I waded through my program!

I started my doctorate when my son was almost 10 years old, and now, he is 16. We have done our homework together for years now! As I finish, he is preparing for college himself and I am so proud of him. Thank you, Alejandro Liam, for putting up with a mom that was often so tired or late or both! You are growing up to be an amazing young man and I hope for you the best education this world can offer. Be inspired and make this world a better place for those to come! I also remarried during my program

and suddenly I had a partner who stepped in and took care of life's day-to-day challenges so that I could study and write. Thank you Mark Schumacher for always being there for me and never giving up on my ability! Thank you for shopping, caring for Alejandro, making meals and managing all the broken stuff in our home. You are my soulmate and I am grateful for you.

Many, many thanks to my mentor and supervisor, Dr. Sandra Pacheco, who patiently and tirelessly processed my worries, fears and challenges throughout my coursework, dissertation research, and writing! Her reassuring presence, and time she allowed me to do what I needed to do, make me forever in her debt. Thank you for role modeling for me that single parenting and dissertating IS possible! I also must thank Sr. Donna Jurick, "my boss's boss," who essentially told me the best dissertation is a done dissertation! And, "Lisa, do not take on one more committee until that dissertation is done!" And, of course, the bourbon fudge that got me through chapter 4 and 5!

There is another mentor and friend, a member of my APCE Cohort 09, who made all the difference in the world for me during my program and the dissertation. He was my advisor and confidant, my coach and dear friend. Dr. Brandon Beck, I seriously could not have made it through without you! While thinking of my cohort family, I want to especially thank now Drs. Michelle Smith, Susan Upshaw, Helen Gadsen-Ross, and Sylvia Pirtle for their love and friendship.

In significant gratitude, I must thank my team at St. Edward's University who held the fort down and gave me the space to go back to school, without missing a beat!

Nicole Trevino, Connie Rey Rodriguez, Sara Beth Cowe, Daniel Hawthorne, Steven Pinkenburg and Jen Wichman, what a team we were and are! Thank you for your confidence in me and for working so hard to serve our students! And, to my girlfriend circle, especially Beth Henderson, Yvette Garcia, Jan Long and Krista Nagel, who gave me backbone and strength to manage multiple life tasks all at once...knowing that so many of you have overcome greater challenges gave me hope that I could accomplish this significant life goal of a Ph.D!

In closing, my value of education for all, in whatever form, compels me to acknowledge the college campuses, with amazing colleagues and students, that have supported me and shaped me up and into this very moment in time, including Texas State University and Ohio University, as well as my dear St. Edward's University.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This narrative inquiry (Chase, 2011; Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2010; Rogers, 2007; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997) qualitative study explores four elders' experiences of hospitality, power, and agency in a Catholic assisted living facility in south central Texas. There are four research objectives in this study: 1) to evoke voices of elders, 2) to perform feminist research, 3) to craft my own creative research framework, and 4) to extend Catholic social teaching beyond traditional spaces. New insights and understandings of how elders foster and/or encounter community amongst diverse elders is important to formal and informal caregivers, as well as elders themselves, as people are aging and living longer than ever before. Evoking the voice of elders' stories, with the use of narrative inquiry, and creating new and positive meanings of assisted living through elders' own experiences can help to counteract the dread that so many elders and their care givers feel when discussing assisted living options.

Primary participants ranged between 66 and 92 years of age at the time of the interviews, and two to three additional secondary participants (mostly staff, other assisted living residents, and family members) named in each elder's stories were also interviewed to gain additional data. Semi-structured individual interviews (Glesne, 2011) were conducted with primary and secondary participants within the assisted living facility; and all interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed, along with writing

field notes to record my observations and thoughts during each site visit (Glesne, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

A blended theoretical framework (Leshem & Trafford, 2007; Merriam, 2009) situated in feminism (Chittister, 1998; Lather, 2001; Luke, 1996; Noddings, 2007) was created and applied to the stories, integrating several theoretical perspectives including a life cycle theory by Erikson (Erikson, 1963, Erikson, 1997), recent interpretation of Catholic social teaching (DeBerri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003; O'Brien & Shannon, 2010) in exploration of hospitality (Aristarkhova, 2012; Levinas, 1979; Pohl, 1999; Vogt, 2007; Wroblewski, 2012), as well as the concept of cosmopolitanism (Appiah, 2006; Derrida, 2001; Hansen, 2010; Miller, 2011; Quinn, 2010) through education and philosophy.

While there were 25 themes identified within the stories (Chase, 2011; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Glesne, 2011), the study concluded with these guiding insights that emerged from the data: 1) maintaining a sense of purpose is important for elders, 2) encountering hospitality impacts the quality of life for elders, 3) staff are both host and guest, and 4) elders are transformative educators. Additionally, the study suggests several organizational strategies addressing systems-level change: 1) ways in which to engage elders as powerful and life-filled, 2) ways in which to ensure elder stories are told to others, and 3) how to translate useful elements of a Catholic mission to non-Catholic organizations.

Key Words/Phrase: Elder, assisted living, Catholic, hospitality, power, agency, community, cosmopolitanism, life cycle theory, feminism

## I. INTRODUCTION

People are aging and living longer and families are often unable to provide the kind of care and assistance old people need in the final stages of their lives (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention & Merck Company Foundation, 2007; Eckert, Carder, Morgan, Frankowski, & Roth, 2009; Imamoglu, 2007; Traylor, 2010; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996). Assisted living (AL) communities exist in the United States as homes for aged people to live where 24-hour care is available. It serves as “in-between” space for aging people who need some amount of support beyond independent senior living but less care than nursing homes (AARP Public Policy Institute, 2012; Kraditor, 2001).

Within AL, there is a variety of assistance available that ranges from dining and housekeeping services, all the way to medicine distribution and on-site medical staff availability. More than half of the elders in AL are 85 or older and just 10% are younger than 65 years of age (Moss, Harris-Kojetin, & Sengupta, 2011). To live in AL, the person must be able to pay for the facility and services and/or receive Medicaid, as well as meet certain medical and descriptive criteria. These criteria differ, but tend to be state driven for licensure requirements, so that the ALs provide the correct assistance with activities of daily living needed by the residents. For instance, in Texas, there are three types of AL licensures; A for residents mentally and physically capable; B for those residents who require more attention, particularly during sleeping hours, emergency conditions and getting in and out of bed; and C for those requiring the most intensive care, and which tends to be considered adult foster care (Polzer, 2012).

For the purposes of this study, those participants living in AL in their last stages within the lifecycle as defined by Erik Erikson and Joan Erikson (1997), will be

respectfully referred to as elders. Erik Erikson (1997) wrote of elders as “the few wise men and women who quietly lived up to their stage-appropriate assignment and knew how to die with some dignity in cultures where long survival appeared to be a divine gift to and a special obligation for a few” (p. 62). Those last stages include Stage 8—old age where the crisis at hand is integrity versus despair with the eventual strength emerging as wisdom; and more recently, Stage 9—added to the life cycle theory by Joan Erikson (Erikson, 1997) to describe the 80s and 90s where,

even the best cared-for bodies begin to weaken and do not function as they once did. In spite of every effort to maintain strength and control, the body continues to lose its autonomy. Despair, which haunts the eighth stage, is a close companion in the night because it is almost impossible to know what emergencies and losses of physical ability are imminent. As independence and control are challenged, self-esteem and confidence weaken. Hope and trust, which once provided firm support, are no longer sturdy props of former days. To face down despair with faith and appropriate humility is perhaps the wisest course. (pp. 105-106)

In a video, *On Old Age II: A Conversation with Joan Erikson at 92* (Davidson, 2011), Erikson talks of AL as “beautiful hotels” out in the country where we “put people out” and isolate them from the rest of the community where people must travel to visit and have money to stay. She underscores the isolation of many AL facilities away from opportunities of intergenerational interaction where people of all ages can interact and learn about getting old. She comments while writing about the more recent ninth stage that “our society does not truly know how to integrate elders into its primary patterns and

conventions or into its vital functioning. Rather than be included, aged individuals are often ostracized, neglected, and overlooked; elders are seen no longer as bearers of wisdom but as embodiments of shame” (Erikson, 1997, p. 114).

The Catholic Church offers significant and rich scholarship about hospitality, community and social justice which will support this research study about elders and aging in community. O’Brien and Shannon (2010) write about more contemporary Catholic Church teachings,

The modern documents, in contrast, communicate a vision of the church as servant to humanity, a renewed concern for the human person and human rights, an increasing emphasis on popular participation, and a more open and humble acknowledgment of the historically conditioned character of human life and consciousness. The social teachings of the modern church also reflect the ideas and perspectives of the emerging Christian communities of the Third World.

(p. 1)

The experience of hospitality, in the context of Catholic Church teachings, addresses inclusion and active welcoming into an open and caring community; while respecting the dignity and worth of each person; valuing each person as both a learner and a teacher; with personal responsibility to the community (Deines, 2008; Pohl, 1999; Vogt, 2007). This understanding of hospitality is similar to cosmopolitanism, or universal hospitality, in education (Quinn, 2010). Elders moving into AL leave one community and enter into another one. The experience of living in this new AL community and the dimensions of hospitality that exist within, including the opportunity for new relationships, new routines, new understandings of self in relationship to others, is the focus of this study.

One's own sense of belonging and connectedness to others is nurtured while the individual is able to share and engage within a common experience. From my own experience in communities, I believe the act of receiving and sharing hospitality with others reinforces one's own sense of power and agency while learning to respect and foster the same in others who live in community. Power and agency is understood as a continuum of experience, being able to think and act independently while in relationship with others. Power and agency for elders in AL communities may decrease as more care is required by staff and families within the AL community and elders experience the more dystonic elements of the ninth stage of human development as understood by Joan Erikson (Erikson, 1997).

### **Central Theme and Background**

#### **Demographic Trends**

The number of elders in the United States is growing more quickly than ever before (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention & Merck Company Foundation, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). A report by the CDC and the Merck Company Foundation, *The State of Aging and Health in America 2007*, states better health care and prevention education has increased life expectancy. This longer life span combined with aging baby boomers will result in a projected 71 million adults 65 years and older by 2030. This means 20% of the U.S. population will be elders and they will be significantly more ethnically and racially diverse as well, with minority elders experiencing more chronic illness than non-Hispanic white adults aged 65 years and older (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention & Merck Company Foundation, 2007).

The *2010 Census Brief* (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011) addressing age and sex composition reports the population since the last 2000 Census is growing older with the median age increasing from 35.3 years of age to 37.2 years of age. Interestingly, the 2010 Census found Maine and Vermont had the highest median age, with 42.7 and 41.5 respectively, while the next three states with the highest median age include West Virginia with 41.3, New Hampshire with 41.1, and Florida with 40.7. The 2010 Census, compared to the 2000 Census, also revealed that elders 65 and older grew at a faster rate, 15.1 %, than the population under 45 years of age, and the fastest growing age group, 45 to 64, grew 31.5 %. In terms of the total population, elders 64 and older make up 13%, those aged 45 to 64 include 26.4 %, young adults 18 to 44 years of age make up 36.5 %, and youth under 18 years of age consist of 24% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Also noteworthy is that although 105 males are born for every 100 females in the United States, mortality rates tend to be higher for males, resulting in more males at younger ages and more elder women in the later years of life (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

At the state level, Texas, where the research study will be conducted, has an estimated 3.7 million elders over the age of 60, making up 14% of 25 million Texans (Traylor, 2010). Furthermore, by the time 2040 arrives, Texas is projected to be the home state for 10 million elders 60 and over, which will be over 20% of total Texas residents. Projections made in the *Texas State Plan on Aging: Fiscal Years 2011-2013*, suggest the fastest growing age group within Texans 60 and older is the group 85 years of age and older, tripling by 2040, with an estimated 944,000 elders over 85.

In terms of diversity, the most common elder in AL is White, and “a pattern among national, multistate, and single-state AL studies suggests disproportionately lower AL use by people of color compared to their proportions in the national and state populations” (Hernandez & Newcomer, 2007, p. 113). Interestingly, in nursing facilities for elders, the racial differences in proportional use are narrowing, while the gap is growing in ALs (Hernandez & Newcomer, 2007). While there are a number of reasons for this (economic factors, exclusionary practices, resident choice), the point is that elders are not one homogenous group and access and usage look different for each group (Hernandez & Newcomer, 2007; Howard et al., 2002). Additionally, some studies have found that non-White and lower income AL residents are “more likely to live in smaller, older, and lower priced homes that have fewer residential and safety-enhancing architectural design features” (Hernandez & Newcomer, 2007, p. 113).

### **Critical Issues and Questions Related to Demographic Trends**

The national and state demographic trends for elders suggest change is not only on the horizon, but rather, knocking at our front door. The United States’ population as a whole is living longer and getting older, with marital patterns and reproductive histories that suggest elders will be living alone and less likely to have caregivers. A joint 1996 *Current Population Report, 65+ in the United States*, by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, identified urgent questions related to these trends including,

Will tomorrow’s generation of older people be healthy; will they be independent; will societies provide productive and purposeful roles for them? Questions about the older population of tomorrow, such as whether more people will be subject to

extended years of disability or whether the age of the onset of chronic conditions is going to be postponed, remain unanswered... The future roles of individuals, families, and society with respect to the older population are unknown. What is needed to educate the public about long-term physical and economic effects of lifestyle in younger years? Who will care for the physically and economically dependent aged? Will care programs take into account cultural differences? Will older persons be able to pay a larger proportion of the costs of their old age? (U.S. Department of Commerce & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996, pp. 7-12)

Quality of life issues—social, ethical and economical—are being raised by state and federal government agencies like the Center for Disease Control and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, advocacy organizations like AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), the National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL) and the Assisted Living Federation of America to name just a few. The aging of the U.S. population is one of the major public health challenges we face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of CDC's highest priorities as the nation's health protection agency is to increase the number of older adults who live longer, high-quality, productive, and independent lives. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention & Merck Company Foundation, 2007, p. 1)

At the state level, the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services submitted their *Texas State Plan on Aging for 2011-2013* (Traylor, 2010) underscoring critical issues and funding challenges regarding elder care. In particular, the report emphasized the concern around a decrease in family care givers,

The informal caregiver system is experiencing increased stress as the pool of family caregivers gets smaller and its average age increases. In 1990, there were 11 potential caregivers for each individual needing care. By 2050, the expectation is for this ratio to fall to four to one. Caregivers will continue to impact the success for providing community-based services so older persons can remain at home as long as possible. (Traylor, 2010, p. 4)

As a backdrop, this same report estimates the United States has 50 million informal caregivers who provide \$350 billion worth of unpaid services each year, with 2.7 million informal caregivers in Texas providing an estimated value of \$26 billion yearly. The existing “aging network in Texas will become more pressed to provide supports, including education and training, respite, and in-home supports for caregivers” (Traylor, 2010, p. 3).

### **Assisted Living Facilities**

The term assisted living (AL) is used today to describe a community for elders that provides more care than independent senior living, but less than a nursing home setting affords. The National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL) defines assisted living as:

A congregate residential setting that provides or coordinates personal care services, 24-hour supervision, assistance (scheduled and unscheduled), activities, and health-related services; is designed to minimize the need to move from the care setting; is designed to accommodate individual residents’ changing needs and preferences; is designed to maximize residents’ dignity, autonomy, privacy,

independence, choice, and safety; and is designed to encourage family and community involvement. (Kraditor, 2001, p. ix)

Historically, “assisted living came to the United States in the mid 1980s and is originally a Scandinavian model of care for the elderly” (Kraditor, 2001, p. ix). Eckert et al. (2009) tell the story of three individuals disenchanted with nursing home care who developed alternatives in two states, Oregon and Virginia, which became the first models for assisted living in the United States. Both models included “respect for resident independence, choice, and privacy in an apartment-style building designed to be homelike and non-institutional” (Eckert et al., 2009, p. 5). Similar programs were developed across the country under a “social model of care, including a homelike living environment, with respect for residents’ privacy, choices, independence, dignity, and individuality” (Eckert et al., 2009, pp. 5-6). This social model of care was in distinct opposition to the medical model of nursing homes where efficiency, routine, regulation and control were priorities of the day (Eckert et al., 2009; Imamoglu, 2007; Wilson, 2007).

The language for AL communities evolved over this time period as well. For instance,

States use many different terms for residential settings; boarding homes, rest homes, adult care homes, domiciliary care homes, personal care homes, community based residential facilities, assisted living, and adult foster care. Until the mid-1990s, the most frequently used term was board and care. Today all types of group residential care are commonly referred to as assisted living. (AARP Public Policy Institute, 2012, p. 1)

In addition to the evolving terminology, one of the more challenging and timely debates within assisted living policy and communities is the notion of “aging in place where older persons desired to age wherever they have lived; they preferred not to move, especially to a nursing home...a move into assisted living might be the last move an older person would make” (Eckert et al., 2009, p. 7). There is significant debate among policy makers and professionals regarding the economics and feasibility of such a community (AARP Public Policy Institute, 2012; Eckert et al., 2009; Kraditor, 2001).

Key findings from the *2010 National Survey of Residential Care Facilities* done by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services include the following (for the purposes of this study residential care facilities include assisted living and personal care homes, providing housing and support to elders who cannot live independently but do not need skilled medical care found in nursing homes):

- In 2010, residential care facilities (RCFs) totaled 31,100, with 971,900 beds nationwide.
- About one-half of RCFs were small facilities with 4-10 beds. The remainder comprised medium facilities with 11-25 beds (16%), large facilities with 26-100 beds (28%), and extra-large facilities with more than 100 beds (7%).
- One-tenth of all RCF residents lived in small RCFs and about that percentage (9%) lived in medium facilities, while the majority resided in large (52%) or extra-large (29%) RCFs.
- About 4 in 10 RCFs had one or more residents who had some or all of their long-term care services paid by Medicaid.

- Larger RCFs were more likely than small RCFs to be chain-affiliated and to provide occupational therapy, physical therapy, social services counseling, and case management.

(National Center for Health Statistics [NCHS], 2011, p. 1)

This same study found that residential care facilities tended to be financed by a private-pay adult population while Medicaid financing has been on the rise. “About four out of 10 residential care facilities had a least one resident who had some or all of their services paid by Medicaid” (NCHS, 2011, p. 5). That said, AL providers find it difficult to accept publicly funded residents because the reimbursement is much less than the actual cost, while some feel they must accept this type of payment because it is better than an open apartment unit (Carder, Wright, & Jenkins, 2005; Eckert et al., 2009).

Additionally, residential care facilities are not federally regulated, leaving it to the states to develop regulations that vary widely and include a number of different settings for AL (AARP Public Policy Institute, 2012; Eckert et al., 2006; NCHS, 2011; Polzer, 2012). Because each state is different, questions arise about a number of issues, including,

whether to require licensed nurses in assisted living facilities, whether and how to define and monitor this new form of long-term care, whether and at what level to set staffing ratios, and what range of medical services would be permitted. (Eckert et al., 2006, p. 8)

Needless to say, professionals and policy makers, as well as elders and care givers, remain in disagreement about whether national regulation is needed in addition to the states.

Texas regulations are managed by the Department of Aging and Disability Services and Texas defines several types of ALs, including:

- Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs) may provide assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs). There are several types of ALFs.
- In a Type A ALF, a resident must be mentally and physically capable of evacuating the facility unassisted in the event of an emergency; may not require routine attendance during sleeping hours; and must be capable of following directions.
- In a Type B ALF, a resident may require staff assistance to evacuate; be incapable of following directions under emergency conditions; require attendance during sleeping hours; may not be permanently bedfast, but may require assistance in transferring to and from bed.
- A Type C ALF is a four-bed, adult foster care, contracted facility that must meet the contracting requirements.

(Polzer, 2012, p. 205)

Texas regulations address not only definitions but disclosure items, scope of care, third party interactions, move-in and move-out requirements, resident assessment, medication management, physical plant requirements, residents allowed per room, bathroom requirements, life safety, Alzheimer's unit requirements, staffing requirements, administrator education and training, staff education and training, continuing education requirements, and Medicaid policy and reimbursement (Polzer, 2012).

## **Elder Characteristics in AL Based on First Comprehensive National Data Collection Effort**

The National Survey of Residential Care Facilities (Moss et al., 2011), first used in 2010, found that elders in AL and residential care were 70% female and that 54% of the total elders are 85 years or older, while 10% are younger than 65 years of age. In addition, the study found a relatively even three-way split with 33% of the elders having lived in the AL community for less than a year, 36% for one to three years and 31% lived in AL for more than three years.

An estimated 74% of elders in AL received support with activities of daily living (ADLs), including eating, dressing, bathing, transferring, and toileting, along with meals, laundry, housekeeping, recreation, and transportation, while 37% of elders have three or more ADL challenges and 42% have dementia of some kind. Finally, 19% of elders receive Medicaid assistance and were more likely to be younger than the other elders in AL (Moss et al., 2011).

### **Reflexivity**

In order to situate myself within this proposed research study I must explain my interest in this topic as it has not been my professional path, rather Catholic higher education student affairs work has been my experience for the last twenty years. In February of 2010 my father had open heart surgery and suffered a severe stroke, leaving him with brain damage that negatively affected his vision, impulse control, ability to sequence basic activities like putting on a T-shirt, and short term memory. The damage to his frontal lobe also affected his judgment and communication skills. His days became filled with anxiety and paranoia, literally overnight. At 69 years of age, after working

hard all his life in higher education himself, he suddenly could not read, write, or follow a conversation and recall it 30 minutes later.

My father lived alone and 1,200 miles away from me and my younger sister. After a year of managing his recovery and living arrangements from afar, my sister and I moved my father into an assisted living facility near us where we could ensure he had the care and support needed to transition into this new and unanticipated life situation. He was completely uprooted from his community where he had been born and raised, away from his friends of 60 plus years. My father moved between hospitals, skilled-nursing rehabilitation facilities, and assisted living. He was angry, confused, scared and resistant to others' efforts to support and care for him. His primary emotion was anger and he was verbally abusive to most of the caregivers, including family, friends, medical, and support staff. In our different roles, all of us were present to attend to his needs and assist him in learning everything over again in a new environment with less capacity to be independent than he had ever experienced in his life.

On July 3, 2011, I was preparing to make the four-hour journey back to Austin, after spending the weekend with my father in his new AL outside of Houston, near my sister's home. At that time, he had only been living in the AL for a month and everything felt very foreign to him. Something significant occurred for me as a daughter and doctoral student studying adult education, and I emailed my faculty member two days later, saying:

After I said goodbye and loaded up my car, including his dog, who is staying with me for now, I backed out of my parking space at the facility and started to drive out of the parking lot. I looked up and saw a man named Jack who lives at Regal

Estates, dad's assisted living facility. He was out for a walk, had a bandaged knee and walked with a cane, but looked at me as I pulled up beside him, grinned really big and said to drive safely and that he would see me again soon.

He is the only person I have met since Dad moved in who seems to be happy and have transitioned well to this next stage of his life. I smiled back at him and told him I would see him soon. He kept smiling and waving as I pulled away. All I could think of was that I wanted Dad to drink that man's Kool-Aid!!! Something is working for Jack. Whether it is him, how he connected with others, to services, whatever...and, I trust there are more folks who have made that transition well...I just haven't met them. Jack had managed to meet my dad and connect with him because they exchange greetings. (July 5, 2011)

### **Personal Experience Informing the Study**

I believe that my own critical experiences—my stories—related to the study influence the ways in which I move, see, interpret and analyze the stories of hospitality I excavate. Even the choice of place and participants will be informed by my experience. My stories become part of my own lived experience. Consequently, I wish to be transparent and comprehensive in creating a theoretical framework and identify the specific, personal, critical experiences that inform my thinking in this study.

**Placement of my parent in assisted living.** As the eldest daughter and living far from my father when he had his stroke following open heart surgery, I found myself reacting to the circumstances, feeling unprepared, and completely ill equipped to make choices on behalf of my father, regarding his living arrangements. My sister and I both

lived several states away and had little time to investigate assisted living facilities once my father had proven unable to care for himself, even with home-health care.

Besides managing the emotions of anger, loss and confusion, I had much anxiety over my father's finances, property and long-term plans. At 69 years of age, his health and related needs proved unpredictable and after trying to make a go of it at home, moving to and from hospitals and hospital-like settings, my sister and I moved my father to a near-by assisted living facility in his home town. He became unmanageable without family nearby to support the professional caregivers and so, we subsequently moved him to Texas, 10 minutes away from where my sister lived and worked.

The entire move was against my father's wishes and he was bitter, angry and confused about the decision, the move, and the transition into the new AL community. He expressed thoughts of hopelessness, fear and loss as he watched his life, community of life-long friends, and sense of purpose in the world melt away. It was devastating for him to leave his home, unable to work and contribute within his community.

**Observations of elders surrounding my parent in AL.** At first, I thought everyone was angry and miserable when living in the AL that I visited as often as I could. I made the four hour trek from my town to my sister's to visit my dad, bringing his black lab to visit with me. I quickly noticed how other elders watched me, greeted me, reached out to pet dad's dog, and seemed settled in their AL community. Not everyone seemed comfortable or content, but enough that I noticed them. I became frustrated that my father was not getting to this same space and began to wonder what I could do differently to help him. Nothing I tried worked. Reasoning, processing, reflecting back his own words and stories, loving him—was just not enough. He became more and more

resentful and depressed, not making many friends, or getting involved in the rituals and traditions of the AL, or rarely offering a kind word to the caregivers who worked and lived in AL with him.

**Journey with my parent in, during and out of assisted living.** The staff, elders, visiting families almost always were smiling and offering kind words to me and my father. I was never in town long enough to get to know anyone well, but they all became familiar characters in my father's life and in mine too. They fixed food, toilets, tied shoestrings and helped dad get dressed regularly. They dispensed medication, called the ambulance and offered reassurance to my father. They built community, facilitated elder programs, maintained the facility and ensured a clean and safe apartment for my father and other elders in which to live.

My father only wanted one thing—to return home. After living a year and a half in the AL community, and 40 years of being divorced, my father remarried my mother and returned to his original home. My mother is a registered nurse and now takes care of my father's daily needs. As surprised as I am about the change in events, I am happy for them. I also know it is just a matter of time until one or both must return to an AL setting or some other form of elder community. Living so far from their daughters and being 72 years of age with health issues, there is little else to expect.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Merriam (2009) writes that the research problem should address the context of the study, the gap in the research, and establish a sense of urgency to address the problem. The context for this study is the landscape in which elders find themselves when they become unable to live independently and must re-establish themselves in AL

communities, often with less capacity and greater need for external support, while being isolated from family and friends in their previous communities.

There is a gap in the research as well. While reviewing the literature, the closest I could find to understanding hospitality in relationship to community building in AL was related to *hominess* and architecture, as well as hospitality services referencing housekeeping and laundry services. These surface level understandings of hospitality “dominate our cultural landscape today” (Newman, 2005, p. 135) and do little to get at the nature of relationships, power and agency within community. In addition, few studies have been done through narrative inquiry and storytelling by elders in AL, although the closest recent and relevant example I found was ethnographic research done by Eckert et al. (2009) published in *Inside Assisted Living: The Search for Home*.

Never before have people in the United States lived longer and in greater numbers. Where will we go? What will we do? How do we live well when we are old in AL? This matter is of the utmost importance to us all! What can we learn from our elders’ experiences of rebuilding community in AL so that we can build future communities that foster rich, meaningful and stimulating lives well into our 80s and 90s? Most of us have not been in close contact with those living through the eighth and ninth stages of the life cycle noted earlier. Who better to show us the way than those who are living it now?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to *unpack* elders’ experience of hospitality in a Catholic AL community and learn how elders’ own power and agency emerges in such a setting. Inviting elders and those in the AL community to share their stories of

hospitality, power and agency within and amongst one another will allow new insights and understandings of how to foster community, an openness to new and different experiences, and create space where new realities can be imagined, including the reality of living well in AL.

Aging is difficult enough without adding the challenges that come along with leaving all that is known behind and beginning anew in a foreign place. Giving voice to elders' stories and creating new and positive meanings of assisted living through elders' own experiences can help to counteract the dread that so many elders and their care givers feel when discussing assisted living options. Those same stories may help to empower the AL staff, medical professionals, care givers and family who work hard to make AL work for their residents and loved ones, providing new insights into day-to-day community living.

My own experience of resistance, including my father's and my own, to this new way of living, is intense and negative, creating fear and dread at the thought of getting old and dying in AL. It defies any expectations my father or I had of living out the *golden years*. But, what about Jack, from my own story with my father in AL? I want to excavate and learn from those stories. I want to tease out what is working and making people engaged, joyful and excited about living in AL. I want to counteract the stories of hopelessness and loss of purpose that elders and caregivers, like my father and I, tell and retell. I want to find and evoke the voices of elders in stories that empower and shape community for our elders in positive ways.

## **Need for the Study**

All people deserve to live well, including our growing population of elders, no matter their socio-economic status, ethnic and racial background, sexual orientation, cognitive and physical ability or gender. In my experience with my father, I learned first-hand that transitioning from independent living to AL and learning how to live well in an unfamiliar and different kind of community can be difficult. In fact, it can silence elders and care givers completely. Joan Erikson (Erikson, 1997) says it best,

Something is terribly wrong. Why has it been necessary to send our elders out of this world into some facility so removed in order to live out their lives in physical care and comfort? Every human being is headed for old age, with all its joys and sorrows. But how can we learn from our elders how to prepare for the end of life, which we all must face alone, if our role models do not live among us? (p. 118)

By excavating the stories of elders and sharing them with others within and beyond the boundaries of AL, I want to evoke the voices of elders' and their experiences of aging in community. I will interpret these experiences through a framework of Catholic social teaching and Catholic feminist teaching on hospitality, in order to learn how acts of hospitality foster living well in community, allowing individual power and agency to thrive within and amongst elders in a Catholic AL.

Catholic feminism, while explored in further detail later in this study, provides a lens in which to consider the research problem. Joan Chittister, a Catholic nun and Catholic feminist scholar, describes Catholic feminism for her as “a way of seeing...a new world view...an attitude toward life. It values things differently than did its forebears. It gives honor where honor has far too long been lacking” (Chittister, 1998, p.

5). Abraham and Procario-Foley (2009) who are Catholic feminist scholars, explain, “Roughly, over the past forty years, through a variety of voices, feminist theology has summarized the basic themes of feminism in terms of mutual relation/relationality, radical equality, and community in diversity” (p. 3). This lens, or perspective, will assist me, as the researcher, in “unpacking” the stories elders share and focusing my data analysis on key experiences.

It is important to note for the purposes of this study I draw on definitions of power and agency from St. Pierre’s (2000) work comparing poststructural feminism to humanism. Although this study is not poststructural, the definitions are useful. Power does not belong to an individual, nor is it necessarily negative. St. Pierre (2000), influenced by Michel Foucault, the French philosopher and social theorist, understands power as it exists in relationship between people, so that power is dynamic, strategic, unbalanced and productive. We move in and out of relations of power as they are “complex and shifting. Resistance and freedom are daily, ongoing practices” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 493). As a researcher, she indicates this definition of power as much more useful to work for social justice too.

Agency in humanist terms is inherent to all people, with “freedom from oppression” possible by invoking one’s own innate will (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 501). Obviously, this is not the experience of elders, and this definition does not apply well. The poststructural feminist approach is to not define agency at all, but suffice it to say that agency results when a person can “decode and recode its [subject] identity within discursive formations and cultural practices” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 504). In other words,

the power to act comes from a constant re-understanding of self in relation to others and the context.

### **Research Site Profile**

The only existing Catholic AL in central Texas is The Village at Incarnate Word (The Village) in San Antonio, Texas. According to their website at [www.iwretire.org](http://www.iwretire.org), The Village provides a continuum of care for senior living and is a non-profit 501 (C)(3) Corporation developed by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word in 1988.

Although it is a Catholic organization, elders of all faith traditions and no faith tradition are welcome. The facility has 299 units with residency representing 75% laypersons and 25% Catholic sisters. The Village offers independent living, AL, nursing, and memory care communities, with 210 full and part time staff. Elders can attend programs and activities at the University of Incarnate Word which is next door to the The Village.

There are two levels of ALs based on abilities and characteristics of residents at The Village. An AL-A is a community where the residents are mentally and physically capable of evacuating the facility unassisted in the event of an emergency and do not require routine attendance during sleeping hours. They are also capable of following directions. In the AL-B, a resident may require staff assistance to evacuate and be incapable of following directions under emergency conditions. Additionally, residents require attendance during sleeping hours and while they may not be permanently bedfast, they may require assistance in transferring to and from bed.

### **Research Questions**

This research study will excavate stories of hospitality within a Catholic AL, giving voice to several elders' stories. I cannot know first-hand what it is to be an elder

in AL because that is not my lived experience, as is the case for so many of us. Thus it is important to listen to those who go before us and can teach us of what is to come and how to create something we all desire.

The following questions will be used to prompt stories from five elders in AL-A at The Village at Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas. Additionally, those who engage frequently in community with those elders, possibly mentioned in the associated stories, will be important individuals to interview, including staff, family and volunteers. When referencing individuals connected to the elders by story, they will be referred to as characters because they are key people elders identify within the context of their stories. These characters have stories too, likely interconnected with the elders' stories, and I want to be sure to capture those intersections in my research and data analysis.

I anticipate these research questions to evolve as I work through the study and interact with the community of elders with whom I will speak, with the following serving as my primary and secondary research questions:

1. How do elders in a Catholic assisted living facility foster and/or experience hospitality?
  - a. What are elders' experiences of fostering and/or encountering hospitality in a Catholic assisted living facility?
  - b. How do iterations of hospitality in community support or detract from a sense of power and agency of the elders?
  - c. What does hospitality in a Catholic AL look like and can it inform secular and other faith-based AL settings?

## Objectives of the Qualitative Research Study

There are four research objectives located within this study, including:

1. To evoke voices of elders
2. To perform feminist research
3. To craft my own creative research framework
4. To extend Catholic social teaching beyond traditional spaces

This research study is meant to evoke the voices of several elders who represent a growing group in our society that is often marginalized and unheard, literally picked up and moved to an isolated space, and expected to *figure it out* and make the most of their circumstances. I do not expect the stories shared by several elders in one Catholic AL community to mirror all other elders in AL. However, it is my hope that this qualitative, naturalistic study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009), can bring to light new understandings of a particular lived experience—aging and living in AL communities. More specifically, the study focusses on the possibilities of mutually creating community in assisted living that is nurturing and giving to the elders themselves and also allows elders to give to others beyond the boundaries of their immediate AL, to continue to live lives with purpose.

Because of my sense of the marginalization and vulnerability experienced by many within this group, combined with my own lived experience, I wish to create my own theoretical framework beginning with a Catholic feminist approach, defining and redefining hospitality through Catholic social thought and cosmopolitanism, using narrative inquiry as my methodology, in order to evoke the voice of elder stories of hospitality, power, and agency that matter for elders living in AL. My choice in drawing

from Catholic social thought comes in part because of the Church's longstanding commitment to social justice in the context of community. My feminist stance is best justified by Noddings (2007) in her discussion of a feminist ethic of care, "Ethical caring's great contribution is to guide action long enough for natural caring to be restored and for people once again to interact with mutual and spontaneous regard" and is "the root of our responsibility to one another" (p. 232). Both areas of scholarship combined offer a starting place to explore the primary interests of the study.

Similar to Flannery O'Connor, a short-story writer and "Catholic woman whose stated purpose was to reveal the mystery of God's grace in everyday life" (back cover of her 1983 version of the book, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*), I wish to push the Catholic social thought that grounds an understanding of hospitality, beyond the boundaries and lives of Catholic organizations and people, so that it can be useful in the everyday life of other (non-Catholic) organizations and people. In fact, I have practiced my theoretical framework and narrative inquiry on a short story by Flannery O'Connor (1983) called *The Displaced Person* to begin to excavate the characters and milieu that engage, run from, ignore and ignite a Catholic feminist hospitality. Learning from this experience, I will be better positioned to do the same with elder stories I have the privilege of learning about during my data collection.

Thus, my research objectives are qualitative in nature, rooted in Catholic feminism (Abraham & Procaro-Foley, 2009; Beattie, 2006; Chittister, 1998). I wish for the research study to raise the emotionally charged issue of aging, loss of power and agency, and independence, and to compel others to learn how to make it better for elders in AL in the future. Using narrative inquiry, I want to evoke the voice of elders'

experiences living in community; understand how hospitality lives within them and those around them; and disrupt the ugly nature of becoming old and dependent. My intention is to respectfully expose the wisdom and life-giving presence of elders and the characters in their lives, that when empowered, can generate community and hopefulness, sense of purpose and life-long learning, through meaningful lived experiences with one another, even in AL.

### **Definition of Terms**

1. **Assisted Living** - as noted earlier in the introduction, assisted living (AL) communities exist in the United States as homes for aged people to live where 24-hour care is available. They serve as an “in-between” space for aging people who need some amount of support beyond independent senior living but less care than nursing homes (AARP Public Policy Institute, 2012; Eckert et al., 2009; Krادitor, 2001).
2. **Catholic Feminism** - It is impossible to identify one correct definition; rather I offer several descriptions that collectively describe the Catholic feminism I connect with for my study. It is safe to say that Catholic feminist scholarship is interested in Christian narrative that is reconstructed with “the inclusivity of mutuality, equality, and diversity” (Abraham & Procario-Foley, 2009, p. 4). Beattie (2006) writes,

If the Church has any hope of being listened to by modern women, it needs to go beyond its present anachronistic sexual stereotypes and authoritarian structures, to present the Gospel in a way that is attentive to the questions, needs and values of the age, without surrendering the central truths of the Christian

faith. This entails recognizing that much of what presents itself as tradition and truth in neo-orthodox Catholicism is neither: it is a modern sexual ideology, shot through with contradictions, inconsistencies and distortions which obscures the luminous possibilities of the Catholic faith and binds tradition to its own narrowly defined understanding of human nature. (p. 15)

Catholic feminism is “courageously blazing new understandings of being Catholic and of being in community with Church and world” while emphasizing “deep reflection on being human in relationship to each other and to God ... as a necessary part of a global conversation that wishes to avoid ecological, economic, and military catastrophe” (Abraham & Procario-Foley, 2009, pp. 1-2). It also wrestles with the figure of Christ and how Jesus is misused to marginalize women and other oppressed groups, often coming from feminist thought that is grounded in second and third wave feminism interested in “criticism, recovery, and reconstruction” (Abraham & Procario-Foley, 2009, p. 3).

Chittister (1998), as a Catholic feminist nun, describes a Catholic feminist spirituality for men and women with a feminist worldview as “another way of looking at life, about another set of values designed to nurture a dying globe and rescue a forgotten people” (p. 7). Her motivation to challenge patriarchal and oppressive behavior in the Church is significant and her prolific writing from a Catholic feminist position comes from a desire to change the current status quo. In reference to her scholarship, she says,

A book like this may not give sure and certain answers to the tensions and confusions surrounding the development of a spiritual life today, but it may raise

enough difficult questions to make the spiritual life different tomorrow from what it was yesterday. Anything is holier than being in an aimless rut that derives from nothing with which we can any longer identify and is going nowhere we want to go. (Chittister, 1998, p. 7)

3. **Catholic Hospitality** - Catholic hospitality is an outcome and virtue of social justice teachings rooted in the history of the Catholic Church (DeBerri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003). It is experienced by the stranger as being welcomed, cared for and engaged by others in the context of an unknown community (Pohl, 1999; Vogt, 2007; Wroblewski, 2012). Catholics do not hold this concept alone; rather Christians and other religious and spiritual traditions throughout history have drawn on the action of hospitality, with different motivations, depending upon the circumstances (Pohl, 1999; Vogt, 2007; Wroblewski, 2012). However, for the purposes of this study, hospitality will be explored through the lens of Catholic social teachings.
4. **Catholic Social Teaching** - Catholic social teaching refers to a “body of teaching on social, economical, political, and cultural matters” (DeBerri et al., 2003, p. 3) and offers “social wisdom based on biblical insights, the tradition of the early writers of the Church, scholastic and other Christian philosophies, theological reflection, and the contemporary experience of the People of God struggling to live out faith in justice” (DeBerri et al., 2003, p. 5). Catholic social teaching connects strongly to social justice for all and emphasizes “that ‘living faith’ leads directly to a ‘loving action’ in the transformation of the world” (DeBerri et al., 2003, p. 5).

Catholic social teaching is broad and often abstract, leaving room for local and regional communities all over the world to “examine the situations of their own countries and regions, reflect on that situation in light of the gospel and the teaching of the Church, and develop their own conclusions and directions for action” (O’Brien & Shannon, 2010, p. 7). Liberation theologies evolved from these teachings as well (O’Brien & Shannon, 2010).

5. **Characters** - Characters reference simply “who peoples your story” (Leavy, 2013, p. 65). Sometimes it is easier to understand what is meant by a word by describing what it is not. I do not mean for character to imply someone who is unusual, has a strong personality, and is odd or eccentric. For the purpose of this study, characters are those, including elders, who live in the stories told by the participants.

I practice the application of a theoretical framework on Flannery O’Connor’s short story called “The Displaced Person” where the characters come together on a farm during World War II. Johansen (1994) references characters in O’Connor’s stories as living on the edges of their families or communities. Existing on the fringes, relying heavily on sight—a less intimate sense than touch or taste, for example—each is to some extent a passive spectator distant from the world and not responsible for it. (p. 21)

Using the story and characters as data, I am able to identify specific themes of interest to better understand a particular kind of human experience. I chose the story of “The Displaced Person” to practice with because O’Connor’s story and character development allow me to explore hospitality in community,

cosmopolitanism as it relates to hospitality, as well as power and agency demonstrated by the characters.

6. **Community Engagement** – For the purpose of this study, community engagement references ways in which elders are involved with, or connected to, others in the AL community (Eckert et al., 2009; Erikson, 1997; Erikson, Erikson & Kivnick, 1986; Schoklitsch & Baumann; 2012) and does not mean to be confused with the field or study of community engagement. Erikson et al. (1986) explain communal involvement for elders as “an interactive involvement within a communal ‘actuality,’ and a shared sense of ‘we’ within a communal mutuality” (p. 53). The communal practice of hospitality can be located in the AL through the many different ways elders engage, or become involved in their community (Pohl, 1999; Vogt, 2007; Wroblewski, 2012).
7. **Cosmopolitanism** - Although a very complex and multidisciplinary term, cosmopolitanism, in the context of this research, will refer to universal hospitality in which people from different communities come together for a common purpose, with respect and dignity within self and between one another (Quinn, 2010). Cosmopolitanism fosters participation and action, reinforcing agency on the part of the individual in the context of a community that works toward justice (Appiah, 2006; Derrida, 2001; Hansen, 2010; Miller, 2011; Quinn, 2010).
8. **Elders** - elders refer to those aged individuals who participate in this study and live in an AL community. Along broader terms, elder may refer to anyone 65 years and older, a frequently used cut-off point for a segment of the population (CDC and the Merck Company Foundation, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011;

U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996). Furthermore, elders will be considered to have wisdom to educate earlier generations and offer understanding and experience about living well, growing old, and many other matters in society (Erikson, 1997; Erikson et al., 1986; Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012).

9. **Feminist Ethnographer** - a feminist ethnographer is a researcher that allows feminist theory to inform the research strategy of ethnography. Feminist research works to address oppression and exploitation of women, focusing on justice and power, and moves beyond just sex and gender, to other forms of marginalization because all forms of oppression are interconnected in the human experience (Glesne, 2011; Noddings, 2007).

Murchison (2010) describes ethnography as an engaged, firsthand study of society and culture in action,

Unlike many other scientific research strategies, the ethnographer as researcher is not typically a detached or uninvolved observer. The ethnographer collects data and gains insight through firsthand involvement with research subjects or informants. With few exceptions, the ethnographer conducts research by interacting with other human beings that are part of the study; this interaction takes many forms, from conversations and interviews to shared ritual and emotional experiences.

(p. 4)

The feminist position of a feminist ethnographer attends to the relationships with participants and demands constant critical self-reflection “of their own roles as researchers and of their histories, values and assumptions in

relationship to the research” (Glesne, 2011, p. 11). Lather (2001) describes her work as a feminist ethnographer as an attempt to reach “toward a generally accessible public horizon and yet denies the ‘comfort text’ that maps easily onto our usual ways of making sense” (p. 205). In essence, feminist ethnographers work toward social justice ends for those that are oppressed while breaking down hierarchical research relationships (Glesne, 2011; Lather, 2001).

10. **Narrative Inquiry** - is an interdisciplinary method of qualitative research interested in the human experience as narrated by those living them (Chase, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The researcher gathers stories, often through interviews, but can be applied to any spoken or written account, as well as visual accounts. The stories become the data the researcher uses for the study. The method is sometimes criticized because it tends to the individual person rather than a group or social context. However, the narrative inquiry considers questions about “groups, communities, and contexts through individuals’ lived experiences” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 153). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe narrative inquiry as a “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” that essentially amount to “stories lived and told” (p. 20).

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Introduction to the Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

Merriam (2009) explains a theoretical framework as drawing “upon the concepts, terms, definitions, models and theories of a particular literature base and disciplinary orientation” (p. 67). All dimensions of this study will be rooted within a blended theoretical framework, while guiding my problem statement and purpose of the study (Merriam, 2009). The blended theoretical framework will draw from several disciplines of study including Catholic social teaching, feminist thought, philosophy, education and psychology. Additionally, Maxwell (2013) explains that conceptual frameworks serve as a visual map that demonstrates the direction of the study and the relationships between the different theories, models, expectations and terms.

As an overview, I am drawing from my own lived experience and disciplinary orientation as a student development practitioner (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010; Fowler, 1981; McEwen, 2003; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Schlossberg, 1984), and using identity development theory as a lens to consider elder experiences during the latter stages of the life cycle (Erikson, 1963, 1980, 1997; Erikson et al., 1986; Evans et al., 2010; Gergen, 1991; Josselson, 1991). I am also pulling from my own professional experience and interest as a Catholic feminist administrator working at a Catholic university and drawing on scholarship from Catholic social teaching, specific to the concept of hospitality (DeBerri et al., 2003; Pohl, 1999; Vogt, 2007; Wroblewski, 2012), as well as from feminist scholarship (Abraham & Procaro-Foley, 2009; Chittister, 1998; Lather, 2001; Luke, 1996; Noddings, 2007). And, finally, I am referencing a dimension of study in education known as cosmopolitanism

that was first introduced to me while studying theological issues in education as a doctoral student, with a focus on the experience of being a stranger in a new place, highlighting the importance of hospitality in community (Appiah, 2006; Derrida, 2001; Hansen, 2010; Miller, 2011; Quinn, 2010).

My theoretical framework engages my own personal experiences to weave together a tapestry or map that gives it *legs to stand on* and a direction to move, suggesting an interaction between elders and others, within an assisted living (AL) community, where Catholic hospitality and cosmopolitanism exist to some degree. My desire is to excavate elder stories of hospitality in a Catholic organization, informing professional and informal care givers, as well as those anticipating old age, while finding good use for Catholic scholarship beyond the boundaries of Catholic communities-- ultimately, placing elders at the center of their own reality making, as teachers to those serving elders (informally and formally), so that we can build communities in AL that are nourishing and sustainable.

Using Crotty (1998) and Merriam (2009) to describe my qualitative and feminist research process, my epistemology is grounded in constructionism, my theoretical frame is interpretivism, my methodology will be narrative inquiry and my primary methods will be the interview and narrative. In other words, I see knowledge and meaning as constructed differently by different people, and my intention is to describe, understand and interpret the stories I gather from my participants, in this case elders, in order to excavate realities of hospitality in a Catholic AL community—context bound but informative beyond the Catholic AL community. My general feminist stance/approach/philosophy/epistemology compels me to desire this study to do more

than describe, but change future elder communities for the better (Abraham & Procaro-Foley, 2009; Glesne, 2011; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Noddings, 2007).

### **Theories and Models Informing the Study**

The following sections address the theoretical framework I am constructing from an integration of several theoretical perspectives. It includes a life cycle theory, first articulated by Erik Erikson (Erikson, 1963) and later further developed by his wife, Joan Erikson (Erikson, 1997). A recent interpretation of Catholic social teaching is also provided in order to establish a context and description of Catholic hospitality and more broadly Christian hospitality. Finally, the concept of cosmopolitanism is explored through several disciplines, including education and philosophy. All of this is informed by a feminist perspective and eventual articulation of the hospitality in which I hope to excavate through this study.

**Feminism as a backdrop.** I begin with feminism because it is the ground on which I stand.<sup>1</sup> Luke (1996) remarks from a public pedagogical and feminist perspective, “I have learned from and have been taught by popular culture, peers, parents and teachers, as a girl and as a woman” (p. 8). It is how I see the world. As a doctoral student pursuing my Ph.D. in education, I situate myself as a Catholic feminist. I do so carefully and with tremendous respect for how those two words, Catholic, and feminist, come together. Sr. Joan Chittister, O.S.B., a Benedictine nun, says of her feminist worldview, feminism is “about another way of looking at life, about another set of values designed to nurture a dying globe and rescue a forgotten people. These concepts are open to men and women alike” (Chittister, 1998, pg. 7). She also explains that the “feminist

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<sup>1</sup> This discussion identifies key words that contribute to my overall understanding of feminism, later represented as a word cloud.

commitment to peace, freedom, dignity, respect, compassion, and mutuality have paled in the shadow of masculinist power, force, control, and domination” (p. 6). I ground my own thinking and understanding similarly, believing as she does that:

Feminism commits itself to the equality, dignity, and humanity of all persons to such an extent that it sets out to secure the societal changes necessary to achieve that reality for both women and men. It rests on the notion that God did not make one sex simply for the sake of serving the other and that to the diminishment of its own possibilities. The real development of the human race, the feminist contends, depends on the equal partnership of women and men, not the oppression of one for the indulgence of the other. Feminism makes humans of us all. (Chittister, 1998, p. 4)

Additionally, taking a feminist approach means I do not subscribe to one metanarrative and universal truth. This being said, Noddings (2007) further explains, it seems more prudent to many of us to speak of a partially constituted subject—one who is shaped in large part by her situation in time and place but also at least in part by her own decisions and actions. (p. 218)

Noddings (2007) also echoes Chittister’s words in that she believes, as do I, that all stakeholders have something to share in regards to feminism. From this open stance, she explains, “Men and women, blacks and whites, oppressors and oppressed, speak from different perspectives—different standpoints—but each contribute something valuable to a discussion of the issues that arise in interaction” (Noddings, 2007, p. 218).

Noddings’ feminist ethic of care “can lead us to a less violent, more caring way of life” (p. 222) and I very much approach learning, being, doing and reflecting in that

manner. Living in right relationship with one another, being in community, speaking and acting from a space of compassion and understanding are dimensions I will be listening for in the stories I excavate with elders in my research. Noddings (2007) offers her thoughts about living out the ethic of care in different dimensions of life experience that suggest clues, a stance, for me to look for in the stories to be shared, “I take my cues not from a stable principle but from the living other whom I encounter” (p. 224). Those words inspire me to develop some sensitive level of relationship with those elders I too expect to encounter.

As I continue to situate myself as a researcher for this study, I turn to Patti Lather’s work studying women with AIDS in Ohio (Lather, 2001; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997). She illustrates how to be in relationship as a researcher with the participants she considers co-researchers in the process of understanding and scholarship. Lather writes of “giving voice to the voiceless” (Lather, 2001, p. 199) and being careful about our own position in relation to those we are connecting with, “This closeness to the practical ways people enact their lives has been the promise for understanding how the everyday gets assumed” (p. 202). There is much I do not know that I do not know, and this is Lather’s gift as a feminist ethnographer—a reminder that we must not for a second think we know. Rather, we must engage with our co-researchers, in the story telling and retelling to create some mutual understanding of the lived experience—even then certain we missed it. It is the way we narrate our reality that allows us to create it.

Lather (2001) explains her feminist thinking further,

In contemporary regimes of disciplinary truth telling, the concept of voice is at the heart of claims to the "real" in ethnography. Indeed, in the new ethnography, the authority of voice is often privileged over other analyses. Confessional tales, authorial self-revelation, multivoicedness, and personal narrative are all contemporary practices of representation designed to move ethnography away from scientificity and the appropriation of others. At risk is a romance of the speaking subject and a metaphysics of presence complicated by the identity and experience claims of insider/outsider tensions. From the perspective of the turn to epistemological indeterminism, voice is a reinscription of some unproblematic real. This is a refusal of the sort of realism that is a reverent literalness based on assumptions of truth as an adequation of thought to its object and language as a transparent medium of reflection. The move is, rather, to endorse complexity, partial truths, and multiple subjectivities. My attempt here is to defamiliarize common sentiments of voice in order to break the hegemonies of meaning and presence that recuperate and appropriate the lives of others into consumption, a too-easy, too-familiar eating of the other. (p. 206)

Lather challenges me to displace my own authority and power as the researcher by acknowledging the ongoing failures within my research to understand the experiences of elders. In other words, my own failures to understand can actually assist in the construction of new knowledge through stories. My intention is to practice a level of self-awareness as the researcher—constantly challenging myself in my interpretation of experiences of the elders I research.



2012). Stages can be revisited throughout life and resolved and re-resolved (Erikson, 1997; Merriam et al., 2007). The stages, if resolved, include stage one: basic trust versus mistrust resulting in hope, stage two: autonomy versus shame and doubt resulting in will, stage three: initiative versus guilt resulting in purpose, stage four: industry versus inferiority resulting in competence, stage five: identity versus identity diffusion (confusion) resulting in fidelity, stage six: intimacy versus isolation resulting in love, and stage seven: generativity versus stagnation resulting in care.

For the purposes of this study, I am particularly concerned with stages eight and nine. Originally there were eight stages, but Erikson's wife, Joan, offered a ninth stage after his death (Erikson, 1997). Stages eight and nine take an adult from the average age of about 65 into their 80s and 90s, with stage eight addressing integrity versus despair resulting in wisdom. J. Erikson (1997) posed that after aging herself and watching her husband age, as well as reviewing his notes over the years, a ninth stage in identity development exists, with the elder moving through the already resolved crisis points and confronting them again because of the failing mental and physical ability over time. If the elder is able to successfully re-confront the challenging elements of each stage, growth and strength are continued possibilities (Brown & Lewis, 2003; Erikson, 1997) and allow for formal and informal care givers, as well as elders themselves, to look forward to potential psychological and spiritual growth very late in life. It is a hopeful way in which to view aging in the latter years.

An important note for my study is that the ninth stage flips the crises states so that the dystonic (negative) element is listed first, with the syntonic (positive) element listed second. This is to underscore the extreme challenge that an elder will face and that others

may observe while spending time with him or her (Brown & Lewis, 2003; Erikson, 1997). For example, when an elder must re-confront the first stage (trust versus mistrust), now mistrust versus trust, it is because they are forced to “mistrust their own capabilities. Time takes its toll even on those who have been healthy and able to maintain sturdy muscles and the body inevitably weakens” (Erikson, 1997, p. 107). As another example, Erikson (1997) describes the second stage, flipped, as shame and doubt versus autonomy,

Autonomy. Remember how it feels, how it always felt, to want everything your way. I suspect this drive continues to our last breath. When you were young, all the elders were stronger and more powerful; now the powerful are younger than you. When you are feisty and stubborn about arrangements made for or about you, all the more powerful elements—doctors, lawyers, and your own grown children—get into the act. They may well be right, but it can make you feel rebellious. Shame and doubt challenge cherished autonomy. (p. 108)

Formal and informal caregivers, as well as elders themselves, can use this theory to better understand what is underneath elders’ actions and words in order to better foster support and growth within a community like AL (Brown & Lewis, 2003; Erikson, 1997).

Erikson et al. (1986) offer that “vital involvement in old age and interdependence among people allow adults to complete the life cycle successfully and leave a positive legacy for the next generation” (pp. 306-307).

The Eriksons left us with a psychosocial development model for adulthood—the first one that spanned birth to death. In a sense, what they left for future generations is

their own generativity and stage seven expressed as a positive and hopeful lens through which to see growing old. Schoklitsch and Baumann (2012) write about generativity,

Generativity not only needs a giver, but also a recipient. Maybe it is, at least in part, a problem of Western societies, which eternally praise the youth, to not always appreciate the experience and wisdom of older adults. In other civilizations and history periods, older adults were deemed sources of wisdom and this gave them a significant role within the everyday life of the societies they belonged to. (p. 270)

This strengthens the need to engage this study so that the stories elders share about their lived experience of hospitality, agency and power, while in an AL setting, may be learned and understood by others (young and old, caregivers and those with no experience) in order to consider how to grow old and live well together, as opposed to thinking AL communities are where elders go to die. In fact, elders participating in this study become part of a greater effort to educate younger generations. Wolf and Brady (2010) remark about adult education,

Older adults can be fully integrated into the everyday changes experienced by younger cohorts. They will not be isolated, marginalized, or fogies to be tolerated...Education can be the hallmark of the search for hope, meaning, and connection for all other generations. (p. 371)



social teaching shows a lively evolution marked by shifts both in attitude and methodology. (DeBerri et al., 2003, p. 14)

The most recent change in attitude for the Catholic Church followed a historical time known as *The Second Vatican Council* in the late 1960s which followed a change in the way the Catholic Church positioned itself with the world, leadership, and relation to members of the Church. DeBerri et al. (2003) named four major attitude shifts including,

1. An assault on political apathy
2. A commitment to the *humanization* of life
3. A commitment to world justice
4. Preferential option for the poor

From this shift in attitude also came changes in theological method, one of which emphasizes “reading the signs of the times” which means,

It is a basic Christian belief that God continues to speak in and through human history...History ceases to be the mere context for the application of binding principles, which are derived uniquely from speculative and philosophical reasoning. It becomes the place of ongoing revelation. (DeBerri et al., 2003, p. 16)

Following along this shift in attitudes and particular methodology, Catholic social teaching comes to play. This thread that God is “at work healing and redeeming human history and inviting all people to participate in that work,” (DeBerri et al., 2003, p. 18) no matter their beliefs and understandings, gives way to seven general principles, most recently distilled in 1999 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops document *Sharing*

*Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions—Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops.*

1. The Dignity of the Human Person,<sup>3</sup> with areas of concern including:
  - a. Authentic human development
  - b. Love of God, love of neighbor
  - c. Love and justice
  - d. Dialogue
2. The Dignity of Work, with areas of concern including:
  - a. The priority of labor over capital
  - b. Religious and social development
3. The Person in Community, with areas of concern including:
  - a. Common good
  - b. Human freedom/social structures
  - c. Structures of sin/structures of grace
  - d. Liberation
  - e. Participation
  - f. The role of the Church
4. Rights and Responsibilities, with areas of concern including:
  - a. Human rights
  - b. Responsibilities
  - c. Private property/social mortgage
  - d. Resisting market idolatry

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<sup>3</sup> This discussion identifies key words that contribute to my overall understanding of Catholic social teaching and hospitality, later represented as a word cloud.

- e. The role of government
  - f. The principle of subsidiarity
5. Option for Those in Poverty, with areas of concern including:
- a. Biblical justice
6. Solidarity
- a. Unity of humanity
  - b. Peacemaking
  - c. Pacifism or non-violence
  - d. Just war
7. Care for Creation, with this most recent statement of understanding:
- People are to respect and share the resources of the earth, since we are all part of the community of creation. By our work we are co-creators in the continuing development of the earth. Catholic social thought has explicitly addressed environmental and ecological concerns only in rather recent times. But the concern for respecting, sharing and caring for creation has always been part of the tradition. Recent statements on the importance of environmentally and socially sustainable patterns of consumption and development have built solidly upon that part of the tradition. (DeBerri et al., 2003, p. 33)

In my study, I want to suggest that hospitality, recognized as a Christian virtue and tradition, (Pohl, 1999; Vogt, 2007; Wroblewski, 2012), is one way in which to perform, enact, or act upon Catholic social thought. Vogt (2007) proposes such a thing in combination with two other Christian virtues, solidarity and compassion, where “the

cultivation of these three virtues involves developing habits of thinking, feeling and acting that concretely express a vision of Catholic social teaching,” (p. 394).

Furthermore, these and other spiritual practices help to cultivate an openness to God and are necessary to the practice of hospitality (Wroblewski, 2012).

Vogt (2007) goes on to explain that hospitality is an expression of solidarity and compassion that is meant to shape the practice of the other two virtues. It is one of the oldest and most critical Christian virtues, and was also conceptualized by Greeks and Romans and practiced in a community setting intended to gain favor with powerful members in the social setting (Pohl, 1999; Quinn, 2010; Vogt, 2007; Wroblewski, 2012). In addition, Matthews (1991) explores the protocol of hospitality, the welcoming of strangers into the home, where in the “Near East, in both ancient and more modern times, [hospitality] followed a set pattern of ritual fulfillment of obligation and expectation” (p. 13). The story of Sarah and Abraham welcoming three strangers is a historic example of hospitality, “Only in Genesis 18 and 24 are there examples of the proper mode of conduct within the biblical hospitality ritual,” according to Matthews (1991). Hospitality, then, can be understood as welcoming, caring for, and engaging *the other*, essentially directing hospitality toward strangers and those at the margins, as well as toward the powerful.

**Postmodern hospitality.** Although Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, postmodern philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, did not come from a Christian or Catholic context, their work further explores and helps to understand the nature of hospitality and lends itself to this study. Both saw hospitality as a “universal concept” and

even if hospitality differs historically and geographically, nevertheless it is a part of the human condition, and it might be defined as a human virtue, a system of

communal relations, a sacred link with god(s) and goddess(es), and even as a ‘culture’ itself. (Aristarkhova, 2012, p. 164)

Levinas’ understanding of hospitality includes dimensions of welcome, receptivity, discretion, intimacy, recollection, and habitation (Aristarkhova, 2012; Levinas, 1979). This occurs as complete openness and unconditional acceptance of the other that is worked for with purpose with attention on the guest, as opposed to the host or self. Besides hospitality being discrete and humble, it is also intimate, where a level of vulnerability is reached while inviting the stranger into one’s home. The experience of hospitality, both by the guest and host, creates a memory of feeling at home and being inside a dwelling or habitation where *asylum* is offered (Aristarkhova, 2012; Levinas, 1979).

This understanding of hospitality, as worked out by Levinas (1979), compliments Derrida’s understanding of hospitality, “for whom at various points hospitality stands for culture, deconstruction, and a radical alternative to current European politics and treatment of its ‘Others’: ethnic minorities, immigrants, refugees, visitors” (Aristarkhova, 2012, p. 166). Derrida’s contribution to the discussion of hospitality and this study is his appreciation for the tensions that come with the acts of hospitality (Aristarkhova, 2012; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Kessel, 2008; Wroblewski, 2012). Derrida differentiates two kinds of hospitality, that which is conditional and that which is absolute (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). Conditional hospitality comes with rules and limitations, while absolute hospitality “entails a willingness to welcome what is unknown, unexpected, and even disturbing” (Wroblewski, 2012, p. 23).

Besides the pros and cons inherent in conditional and absolute hospitality, Derrida teases out the frustration of hospitality, in that “to give from one’s economy while allowing it to be disrupted” is difficult (Minister, 2007) and that “a truly unconditional hospitality requires that I relinquish even the conditions that make hospitality possible” (Wroblewski, 2012, p. 22). Derrida coined this primary argument the *aporia of hospitality* (Aristarkhova, 2012; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Wroblewski, 2012) where the host owns and is empowered by ownership while at the same time giving it up through the act, the performance, of hospitality.

The complexities of hospitality, including those elements as understood by Levinas (1979), as well as the inherent tensions as identified by Derrida and Dufourmantelle (2000), will assist me in making meaning of the rich stories by and of elders I anticipate in my study. It also makes me wonder about the experience of hospitality of elders in AL when they neither own nor may be empowered by ownership of dwelling, but are still placed in a position of host, and to receive guests.

While Derrida noted the impossibility of unconditional hospitality, even while working toward it, Henri J.M. Nouwen (1974), Catholic priest and theologian, saw hospitality laden with challenges as well. Wroblewski (2012) highlights Nouwen’s work, identifying three paradoxes, “receptivity and confrontation, emptiness and articulate presence, and poverty and plentitude” (p. 45). How one navigates these spaces helps or hinders the practice and experience of hospitality and according to Wroblewski (2012), there are concrete spiritual practices that help us to be open to God, and thus enlarge our capacity to give and receive hospitality. Examples of these practices or “spiritual

disciplines” include “prayer of word and prayer of silence, solitude and fellowship, fasting and celebration, service and rest, and confession and forgiveness” (p. 53).

**Public hospitality.** Obviously, hospitality has a rich history and the meaning of hospitality varies depending upon time and place, with location impacting “its meaning and practices” (Pohl, 1999). Although hospitality usually invokes a sense of home to many,

For Christians, the other site most commonly associated with hospitality is the church and the institutions which have derived from the church, such as monasteries, hospitals, and hospices. In addition to these primary locations, certain aspects of hospitality to strangers have also been located in the economic and political spheres. (Pohl, 1999, p. 39)

The history and meaning of hospitality, from a scholarly perspective, can be traced back to Old Testament settings, New Testament settings, fourth and fifth century settings, the Middle Ages, Reformation and early modern settings, to the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Pohl, 1999; Wroblewski, 2012), but that is beyond the scope of this study. What is important to note is that hospitality is a term that has been studied inside and outside of the Catholic Church, and has been useful in history in different ways at different times.

Currently, acts of hospitality are critical and challenging because so much of what used to be done in the home and church is now in late modernity performed by different institutions, often in a very specialized manner,

...work, religious observance, protection, education, care for the sick, provision for the aging, and care for strangers—are now located in their own spheres and separate institutions. Each sphere has its own culture, rules, and specialists.

Professionals within each sphere are paid to provide a service. When we want to respond personally to the needs of a stranger, we often face distinct institutional pressures that push us toward relying on specialists...maintaining social networks is much more problematic; the bond between provider and recipient is much more limited. Although physical needs might be met, needs for a social identity and connection are not only overlooked but sometimes intensified. (Pohl, 1999, p. 57)

I will use these understandings of hospitality, as part of my theoretical framework because it will help me to bridge the act of welcoming and caring for strangers with the important questions of our time; the morality behind our actions, that allow us to be inclusive; attentive to those on the margins of society; compassionate and humble; as lived and practiced in a Catholic AL community by elders and those in community with them.

**Houses of hospitality.** In discussing the concept of hospitality, The Catholic Worker Movement and the houses of hospitality that sprung from that social reform movement are important to reference and offer a deeper understanding of hospitality practiced in community. The Catholic Worker Movement began in 1933 by a journalist, Dorothy Day, and a philosopher, Peter Maurin, to promote justice and mercy in the face of capitalism and communism, and even today, an estimated 185 Catholic Worker communities exist in the U.S., Canada, and Europe (Deines, 2008; Wroblewski, 2012). This movement is committed to “personalism, community, nonviolence, and works of mercy” and emphasizes direct action and personal responsibility (Wroblewski, 2012, p. 128). Workers and guests living and working together maintain the community, with little distinction between guests who do not choose their lot in life (often poverty) and

workers who deliberately decided to live in these house of hospitality in order to be transformed through community life, which acts as a source of support and development (Deines, 2008; Wroblewski, 2012).

The day-to-day living with and caring for one another creates and re-creates acts of hospitality in these houses of hospitality. Wroblewski (2012) writes of the challenges of hospitality as she describes the issues faced daily by those in these houses who were taking personal responsibility for one another, as opposed to delegating it to the government. “Virtually anyone with some experience in a Worker House of Hospitality can share similar stories of feeling overwhelmed and overworked, made hostile or humbled by the needs and demands of their guests and fellow hosts” (Wroblewski, 2012, p. 129). I anticipate similar stories by elders living in AL community as they describe themselves in relationship with other elders, caregivers, family, friends and guests.

## Threads of Catholic Identity

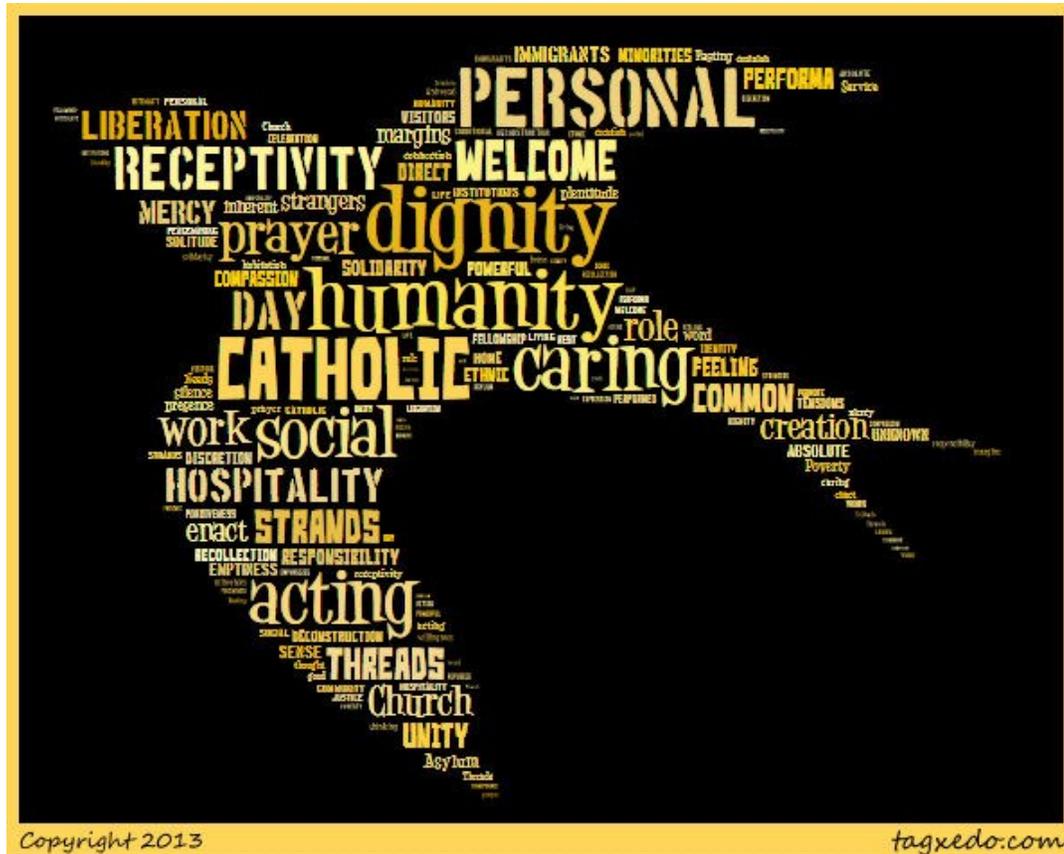


Figure 3. *Threads of Catholic Hospitality*. The act of creating a word cloud in [www.tagxedo.com](http://www.tagxedo.com) allows me to synthesize and illustrate the different dimensions of hospitality. Hospitality is a historical term and the use of the term varies. For the purposes of this study, I use text in the word cloud from scholars that locate it in Catholic social teaching (DeBerri et al., 2003; Deines, 2008; Vogt, 2007), as well as Christian tradition (Pohl, 1999; Wroblewski, 2012), and postmodern philosophy (Aristarkhova, 2012; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Levinas, 1979). The shape of the word cloud reflects my intention as a researcher to contribute to the creation and sustainability of peaceful communities that intentionally embrace and respect elders as wise teachers who have much to give to our world.

**Cosmopolitanism.** I will use cosmopolitanism to add dimension to Catholic hospitality in order to further my feminist understanding of hospitality. Derrida (2001) wrote an essay addressing the International Parliament of Writers in Strasbourg in 1996 discussing “cosmopolitan rights for asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants” (p. viii) and in this essay connected cosmopolitanism to hospitality. Essentially, Derrida

challenged us to think about the complexities of cosmopolitanism through the actions of unconditional hospitality<sup>4</sup> “which should offer the right of refuge to all immigrants and newcomers. But on the other hand, hospitality has to be conditional: there has to be some limitation on rights of residence” and the negotiation of the “contradictory logic” is what should enable action, as opposed to stymie it (p. x). Derrida’s deconstruction of *open cities* or *cities of refuge* as it relates to the concept of cosmopolitanism, helps us to see how difficult but important it is to welcome the stranger and to use this analogy in the larger picture of resolving political discussions about immigration and war.

Derrida (2001) poses the question, “How can the hosts and guests of cities of refuge be helped to recreate, through work and creative activity, a living and durable network in new places and occasionally in a new language” (p. 12)? This question can be applied to the Catholic AL in my study, particularly as hosts and guests come and go in a community that may feel very foreign at times to both. The experience of work and creative activity—what does that look like and how does it happen amongst elders and care givers? Derrida’s efforts to decenter cosmopolitanism long enough to look inside and see how it may serve a purpose, through the negotiation of hospitality, if it is even possible, helps to understand experiences anew and maybe “shake things loose” in order to re-start something compelling and just. I am hopeful that the stories I gather will help both the elders and caregivers (formal and informal) see ways in which to experience themselves and their community anew--and if not for them, for others, who desperately need stories that empower and nourish anticipations about aging in community.

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<sup>4</sup> This discussion identifies key words that contribute to my overall understanding of cosmopolitanism, later represented as a word cloud.

Long (2009) speaks to cosmopolitanism as the notion of being a citizen of the world and a broad theory that focuses on a global perspective. Furthermore, he outlines moral cosmopolitanism as underscoring “our duties to other human beings, regardless of nation or state” (p. 317). This understanding undergirds the nature of welcoming strangers with an appreciation for diversity and common citizenship by virtue of being on the planet earth, and that considering the mobility of people on the planet, our connectedness, both through technology, and through proximity, is frequent and real. Long (2009) uses this particular lens of cosmopolitanism to understand our duties to the world’s poor—justice done globally.

Miller (2011), while discussing a “feminist account of global responsibility and global duty to care” (pp. 391-392) names four categories of cosmopolitanism, including political (focusing on the nature of international political organization and recommending different degrees of global oversight); economic (with a focus on the development and regulation of global economic systems); cultural (offering a view of cultures and self with a bent toward cultural diversity); and finally moral cosmopolitanism, which underscores moral commitments to justify certain stances of equal moral worth and impartiality. She argues that care seen as a “cosmopolitan obligation” enhances the justice-dominated discussion and scholarship of global responsibility (Miller, 2011, p. 391).

Hansen (2010) references his understanding of “cosmopolitanism on the ground” to mean,

...participating in pluralist change as an agent, as an actor, rather than remaining passive or reactive to events...Among the voices that can be heard in the literatures cited here are those of people, young and old alike, putting their foot

forward, both figuratively and literally speaking. They engage the world at whatever level their resources and strength permit. They think about their settings and the world writ large. And their porosity to influence from the world differs from that of some rocks in which water merely passes through...constitutes an approach toward deepening people's creative ability to balance openness and loyalty. (p. 24)

These understandings of cosmopolitanism can be transferred to elders in AL when thinking about living in community, welcoming diverse people as a person likely different in many ways from those with whom they live. More importantly, this understanding of cosmopolitanism is empowering and compels each person, no matter their background and status, to engage fully with the world around them, while relying on what they know and who they are—individual power and agency are seen as part of this experience of cosmopolitanism.

I wish to use cosmopolitanism to add dimension to Catholic hospitality, to understand the ebb and flow of power and agency elders experience living in a new and diverse community as it relates to embracing others and living in community—"...our duties are impartial ones, in the sense that they aim to affirm human beings as of equal moral worth, and aim to see past national or cultural biases" (Long, 2009, p. 319). This particular view of hospitality, through cosmopolitanism, allows me to focus on difference and to expand the motivation of hospitality beyond Christian and Catholic faith tradition, to a universal connectedness between people because we share a common citizenship living in the same world. Both understandings of hospitality are important, both lead to

increased justice and compassion, and appreciating both adds to the depth and possibility of lived hospitality from a feminist space.

Quinn (2010) discusses cosmopolitanism through her own lived experience of the ...inhospit-abilities, inhospitableness, inhospitality, of academia, my own attempts to reckon with the testimonies of the even greater experience of such for teachers in schools with whom I have worked: the inhospitable dwellings—if they are and can be that, dwellings, that is—we have made of education, curriculum, schools, for children. (p. 79)

Her direct movement from cosmopolitanism to a focus on hospitality as a central concept, “an ethics of universal hospitality,” is to consider the possibility of education being a welcoming space for all, “For me, this intention means learning to become present to our selves, each other, our manner of dwelling together...and respect” (Quinn, 2010, p. 80). She references her own experience as a New Yorker, the need for connectedness even as strangers, and the “perpetual need for personal asylum and amnesty—in pursuit of the good life (i.e., the American Dream)” (p.82).

Noting how children live, work and play in schools, Quinn (2010) says it is with a “deficit-oriented view of youth that largely ignore their lived experiences and complex identities as well as participatory views of citizenship” (p. 86) and takes away from capacity building and inclusiveness in school communities. I relate this to elders in AL and a medical model that is deficit driven—what is wrong with the person that needs to be fixed, as opposed to inherent strengths that can be built upon so that elders can grow and thrive as they continue to age.

Quinn (2010) develops the idea of being a stranger in a strange place by raising the issue of immigrant rights, stating,

questions of hospitality loom large with respect to our openness to the ‘other’—and to who is the ‘other’—in an ethos affected by contested responses to terrorism and war, natural disasters and declining economies, and the possibilities of global warming and universal healthcare, among others. (p. 85)

Again, the elder as *other* welcomed by *others*—transitioning to a new community where people come and go with little common experience except growing old—the place of hospitality *looms large* here as well.

As I use cosmopolitanism to understand dimensions of hospitality extended in community and the movement of individuals coming and going from community, the work of Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) is very useful. His book, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, outlines two elements of cosmopolitanism,

One is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance. People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to learn from our differences...--universal concern and respect for legitimate difference—clash. There’s a sense in which cosmopolitanism is the name not of the solution but of the challenge. (p. xv)

While explaining cosmopolitanism, Appiah (2006) underscores the importance of conversation and a “language of values” (p. 28) that assists people across the globe and

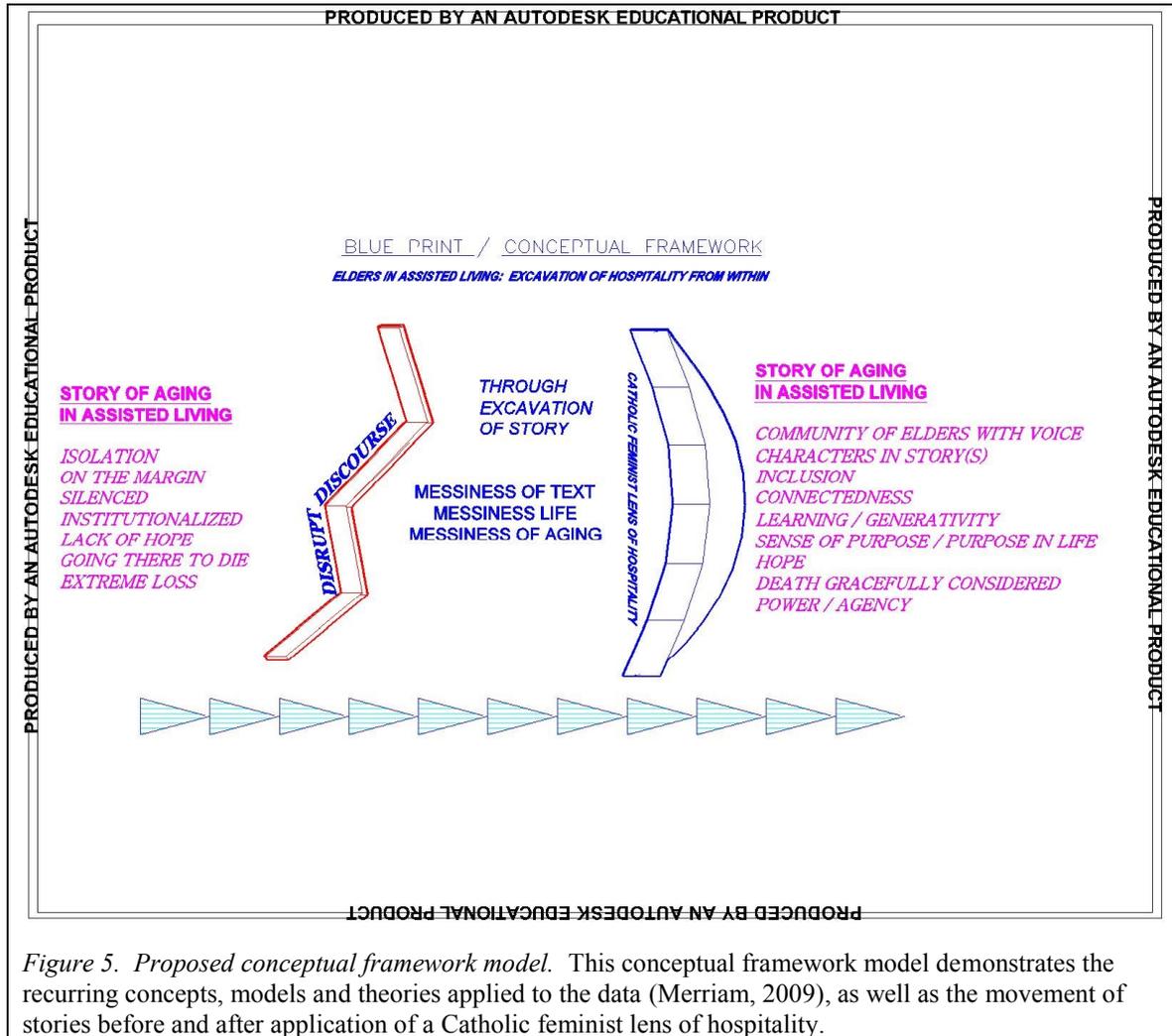
within local communities to live and work together. Through stories, we use our language of values, and story-telling is part of the human experience. “We wouldn’t recognize a community as human if it had no stories, if its people had no narrative imagination” (Appiah, 2006, p. 29). He goes on to explain that as we evaluate one another’s stories, we are creating a “social fabric” that fosters “the texture of our relationships” (p. 29). I am excited to listen closely to the stories of elders in an AL community and see how these stories manifest relationships where hospitality flows between, amongst and along the border of their community. Part of understanding cosmopolitanism means *getting* the importance of curiosity, concern, and justice for others—and then engaging in a manner that demonstrates concern for the stranger or the neighbor—not stopping at a basic understanding, but getting the larger picture in relationship to the systems that exist. How do elders navigate the “pluralism” within their community, a cosmopolitan value (Appiah, 2006, p. 144), especially when the comings and goings, the displacement, of both elders and the care givers, is more frequent than a neighborhood community?



the theories and design of the research and analysis process. In sum, it offers “a self-audit facility to ensure cohesion and appropriate conceptualization for research conclusions” (Leshem & Trafford, 2007, p. 101).

For the purposes of this study, the conceptual framework exists as the creation of a Catholic feminist understanding of hospitality. The research study will engage that catholic feminist framework of hospitality to inform a narrative inquiry involving elders’ stories, told in the latter stages of the elders’ adult life cycle, while living in a Catholic AL—essentially grounding narrative in experience. Using a feminist lens, I am extracting what is useful and meaningful for my work from Catholic social teaching and the concept of cosmopolitanism to help flesh out elements of hospitality along the way.

## Proposed Conceptual Framework Model



### Application of Theoretical Framework to O’Connor’s *The Displaced Person*—An Exercise in Data Analysis

In order to practice applying this developed Catholic feminist lens of hospitality, I will use the short story, “The Displaced Person” in Flannery O’Connor’s 1955 (first print book, *A Good Man is Hard to Find and Other Stories*, working the story as my data. My decision to use fiction as part of my approach to research is well supported. Leavy (2013) explains,

Social research is aimed at generating meanings, creating understandings, and illuminating that which may be concealed in everyday life. Perhaps more than anything else, researchers try to portray lives, complete with nuance and context. As we attempt to interrogate social reality or some aspect of it and share what we have learned with others, we need to use all available tools. Fiction is a wonderful tool for getting at the complexity of lived experience and helping others to learn and feel. (p. 37)

I specifically chose Flannery O'Connor's work for several reasons. Most importantly, "almost all of Flannery O'Connor's work...deals extensively with the coming and welcoming of the stranger" (Kessel, 2008, p. 185), which connects to my interest in understanding hospitality in a Catholic AL.

Secondly, she was a Catholic woman from the South who extended her own personal experiences and knowing into her fiction writing. This Catholic sensibility allowed her to explore issues and challenge thinking beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church—to be useful to a broader society, as explained in a critical review of her work, "the dynamics of faith and region was every bit as much the substance of her life as we had come to know it was in her fiction" (Rood, Ross, & Ziegfeld, 1981, p. 87). Her stories support one of my research objectives, to extend Catholic social teaching beyond traditional spaces. Fr. Robert McCown, a Jesuit priest, wrote in an article in January 1959 *Catholic World* (Rood & Wimsatt, 1995),

Yet, within these self-imposed limits, she has created characters of extraordinary depth, originality, and color; with all the strength of mind, prejudices, fears—fears of shame, of poverty, of the foreigner—which go to make a Southerner...she

is deeply concerned with the palpable reality of sin, of the blight it can bring to human existence, and of its mysterious communication from one generation to another. (p. 41)

Finally, utilizing a short story as data to explore hospitality through a Catholic feminist lens is excellent practice space to apply my own creative theoretical framework, another one of my research objectives, and is supported by other scholars—“there seems, then, to be something about the site of literature that welcomes the question of hospitality” (Kessel, 2008, p. 185). Both Derrida (2001) and Newman (2005) connect questions of hospitality to text and story, locating meaning and losing it and finding it again as they make their way through the meat of text, while Johansen (1994) explores “figures on the fringes” (p. 60) to understand displacement from and within communities and the dominant discourse. This practice space will help to prepare me for the use of narrative inquiry and story “gathering” that I commit to in my study.

In my attempt to practice, I recall my interest and commitment to *messy text* that Lather (2001) explains well, “Feminist work both challenged and built on this move, particularly in terms of a sense of failed promises, charged anxieties, and a ‘self-abjection’ at the limit as a way to live on in the face of the loss of legitimating metanarratives” (p. 201). I wish to challenge the metanarrative about aging that devalues elders and worships youth. Lather (2001) suggest her messy text will reflect “back at its readers the problems of inquiry at the same time an inquiry is conducted” and that “such a practice strikes the epistemological paradox of knowing through not knowing, knowing both too little and too much in its refusal of mimetic models of representation and the nostalgic desire for immediacy and transience of reference” (p. 205).

I have already felt the underlying presence of *messy text* in my attempts to identify strands of thinking that neatly define feminism, Catholic social teaching, hospitality, cosmopolitanism, and the like. The exercise of creating word clouds, as informal as it seems, was a way to manage my need to *box* the ideas that I had in a creative space—it was like placing my brain in a playpen to temporarily work out what I was trying to see, hear, understand...or not. The discourse surrounding aging and being an elder is one of isolation, living or dying on the margin, being silenced, institutionalized, lacking and experiencing extreme loss. Not only is it referenced as such, but that was a significant portion of my own experience with my father. To disrupt this discourse through application of my proposed theoretical framework is messy.

It is important to note that during my review of the literature, I was inspired to look more closely at Flannery O'Connor after I discovered Elizabeth Newman's (2005) article titled, *Flannery O'Connor and the Practice of Hospitality*, where she essentially argues that three of O'Connor's short stories (not including the one I have chosen to use) "shed light on the practice of Christian hospitality so understood, both by pointing toward potential distortions and by illustrating significant embodiments of this practice" (p. 135). Newman's analysis includes what hospitality is not, "superficial friendliness" or "hotel industry with entertainment and consumerism" or "non-judgmental welcoming of the other" or "feeding people" (Newman, 2005, p. 135).

By unpacking three of the short stories, Newman (2005) identifies Christian hospitality to be "grounded ultimately in the mystery and grace of God" (p. 136), and "produces gestures of abundance toward even a hardened criminal who, like ourselves, stands in need of God's mercy and grace" (p. 140). She goes on in her analysis of the

short stories by O'Connor to explain that "faithful practice of hospitality is necessarily related to learning to speak and live God's truth" (p. 144) and we must know ourselves to know others which means we can sometimes be a stranger to ourselves, thereby complicating the act of hospitality.

Flannery O'Connor was known for writing short stories that did not have happy endings, and many readers even categorized her works as grotesque and violent, stories of horror (Johansen, 1994; Rood et al., 1981; Rood & Wimsatt, 1995). Much of the discourse on aging and elder life can be described as similar. Death at first glance is not a happy ending, while youth has so much for which to look forward. Learning, disrupting discourse, requires us to *go there* and to not search for happy endings, but look for light and new ways of understanding—through the excavation of story. I will apply my theoretical framework to identify patterns and offer interpretations of the data (the story) in order to explore my research questions which focus on characters who develop and disrupt hospitality in community, as well as their experiences of power and agency in such a context.

*The Displaced Person* (O'Connor, 1983) takes place during World War II and is about a Polish family rescued from a concentration camp. The Guizac's are brought to the United States by a Catholic priest, Father Flynn, and placed with a widowed woman, Mrs. McIntyre, who lives in the South, left to manage her dead husband's 50 acre farm. The Polish family is *hired help*, just like the two African Americans, Astor and Sulk, and the poor white family, the Shortley's, who already live on Mrs. McIntyre's farm. O'Connor's story essentially tells the tale of Mr. Guizac, referenced mostly as *the Displaced Person* or *DP*, who works very hard on the farm.

The entire story revolves around the characters on the farm accepting or denying DP's presence. Through her characters' dialogue and actions, a multitude of truths are spoken all at once, while for the most part, displaying acts of inhospitality toward Mr. Guizac or speaking of him in inhospitable ways, making him a stranger and outsider. For example, Mrs. Shortley explains a displaced person to Sulk and Astor, "It means they ain't where they were born at and there's nowhere for them to go—like if you was run out of here and wouldn't nobody have you" (O'Connor, 1955, p. 214). Astor, the aged African American responds by saying, "It seems like they here though...If they here, they somewhere" (p. 213).

This pattern of inhospitality and rejection starts in the beginning of the story, with the Shortley's disapproving the Guizac family joining the farm community, distrusting all along that Mr. Guizac will replace her husband and the African Americans, because he works so hard and is so skilled. Mrs. McIntyre is described as gathering furniture and home items for the "shack" the family will inhabit, welcoming them generously, and praising the DP's work, "That man is my salvation!" (O'Connor, 1983, p. 220), but even her initial and short-lived welcome is driven not by relationship or justice, but by her own gain and ownership of another laborer on her farm.

Two thirds of the way into the story, Mrs. McIntyre discovers the DP is accepting money from the younger African American, Sulk, to help pay for the DP's 16 year-old cousin to leave the concentration camp and come to the United States to marry Sulk. Even after the DP explains his rationale in broken English to Mrs. McIntyre, she is horrified and believes the DP and his family must leave the farm, *disgusted* that such a thing be considered (white woman and African American to be married). By the end of

the tale, all the characters but the priest want Mr. Guizac (DP) and his family gone because they have imagined him to be evil, out to make more money than the rest and to replace their need for existence on the farm, as suggested by Mrs. McIntyre, “They’re all the same...whether they come from Poland or Tennessee...All her life she had been fighting the world’s overflow and now she had it in the form of a Pole...” (O’Connor, 1983, pp. 248-249).

To further examine the pattern of inhospitality, the way in which O’Connor references characters’ names indicates the measure of inclusion in the farm community—the tensions between insiders and outsiders. The priest and the DP are rarely named Fr. Flynn and Mr. Guizac. The African Americans, for the most part are referenced as Negroes or worse, but sometimes named Astor or Sulk. The Shortley’s, as well as Mrs. McIntyre herself, are always referenced by name. It appears that income and skin color are less of an issue than being a foreigner and a religious. The patterns in the text regarding name usage makes it easier to marginalize and not truly know those who have no names because there is little relationship involved and less responsibility to the other.

Catholic hospitality, as well as postmodern hospitality, includes acts of openness, compassion, vulnerability, refuge, even *asylum* (Aristarkhova, 2013; Levinas, 1979; Pohl, 1999; Wroblewski, 2012). The evidence presented thus far suggests the opposite and eventually leads to a violent end for the displaced person. He is involved in a fatal *accident* while repairing a tractor when he is crushed to death as the tractor rolls over him. While O’Connor (1983) doesn’t directly state the incident was intentional, she writes,

Later she (Mrs. McIntyre) remembered that she had seen the Negro jump silently out of the way as if a spring in the earth had released him and that she had seen Mr. Shortley turn his head with incredible slowness and stare silently over his shoulder and that she had started to shout to the Displaced Person but that she had not. She had felt her eyes and Mr. Shortley's eyes and the Negro's eyes come together in one look that froze them in collusion forever, and she had heard the little noise the Pole made as the tractor wheel broke his backbone. (p. 263)

However, applying Derrida's postmodern understanding of hospitality, which creates a distinction—conditional versus absolute hospitality (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000)—opens up a pathway for some acknowledgement of hospitality existing on the McIntyre farm after all. In fact, considering hospitality from this vantage point allows for compassion to be offered to the host, as inhospitable as she may seem at first read. Derrida's notion of the tensions (Aristarkhova, 2012; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Kessel, 2008; Minister, 2007; Wroblewski, 2012), embedded in sharing resources and offering hospitality to the *other* adds context to the story, as evidenced by Mrs. McIntyre's self-description, "...she knew there was nobody poorer in the world than she was" (O'Connor, 1983, p. 245). In fact, there are elements of hospitality, however conditional, including anticipation, preparation, approval, and gratitude, as evidenced in the story, with the demonstration by Mrs. McIntyre toward the DP and his family, albeit limited to what the DP could offer her that other hired staff could not.

Mr. Guizac could drive a tractor, use the rotary hay-baler, the silage cutter, the combine, the letz mill, or any other machine she had on the place. He was an expert mechanic, a carpenter, and a mason. He was thrifty and energetic. Mrs.

McIntyre said she figured he would save her twenty dollars a month on repair bills alone. She said getting him was the best day's work she had ever done in her life. He could work milking machines and he was scrupulously clean. He did not smoke. (O'Connor, 1983, p. 218)

Upon further reflection and application of the theoretical framework, Mrs. McIntyre can be understood as moving from what was more likely experienced by most in her generation as hostility toward the foreigner, to hospitality offered to a stranger (albeit for self-gain). Nouwen (1974) explains a characteristic of spiritual (Catholic) life to be "the movement by which hostility can be converted into hospitality" (p. 5). When applying specific elements of both postmodern, and Catholic, hospitality, there is a deeper appreciation for the challenges and possibilities of hospitality on the McIntyre farm.

The role of "the priest," Fr. Flynn, is one of Catholic hospitality. He sees the morality and social justice of creating a home (DeBerri, 2003; Deines, 2008; Wroblewski, 2012) and offering an asylum from war-torn Poland and the concentration camp, in the United States, for a displaced family due to war and genocide—while also addressing a widow's need to have help to care for her farm. Expanding our understanding of the Catholic nature of the character, there is also a theme of cosmopolitanism, or universal hospitality, connected to Fr. Flynn's efforts.

Appiah (2006) speaks of cosmopolitanism as being supported by a common set of values that connect people from different cultures and communities around the world. Fr. Flynn unsuccessfully demanded of Mrs. McIntyre such a depth of hospitality located in cosmopolitanism. This is evidenced more than once in the story, and often transpires

with no immediate winner. For example, Mrs. McIntyre says to the priest, “He’s extra, He doesn’t fit in. I have to have somebody who fits in” (O’Connor, 1983, p. 250). Fr. Flynn responds, “He has nowhere to go...Dear lady, I know you well enough to know you wouldn’t turn him out for a trifle!” (p. 251)

Fr. Flynn is later determined to be evil by the Shortley’s and Mrs. McIntyre, because his assumed interest is to convert Mrs. McIntyre to Catholicism and to bring more displaced people to the United States. This belief about the priest illustrates Appiah’s (2006) notion that cosmopolitanism gets at both the tension, or challenge, between universal concern (war and genocide) and the legitimate difference (religion, specifically Catholicism), resulting in dissonance and misunderstanding in the immediate community (farm).

As an example, Mrs. Shortley describes Fr. Flynn, “Here he was: leading foreigners over in hordes to places that were not theirs, to cause disputes, to uproot niggers [*sic*], to plant the Whore of Babylon in the midst of the righteous!” (O’Connor, 1983, p. 229). Again, this text in the story could easily be interpreted as an example of distrust and inhospitality—resulting in death, illness, or marginalization, depending upon the character examined. However, using the postmodern, as well as Catholic, understandings of hospitality, there are limits and tensions (Aristarkhova, 2012; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Nouwen, 1974; Pohl, 1999; Wroblewski, 2012) to be expected when welcoming the DP, but that does not mean hospitality, or the possibility of such, is fully absent. In fact, Fr. Flynn’s disruption in the farm community, motivated by justice and service, is an act of significant hospitality, as understood through a Catholic, feminist, and postmodern lens.

The irony, in the end, is Mrs. McIntyre falls mentally and physically ill following the death of the DP (I am lead to believe the illness is due to a recognition of her own responsibility in the DP's death) and,

Not many people remembered to come out to the country to see her except the old priest. He came regularly once a week with a bag of breadcrumbs and, after he had fed these to the peacock, he would come in and sit by the side of her bed and explain the doctrines of the Church. (O'Connor, 1983, p. 265)

Using this final act described in the story to unpack a critical depth to hospitality, described by Derrida (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Minister, 2007; Wroblewski, 2012) and others, the notion of absolute hospitality becomes even more fragile and significant. The priest is challenged to forgive, to remain open and welcoming, even after the disturbing actions of inhospitality of Mrs. McIntyre, and continue to be present and compassionate towards her in her most vulnerable state. This idea of the *aporia of hospitality* (Aristarkhova, 2012; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Wroblewski, 2012) fosters a new understanding of the priest's actions in the face of incredible paradox. The significant contradiction that seemingly comes with remaining open to those who are most violent and destructive provides a deeper understanding of hospitality as the risk to self and others is great, as understood through Catholic hospitality as well (Nouwen, 1974; Wroblewski, 2012). Just as the morality of hospitality is in the making of the story, so it is continually dismantled and re-established by the characters, so that even in its inexistence, it exists all the more (Minister, 2007)—at least when examined through this theoretical framework.

O'Connor's description of Catholic hospitality aligns with other scholars' notions of the concept, as demonstrated by the priest character's acts of forgiveness, compassion, acceptance, interest, concern, patience, morality, openness and habit (Nouwen, 1974; Pohl, 1999; Vogt, 2007; Wroblewski, 2012). He visits Mrs. McIntyre regularly, even though she becomes increasingly rude, hysterical, selfish and cruel in her thinking—even after she has contributed to the death of Mr. Guizac and all the rest of her hired help left her. O'Connor symbolizes progress toward salvation through acts of hospitality and the presence of Christ through the presence of the DP. There is a point in the story, leading up to the tractor incident, where the priest and Mrs. McIntyre are just short of arguing, and Mrs. McIntyre says, "Mr. Guizac didn't have to come here in the first place," and the priest says "He came to redeem us" (O'Connor, 1983, p. 252). At the story's end, the reader is left to have understood a ruthless and chaotic journey of inclusion and exclusion, welcome and denial, good and evil, ending in the possibility of salvation, although still unclear.

My initial understanding of the *data* in this story suggests there was little negotiation of hospitality and certainly no unconditional hospitality offered the DP. However, upon application of this theoretical framework, the priest does show evidence of commitment to a space for all, a global responsibility and an ethics of universal hospitality described earlier in this study as cosmopolitanism. There is a thread of commonality amongst the strangers in O'Connor's story, *The Displaced Person*, each character estranged and belonging at the same time—poverty, skin color, religion, country of origin, widowed—all spaces of the other and yet belonging at some level to

the community on that farm, connected to one another through their humanness and shortcomings.

Examples of being a stranger and belonging at the same time are evidenced as O'Connor speaks to power and agency through her characters. The DP may be unaccepted, but he is strong and capable. Mr. Shortley is described by his wife as "no man that works as hard as Chancey, or is as easy with a cow, or is more of a Christian" (O'Connor, 1983, p. 223) while he still struggles to keep up with the pace of the DP on the farm and worries about being excluded himself. Mrs. Shortley sees herself as strong, reflecting "the Lord God Almighty had created the strong people to do what had to be done and she felt that she would be ready when she was called" (O'Connor, 1983, p. 229). Mrs. Shortley dies of a stroke later in the story, seemingly unraveling at the thought of being ousted from the farm because the DP could do what multiple hired staff could not.

Interestingly, the agency does not flow from all positions of power, according to the text. To explain, Mrs. McIntyre, who owns the 50 acre farm and is in the position of ultimate power over her employees, lives in constant fear of not having enough money and being taken advantage of by the *hired help*. In the end, she has no friends, except the priest. How one experiences self, in relationship to others, is complicated at best and the impact the characters have on one another is complex in relationship to power, agency, community and eventual hospitality.

### **Summary**

I have identified patterns and offered an interpretation of the data found in O'Connor's *The Displaced Person* through application of my Catholic feminist lens of

hospitality. In exploration of my research questions, I have read this story at least 10 times and after application of my theoretical framework, have a much more in-depth and complex understanding of the experience of hospitality, displacement, and relationships between characters, power and agency. My first experiences of reading the story left me disgusted and depressed. After practice with the theoretical framework application, I see the capacity to negotiate hospitality with solidarity and compassion in the actions of the Fr. Flynn; the courage, humility and agency of Mr. Guizac, the acceptance, humility and wisdom of Astor and Sulk. I also feel compassion for the Shortley's and appreciation for their fear, if not agreement with it. And, I want to see the transformative nature of Mrs. McIntyre, recognizing that maybe her farm was an attempt at a *city of refuge* with personal asylum and amnesty, as noted by Derrida (2001) and Quinn (2010), if not a successful delivery, and that she may still recognize and be accountable for contributing to the downfall of another human, justice incomplete.

Presented as a theoretical framework, I have reviewed the literature to explore and elaborate on my Catholic and feminist approach to my study, as well as hone a deeper understanding of Catholic social teaching as it relates to acts of hospitality (Christian, Catholic, postmodern, cosmopolitan), and am prepared to apply it to a community of elders living in a Catholic AL. The word clouds help to identify strands or threads to look for and follow, in the stories I gather from elders and their formal and informal caregivers. I also remain open to new and different expressions of hospitality in community, power and agency. Through the application of my theoretical framework, essentially practicing the application, I have also learned that what appears at face value

as horrific, disgusting and wrong, may offer deeper insights about how we live together,  
as different and the same, as we are.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction to Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry as my chosen approach to this research study is born out of my perspective as a learner, in combination with my identified research questions and chosen methods. In essence, my research is “best addressed in a natural setting, using exploratory approaches” (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p. 90). Furthermore, Crotty (1998) initially refers to qualitative research and quantitative research as “the great divide” (p. 14) at the level of methods, while Glesne (2011) speaks of the two more in terms of a “continuum” (p. 4) and Merriam (2009) understands qualitative as opposed to quantitative research based on a set of “characteristics and competencies” (pp. 13-18).

Marshall and Rossman (2011) indicate qualitative researchers tend to,

1. view social worlds as holistic and complex,
2. engage in systematic reflection on the conduct of the research,
3. remain sensitive to their own biographies/social identities and how these shape the study (i.e., they are reflexive), and
4. rely on complex reasoning that moves dialectically between deduction and induction.

Additionally, they indicate qualitative research is broad in its approach to the study and tends to be “naturalistic, interpretive, and increasingly critical” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 3) and uses a variety of methods in the course of research.

That said, my views about knowledge and truth place me epistemologically as a constructionist (truth and meaning constructed individually and socially), and my theoretical frame or paradigm is interpretivism (how people interpret and make meaning),

influenced heavily by numerous feminist scholars and my own experience as a woman (Chittister, 1998; Crotty, 1998; Glesne, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Luke, 1996). I perform qualitative research, as understood above, because I believe it is in alignment with my concern for the participants, as well as providing for plenty of overlapping opportunity for me as the researcher to read, reflect and do (Glesne, 2011), and it can evoke voice from the marginalized in a way that makes the world a better place, results in better informed practices and programs, and opens up dialogue and reflection (Glesne, 2011; Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

There is a more personal reason for proceeding with qualitative inquiry that Merriam (2009) lays out well in her list of competencies desired for a qualitative researcher,

1. a questioning stance with regard to your work and life context,
2. high tolerance for ambiguity,
3. being a careful observer,
4. asking good questions,
5. thinking inductively, and
6. comfort with writing

(Merriam, 2009, p. 17).

These competencies are critical skills I am working to further refine in my doctoral student experience and I believe are necessary ingredients, not just for scholarly research, but to serve in my current role as a higher education administrator and leader, and to live in right relationship with others on the planet.

Finally, the nature of my research questions demands a qualitative approach best addressed through distinguishing characteristics of naturalistic inquiry. There is a focus on meaning and understanding; rich descriptions and text in order to explore the human experience; an inductive process (due to gaps in the research); and I am the primary form of data collection, responding in a timely manner to environmental and human signals (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). The questions about how elders experience and foster hospitality; what elders' experiences of power and agency look like; and how a Catholic-sponsored AL can inform secular settings, can be explored, probed and complicated best through qualitative research because of its orientation to understanding people's meaning-making processes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry, my chosen interpretivist methodology, assumes "people construct their realities through narrating their stories" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 153). Before I explain the theory of narrative inquiry, I want to summarize Glesne's (2011) thoughts about the contributions interpretivist qualitative methodologies, including narrative inquiry, can make to society:

1. ...contributing to the multiplicity of voices and visions and the plurality of our knowing.
2. The act of listening...to witness the stories and lives of those whose voices are ignored or silenced.
3. ...through your representations, can inspire others to perceive, believe, or act in different ways.

4. ...attunes your senses, your eyes and ears in particular, to the richness of the lives around you, to the complexities and particularities of people's actions and words which you communicate to others.
5. Seeking to interpret a context not your own can work to reveal you to yourself.
6. ...without attaching your expectations, you give of yourself as you take delight in learning about those around you and yourself. In the process, you develop meaningful relationships.

(Glesne, 2011, p. 24)

Narrative inquiry (Chase, 2011; Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2010; Rogers, 2007; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997) is the methodology I have chosen and is an interdisciplinary approach that "assumes people construct their realities through narrating their stories" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 153). This connects to how Xu and Connelly (2010) describe narrative inquiry, "the idea that story is a portal to experience means that every experience is encountered in the context of a web of historical meaning and significance. We call this web of meaning and significance 'story'" (p. 352). Essentially the story becomes the data for analysis with the text being examined for the meaning it has for its author (Merriam, 2009). The text can come in many forms, spoken or written, and helps the researcher to "understand sociological questions about groups, communities, and contexts through individuals' lived experiences" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 153).

A scan of the literature indicates that narrative inquiry, specifically, has been used as a qualitative research approach in the social sciences and applied fields since the

1990's, is a growing and evolving methodology somewhat difficult to pin down with a definition, and was first named narrative inquiry in education by D. J. Clandinin and F. M. Connelly (Chase, 2011; Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Polkinghorne, 2010; Xu & Connelly, 2010). A working definition seems necessary, so I offer Chase's (2011) explanation,

A distinct form of discourse as meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time. Narrative researchers highlight what we can learn about anything—history and society as well as lived experience—by maintaining a focus on narrated lives. (p. 421)

According to Chase (2011), there are at least four different approaches to narrative inquiry. The first has most to do with the relationship between the story and the quality of the life experience, focused mostly on the daily life of the participants, with a focus on the inherent possibilities for improvement, and is considered “pragmatic or applied” (Chase, 2011, p. 422). The second approach she offers is “storytelling as lived experience” (p. 422). This is where the act of narrating is at the same time a way in which the participants make meaning, develop identities and essentially create their realities within cultural discourses. There is particular attention to the identification of “oppressive discourses—and the ways in which narrators disrupt them—as a worthy goal of narrative inquiry” (Chase, 2011, p. 422).

The third approach according to Chase (2011) is the study of the interplay between narrative practices and the local narrative environments. And finally, the fourth

approach has to do with the actual researcher's stories as they relate to the participants and the lived experiences being explored. Chase (2011) explains that sometimes the focus can be on creating a more equitable relationship with the participants, becoming co-researchers as it were, and other times it may be more about how the researcher's story can help better explore some lived experience of the participants.

I apply a hybrid approach for my research study. I find all of them necessary and valid. In developing the rationale for my study, as well practicing the application of my theoretical framework, all four approaches are necessary at different times during my analysis of the data. Therefore, I do not choose one standing approach, but draw from all four.

I now wish to distinguish the difference between theory and practice because I find there to be significance in this understanding of how narrative inquiry is viewed and how it is used. Polkinghorne (2010) explains how theoretical knowledge has been applied to education, the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, and the failed outcomes of this approach. In this case, as is the current practice, theoretical knowledge dictates practice. The practitioner's experiences and judgments, although important, are secondary (Polkinghorne, 2010). Theoretical knowledge then, creates rules, laws, and assumptions about how things generally are.

The challenge with theoretical knowledge is that it does not allow for the "full, complex life world of a person. It is on a relationship that holds among various human dimensions and qualities. It attends to distinct aspects (variables) of people, lifting them out from the person's inter-related whole" (Polkinghorne, 2010, p. 394). This is limiting when situations, particularly people and their circumstances, are most important to

understanding and achieving research goals. Polkinghorne (2010) makes the argument that narrative inquiry allows for “practice situations” and “practitioner judgments” to be better addressed and that “capturing the turbulence and flow of a practice process requires a type of thinking that can represent its temporal flow...narrative thinking” (p. 395). Thus, theoretical knowledge is about things, while practical knowledge “involves narrative thinking about how the effect of actions, happenings, and events affect the occurrence of ends” (Polkinghorne, 2010, p. 395) and is better situated to communicate human experience.

Xu and Connelly (2010) describe narrative inquiry used in a particular research study as “working from practice to theory” as the researcher observed and experienced her participants’ practical situation and then began “to think narratively” about the situation of the participants (p. 353). Essentially, starting with the practical situation, the practices occurring, “guided by a sense of the practical,” and placing theory in the background, is the way in which narrative inquiry can offer an approach to exploring the human experience (Xu & Connelly, 2010, p. 353). I connect strongly with this as a practitioner in college student development, and believe this reinforces my decision to use narrative inquiry as it fits with my own experiences. Additionally, although the context of Xu and Connelly’s work was in schools, community living for elders seems similar enough that it is reasonable to transfer these notions about narrative inquiry to my research setting.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) offer a general framework, informed by John Dewey’s writings on experience and education, specifically situation, continuity and interaction, for the narrative inquiry process. The framework is essentially a

metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third. Using this set of terms, any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50)

I collect various forms of text, including ethnographic data from in-depth interviews, written materials offered by participants, field notes of naturally occurring conversation and visual images in the environment (Chase, 2011; Merriam, 2009), applying the above framework in my analysis, with the intention of capturing as “much as possible this openness of experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 89). This methodology allows me to consider elders’ experiences of hospitality in a Catholic AL, how their experiences of power and agency unfold, and what they have to teach those in community, as well as formal and informal caregivers, by exploring all three common places of temporality, sociality and place (Clandinin et al., 2007), with the overlay of my theoretical framework.

Narrative inquiry does present a set of issues to be managed by the researcher. Chase (2011) names them as methodological issues, including the research relationship, ethics, interpretation, and validity. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) provide their own list, including “ethics, anonymity (of both participants and researchers), ownership and relationship responsibilities, how we are storied as researchers, the distinction between fact and fiction, and possible risks, dangers, and abuses” (p.170). I address these

concerns throughout my study, but wish to explain a term offered by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identified as “wakefulness” (p. 182) which suggests a general attitude of awareness and reflection about everything I do as a researcher.

This attitude of wakefulness assisted me in recognizing and managing concerns throughout my research, and I think it is significantly important for me as a novice researcher. It seems particularly necessary because,

Narrative inquiry, positioned as it is at the boundaries of reductionistic and formalistic modes of inquiry, is in a state of development, a state that asks us as inquirers to be wakeful, and thoughtful, about all of our inquiry decisions.

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 184)

Wakefulness on my part is and was supported by my dissertation chair and committee members, as well as through my own journaling and reflection, and my ongoing conversations with elders and the characters in their stories.

### **Research Design**

Merriam (2009) describes a research design as, “some idea of what you want to know and a plan for carrying it out” (p. 55). Marshall and Rossman (2011) go further to explain the research design,

1. It presents a plan for the conduct of the study.
2. It demonstrates that the researcher is capable of conducting the study.
3. It asserts the need for, and offers strategies to preserve, the flexibility of design that is a hallmark of qualitative methods. The latter purpose is often the most challenging.

(p. 89)

Considering my topic and problem, research site and research questions identified in Chapter I of this study, I now move to the specifics of my plan. I worked with a small group of elders in a Catholic AL in south central Texas, along with the formal and informal care givers who served as characters in their stories. I used narrative inquiry as my methodology, engaging elders and their story characters in extensive interviews, as well as gathering written materials offered by participants, making field notes of naturally occurring conversation and describing visual images in the environment (Chase, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Data analysis demanded extensive application of my proposed theoretical framework, which was initiated through an extensive literature review in Chapter II, eventually resulting in this final research product (Merriam, 2009).

### **Participants**

My interest in identifying a Catholic AL and elders who live within this community narrowed my choices quickly due to proximity and existence of such a site. There is only one Catholic AL in south central Texas. It is run by a Catholic order of nuns and connected to a higher education institution. The nature of the site assisted with accessibility because it is common practice for graduate students to enter the community for some type of learning experience. Marshall and Rossman (2011) state plainly the need to retain “flexibility” (p. 104) in regards to a specific site and population. While there is only one such site in my initial criteria (Catholic and reasonable distance from researcher base), ruling out multisite sampling, the flexibility and tolerance of the site and participants did work to the advantage of successfully completed research.

I used nonprobability sampling as this is a qualitative research study and I am not interested in generalizing results of the study from my sample, but rather am interested in

discovering what is taking place, the implications of such experiences and the relationship between occurrences (Merriam, 2009). More specifically, I used purposeful sampling, within the context of convenience sampling (Marshall and Rossman, 2011) due to the availability of only a single site, as understood by Merriam (2009) because it “is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 77).

Once I identified the site and made a preliminary visit to discuss my research, I determined the selection criteria to be used to identify my sample (Merriam, 2009). In a preliminary interview with three of the staff on site at the Catholic AL, they identified five potential elders who met the general criteria I identified, including

1. living in the Catholic AL for at least nine months,
2. operating at a cognitive level indicating capacity for extensive interviews, and
3. some amount of diversity of background and demographics amongst the participants.

These three major criteria are essential attributes of the participants in order for my sampling to be effective. Nine months of living in the Catholic AL allows for some time to pass with the opportunity for enough experience in community to be shared as narrative, relationships to be built with formal caregivers and fellow residents, and the possibility of power and agency to be established in their experience in the Catholic AL community. To some degree this is a transient population due to medical and financial issues, thus narrowing my sample significantly.

The second major criteria speaks to an elder’s ability to fully commit to or reject the role of participant, recall and share experiences related to the topic at hand, and

engage in a series of interviews that require attention, focus and interest. There are two types of AL residents as described in Chapter 1. The higher functioning group is where the sample originates, but one elder is from AL B because he requires more mobility assistance.

Diversity, as a third category, is more difficult but important in order to gather a richness of experiences. Gender, race, culture, education, age, religion are all important characteristics that may influence the nature of their experiences. I worked with the staff to ensure as diverse a group as reasonably possible, given the initial demographics with which I have to work at this single site.

Considering my research questions, the nature of the rich data I was gathering, the open-endedness of my analysis, and limited resources including time and money (Merriam, 2009), and in consultation with my dissertation chair, I set a goal of four elders for my sample. It is important to note that my sample size did not determine the number of characters I interviewed to provide a thorough analysis of the stories shared. For example, one elder resulted in three additional characters interviewed, while another only two, in order to explore the narrative fully.

Within the discussion of participants, it is important to explain my commitment to ethical research practice. Beyond informed consent forms (a starting point only) I used with everyone I interviewed, I was mindful of the moral principles for all researchers, including respect for persons, beneficence and justice (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

With the guidance of my dissertation chair and committee members, as well as the staff at the Catholic AL, I worked into my research design plans, ways to anticipate ethical issues that were likely to arise. For example, the ways in which I formulated my

interview questions, determined the interview locations for each elder, and planned the necessary follow up to both our impromptu and planned conversations, were all authentic and straight-forward, sensitive to the impact of communicating about different topics, and respectful of the physical state of my participants. I checked in frequently with staff, elders, and story characters to ensure I respected boundaries and moved at a comfortable pace.

In addition, Glesne (2011) outlines a set of ethical codes that I adhere to within my research design plan, including:

1. Research subjects must have sufficient information to make informed decisions about participating in a study.
2. Research subjects must be able to withdraw, without penalty, from a study at any point.
3. All unnecessary risks to a research subject must be eliminated.
4. Benefits to the subject or society, preferably both, must outweigh all potential risks.
5. Experiments should be conducted only by qualified investigators. (p. 163)

### **Role of Researcher**

Glesne (2011) clearly outlines two major roles of the interpretivist researcher, including the researcher's role as researcher and the researcher's role as learner. I take from her expanded thoughts that I am always a researcher, no matter the time of day or context, and I must consider my verbal and nonverbal behavior and how my actions and thoughts impact my participants and the community in which they reside. This speaks to the attitude of wakefulness brought forth by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), demanding

an ever-respectful level of awareness and self-consciousness (Glesne, 2011). Taking on the role of learner means that I reflect consistently on all that I am doing through the process of narrative inquiry. Glesne (2011) says it best,

You do not come as an expert or authority. If you are so perceived, then your respondents will not feel encouraged to be as forthcoming as they can be. As a learner, you are expected to listen; as an expert or authority, you are expected to talk. The differences between these two roles are enormous. (p. 60)

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write about being a researcher in the field and what it is like in relationship to the work and those for whom you study, “Throughout the inquiry, in our experience of being in the field, the researcher-participant relationship is a tenuous one, always in the midst of being negotiated” (p. 73). I understand that to mean my own experiences mingle with the experiences I gathered from the elders. In truth, there were some participants I interviewed with whom I felt strong connections, and others, I did not. I tried to be constantly aware of how my own story changes and influences my interpretations of others, while respectfully attending to the interests I have as a researcher and the individual interests of all those from whom I gathered data. This notion is further explained, “we work in different places, have different purposes, and have different ways to account for ourselves as researchers and participants” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 72).

One other element I wish to explore regarding the researcher role, as it relates to feminist research, is best explained by Patti Lather (Lather, 2001) when she warns researchers to not assume closeness to the participant equates to fully understanding their experiences, or a more violent assumption, that the researcher can represent the

participant. She also endorses “complexity, partial truths, and multiple subjectivities” (Lather, 2001, p. 206) that can be discovered between researcher and participant. Additionally, Xu and Connelly (2010) speak of “the more you learn the less you know” with narrative inquiry (p. 365). In my role as researcher and primary instrument for data collection and analysis, I tried to be constantly wise to this assumption and be aware of my shortcomings and biases, identifying them and monitoring them, documenting “how they shape my collection and interpretation of the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15).

Situating myself as the researcher (further definition of researcher role) in the Catholic AL required a “degree of participantness” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 113). My intention was to represent my role in an honest and open way (complete transparency about my interest and experience with my father), recognizing that “some sort of direct and immediate participation in the research environment usually becomes important to building and sustaining relationships” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 113).

Another element impacting my role was the degree of “role intensiveness and extensiveness” I took on, based on the amount of time I spent daily in the setting and the length of time required by the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 113). In discussions with my dissertation chair, as well as a preliminary meeting with the site staff, I spent an estimated two months interviewing in the Catholic AL, making visits around my work schedule to engage in the community and complete my data collection. As recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2011), I left myself flexibility to “follow serendipitous leads” (p. 114) but also remained focused on the intent of my theoretical framework. The length of time allowed for rapport, trust and relationships to develop in order to ensure rich and quality data collection, while respecting the participants and politics of the community.

## **Information Collection**

Before discussing the *what* of data collection, first I address access to the site and participants. My initial site development began with a letter to a university administrator who personally connected me to the director of the Catholic AL. From there, I was directed to key staff who maintain access to elders and manage volunteer roles. It is these key staff who are the formal gatekeepers in the organization (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), with whom I met and explained my research study, presented a power point with further detail, and was granted approval to proceed with my study (November 8, 2013).

Data was collected through interviews, observations, and documents (Merriam, 2009) and contributed to the overall stories of the elders and associated characters in their stories. Merriam (2009) speaks of data as “not ‘out there’ waiting collection, like so many rubbish bags on the pavement. For a start, they have to be noticed by the researcher, and treated as data for the purposes of his or her research” (p. 86).

Interviews were conducted on site with four elders; and with permission by the elders, some of the characters mentioned in their stories, including formal caregivers in the Catholic AL, as well as informal caregivers including family and friends. These elder interviews were more like conversations, entering into them over a cup of Ensure, a snack, or in the Bistro where visitors are received by some of the residents and staff. I consulted with staff and individual elders for the most comfortable space and setting, particularly as medical needs dictated the best location.

The interviews were semi-structured interviews where my questions emerged in the course of interviewing and I added or replaced previously identified questions as needed (Glesne, 2011). I was open to reforming questions and adding to them (Glesne,

2011) throughout the process, allowing different elders to inform my research as I went along. While I anticipated three separate interviews for each elder, 45-60 minutes in length, over the course of two months, due to medical reasons, I had to adjust two elders' interviews to incorporate the questions into two interviews each. Each of the interviews addressed an overarching topic and I had guiding questions for each topic to get the conversation started (see Appendix for topics and interview questions). With permission, I tape recorded the conversations to review later in my data analysis. In order to transcribe the audio recordings, I anticipated "five-plus hours per ninety-minute" interview, and paid someone with experience to transcribe the recordings (Glesne, 2011, p. 117). I ensured that I accurately accounted for spoken words transcribed into written words by gathering feedback from my participants when I wasn't sure about something said (Glesne, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Pseudonyms were assigned to all interviewed participants to ensure confidentiality. The follow-up interviews with up to three characters in the elders' stories were single interviews that ranged from 30-60 minutes in length and centered on the primary topics of community, hospitality and, power and agency related to the elder. Those interview questions were developed as a result of the elder conversations, audio recorded with permission, and transcribed as well.

As I spent time with elders and the characters in their stories, I also observed them in their residential environment as part of my data collection. I am not an elder, nor do I live in the residential setting with other elders, so I was an outsider and wanted to be conscious of how my presence alone impacted their thoughts, feelings and actions. Glesne (2011) explains participant observation "differs in that the researcher carefully observes, systematically experiences, and consciously records in detail the many aspects

of a situation” (p. 67). Over time, I became more selective about my observations and recordings, reflecting on my choices, writing field notes to refer to later in my analysis process. Different kinds of observational data, as outlined by Glesne (2011) may include setting appearance, acts, events, processes, talk, documents and artifacts.

These observations took place during my planning meetings with the staff, as well as during my conversations with the elders and characters in their stories. I anticipated spending most of my time in a sun room that is quiet and at the end of the hallway of one of the AL wings, but instead, I always met with the elders in their homes, no matter the size of their apartment. Privacy, mobility concerns, and acoustics were much better in their own personal spaces and they were all very welcoming each time I visited. I also had coffee or a meal in the dining room called the Bistro while I was there in conversation with some of the characters in the elders’ stories. All of these spaces in the AL gave me the opportunity to take field notes about the setting appearance, observe everyday behavior of staff and elders in the community, and identify particular artifacts and documents that reflect aspects of community and hospitality, as well as power and agency. I also made observation notes and requested organizational publications about the AL (Glesne, 2011, p. 90).

I viewed, and sometimes collected, visual data because “more than the researcher’s words usually, the pictures are personal and meaningful” (Glesne, 2011, p. 85). As stated above, I sought and confirmed permission before collecting any data of such kind. I took photographs of the site and people living in community, in particular, a few of the elders and caregivers I interviewed. As participants shared their experiences, they offered personal photographs that aided in the explanation of their experience, past,

present and future. I collected and labeled anything provided to me, including documents and artifacts which serve as “material culture” that helps to assign “meaning and history by the people in that context” (Glesne, 2011, p. 85).

### **Information Analysis**

The analysis of the information (data) was done concurrently with data collection so I could shape the study and make adjustments as needed (Glesne, 2011). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write about the challenging move from field texts to research texts as part of the interpretive-analytic considerations of narrative inquiry,

The move from field texts to research texts is layered in complexity in still other ways. There is no smooth transition, no one gathering of field texts, sorting them through, and analyzing them. Field texts have a vast and rich research potential. We return to them again and again, bringing our own restoried lives as inquirers, bringing new research puzzles, and re-searching the texts. (p. 132)

I like this notion of cascading back and forth with the data while reflecting on my own stories too. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advise narrative inquiries are strongly autobiographical and “our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines” (p. 121). Certainly this was the case for me.

In order to manage the data in this information analysis stage, I used several techniques including writing memos to myself to capture my own thoughts throughout the process; and analytic files to organize my data by interview questions, people and places, eventually keeping specific files on the topics I explored and for specific

purposes, like reflexivity (Glesne, 2011). I provided monthly reports for myself and committee chair, with less frequent updates to my entire committee.

My responsibility to the participants as the researcher is to “sort out a narrative view of the experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 127) by using the theoretical framework as a lens through which new understandings can emerge. It is important to consider the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of the “personal and social (interaction); past, present, and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation)” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). This helped me to “narratively code” my field texts that I collected through interviews and observations so that I identified “patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual’s experience and in the social setting” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 131).

Just as I practiced the application of my theoretical framework on O’Connor’s short story *The Displaced Person*, I applied the framework to the stories I gathered from the participants. I used a combination of narrative and thematic analyses so that stories could be told “with as little interruption as possible” attending to both the story and the telling of the story (Glesne, 2011, p. 185), as well as identifying themes and patterns through the lens of the theoretical framework (Glesne, 2011). “Plotlines are continually revised as consultation takes place over written materials, and as further field texts are composed to develop points of importance in the revised story” and I wrote “interim texts” as I shared and negotiated meaning with the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132-133).

Within the context of information analysis, voice, signature and audience come into play. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advise intentional balance between the

participants' and researcher voices, carefully telling the "participants' storied experiences and to represent their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to, and reflect upon, the audience's voices" (p. 147). Research signature is "being there in the special way that marks each of us as writers" according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and requires a balance between theory and the researcher's "stamp on the work" (p. 148). I *checked in* with the elders and their characters in the stories to make sure the participants' voices resonated in a manner that captured their experience and represented an understanding that *works* for them while applying the larger theoretical framework of the research study.

While not traditional practice in qualitative research, I intentionally chose to display the sequence, or chronology, of my data collection by listing the date of the interviews the data was collected. The purpose of doing so is to be innovative and demonstrate the chronological relationship among my data within a thematically organized data presentation. By citing the date of the interviews associated with the data, I want the reader to track the chronology of the data within a thematic presentation.

Throughout the information analysis I remained "wakeful," a term Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use to describe a level of constant vigilance, "...we characterized narrative inquiry as a kind of fluid inquiry, a kind of inquiry that challenges accepted inquiry and representation assumptions. It is a kind of inquiry that necessitates ongoing reflection, what we have called wakefulness" (p. 184). This is a mindset I apply in order to hone by own skills as a developing researcher and to provide direction for future research activities.

#### IV. PRESENTATION OF THE NARRATIVE DATA

This chapter introduces a description of the four primary research participants, referred to as elders living in a south central Texas AL, as well as portions of stories in response to the main research question, *How do elders in a Catholic assisted living facility foster and/or experience hospitality?* The elders are introduced by sharing demographic data provided by the AL staff, as well as a summary of personal information provided by the elders themselves over the course of two to three interviews.

Next, while not claiming to tell the whole story, I share partial stories from my direct encounters with the elders and characters. This is the first level of my analysis through narrative inquiry. In this chapter I attempt to balance the “tensions among voice, signature, and audience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 149) as I ascribe meaning by virtue of choosing elements of the stories; offering interpretations grounded in my own lens of experience; all as a result of three sets of secondary interview questions. As a reminder, those questions were:

##### A. Living in Community

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What is it like to live in community here?
3. How do you and others build community?
4. Give me an example of a time when you experienced community here.
5. Tell me about some of the important people in your life here at the AL.

##### B. Hospitality in Community

1. How were you welcomed into this community?

2. Give me an example of a time when you welcomed new residents to the community?
3. How do relationships between residents form and how are they sustained?

C. Power and Agency in Self and Others

1. How do decisions get made that impact your daily life?
2. Give me an example of how you influence change in your environment.
3. How does advocacy look here? Give me an example of how you advocate for other residents and how they advocate for you.

While I am still carrying my Catholic, feminist and cosmopolitanism commitments in Chapter 4, it is only the first layer of analysis, as I mentioned. Application of the theoretical framework takes place in Chapter 5, where the second layer of analysis occurs, and connections beyond the individual stories are made.

**Introduction to the Primary Research Participants-Four Elders**

Mr. Liam DeVos is an 88-year-old white male Catholic from central Texas who arrived in July of 2012 to AL B, as a result of falling and breaking his leg, following a stay in an extended care facility off site. He lives with his wife, Katy DeVos (married 61 years), in an apartment-style living space with a living room, bedroom and bathroom. Mr. DeVos and his wife had three boys. One son died during childhood. Of the two remaining, one lives with his family in a city an hour away, while the other son and his family live in the same city as the AL. Mr. DeVos told me he grew up in a Belgian community with many close friends and went into his father's grocery-bakery-bar and motel business after he returned from the U.S. Air Force. He continued to work in the same city of the AL in the restaurant business all of his adult life and was involved in many community leadership roles, including professional restaurant associations, Knights

of Columbus, and his local Belgian community organization. Mr. DeVos told me he graduated from Catholic high school and completed two semesters of college before joining the Air Force.

Mrs. Maria “May” Fuentes is 92 years old, Catholic, originally from Cuba, and came to the US with her husband when Fidel Castro’s regime took over her home town. She lived in New York City briefly, but settled in Miami, living there until her husband died four years ago. At the encouragement of her only living relatives (a nephew living in central Texas and a niece living California), she moved to this AL A in July, 2013. Before moving to the AL section of the facility, she spent just over a year in the independent living portion of the facility, beginning May of 2012. Mrs. Fuentes graduated from Havana University, having studied history and geography. Her professional life included teaching, as well as working with Catholic charity organizations. She talked about her difficulty learning English and how her professional work was often determined based upon being an avid Spanish speaker.

Ms. Amy Acebo is a 66-year-old white female, Catholic, widowed at an early age, and has lived in the same town as this AL since 1977. For many years she lived with her aging parents in order to care for them, until they passed. Eventually, Ms. Acebo experienced enough mental and physical health issues that, with the encouragement of her one living brother who lives nearby, she moved into a different AL in the same town. In August of 2010 Ms. Acebo moved into this AL A, and at the same time adopted a large white long-haired cat named Oliver who is her companion, Her apartment has one bedroom, one living room and one bathroom. Ms. Acebo did not speak of educational or

professional life experiences, but did share she experienced significant mental health issues that started in her early 20s.

Mrs. Debbie Johnson is an 87-year-old white female, Catholic, from central Texas, who arrived at this AL A in December of 2013, after living in three previous AL facilities in the same town. Her apartment is a two-bedroom, one bath, with living room and kitchenette. She shared that just as she finished high school her father died, and in order to help support her family, she began working in the meat-packing business where her father had worked, and continued to work in different professional settings until she retired in 1984. She married three times, and from her first husband had twin boys and one girl, all of whom live with their families in the same town as the AL, or an hour away.

Table 1

*Participant Characteristics*

<b>Elder Name</b>	<b># of Interviews</b>	<b>Elder Age</b>	<b>Arrival Date at AL</b>	<b>Type of AL</b>	<b>Character/ Relationship</b>	<b>Character/ Relationship</b>	<b>Character/ Relationship</b>
<b>Mr. DeVos</b>	3	88	July 2012	B	Mrs. DeVos/wife	Sandra Trevino/staff	Connie Pacheco/staff
<b>Mrs. Fuentes</b>	2	92	July 2013	A	Jane Rodriguez/staff	Sally Smith/resident	-
<b>Ms. Acebo</b>	2	66	August 2010	A	Kay Maldonado/staff	Jane Rodriguez/staff	Matthew O'Brien/brother
<b>Mrs. Johnson</b>	3	87	December 2013	A	Steve Gonzalez/staff	Catherine MacAuley/resident	-

**Presentation of Results from Interviews**

**Mr. DeVos**

I met with Mr. DeVos in his apartment on three different occasions, spanning August and September of 2014. The characters in his stories with whom I followed up in

secondary interviews included his wife, Mrs. Katy DeVos, and two staff members, Sandra Trevino, Assisted Living Manager for AL B, and Connie Pacheco, Activity Director for AL A and B.

**Living in community.** When I first asked Mr. DeVos what it was like to live in the AL community, he instructed me to hand him his iPad. He immediately began flipping through digital photographs, stopping periodically to show me two or three pictures, explaining to me what was happening, who the people in the pictures were, and what he and his wife had done to support the event.

Like yesterday, we gave a party here, so my wife and I were the king and queen here during Fiesta Week...friend of mine, David Cortes has Mi Tierra and so, he furnished mariachis for me...they [AL staff] planned it, but I helped them get entertainment...and then my wife and I are dancing out there on the patio.

(August 15, 2014)

Mr. DeVos went on to flip through iPad photos,

And let's see what else I have here. King Antonio came to visit during Fiesta Week...Going around with the king and his entourage, and where else are we here, and then they have a mile walk at the track here at the University...so the track is you go around four times that's a mile, but I did one round, a quarter of a mile. (August 15, 2014)

As Mr. DeVos kept flipping through the iPad photos, he reflected out loud what he had done to contribute to the different events planned by AL staff.

It's just like, have a bake sale, raise funds for the walk and so forth. So I got my friend over at Flowers Bakery, and they donate honey buns that they sell. And,

when we had our picnic in the park, a friend, a friend of mine, and they come in and sell popcorn and all that kind of stuff. Got them to part with some popcorn for the picnic. So, like I say, I'm involved. Without a salary. And, like for the picnic, a friend of mine who's in the produce business, he furnished the coleslaw. You know, called Bill Bethers and they furnished the pinto beans. (August 15, 2014)

His involvement in the community extended beyond the boundaries of the AL.

I observed a positive attitude emerge as the photos triggered recent memories of community events and the ways in which he supported community building. He explained to me how he approaches living in the AL,

When I first came here, I had a bed sore that didn't heal up at Regent Care, so I figured I'd stay in assisted living. I mean, extended care downstairs, but she [wife] was up here. Then once I got rid of the bed sore I got moved up. We moved up here. We're happy here. Yeah. Three square a day, and if you need help getting dressed or so forth, assisted living. We try to do most everything yourself. If you get in the habit of having assistance, if you don't use it, you lose it. (August 15, 2014)

I heard him share this perspective repeatedly during the three interviews.

Mr. DeVos's interest and personal ownership in developing the community to which he and his wife belong became clear to me as he listed the different programs he had helped with, as well as new ideas he had offered to AL staff.

Let's see what else. There was an article in the paper around here about the bats come out at night down at the bridge down on...so I mentioned it to Connie

(staff). I said to her maybe one of these evenings we'll get the bus. We'll go to watch the bats come out...yeah. You know, get you out of the building, get you out of your room, keep you active. And then, during Christmas time the bus will take you through Whitecrest to show us the Christmas lights on all of the houses and stuff. (August 15, 2014)

Mr. DeVos felt good about his purpose in the community and his ability to support the programs. When our first interview was coming to a close he was still flipping through pictures on the iPad, explaining how he engaged with others.

They can provide transportation for you, but I've got my car here, and my son, of course it's a bigger car, and when we go to the doctor or go to a meeting or something he'll come switch cars and I'll go in my car. And, sometimes, I'll be coming in late, well she's on sick leave right now, but Kay was the head nurse downstairs. So I'd let her know I was coming home late, because they usually lock the door by eight o'clock. I says, the party animal is coming back a little late. So, she'll leave the door unlocked. (August 15, 2014)

I sensed his appreciation of the staff and how he saw them as partners in the AL community.

When talking with his wife about how her husband built community, she described Mr. DeVos as a "good organizer" and went on to explain,

Well, he just knows how to talk to people, and he always has this friendly attitude. He doesn't have this "why do you do", "why don't you do this" or "why don't you?" He says, "Would you like to do this?" (September 12, 2014)

Sandra Trevino, the AL B manager, echoed as much when I interviewed her,

But seeing, he's done so much for us, and when he was, when we made him our king and queen, and he is, he is, his personality! And it was nice for me to see him receive. He gives so much to us, and for us giving it back to him, and we have it outside. We close off this area, this entire roadway in this little porte cochere and what not, and we turn it into a fiesta. I mean, it's all fiesta. There's booths and everything, and we made him a crown and a sash, and then he was greeted and welcomed by El Rey Feo. Fiesta's such a big theme in San Antonio, and there's so many, there's all these courts, royalty fiesta courts...he's getting us out! (August 15, 2014)

Mr. DeVos's contributions were recognized by both residents and staff in the AL community.

Referring to a German beer garden, the Beethoven, recommended by Mr. DeVos, where a group of AL B residents recently visited, Sandra remarked,

He comes up with so many ideas and it's things that are fun that he wants to do that he thinks others will enjoy, and he knows so many people, and he brings them here, and at the same time...he brings us to them too. (August 15, 2014)

Connie Pacheco, the activity director for AL A and B, offered a similar perspective when asked to reflect on Mr. DeVos's community engagement,

He, I think, he enlightens a lot of the residents. Like at the parties. "Okay, let's all take a picture." Oh, we're going to take a picture now. "Okay, take one from that side too." That livens the residents. Like, oh, okay, we're going to show our party off here. Because those pictures we get to share on our drive [group web forum], once he sends me all the pictures [from the I Pad]. (September 22, 2014)

Mr. DeVos motivates his peers to get involved and become engaged in the AL community in ways that motivate and invite connectivity.

**Hospitality in community.** Mr. DeVos described his initial transition to the community as “when you move in here, you just kind of feel your way around” (August 29, 2014). He recalled his initial interaction with the staff, “Well, I was welcomed by the staff. I guess orientated on what’s available, what to ask for if you need help, and so forth and so on...I’m not bashful to ask questions or whatever.” While not saying very much about his own welcome, when prompted, he shared how he welcomed another woman into the AL B, “I just, I just, I guess when I’m gonna go to breakfast or lunch wish her good morning or whatever, and I guess I kind of just made her feel at home” (August 29, 2014).

His past professional experience was helpful to him, as evidenced in his explanation of how he learned to welcome others,

Well of course bein’ in the restaurant business you’re welcoming customers that come in the door, make sure they’re satisfied and so forth. One question when you’re in the restaurant business, you go around and meet the people at the tables and so forth, and ask them, I’m trying to think of it. I’ve been out of the business for a couple years now. I forget. I think, “How’s everything?” Let them tell you. Or you don’t say, “Is everything all right?” So you let them, “Well how is everything?” rather than, “Is everything all right?” And let them say, “Well, my steak’s tough,” or “I need it cooked a little bit more,” or “It’s too well done,” or whatever, and it’s like they say, hospitality makes people feel welcomed. (August 29, 2014)

I noticed the way in which he talked about welcoming others was very inclusive and thoughtful. He told a story of how he developed a relationship with another resident, It's like Ida. She's down the hallway. She's in a wheelchair, but she used to walk with a walker. She fell or something, but like in the morning and her door's open. "Come on, Ida. Chicken's done laid eggs. Let's go have breakfast." It's just like at meal time we all have salad and she wants sweet pickles. They were out of sweet pickles for a couple of days. So anyways, Sunday was her birthday, and I had my daughter-in-law pick me up a little bottle of sweet Gherkin pickles. "Here you are, so if they don't have any in the salad, you can go get your own."

(August 29, 2014)

Another story illustrated similarly,

Just like we've got one couple, Gerome Geronovich and his wife, she's the one that's kind of, she's in a wheelchair, but he gets around, but I got agitated with him. "Come on. Make sure you come for lunch or bring your wife for bingo." Well they kind of hibernate in their room, and I joke about it, and say, "Well, we'll get the fire alarm to go off and that will get you out of your room." (August 29, 2014)

His concern for others was reinforced through his actions in the AL community.

Listening to Mr. DeVos explain how he interacts with others, develops relationships, and remains open to the ebb and flow of others wanting to be involved in the community, he cautioned, "You just want to stay to yourself...I don't think it's a rule. Just respect each other's privacy or whatever..." (August 29, 2014). And later, "...well usually, I'm not a nosey busybody, so I kind of stay out of their problems." (September

12, 2014). There seemed to need to be a reason to actually knock on one another's apartment or room doors, an example of boundary setting in the community. For instance,

Or just across the hallway, Dorothy, she'll have trouble with her TV. She's got two remotes. One of them works on the old TV and the other one you gotta throw the other one away, just work that one. So, she'll knock on my door, "I can't get channel five." So, I'll go there and try to help her out. (August 29, 2014)

He also shared examples of when he and other residents expressed care and concern for others, evidence of Catholic hospitality,

Well, like, well at that table where she sat, Sister Bridget, she got a get well card and everybody signed it...and like the other day one of the employees, her son was on a skateboard, and he fell and broke his wrist. So we signed a little get well card for him. (September 12, 2014)

As noted, his helping skills move beyond just serving other residents, an expansion of hospitality, but also to staff,

And then, like here when we have a birthday feast day or when we had the fiesta party they'll have a beer, and the bottle's hard to twist off, so Connie [staff] will come get my church key to open up the beer. (August 29, 2014)

Again, Mr. DeVos appeared in many ways to see staff and residents as all important members of the community in which to serve.

His wife, Mrs. DeVos, described Mr. DeVos as,  
...a great leader and he can get people to do things that not everybody can accomplish. You know, he just, I think it's because he was always in the business

itself and he knew how to handle people and to talk to them and to get them involved and get them interested, and he's very good at that. (August 15, 2014)

Mrs. DeVos went on to explain the nature of relationship building in the AL, "Well, if you know the people real well, you know how to handle the situation, because you know their backgrounds, and you know what they are willing to do, and what they are limited to do" (September 12, 2014). Mr. DeVos offered another example of the way in which he generates hospitality,

It's just like on Saturday, when we have bingo in the main dining room, I ask at breakfast Shirley, no, Dorothy across the way, and Rita, and let's see who else, and then there's Antonio, and then you and I. So, I'll say, I'll go, "We're all going to bingo today?" So about quarter, twenty minutes to one, make sure we all go to the restroom before we go, and I'll punch the button on the elevator, and away we go! (September 12, 2014)

As I listened to Mr. and Mrs. DeVos, I discovered they engage with many more residents than just those in their own AL B, a behavior reflecting openness beyond just the immediate community boundaries. As an example, Mrs. DeVos explained, "Oh yea, they have dances there [in the Heritage Ballroom]. They dance there don't they Liam? Oh, yeah. Plus it's good because you have a chance to mingle with different people." Connie, the activity director, told me, "He seems, he's very outgoing. He tells everybody. He tries to motivate everybody..." (September 22, 2014).

**Power and agency in self and others.** Besides actively supporting many of the community events planned by Connie, the activity director, there are more direct acts of

agency that Mr. DeVos shared with me. He told me about monthly resident council meetings,

We all get together in the Josephine Room down on the end. If anybody got any problems, complaints, or whatever, you can bitch about it. And there's some don't go to the meeting because they figure, well, go to this place, nothing's going to get done anyway. Nothing happens, you weren't there to complain. Otherwise like I say we, everybody's pretty happy up here...After so long a time, you figure it's just the same old meeting. You know? But, like I said, we go every time, because like I say...If you don't go, somebody might say something and you know the answer to it. (August 15, 2014)

His "showing up" served as evidence to me of the importance he placed on the need to be present and to contribute.

Mr. DeVos shared an example of a resident council meeting and a concern he brought forward. As I listened to his thinking, I realized how appreciative he is of the work staff members do daily and the challenges they face, while still being able to communicate his needs and concerns in a respectful and useful manner.

Well, I think one time I complained that the eggs were cold every morning. Probably what happens, being in the former food business I know what probably happens. They cooked them and dished them and put them on the cart before they bring them up here and they get cold, see. They've got a little, guess you'd call it a steam table up here. Sometimes they should turn it on before they get up here and that way it's warm when you put the pans in there. Then there's like the toaster up there. One side quit workin'. So I told Doc Colman he was up here

visitin' his mother. He does commercial kitchen repair, and I told him about the toaster not workin', and he says it's cheaper to just go buy a new one. By the time you try to fix an old...so anyway, we passed the word on, and in the meantime I called my friend down in Mission Restaurant supply to see if they might like to donate one. I'm working on both ends. Get Giovanni down there to solve the problem or get one donated or whatever. (August 15, 2014)

An example of personal agency, exhibited in the form of advocacy for others, included a story Mr. DeVos shared,

...last month they had a picnic in the park. So they bussed a whole bunch of us down to the Joskey Pavilion in the park there, and they provided lunch for us. Katy and Sister Bridget, they fed the ducks with bread or whatever, but the terrain was a little difficult to navigate. So I said, "Connie, I know a better pavilion." So we're at the Taylor Pavilion. It's across the river, because we've had the zoo trips for the developmentally disabled. So we use that pavilion, because we'll have three, four hundred kids there, and it's a little more navigable. So we're going to go check it out...because that's one of the newer pavilions that the terrain is concrete and so forth, but the other one is kind of just rocks, and so it's a little difficult to navigate. (August 29, 2014)

Sandra, the AL B manager, told me,

Mr. DeVos advocates for everyone, and he's always looking out for everyone, and if he, it's their home upstairs. I mean we don't call them patients or residents. That's their home. Each room is their home. And so, he looks out for everyone. It's like you went on your own street. Someone's not feeling well. I have seen

him leave his room and go down to that room, and knock, and “How are you doing?” I’ve seen that. Or even on, advocating, oh God. He does it for so many, but I know that he’s, he will look out for them. (August 15, 2014)

She recalled a specific example,

Mr. DeVos, you know, he beckons me with that finger of his... “Go down there and go get Jerry or Jerome and Mary over here. They’re missing all the fun.” ...So yes, I did go down. It was successful, and I went down, back down the hall, and I told Mr. DeVos, “He’s coming down. “ And he was like, “Good, good, good.” And he did. He really did. It turned out it was their wedding anniversary. He had a beer...” (August 15, 2014)

Sandra explained that AL A residents are more likely to go out and do things in the community, but “like I said, because of Mr. DeVos, he’s getting us out! He really is!”

I commented to both Sandra and Connie about what a positive attitude Mr. DeVos brings to the community and how he seems to affect change. Sandra chimed in,

It really is cool how he, you know, his life before being here, he can still mesh it with this. So before and after, but he’s got this really great way of just combining both, combining both, and advocating...but not just that, but bringing attention to Incarnate Word, you know, and getting people to recognize us and what we do here, you know, back and forth. (August 15, 2014)

Connie said similarly,

...he does help a lot. He does bring in a lot of people for us, you know, as far as people from the community...You can know as many people as you like. Just let me know what to do. Show me the way over here. And, you know, something

always new. I tell him something new is always good. So, we go from there.

(September 22, 2014)

### **Mrs. Fuentes**

I met with Mrs. Fuentes in her apartment on two different occasions, spanning August and September of 2014. A third interview that we had planned did not take place because Mrs. Fuentes fell and injured herself, requiring her to be hospitalized indefinitely. The characters in her stories with whom I followed up in secondary interviews included Sally Smith, a resident she had previously met in independent living, and one staff member, Jane Rodriguez, Assisted Living Manager for AL A.

**Living in community.** I was taken aback when Mrs. Fuentes answered the door and invited me in for our first interview session. Her walls were covered with beautiful oil paintings, decadent frames, and both rooms, the living room and bedroom, had antique furniture she had collected over the years, all squeezed tightly into a very small apartment. All the beauty she later explained came from trips to Europe that she enjoyed with her late husband. She graciously invited me to sit down on a red velvet couch in the living room and served me a tea cup of chocolate Ensure. After explaining how she fled from Cuba with her husband, and came to settle in the US, we began to talk about what it was like to live in the AL community, and in particular, how language can be a challenge to community connections. She explained,

Well, for me it was difficult because of the language. You know? When I was in Miami, they didn't speak any, all of our friends, every one, you know, spoke Spanish in the building, you know—all the employees and everyone...it was difficult to be adjusted because of the language, but the people, everyone was

very nice to me. Starting, you know, despite our English, English, you know, to talk to them. As if you can to have a family with those. We are going to be here your family. So I have been around almost the whole time with the same group of people. I have meals with them...with a few of them I spoke Spanish, but then I know a group of American, you know. People who were very open to me and they invited me to go to their table, and they said, "Well, this is my friend..." So, little by little I start talking to everyone, almost everyone." (August 15, 2014)

Her vulnerability and perseverance were moving and noteworthy.

She also remarked, "I have very close and good friends here." She got up from the couch and retrieved a photograph from her table, and began to talk about a woman from the photo she had met in the AL community who was helping her family plan a trip to Spain and France, "They are very close to me, because they were planning a trip to Spain and a trip to France, and my husband and I, we went to Spain and to France, we went to Spain many times." She recounted what her friend had asked of her, "May, what if you show us what to do" in France and Spain since she had been there before (August 15, 2014).

When I asked about participating in community activities in the AL, she shook her head and became thoughtful,

Not too many. No, because I don't feel a lot. My husband passed away, you know, I don't feel too much but sometimes they have music, you know, in the dining room, you know, a little before dinner, and sometimes I go. You have to go, you have to go, and sometimes I go, you know, but I don't participate in many things. (August 15, 2014)

Mrs. Fuentes spoke of her loneliness, now that her husband and most of her family have passed,

But my parents, before, you know, my father pass away, then my mother when she was 91 years old, then I have a sister that was the older one, then two brothers, then I was the younger one. So that now I am totally alone, you know? Because the only people that I have are nieces and nephews, but it's not the same. Really, I love them very much, and they love me. I'm loved also, you know, because we have contact with them, but anyway it's different, you know? The life in family, you know? The life of your parents, you know. But to live in community, because in a community you have to spend hours, you know, for yourself. For some reason, you know, because you are. You have to do that, you know. So there is a big difference, you know. We've been living at home with my family, you know, then living here. (September 12, 2014)

While she missed her family very much, she also seemed resigned to the transition to the AL community and to maintain a quality of life through relationships with others in the community.

I learned about the necessity of having a routine, and that keeping appointments and getting from one location to another within the AL was a complex set of tasks for Mrs. Fuentes, even with assistance from staff.

...my morning is very busy, because I finish about ten, ten-thirty and then I go to Mass, you know, and the Mass gives me time always to hear the whole Mass...the first thing I do is make my bed when I get up. After than I have my shower, and then to dress, you know. It takes time...here, but I have to go up a lot, because

this is more down the stairs. You have to go all through extended care to get to therapy. So, I have to go, you know, almost thirty minutes before to get there on time...big, big, complex...and so, I am very busy in the morning you know. The whole morning is very busy, and then after that I have therapy. So the time that I have to rest is gone, you know. I have therapy about to say twenty to three? You know, and then I come here to write the letter. I've got to send a letter, you know. I used to sit in that chair. And then to rest my feet, you know, maybe take a little nap, but, I am busy. I think it's better to be busy. By five o'clock I go to dinner. We were talking of that you know, and we get back in later. And then I watch TV. (September 12, 2014)

Routine and daily rituals were important to her and required thoughtful preparation.

Mrs. Fuentes told me that the first resident she met was through an ambassador program, sponsored by the AL and meant to establish ways for residents to create relationships, community and connection between and for one another.

Well there is a person that I like very much. Her name is Sally Smith and she's very talkative, you know, is full of life even that she have after a very bad situation, because she had surgery in her knee...many times we have lunch together. (August 15, 2014)

When I asked for more information about the ambassador program, Mrs. Fuentes explained,

I guess they have to be good with people, you know, and in fact they told me that they were going to make me an ambassador, but I have this bad thing you know. That thing, that other day, that was an initial, and I couldn't go, you know,

because I felt very weak, very tired. And I told them that I wasn't ready yet, because if my, if I had very good health, you know, I wouldn't mind, and the way I live, people, I would like people, you know, and I have many, many friends in the past, but anyway I don't, you know, this lady was to meet her, you know, I couldn't you know, go to wait for her, but already met her and I call from my phone and explain to her, you know, but anyway I told her that for now I cannot be an ambassador. (August 15, 2014)

Besides meals with friends in the AL, Mrs. Fuentes spoke of the importance and convenience of attending Catholic Mass, "Well, here you don't have to go out for anything. It's convenient that you have the Mass, you know, and I was raised a Catholic, and I am much more involved in Mass here. This is the truth" (September 12, 2014).

**Hospitality in community.** Over the course of the two meetings with Mrs. Fuentes, I learned how important meals are to meeting new and old friends, a space where hospitality is expressed and received.

Because sometimes, you know, you have an empty seat. Someone says, "May I sit with you?" And then, you are knowing people like that, and you say hello anytime, you know...If there's a seat available someone will come, you know, and then my friends like that...and then, we say, "Hello," or we don't know the person, we say, "Hello, how are you?" They just become your friend. Yeah.

(August 15, 2014)

I asked for an example of this hospitality at the table, specifically how it might play out for her. She explained step by step as a patient teacher might explain to a young student,

Well for example, if I am the first one, you know, I'm sitting in a larger table, you know, and they are coming and sit around there. If some other people come, you know, I'm not going to tell them, "No, you cannot sit here. This is for someone." Rather, "Okay, sit down." And the other person is affected. So, sometimes, it's the same people. Sometimes, it is someone who is a little different, you know, but we are of course, accepting of other people. You cannot sit there, so someone can come in, you know. (September 12, 2014)

Her awareness of others' feelings, as well as the need to be gracious toward others, stood out to me as I listened to her instruct me about meals and hospitality.

A detailed example of Catholic hospitality was shared by Mrs. Fuentes when she talked about attending a doctor's appointment. She reflected on having "much more friends" like Sally Smith,

She's a very good person. She has a very good heart and she told me she's very close to me, and she told me, "May, I know that you are going to the doctor, so I would like to see if you want me to come there." I said, "Oh Peggy, it is going to be very bad, you know, because, so don't worry anyway." And I didn't talk to her anymore. I didn't see her that evening. So I didn't think more about that, and I told her it's better to go alone because it's going to be a long day...so I am sitting there, and Peggy comes and says, "Well, here I am." ...Anyway, she accompanied me, you know, so she was a very good companion. (September 12, 2014)

Her authentic appreciation and acceptance of her friend's support seems importance to embracing the hospitality offered by others.

When I sat down in a community lounge and talked with Sally Smith, she immediately began sharing how gracious Mrs. Fuentes is, a characteristic that I am noticing more and more where Catholic hospitality is present. Peggy explained,

...because she's a very giving person, and if you, before she moved to assisted living, she lived in independent living, and you know, we'd sometimes go to her apartment. She always had chocolates, snacks, and we're laughing so hard. You know, we kept saying, "May, we'll come to your apartment," but no, she was just, that's her manner, and I think she's the most stylish person there ever was. You know, she's ninety-two and it looks like she stepped off the pages of Vogue or something...she'll laugh at herself, too. So we really have treasured her. (August 29, 2014)

Jane Rodriguez, manager of AL A, shared a similar story,

When I go visit her, like when I go visit her and I'm standing up, because a lot of times I don't just go sit in somebody's room. I just don't do that [as staff]. And I either had to go talk to her about whatever was going on, maybe an appointment or something, and she'll tell you, "Oh, no, no. You know, come sit down." And, she'll talk to me in either Spanish or English, because I understand the Spanish...She's very, she likes to make everybody comfortable in her room, and I've seen where people maybe visit her sometimes, and she's got somebody sitting down and she'll ask them, she'll offer them chocolates, because she likes chocolates. (October 2, 2014)

Peggy jumped into a story about Mrs. Fuentes that illustrated her receipt of hospitality in the AL community, as well as the joy Peggy experienced offering the act of hospitality:

But the most wonderful thing that we did is May's birthday...we decided we would do a surprise party in the Bistro. So we had gotten all this stuff done downstairs, and I had gone up to May's, and I said, "May, how about you and I eat dinner about five-thirty tonight? Would that be okay? Because I have a couple things I need to do, and I'll, you want me to come up and get you?" I said, "I'll just come and get you." Cause I thought, "Stay in your apartment until we're ready." So I came up, and then, of course, I let her come out of the elevator and be in front of me, and she was like, "Oh my goodness, there's a party." And I said, "Yes and, surprise, it's for you." She said she was overwhelmed. She said, "I've never had a party like this. Never." So we had so much fun. It was just such a delight. You know, her life just didn't revolve that way, and you know, I think they had very good friends in Miami, but you know, that's not something they would think to do...we had balloons that came back to her room and everything. So, she left the balloons up until they were just, we had the mylar, so they stayed up for a while, but hers were lying on the floor, and I said, "May, do you think we should put these away?" And she said, "No, no. They're okay." So, she had them for a long time. That was my favorite thing. (August 29, 2014)

**Power and agency in self and others.** While Mrs. Fuentes turned down the invitation to serve as an ambassador for the AL due to health concerns, a noticeable

obstacle to community building, she still acts on others behalf, demonstrating both agency and power in the AL, as a story by Jane, the AL manager, illustrates.

...[a resident] maybe from the independent area, because she has friends over there from that area, and, you know, maybe they're not feeling well, and she'll talk to them and tell them, "You know what? Come to the nurse. They'll take your blood pressure. They'll check your temperature, and, you know, maybe they'll see what's going on with you." So she does look out for other people as well. So, and a lot of times, she's brought people, and she'll tell me, "This is so-and-so, and I'm going to go ahead, and she's having some headaches and some problems. Can you check her?" We'll tell her, "Yeah. You know, sit down here." We'll check them...because in independent living they don't have a nurse.

(October 2, 2014)

Problem solving and connecting peers in need with resources in the community are evidence of Mrs. Fuentes's advocacy for others.

When prompted to describe Mrs. Fuentes in the AL A, Jane said, I think she has adapted very well. I don't think she's really had a problem with the change. You know, she's, I haven't seen where she's felt that, that she was, you know, halted by something. I mean, she transitioned very well from independent over here. She does her own thing. She has her little key. She opens her door, locks her door. She goes in and out as she pleases. She comes down. She'll see us. She calls us on the phone if she needs something or she'll let us know she made an appointment. So she pretty much didn't have any problem

where she felt or I think that she felt maybe, you know, there was something going on that I have to call the nephew like that. (October 2, 2014)

Peggy did not see the transition going so smoothly for Mrs. Fuentes, and described a time when she advocated for Mrs. Fuentes,

Moving from independent living to assisted living was very hard on her. She had a wonderful apartment and all of her paintings and furniture and everything. She had a one bedroom with a kitchen and spacious living room. So, it was just done beautifully. (August 29, 2014)

In fact, Peggy's account of the decision to move to AL A was that the nephew determined it was best and did not give Mrs. Fuentes a chance to try anything different in terms of home care in independent living. Peggy recalls,

She had no idea what would happen to all of her stuff, and all of her paintings that she loved, and I was just, oh gosh. So one day I even said to him, I saw Carlos [nephew] and his wife with a load of paintings, and I said, "Carlos, is there any way that she can have just a few paintings in her room?" I said, "She really needs them. Those are things that she's been with forever." So I said, "You know, if you can figure a way to hang them or something." It's kind of difficult. I didn't want to tell him what to do, but I did want to tell him. We walk a thin line. (August 29, 2014)

My own reflection of Mrs. Fuentes is that when I first met her she described how her morning routine went, including bathing herself without any help. During my second visit with her she was complaining of severe arm pain and one of the staff stopped by to check on her. I overheard their conversation where the staff member was chiding Mrs.

Fuentes for not calling for assistance when she takes a shower. After the staff member left, she looked at me. I said, “They’ll help you.” Her reply,

Yeah. But I am not ready for that. It’s stupid, you know, but I don’t know why I don’t feel it, you know? No family, you know, to help me with the bathroom. Even though it takes time...I have to be very careful now that I don’t fall again...but I can do it now, but it’s not easy. (September 12, 2014)

She said those words softly but with almost what I thought was indignance, the loss of independence seemingly a struggle. My third interview with Mrs. Fuentes could not take place because she had fallen and been hospitalized indefinitely.

### **Ms. Acebo**

I met with Ms. Acebo in her apartment on two different occasions, spanning August, September and October of 2014. I learned during my first interview with Ms. Acebo that she had scheduled neck surgery the upcoming week and would be unavailable for at least two to three weeks. Therefore, we agreed to combine the three sets of interview questions into two get-togethers so that I could continue to collect my data in a timely manner while respecting her recovery time. The characters in her stories that I followed up with in secondary interviews included Kay Maldonado, a staff nurse, Jane Rodriguez, Assisted Living Manager for AL A, and her biological brother, Brother Matthew O’Brien, a member of a Catholic founding order other than the AL, who lives nearby the AL.

**Living in community.** A staff member brought me to Ms. Acebo’s apartment and introduced me to her. Ms. Acebo was in a recliner and unable to move very much without assistance. Almost before I was greeted by Ms. Acebo, her big white cat,

Oliver, sniffed me and immediately sat down next to me as I took a chair. Ms. Acebo explained, “he’s gonna beg for ya” and then looked around her compact apartment and said laughingly, “I’m not a very good housekeeper, but you know, this is my home, so I know it looks like I’m a hoarder, and that’s probably true” (August 29, 2014).

As she shared with me some of her personal history, which included significant mental health issues and a difficult and brief marriage, she told me she was visited weekly by a psychologist in the AL A and “she’s great. I have never felt better, and I have such a good attitude about everything. It’s just, it’s great. I love livin’ here, and I don’t take in many of the activities, because my neck bothers me” (August 29, 2014). She went on to share she had to have a double knee replacements several years ago and suffers from COPD. She uses a scooter, walker and cane, depending upon the day and how she is feeling, and is scheduled for additional surgery for her neck in the next week.

When asked about how she engages, or does not, in the community, she explained she watches TV, “But the greatest thing I’ve found on the TV is *The Brain Games*. National Geographic has *The Brain Games*” (August 29, 2014). She watches Mass, live from one of the chapels in the AL, on her TV too.

It’s like living in an apartment complex, and the fact that we’re all in walkers and scooters and stuff like that is just incidental...That’s the only difference that I can see. I mean, I don’t do the activities. I did before my neck got so bad. But, it’s hard for me to sit. Like I can hardly go to Mass. It’s too much to try. (August 29, 2014)

She compared the AL to a prior AL she lived in,

But livin' here the people are great. I like it so much better than The Meadows.

The Meadows was more formal and there's a spirit here that you can feel like with all the statues, and the chapel being right here and everything. (August 29, 2014)

While she said she doesn't attend many community activities, she explained further,

I don't know if it's me or I don't have very many visitors here, you know, from people who live here. I have one or two, you know, but so many of them are in their eighties and nineties, and I'm sixty-six...some of the activities, it's like it's all for their age group, you know, and they would be my grandparents, you know, if we were younger, you know, back in the day. But I listen to like the Beatles music, you know, and if they had entertainment and stuff like that I'd be more interested, you know. (August 29, 2014)

She explained to me that because the majority of residents are older, she understands the need to program for an older community, but it is a difference that significantly impacts the degree to which she engages in the community. Then she reflected on her more meaningful relationships she has built in the AL,

But I really love the staff. The staff's really good to me...I guess that after I was gone for like three months (due to health reasons), you know, coming back they were all so open to me, and concerned about me, you know, and that meant a lot to me, you know. I've had three different apartments since I've been here.

(August 29, 2014)

Her relationships with the staff members seemed to replace the explained shortcomings of the residential community.

Considering she described herself as an introvert, as well as having limited mobility, I asked her how she meets other residents in the community.

You know, you might sit with somebody you don't know and introduce yourself [during a meal in the dining room] and just get to know the other person by asking a lot of questions and stuff, and then the activities is the same way. It's for you to hook up with somebody, somebody that has something in common with you.

You know? And I, the only activity I really hooked into was they had a journaling class. But they don't have it any more. The sister that was the leader seemed to take over the group and was like a professor, and that's not what I was there for. I didn't want to have an assignment...so I quit going. (October 25, 2014)

She also described monthly happy hours and resident meetings, although she said she wasn't particularly interested in attending either.

But, they send out the notes to everybody, and they encourage people if they have concerns to go to that meeting and bring them up, you know. So that is one thing, and the food around here, I'm not very pleased with the food because I'm payin \$3,300 a month to live here, and I think they should have some decent food...so they had a suggestion box, and I've written suggestions, you know, like more variety. They have chicken all the time, you know. I'm so sick of chicken. (October 25, 2014)

**Hospitality in community.** Ms. Acebo recalled how an ambassador and others welcomed her to the community, and how this ambassador resident happened to live next door to her, she

introduced herself to me, and you know, she told me the history of the place and everything...that's all I remember about when I first came was having a lot of people welcome me, and you know, real congenial and everything." (October 25, 2014)

She expressed her desire to move to this AL originally, and described the nature of the hospitality she sensed,

Yeah. I mean like everybody was so friendly you know. I noticed that before I committed to coming here, I visited three times before I said, "yeah." Because I was at Morningside Manor for a year, and I just didn't feel right there. And, so, every time I came to visit to look at the apartments everybody was so friendly and happy, you know, and I thought this is a good indication of what it's like here. (October 25, 2014)

Her ability to compare experiences was helpful in her decision making and her happiness with her current situation. Her brother, Br. Matthew O'Brien, said as much,

When she came over here she just immediately liked it right away. Initially she was in independent living, and then she decided she wanted to be in assisted living, but what was interesting was that while the other was very, I mean friendly enough, and she made connections there. There was something very special about (this AL)...I think in part that had to do with the hospitality, you know, that she

and the care that she's experienced here from the staff as well as the, you know, residents. (October 3, 2014)

The mutuality of relationship between staff and residents is meaningful and underscores the compassion and care offered toward one another. One of the staff members about whom Ms. Acebo spoke fondly, Kay Maldonado, shared the following,

Well, the staffers here always express that type of hospitality and loving comfort and reassurance. We go into her room. We not only give her her medications. We'll ask her what else she needs, and it can be small things like filling up her bird feeder or cleaning up, you know, her little porch area or most of all helping her out with Oliver. Yeah. So anytime we show that expression of love for her little animal, her pet, I mean, it just makes her shine. She loves that you know, that we love her and we love Oliver. And, we just go above and beyond the call of duty when it comes to Ms. Acebo and a lot of the other residents here, too.

(September 22, 2014)

The generosity and authenticity of the staff were noteworthy.

Kay not only confirmed Ms. Acebo's way of engaging in the community, mostly through the staff, but also illustrated the way in which staff offer hospitality to residents, She doesn't interact with the other people, not a whole lot. Just as far as her going out for her meals three times a day. She'll socialize in that little time frame, and then she'll go back into her room. Then it's up to us to go up there and visit with her, find out her needs, anything, and she's also got our phone numbers. Do you know that she's the only one that's got my personal cell phone number? Of all the people here I give it straight to her, and she'll call me at any given time.

“Kay, can you do this for me or that for me?” “Yeah, I’ll be right there.” And she knows she can always rely on me for anything...She’s got this inner beauty that shines. I just really appreciate her so much, and she needs a little more help than other folks. (September 22, 2014)

When I interviewed Kay, Ms. Acebo was away from her apartment for several weeks due to surgery. I asked about Oliver, the cat, and Kay replied,

He’s in her room. We go up there. Just last night I cleaned out his little, his little bin, his little potty bin. Cleaned out the room, took out all the trash, talked with Oliver, and I took him on a thirty minute walk. And, I also have another resident on the third floor that loves cats, and she’s been missing her pets. So I thought it would be a great gesture just to invite her down to watch Oliver for about twenty minutes. And you should have seen this lady’s face light up...We’re going to do it again today. (September 22, 2014)

Kay explained her approach to offering hospitality to her residents,

I love it even if it goes outside the realm of my nursing. Sometimes it goes into counseling. Sometimes I change my hat so many times during the day. I can be housekeeping, because they leave at five. I’ll be a plumber next time. I’ll be connecting the chains on the commode flipper...I have to do it all and I love it. (September 22, 2014)

**Power and agency in self and others.** What was so powerful to me as I listened to Kay talk about Ms. Acebo is the mutual relationship that existed between them, and how it seemed to feed Ms. Acebo’s personal agency. Kay shared,

There's something about Ms. Acebo when she feels she's got a health issue that needs to be looked after, she steps it up and gets it done. She'll go the distance. She's strong minded. She knows exactly what she has to do, and she's real tough. She's strong-willed, and you know, we look out for her—make sure she's safe, make sure she gets everything she needs—and I always go in there when I give her her medication, I make sure she's got plenty of fresh cold water to last her the night, and then I go to Oliver and I change his water out too. He likes his water bin up to the top. She knows that I love her, because when I leave her room at night I always go in and I peek again, and I tell her, "Amy, remember I love you." She says, "Oh! I love you too." (September 22, 2014)

The way in which the staff and Ms. Acebo interact with one another seems less about an exchange of a service, and much more about fostering a caring community, together.

Ms. Acebo shared that she wrote a letter on Kay's behalf, to the president of the AL,

and she received an outstanding employee of the month award...Yea. So she's really been my, she just comes in here, and she's full of life, and we laugh, and we have a good time you know, and she just takes the greatest care of me, and that's what I wanted to tell them in my letter. She's just outstanding, and Jane's good too, you know, and Liz. (August 29, 2014)

Kay said,

We made a pact. We've got the trio pact, the three of us. We stick together. Whatever we need we help each other out. We call it the sisterhood. The three of us, because Ms. Acebo knows she can depend on Liz and me. Either way she'll

get whatever she needs even if it's that little back rub. Whatever it is we'll fix her up, and we make her feel welcomed her. That's why she likes it here. (September 22, 2014)

Another good example of agency, Ms. Acebo explained,

I wrote another letter. Our nurse manager before Jane was, she and I got into it...I can't remember how it started, but she told me unless I could wipe my own ass then I wasn't going to live here anymore, and then she denied it...oh, I was pissed. You hate to do that [report the concern], but you know what? She brought it on herself, right? (September 22, 2014)

Jane, the current manager of AL A, shared another illustration of personal agency and power on Ms. Acebo's part, "...Ms. Acebo confided in her that the staff member was spending too much time in her room and watching her TV" (October 2, 2014) which allowed Jane to follow up with the staff member about work performance and professional standards. Her brother, Br. Matthew, reinforced Ms. Acebo's own sense of agency, "Amy stood her ground and rightly so on a couple of occasions, and she's not one to pick a fight or an argument or whatever, but she felt an injustice and she talked to the appropriate people" (October 3, 2014).

The nature of setting boundaries, while being in relationship, is important, not just amongst residents, but between residents and staff. Jane spoke of the balancing act staff and residents must work at when in relationship day to day,

So, I think a lot of times there's a lot of residents that end up having more relationships with the staff rather than the people outside in the community and that's okay. That's what we're here for, you know. We're here to make people's

lives better, you know, to make them happy, because a lot of times their children, like, well, Ms. Acebo for instance, she never had children... Well, we have to kind of, you know, remember that we're staff workers. We're not family so we can't really get involved in a lot of situations. We can't make decisions for them. So, there's a fine line... we have to just be careful about that. (October 2, 2014)

This act of balancing must be constantly reframed as relationships change and the circumstances of each resident differ.

I observed a particular mindset and a positive attitude, one of hopefulness, that Ms. Acebo had as she shared her experiences in the AL. She told me,

So many individuals here are really still hanging on to their past. You know what I mean? And, I talk to them, but I don't really connect with them, if you know what I mean, because I've let go of all of that. I've let go of the house, the car, you know, all those things just brought worry to me. You know, like the commitment to keep, I had a condo, and I lived by myself. Well, anything goes wrong, and I wouldn't be able to fix it. You know, my brother's not handy... a real freedom, you know, and I, 'cause my mom said I was a born worrier, and now I don't have anything to worry about. They take care of everything, you know, and it's a wonderful atmosphere, and it's nice not to worry... I thought I'd miss my car, but I really don't unless I feel like, "Oh gee. I could use a hot fudge sundae." (August 29, 2014)

Her sense of humor and willingness to reframe the way she made meaning of the transition seemed to serve her well.

Both Kay and Ms. Acebo's brother shared her most recent intentions to go on a cruise in the upcoming months. Kay said,

Right now, she's thinking about her cruise. She's going to take a cruise. And she's already ordered purses, and she's already ordered shoes. She, you know, thinks that she wants to look fit. She wants to look beautiful. She wants to blend in. She wants to be a part of it. We're encouraging her. We're going to help her out and make sure her dream comes true! (September 22, 2014)

**Mrs. Johnson**

I met with Mrs. Johnson in her apartment on three different occasions, spanning August and September of 2014. The characters in her stories that I followed up with in secondary interviews included Sister Catherine MacAuley, a resident and member of the founding order of sisters for the AL, and a staff member, Steve Gonzalez, Director of Volunteers and Assistant Director of Resident Services.

**Living in community.** Mrs. Johnson welcomed me into her apartment, the largest of the four apartments I had visited amongst the participating elders in my study. After sharing a little about her life, including thirty four years as an employment specialist in the same town as the AL, she told me about living in the AL,

Well, you know, it's a different life. It's very difficult I think when people come in, just for the first time to live in one of these places. I lived in another one before I came here, but the thing of it is, it's how you come into it, under what circumstances and who you are. Now, I was in good health at that time. I've fallen since, but I have an eye problem, too, macular, so I had just partial vision. (August 29, 2014)

For Mrs. Johnson, her circumstances, including her health, impacted her experience of community.

She went on to disclose some of her initial feelings and understandings about the AL community,

But my living here is good, but I think it is very easy for me, probably because I have had so much experience. Now, somebody coming in here from home, you know, and they're gonna be here, and they're gonna be lonely, because I'm lonely here too. That's one of the things I find. When you're moved into a home like this, most of the time that's one of the worst things you notice is that you're, if your family put you there, my family didn't really put me there, my children, I did it on my own really, it's lonely, and you're, they're not really prepared to entertain you. They're here to take care of you. And, so, that's the main thing I'd say, and of course it's very good care here, of course, because it's the sisters'. It's their home...and that's another thing. This is entirely different here than it is living at another. (August 29, 2014)

She spent significant time explaining how a Catholic AL is different from a public, non-faith-based AL,

Well, the sisters own the home, and they should. It's their home, and of course, that's the main thing here that when you come here, you know, the sisters own the home...I feel like the other places, you know, you come in right away, you're just like everyone else, but here the sisters, they're friends. They know everybody in town. They know all the people, and it's a wonderful life, and they're friendly and lots of fun too. They are, and they're bright and they're interesting because

they've been all over the world. They've had so many different types of education...and so as soon as I came on they were all coming in, too, and they kind of noticed I was new, too, but it's, this is different, really a different type of, a lot of people know it's more different here, than at a public one. I think it's a different attitude. Of course, it's religious, too, and that's a good thing, and that's our main thing is we all go get to go to church, because we're Catholic and that's the reason I'm here to start with. (August 29, 2014)

The Catholic nature of the community, including the presence of the sisters as residents, influenced her experience of AL.

Mrs. Johnson expressed frustration and sadness with engagement in the AL community on one hand because,

...that's the saddest thing for me in this whole thing is there's no Bridge...I can't see to play...Oh, they have the big ones (cards), but I've been a Bridge player, and real good Bridge players don't like to play with people that are slow...but I was a very good Bridge player and my husband played too. We all played, and I played in seven different clubs in my life." (August 29, 2014)

On the other hand, she shared a more positive experience of community engagement, "I met one lady, she and I, I forgot how we met, but we just hit it off immediately. We already went to lunch together and everything, and see that happens automatically if you're sharp enough to catch on" (August 29, 2014).

Her struggles with community life became more evident as she described meal times.

They will go to lunch, and they've got their own little clicks and then nobody goes around here too much. They say that they do, but I haven't been invited to one of them. They have these little meetings, but they don't really, they're not hitting the point on it, because I never did get to meet any of the people that come round here really." (August 29, 2014)

During our second interview, she continued, "There's not much to do around here. That's my problem...but I don't want to move again, and that's the thing here. So I'm just, I'll just stay put" (September 12, 2014).

Additional obstacles to community engagement that she identified included living at the end of one floor, making her feel more distance from the community, as well as not being able to read the bulletin with upcoming activities due to her failing eye sight. Steve Gonzalez, Director of Volunteers and Assistant Director of Resident Services, echoed those concerns, "She's at the end of the hallway. So she, she notices that. On the layout there are not a lot of people, you know, not a lot of traffic going through there" (September 22, 2014). Gonzalez also explained, "She's mentioned to several different people that she has trouble reading her mail, that she has trouble seeing the calendar. So, when a resident brings us an issue like that, we try to find a solution" (September 22, 2014). Mrs. Johnson had strong judgment about exercise programming in the community too,

But I know as far as exercise is concerned, I've gone to these places. They've done all exercises, but that sittin' there day in and day out doin' the same thing and your hands up and all that kind of stuff. I don't need that kind of exercise. (September 22, 2014)

One of several unfortunate incidents she told me about revolved around an annual community event called the Soiree at the AL. Mrs. Johnson began,

Fifty, sixty-five or seventy-five, or eighty-five dollars or something, and I didn't know what a soiree was. So I said, in fact, I got dressed, and I thought, I put my black, I had a black dress on, plain nice black dress, and I dressed with my shoes and all, and I thought, "I'm going to walk down there and see if it's something that I might want to..." And I hadn't bought a ticket to start with, but I hadn't thought of that, but I thought I'm going to go look. I walked to the door of that building where they were having it, and it was real early. There were about four or five men out there, and they were all in suits and a couple of them were dressed in tuxes and I said, he said, "Here's a lady I know right now that's on her way over here. Come on in." And I laughed. He said, "She's all dressed up. I know this lady's coming here." Oh I felt so silly. I said, "I might be dressed up, but I'm not coming here. I don't know what kind of party this is, but I do know there's something going on here." And he said, "Well, for heaven's sakes, you've got to come." I said, "Well, I don't have a ticket." He said, "Well you've got to go right upstairs right now and get your ticket." I said, "No, I don't think I will." I think he said eight-six dollars, seventy-eight, six dollars? And what it was, well, they had oh, food to bare, all kind of food out, just stocked with all kind of food out. Soiree. I don't know what that meant and I don't know what kind of action it was, and I couldn't figure out from anybody else. Nobody knew. It hadn't been publicized. So nobody knew anything. So if I had known a little bit more

about it, because I don't mind payin' the price if it's somethin' we really would have gotten all dressed up to go. You know? (September 22, 2014)

Her loneliness and her mixed emotions about engaging with others were evident in her stories of trying to connect in the AL community. She went on to say,

I went to a couple of the coffees down the stairs. Nobody gets around to introduce to or anything, but I did that and I met a couple people. Yeah. I just introduce myself. I'm not bashful about that. You know, I don't mind either. And I think if I see somebody that looks kind of lonely, too, I'll go talk to them. I'm a pretty good mixer I think, but it, I just don't find, you know, maybe it's me. I'm so old that I just don't push it, you know. When you get ninety-five years old maybe it's time you quit, but I got all dressed up in my black dress the other night, and I thought, "Oh, I'd like to be going someplace." (September 22, 2014)

**Hospitality in community.** Steve Gonzalez, Director of Volunteers and Assistant Director of Resident Services, reflected on Mrs. Johnson's introduction to the AL community,

So, I did that resident orientation with her. Usually I do it within the first week after they've had time to settle a little bit and get all their stuff moved in. And then, from there we will assign them a resident ambassador, which is someone that just sort of welcomes them to, you know, dinner or invites them to different events and just gets their wheels moving. I know Mrs. Johnson had some difficulty with that adjustment, but the other day she came down to our New Resident Coffee, and that's a coffee that we have once a month for everyone to participate, but it's a great chance for new residents to come meet some of our

established residents and the other way around. She did come down to that. She really enjoyed herself. She got to meet a lot of her neighbors. I know she does have some vision problems so that does limit her ability to know what our calendar activities are, but the assisted living nurse does invite her, does encourage her to come participate with us. In doing that, we're just trying to engage her as much as possible. Really, more than, trying to get her to engage. (September 22, 2014)

Encountering hospitality, whether inviting it, expressing it, or observing it, takes time and a community where it may be fostered.

Another example of hospitality in the AL, Sr. Catherine MacAuley is a resident on Mrs. Johnson's same floor and she shared one day she helped Mrs. Johnson read her mail. Sr. Catherine said,

I helped her read. Now I recall. Yeah, I did one day when she needed something that, see her sons read to her. They help her. They read her mail, because they're very faithful in coming, but I, one day, I don't know what she needed but something or other and I read that. I felt good being able to assist someone that was having difficulty and couldn't do it, and I'd be happy to do it any time, but I don't want to intrude in any way, but if I was asked I'd be happy to do it if she requested it, but I don't push myself, you know, in there...she was grateful. She showed gratitude and she was very polite to me and invited me to sit down. So she made me feel at home and welcomed. (October 2, 2014)

Sr. Catherine went on to explain the nature of boundaries and relationships between residents,

Well, people have a certain sense of privacy, and we have to know more or less the limits or the boundaries so that we don't overstep them and maybe disturb the person or make it uncomfortable for them. So we have to be sensitive to people's privacy, because some people are very private and others are not. I mean you'll tell the person. We're all different. What might bother you I mightn't mind at all, you know? And, we're to know the needs, but at the same time when I, let's say intruded or when I helped her I saw her need and I tried to fill it, but I'm not one to be going down to her door and to be asking her if she needs help all the time. (October 2, 2014)

Over the course of the three different interviews, Mrs. Johnson expressed being different from other residents in the AL. This difference she speaks of separates her from others and she experiences isolation—physically and emotionally, even as she says otherwise. Initially, she remarked,

That's the thing. Avoid being prejudice, particularly in religion or with accents you know? Don't pass your opinion, and the sooner you make friends the better for you, and that is the truth. The sooner you make friends the better for you. That could be the thing that I. I don't think I've made friends as quickly as I should have, but I don't feel good. That's another thing. Mine's a little bit different situation, and it's not necessarily that I have to have the friends, because I'm satisfied with myself as far as that, but a lot of people, I can tell you, I would be, I would advise them to make lots of friends... Well, the thing is that's about all you can figure on, because there's so many different kinds of people here. That's what I said about the nuns here. Now that wouldn't happen in a lot of places, but

see here it happened because the nuns own the place, and they're, they run this place and that, that's for them, but see with the other places I've been there were no nuns around. It was just everybody for their own. (August 29, 2014)

Mrs. Johnson acknowledged multiple complexities in her description of people, hospitality, and community.

As I continued to listen to her, and get to know her, she spoke multiple times of difference, and being different. For example, having been married three times, she spoke of others who had never been married (sisters) or those married only once (residents), "I never get into that business, because I'm so different. I don't even have any sympathy for people like that. I think they should have done something about it to start with" (August 29, 2014). And then again on another occasion, when speaking of two residents down the hallway who had never been married, "They go in with the nuns. They've never been married, and you know, you take somebody like me that's been married and has children and all, I have nothing to talk with them about" (September 12, 2014).

Continuing with difference, when speaking of how much attending daily Mass means to her, she commented,

...the kind of people that are, there's nothing wrong with the ladies that are in here. They're all, but they're just not, I don't know how to say it. I think they're not as well as I am. I think that's the only way I can put it. Because they're not, they don't do any of the things that I would like to do, but the nuns, the nuns are here, they're very clannish. (September 12, 2014)

And, another time, as she was thinking about her previous AL friends, "I think I liked, I guess it was the people that I knew there better. You know, they were more like my life

was” (September 22, 2014). And, when speaking of Protestants that live in the Catholic AL with her,

And see, Protestant people come here just for the atmosphere, but that would not be the place for a Protestant. They could come and be fine, but I’m seeing that I think it would make a difference to them, because they don’t go to Mass, and they don’t have our beliefs, and that’s very important when you’re older. (August 29, 2014)

Finally, the way in which she explained how she managed people different from herself, “The situation to be truthful about, because if I know right off the start that they’re not my type of person, I don’t go too far about encouraging” (August 29, 2014).

**Power and agency in self and others.** Besides communicating the need for assistance with reading and getting connected, Mrs. Johnson talked about how much she appreciated and valued the staff.

In fact, the girls working here are really my friends, to tell you, and particularly the ones in the medicine, because they’re the ones that I’m dealin’ with, you know, and I guess I have no problem with that. I’m not above them. I don’t try to be anything to them, and I try to be just very fair with everybody, and I never was a mean person to start with...All of these girls, the one that’s doing my laundry right now, she’s just a doll. They have to do the laundry and also do the medicine. I think that’s terrible that they have to. Why don’t they hire people to do the laundry and let these girls have a minute? They have to run up and down steps all the time. I don’t like that, but that’s business that’s here...I disapprove of that. I don’t like that, but the girls always say, “Well, that’s a part of our job.”

And I think, “Well, let them hire you as that. Don’t let them hire you as medicine people.” I mean that’s what I think, but that’s see, that’s all money. (September 12, 2014)

As I listened, I noticed the care and concern evident in her voice.

Acceptance of status quo was evident in her narrative, even as she verbally spoke of taking a stand. For example, she expressed concern about medication distribution and I asked how she would handle it. Mrs. Johnson responded,

Well, if I see something that desperately, it would be difficult. It’s difficult. I cannot say that, because it is difficult, because the ones you deal with are the people you deal with every day, and if they’re making’ a mistake, you don’t want to be the one tellin’ them. I’ll tell you that. They’ll have to find out another way. I myself, can’t take it upon myself to do it. I’ll just watch my own. (September 12, 2014)

There was an element of distrust that I sensed as I listened.

She told another story of one of the staff inappropriately referencing her medication, “I was takin’ one, the girl came up to me and said, ‘Get Debbie her happy pill,’ and I didn’t like it” (September 12, 2014). Later Mrs. Johnson told her neurologist about it and the neurologist expressed concern and a desire to address it. Mrs. Johnson told her “Don’t do anything” and then shared with me, “I don’t know, and I never did do anything about it, and I think about it all the time, because it happens all over the place” (September 12, 2014). Early on, in thoughtful reflection, Mrs. Johnson said to me, “I could make the best of anything. I’m not going to let anything whip me, you know” (August 29, 2014).

One final story, where both themes of difference and power come into play, was shared by Mrs. Johnson with me during our first interview. It is a story about being taken advantage of by staff at another AL. Her experience of loss, anger and sadness are significant.

Well, one thing, I fell over there [a previous AL], and my kids knew I was going to have to have help, so they told her [previous AL staff member] that I was going to have to have some help, and she said, “Well don’t worry, I’ll get her help.” And so, they [family] didn’t take much look into that. They should have. They didn’t. But she hired some people off the street I’d say, practically, which was against my better judgment. She hired a person and she said they were called a mother, they called them mother lovers or something. They were all Black ladies, most of them, and they were supposed to be taking care of us. You see, someone like me didn’t need me takin’ care of me starting with. She was there to do something for me, but I didn’t say anything about it. What happened was she was one, they had a whole bunch of them. They kept substitutin’ them all the time, and then my son was just payin’ and he wasn’t payin’ a lot of attention to it, and I wasn’t either, because I’d just go to sleep, and then I’d wake up with them with the television on, and I’d get up and tell her to please cut off the television, and then when I left there the bottom drawer of my chest of drawers I had my jewelry. All my lifetime jewelry, which I can’t begin to tell you how beautiful it was, and it went. Every stick of it. Every piece. (August 29, 2014)

## V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Following from the presentation of the narrative data (stories) from each of the elders and their characters in chapter IV, this chapter takes up the direct and formal application of the theoretical framework, as practiced with the Flannery O'Connor (1983) story previously, in order to interpret the elders' stories in a way that addresses my research objectives. As a reminder, my research objectives are as follows:

1. to evoke voices of elders;
2. to perform feminist research;
3. to craft my own creative research framework; and
4. to extend Catholic social teaching beyond traditional spaces.

By using narrative inquiry to interpret my data, I *unpack* elders' experiences of hospitality in a Catholic AL community and learn more about elders' own power and agency as it emerges in the context of my research site.

### **Interpretations of Results**

In order to begin the meaning making process, I identified themes within the stories the elders and associated characters shared with me over the course of the interviews. Those themes, or codes, helped me to determine what elements of the story I wanted to apply the theoretical framework to, and are noted in the tables below, as well as who and how many elders, inclusive of their characters, noted the themes in their stories (Table 2). Table 2 illustrates how I began "clumping the codes" and arranging them "into categories and subcategories" in order to demonstrate relationships between the data (Glesne, 2011, p. 195).

Table 2

*Used Codes*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Primary Element of Framework</b>	<b># of Elders/Characters with Code Present</b>	<b>Elder LD</b>	<b>Elder MF</b>	<b>Elder AA</b>	<b>Elder DJ</b>
<b>Liberating</b>	Ninth Stage	1	-	-	X	-
<b>Staff as Friends</b>	Catholic Hospitality	2	-	-	X	X
<b>Acceptance of Status Quo</b>	Ninth Stage	2	-	-	X	X
<b>Independence</b>	Ninth Stage	2	X	X	-	-
<b>Loneliness</b>	Ninth Stage	2	-	-	X	X
<b>Acceptance of Me</b>	Catholic Hospitality	3	X	X	X	-
<b>Community Building-Obstacle</b>	Catholic Hospitality	3	-	X	X	X
<b>Power</b>	Catholic Hospitality	3	X	-	X	X
<b>Professional Experience</b>	Ninth stage	3	X	X	-	X
<b>Boundary Setting</b>	Cosmopolitanism	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Advocacy for Others</b>	Catholic Hospitality	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Catholic Community Building</b>	Catholic Hospitality	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Difference</b>	Cosmopolitanism	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Hospitality</b>	Catholic Hospitality	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Relationship Development</b>	Catholic Hospitality	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Advocacy for Self</b>	Ninth Stage	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Agency</b>	Ninth Stage	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Comparison to Previous Life</b>	Ninth Stage	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Complicated Decision to Live in AL</b>	Ninth Stage	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Family</b>	Ninth Stage	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Health-Major Issues</b>	Ninth Stage	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Independence-Loss of</b>	Ninth Stage	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Life Experience</b>	Ninth Stage	4	X	X	X	X
<b>Positive Attitude</b>	Ninth Stage	4	X	X	X	X

I included Table 3 in order to demonstrate codes I chose specifically not to use in the interpretative process because I determined they were not useful within the framework. These codes, while meaningful, were beyond the scope of this study. For instance, technology was something several of the elders used as a tool for communication, and could be its own focus of a research study. As another example, the way in which the elders experienced time in the routine of their day was interesting and came up in multiple ways. However, I determined it was beyond the scope of this study with the focus on hospitality in a Catholic AL. As a final example, all four of the elders shared at least one personal trauma that lead up to the transition to AL. While this was part of their experience, it did not assist with the analysis of the data within the context of the framework.

Table 3

*Unused Codes*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Primary Element of Framework</b>	<b># of Elders with Code Present</b>
<b>In-House Caregiver</b>	Catholic Hospitality	1
<b>Health-Medical Service Delivery Problems</b>	Ninth Stage	2
<b>Health-Memory Problems</b>	Ninth Stage	2
<b>Health-Mobility Problems</b>	Ninth Stage	2
<b>Security</b>	Ninth Stage	2
<b>Significant Transition</b>	Ninth Stage	3
<b>Time</b>	Ninth Stage	3
<b>Care for Parents</b>	Catholic Hospitality	3
<b>Money</b>	Ninth Stage	3
<b>Technology</b>	Ninth stage	3
<b>Critical Judgment</b>	Ninth Stage	4
<b>Personal Development</b>	Ninth Stage	4
<b>Personal Trauma</b>	Ninth Stage	4

## **Hospitality in a Catholic AL-New Understandings**

I approached the elders' stories with the understanding that Catholic hospitality is both an outcome and a virtue of social justice teachings in the Catholic Church (DeBerri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003), as well as the experience of being a stranger, welcomed and cared for, included, and sustained, (Pohl, 1999; Vogt, 2007; Wrobleski, 2012) by others in the AL community. As noted in Table 2, relevant patterns that I identified and coded that spoke to dimensions of Catholic hospitality include:

1. staff as friends
2. acceptance of me (not the researcher, the elder)
3. community building obstacle
4. power
5. advocacy for others
6. Catholic
7. community building
8. hospitality
9. relationship development

**Community building and engagement.** Application of my theoretical framework suggests that I begin by interpreting the stories of community engagement and building because it is my contention that without some amount of community engagement, it is difficult to offer, accept, or welcome acts of hospitality. In other words, in the exploration of community, I am able to better examine possible hospitality as it exists amongst the elder milieu. Wrobleski (2012) explains the notion of a community of hospitality,

Yet I hope that these brief episodes [stories] I have shared have helped to show that in addition to its positive core meaning of offering welcome and love to strangers, hospitality is shaped by the need to discern limits in the tensions between giving and receiving, safety and risk, solitude and community, comfort and need. Although hospitality cannot persist as absolute openness—a surrender of one’s home or self, the erasure of distinctions between outside and inside—neither can a place be hospitable if it does not retain a spirit of openness and gift-life generosity. (p. 13)

I begin with Mr. DeVos. He actively generated ideas for community members to engage, for example, he shared, “There was an article in the paper around here about the bats come out at night...so I mentioned it to Connie [staff],” (August, 15, 2014) or when Sandra, another staff member, told me “He comes up with so many ideas and it’s things that are fun that he wants to do that he thinks others will enjoy” (August 15, 2014). Not only did Mr. DeVos generate ideas, he leveraged resources (evidence of power and agency) to support the events, for example, “Got them to part with some popcorn for the picnic, a friend of mine who’s in the produce business, he furnished the coleslaw. You know, called Bill Bethers and they furnished the pinto beans” (August 15, 2014).

Of the three other elders, only Mr. DeVos’ stories indicated this level of community engagement—event generation and resource development. He did not speak of obstacles to community engagement either, as did the other elders, whose stories differed significantly and focused on their limitations when speaking of community and connection. He did not mention his own health challenges except to explain how he initially came to the AL, nor much of a feeling that he had lost his independence, a noted

challenge in Joan Erikson's (1997) ninth stage of development, except when referencing that his son now drove his car for him when he took him to appointments.

His focus on others through community building, as opposed to himself, was an excellent example of Levinas' notion of hospitality where openness and unconditional acceptance of the other is approached with purpose and intention by the host (Aristarkhova, 2012; Levinas, 1979). His positive attitude about living in the AL and contributing to its operation and success came out multiple times, suggesting his capacity to continue to grow and develop within the ninth stage of development (Erikson, 1997), "We're happy here... Three square a day, and if you need help getting dressed or so forth, assisted living. We try to do most everything yourself. If you get in the habit of having assistance, if you don't use it, you lose it" (August 15, 2014).

On the other hand, Mrs. Fuentes, Ms. Acebo, and Mrs. Johnson, each engaged differently in the community, and were also more verbal about obstacles to their community engagement. Mrs. Fuentes spoke of good friends she had developed since her arrival and that meal times and Mass were particularly important for that community connection, "If there's a seat available someone will come...and then my friends like that...They just become your friend," (August 15, 2014) and "It's convenient that you have the Mass, you know, and I was raised a Catholic, and I am much more involved in Mass here" (September 12, 2014). Obstacles Mrs. Fuentes notes included her first language not being English, therefore communication was challenging, as well as her medical conditions, and loneliness due to the loss of her husband.

Ms. Acebo reported she did little with other residents due to health problems, "I don't do the activities. I did before my neck got so bad. But, it's hard for me to sit"

(August 29, 2014). Rather, her strong relationships with individual staff members seemed to be what sustained her. While Mrs. Johnson did share her connection with staff members, they were much less evident or mutual than Ms. Acebo, and she expressed ongoing frustration with her own community engagement with other residents, “They will go to lunch, and they’ve got their own little clicks and then nobody goes around here too much,” (August 29, 2014) as well as, “There’s not much to do around here. That’s my problem...” (Johnson, September 12, 2014) and, “I’m not as good a mixer as I should be” (August 29, 2014). Mrs. Johnson pointed to having less in common with other residents, in fact feeling very different from fellow residents, as well as her failing eye sight and apartment location as obstacles to her community engagement.

What became evident to me was that to some degree, as the level of community engagement shifted, so did the expressions of Catholic hospitality. I am not suggesting there is more or less, rather it appears differently in the community and locating it becomes more likely when the framework is applied, because the framework stretches hospitality so that it includes limitations and tensions, as well as who does the expressing (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Levinas, 1979; Nouwen, 1974; Pohl, 1999; Wroblewski, 2012).

For example, when I asked Mr. DeVos about how he was welcomed into the AL, he struggled at first, with little to say, “Well, I was welcomed by the staff.” And then, “When you move in here, you just kind of feel your way around... I guess I was orientated on what’s available, what to ask for if you need help... I’m not bashful to ask questions” (August 29, 2014). But when I asked him how he welcomed others, that’s when he had much more to say, as demonstrated in Chapter IV. At first glance, I could

claim not much hospitality was initially experienced, if I assumed only staff executed hospitality. However, in consideration of his stories about how he expressed Catholic hospitality toward others, experienced as an expression of solidarity and compassion (Vogt, 2007), there is a much greater understanding of hospitality being present.

Considering Mrs. Johnson's detailed experiences of community engagement in Chapter IV, I did not have much hope there was hospitality she could identify as generating or receiving. Her general negativity caused me concern about disrupting stories of isolation and aging in an AL because that was her story. However, the notion of hospitality as a "universal concept" as explained by both Levinas and Derrida (Aristarkhova, 2012; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Levinas, 1979), as well as Quinn (2010), compelled me to keep looking and to see deeper into what she was speaking. What complicated matters is the way in which her stories came across—they go in multiple directions at the same time. For instance, when talking of community, she said, "Well, you know, it's a different life. It's very difficult I think when people come in, just for the first time to live in one of these places," but then, "But my living here is good, but I think it is very easy for me, probably because I have had so much experience." And then, "...because I'm lonely here too. That's one of the things I find," (August 29, 2014) but, "...I don't want to move again...So I'm just, I'll just stay put" (September 12, 2014). But then, that's what Lather (2001) speaks of about feminist research, "The move is, rather, to endorse complexity, partial truths, and multiple subjectivities" (p. 206).

Following that advice and looking more deeply, I do find acts of hospitality expressed and received by Mrs. Johnson, as evidenced by both staff, a fellow resident, and in fact herself. Matt, a staff member, when describing a coffee program designed to

welcome and introduce new residents to existing ones, shared, “She did come down to that. She really enjoyed herself. She got to meet a lot of her neighbors” (September 22, 2014). A fellow resident and character in Mrs. Johnson’s stories, Sr. MacAuley, told me about how Mrs. Johnson received an act of hospitality offered by her, “...she was grateful. She showed gratitude and she was very polite to me and invited me to sit down. So she made me feel at home and welcomed” (October 2, 2014). And finally, and most importantly, Mrs. Johnson herself taught me how she negotiates community interaction, “Avoid being prejudice, particularly in religion or with accents you know? Don’t pass your opinion, and the sooner you make friends the better for you...” (August 29, 2014).

These examples illustrate the complicated encounters hosts and guests experience in order to be open, or welcome hospitality, while also offering to the other. It also demonstrates how the role of guest and host can be interchangeable, and not without challenge (Aristarkhova, 2012; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Levinas, 1979; Wroblewski, 2012). What seems most notable is the position, or stance, of welcoming power and agency through acts of hospitality that can, in fact, invite evidence of such by the elders. Even if not exercised at first, the welcoming of power and agency can bring it to the surface. This notion is further explained in the next section.

**Elder relationships with staff.** Mr. DeVos’ way in which he engaged with staff suggested an assumption of power and agency on his part, as well as equality, with staff, reminding me of the Catholic Worker Movement and houses of hospitality, where workers and guests live and work together to maintain the community, with little distinction between the two in regards to power and background (Deines, 2008; Wroblewski, 2012). As examples, Mr. DeVos said, “So, like I say, I’m involved. Without

a salary” (August 15, 2014). Connie, a staff member, also recalled telling Mr. DeVos, “You can know as many people as you like. Just let me know what to do. Show me the way over here,” (September 22, 2014) indicating to me a willingness to work with, as opposed to for, or to, residents in general. Mr. DeVos’ relationships with staff allow him to express Catholic hospitality in the AL, as affirmed by Sandra, a staff member, “Mr. DeVos advocates for everyone, and he’s always looking out for everyone, and if he, it’s their home upstairs. I mean we don’t call them patients or residents. That’s their home. Each room is their home.” (August 15, 2014)

Ms. Acebo doesn’t relate as much to the residents in the AL (nor could she give a strong example of a resident offering hospitality), citing age difference and health issues, but her primary relationships are with the staff and her brother who lives nearby. She said multiple times how much she liked living in the AL and that it was less formal than a facility she had lived in prior, as well as how “there’s a spirit here that you can feel” (referencing the Catholic statues and chapels on site) and “...I really love the staff. The staff’s really good to me...all so open to me, and concerned about me, you know, and that meant a lot to me...” (August 29, 2014). Ms. Acebo’s comments about staff and their care for her connects directly to Nel Noddings (2007) *ethic of care* and general approach to relationships with others. The capacity to sustain relationships with this level of care can foster, even evoke, a mutuality of love and respect, which, at its core, comes from an authentic sense of responsibility to one another.

Vogt (2007) writes about Catholic hospitality being an expression of solidarity and compassion, as well as Catholic social teaching enacted. He also explains that the manifestation of all three virtues demands “habits of thinking, feeling and acting” (Vogt,

20017, p. 294). The mutual encounters staff and Ms. Acebo had over time are examples of such habits and specifically the virtue of Catholic hospitality. For example, Kay, a staff member shared with me, “Then it’s up to us to go up there and visit with her, find out her needs, anything, and she’s also go our phone numbers. Do you know that she’s the only one that’s got my personal cell phone number?” Kay also shared how she and other staff help Ms. Acebo to take care of her cat, Oliver, when she is home and when she is away due to medical procedures. What was remarkable was Kay’s description of the relationship between her, Ms. Acebo, and another staff member, “We’ve got the trio pact, the three of us. We stick together. Whatever we need we help each other out. We call it the sisterhood” (September 22, 2014).

A noticeable outlier in the data was the reported feeling of freedom, or liberation, as a result of living in the AL. As such, Ms. Acebo was the only elder who expressed such a feeling. “So many individuals here are really still hanging on to their past...I’ve let go of all that. I’ve let go of the house, the car, you know, all those things just brought worry to me...Yeah, a real freedom, you know...” (August 29, 2014). Ms. Acebo was also the only elder who seemed to have true friendships that transformed professional relationships with staff. Her relationships with staff, while a result of needing assistance, appeared mutual, and beyond simply a relationship of service where such a mindset might limit the feeling of freedom.

The stories of interactions and relationships with staff shared by Mr. DeVos and Ms. Acebo exemplify the complex, interchangeable roles of host and guest in AL, the encounters with strangers, and the importance of staff and elder, both welcoming power and agency, as demonstrated through hospitality, from the other. This level of

engagement, relationship, and respect is significant and takes time and energy on the part of the elder and staff member. Welcoming power and agency through the encounter of one another's hospitality is much different than staff empowering elders, and is a much more respectful form of engagement amongst elders in community. The act of welcoming power and agency, an act of hospitality, is a much more caring, just way of living and being in community and confronts the marginalization and deficit forms of thinking surrounding AL communities.

While Mrs. Fuentes spoke mostly of relationships with residents, Mrs. Johnson shared more about her connections to staff, and they were both fulfilling and troubling, depending upon the story, again referencing the tensions ever present with acts of hospitality (Aristarkhova, 2012; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Kessel, 2008; Wroblewski, 2012). Mrs. Johnson shared with me how much she valued the staff relationships she encountered, "In fact, the girls working here are really my friends, to tell you, and particularly the ones in the medicine, because they're the ones that I'm dealin' with, you know..." However, she also shared her struggle with giving feedback and expressing concerns to staff,

...because it is difficult, because the ones you deal with are the people you deal with every day, and if they're making' a mistake, you don't want to be the one tellin' them. I'll tell you that. They'll have to find out another way. I myself, can't take it upon myself to do it. I'll just watch my own. (September 12, 2014)

The nature of the tensions inherent in her relationships with staff, particularly as it relates to power and agency inhibited by trust, made me think more deeply about Pohl's (1999) work discussing how acts of hospitality used to be performed in the home and church, but

are now performed by differing institutions claiming expertise. Who can an elder expect to turn to if she cannot trust those in positions of service with whom she lives and works, particularly if this person is in an assumed position of power with professional expertise?

Another story exemplifying the ethical need to promote justice and mercy, as in the houses of hospitality in the Catholic Worker Movement (Deines, 2008; Wroblewski, 2012), as well as a standard of care, or Nel Nodding's (2007) version of an *ethic of care*, is Mrs. Johnson's experience of having her jewelry stolen while she lived in a previous AL. Her family hired staff to stay with her in the AL who later stole from her, all her jewelry, including family heirlooms passed down by her parents. Her anger, frustration, loss and feeling of powerlessness were in her voice when she shared,

Oh, I think it makes you just sick, and I find that I have a lot of faith in God, and I just prayed that I would get over this, and all I could do, because I know that diamonds are diamonds or jewelry is jewelry That's not the most important thing in your life. So I made, I tried to look at it like that, but it's hard. It's not easy. And, then of course I think the things that I miss most of all are the things that Grandpa brought me from Germany..." (September 12, 2014)

### **Cosmopolitanism as a Dimension of Hospitality in a Catholic AL-New**

#### **Understandings**

As a reminder, I am drawing on specific strands of cosmopolitanism as it connects to the framework and interpretation of stories in the AL community, including expressions of hospitality in community. That said, cosmopolitanism speaks to unconditional hospitality "which should offer the right of refuge to all immigrants and newcomers. But on the other hand, hospitality has to be conditional: there has to be

some limitation on rights of residence” (Derrida, 2001, p. x). Additionally, Quinn (2010) speaks to a need for connectedness even as strangers when writing of cosmopolitanism and Appiah (2006) expands on difference when writing about cosmopolitanism, “People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to learn from our differences...-universal concern and respect for legitimate difference—clash” (p. xv).

**Boundary setting in relationships.** All four elders or their characters, spoke of the need to set boundaries, or limits, while in relationships with fellow residents and staff, as noted in Derrida’s (2001) discussion of cosmopolitanism and hospitality. When I asked Mr. DeVos about approaching fellow residents directly, he advised, “No. You just want to stay to yourself...I don’t think it is a rule. Just respect each other’s privacy or whatever” (August 29, 2014). He shared two stories about helping fellow residents, one who came to his door and asked for assistance with a TV remote, and another resident who had her door open so he invited her to breakfast, which was evidence of an informal rule or way of being in the AL—that when you need something or your door is open, you ask or invite, but you don’t just go door to door, unexpected or unannounced with no purpose in mind. Mr. DeVos also noted in a different interview that he is not a “nosey busybody, so I kind of stay out of their problems,” but he shared evidence of negotiating the boundary by still exhibiting hospitality through a get well card or similar gesture, “she got a get well card and everybody signed it” (September 12, 2014).

Boundary setting was also raised during my interview with one of Mrs. Fuentes’ characters, a resident, Sally Smith. She talked about the desire to influence, even challenge, Mrs. Fuentes’ nephew’s decision about moving Mrs. Fuentes to the AL from independent living, “It’s kind of difficult. I didn’t want to tell him what to do, but I did

want to tell him,” and she did. She shared the same challenge under a different circumstance with Mrs. Fuentes’ nephew,

We worry about her, and she is really is, she’s failing some...She needs to go to the doctor. We need to take her to the doctor, because she’s got shoulder pain and arm and hands and her one thumb is just totally swollen and really out of joint. Like for me, I thought, “Gosh.” So I hope he’ll (nephew) get on the ball and do something. (August 29, 2014)

Similarly, but from a staff perspective, Jane, a staff member close to Ms. Acebo remarked to me in an interview,

Sometimes you don’t want to delve too much into a person’s life, because it opens up old scars, and you kind of have to go in easy and let them open up to you. You don’t want to go dig in too much, and it’s like, oh my God. And then they get angry at you. So you give them the opportunities to open up to you. (October 2, 2014)

Still speaking about boundary setting in relationship to decision making for Ms. Acebo, Jane advised,

Well, we have to kind of, you know, remember that we’re staff workers. We’re not family so we can’t really get involved in a lot of situations. We can’t make decisions for them. So there’s a fine line. You know, you can be there, kind of their person to talk to or if they need, you know, to relieve some anxiety that they’re having a lot of times they can relieve that anxiety. We have to just be careful about that. (October 2, 2014)

Sr. MacAuley, a fellow resident, sister of the founding order, and character in Mrs. Johnson's stories, spoke of how she interacted and set boundaries with residents in general, and specifically, Mrs. Johnson, "No, no. I don't go around to the rooms. I don't visit unless I am invited..." (October 2, 2014). What's particularly interesting about Mrs. Johnson's experience in AL is that she exhibited frequent boundary setting as a response to believing she was different from those around her, whether in regard to the sisters, staff, or residents. As an example, when talking about two residents on her hallway, as well as the sisters, she shared, "They've never been married, and you know, you take somebody like me that's been married [three times] and has children and all, I have nothing to talk with them about," and, as another example, "The situation to be truthful about, because if I know right off the start that they're not my type of person, I don't go too far about encouraging" (August 29, 2014).

**Experiencing difference in a Catholic AL.** There is much coming and going in AL, not only day-to-day business and activity, but also new residents being introduced into the community, others leaving for one reason or another, as well as staff, onboarding and also exiting and volunteers and visitors coming in and going out. This *migration* speaks to some of what Quinn (2010) and Derrida (2001) noted regarding cosmopolitanism and the nature of universal hospitality, including tensions and limitations, as well as the need to be connected to one another. I noticed this as I understood more about each elder's movement into the current Catholic AL, two came from their homes (DeVos and Fuentes), while the other two came from other ALs (Acebo and Johnson). Even more so, three of the elders had moved around in the AL, prior to

their current settlement in their apartments, either from skilled nursing on another floor, independent living in another building, or another apartment in AL.

Movement in and out of the community impacts the nature of hospitality, and quite frankly, the need for it, in order to welcome, include and be open to strangers (Quinn, 2010). For each elder, there was some incident or circumstance that took place prior to the need to move to the AL too, creating a special set of issues along with the migration. And, as Mrs. Johnson told me, when I asked her how she and others connect in the community, build community together, she explained “[It is] very difficult. Because we’re all so different, and this is one of the most serious things that I have” (August 29, 2014). The stories Mrs. Johnson shared, as indicated in Chapter IV, suggest she feels different and separate from the sisters because they are educated and unmarried; from the residents because some are unmarried or were only married to one other person; from those who are Protestant when she is Catholic; from others who are located too far from her apartment to feel connected; and from staff because she cannot trust them or they have a different skin color or are less than professional in comparison to her own professional career life.

In regards to difference in the AL, when talking with Mr. DeVos, he noted there were fewer men than women living in AL when I inquired about it, “Not too many. Well up here there’s only three...” (August 15, 2014). Sandra, a staff member, spoke of Mr. DeVos’ ability to bring together his professional and cultural past (restaurant business and Belgian cultural background) with the AL community, “It really is cool how he, you know, his life before being here, he can still mesh it with this” (August 15, 2014). Appiah (2006) noted the importance of conversation and values from a cosmopolitan’s

perspective, a way in which to connect and create a “social fabric” that supports relationships (p. 29) when building community where difference and pluralism exist. During Mrs. DeVos’ interview, she highlighted a skillset that assists Mr. DeVos when he interacts with people different from himself, “Well, if you know the people real well, you know how to handle the situation, because you know their backgrounds, and you know what they are willing to do, and what they are limited to do” (August 15, 2014). Her reference to backgrounds and limitations speaks to what Appiah (2006) wrote about in terms of getting to know people beyond “a basic understanding” (p. 144) and the necessity in doing such in order to express and receive acts of hospitality.

While Ms. Acebo indicated living in AL was no different than living in an apartment complex, except for “the wheel chairs and the scooters,” (August 29, 2014) she did acknowledge that she was significantly younger than most of the residents, “...so many of them are in their 80s and 90s, and I’m 66” and, “some of the activities, it’s like it’s all for their age group...” (August 29, 2014). She explained that was likely why she connected better with the staff, who were more similar to her in age and experience and actively interested in her thoughts and interests.

Mrs. Fuentes underscored the difference in language and culture as her primary experience of difference in the AL community. She also shared what it was like to leave Cuba and come to the US when Fidel Castro took over, including the transition to Miami and on to New York, applying for jobs and helping her mother to relocate to the US and live with her and her husband. When describing trying to find a job with the language barrier, she said,

And then, they told me...that my English was poor to talk, you know, except I was specialized, you know...Then they said, “Well, we can get you something else.” And they called me in a very nice place, you know, a job with figures.

(August 15, 2014)

The language barrier continued to challenge her in the AL, but she and her fellow residents and staff did not let it completely inhibit her from connecting to members of the community,

...it was very difficult to be adjusted because of the language, but the people, everyone was very nice to me. Starting, despite our English, English, you know, to talk to them...We are going to be here your family. So, I have been around almost the whole time with the same group of people. (August 15, 2014)

The way in which other members of the community welcomed and received her, in an ongoing way, is reflective of Quinn’s (2010) construction of universal hospitality where there is a welcoming space for all, and addresses “the perpetual need for personal asylum and amnesty” (p. 82). Mrs. Fuentes’ situation is poignant because she truly did seek refuge in the US, although in the 60s, long before an AL was something she had considered more of what Derrida (2001) suggested, “How can the hosts and guests of cities of refuge be helped to recreate, through work and creative activity, a living and durable network in new places and occasionally in a new language?” (p. 12). I assert that this negotiation of hospitality is something Mrs. Fuentes learned to do as a way to manage the language difference, and she continues to do so in the AL, with some amount of receptivity in her AL community.

## Guiding Insights

While cautious about proposing generalizations because this qualitative study is focused on intimate understandings and representations of a small group of elders in a particular place and moment in time, it is important to determine what the individual stories of the elders could mean for a broader context. In other words, what can the elders teach us more generally about living in AL—what might those insights be? Merriam (2009) says about qualitative research, “In qualitative research, a single case or small, nonrandom, purposeful sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many” (p. 224). She also writes that qualitative research can be considered as

modest extrapolations or working hypotheses...Every study, every case, every situation is theoretically an example of something else. The general lies in the particular; that is, what we learn in a particular situation we can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered. (Merriam, 2009, p. 225)

Thus, I go back to my coding as ways in which to speak to “all” of the elders I interviewed (codes that I have not already addressed), and then move to greater insights that speak to the relevance of this study. I did not request staff recommend only Catholic elders to serve as participants, but all four elders were Catholic and shared with me the importance of attending Mass as it related to living in the AL community, or at least watching it *live* on an in-house television station, such as Ms. Acebo’s case. Additionally, three of the four elders spoke of their past professional lives as important experiences that helped them manage life in AL, or at least gave them perspective, and

the one who did not, spoke instead of mental health disabilities and how she took care of her aging parents as life experience. And, to state the obvious, all of them had notable health challenges, and had at least one family member who was connected to each of them and in a position to advocate and make decisions on their behalf.

### **Maintaining a Sense of Purpose is Important**

Beyond the notion of commonalities amongst the four elders, I offer several insights. Considering the amount of independence, agency and positive enthusiasm demonstrated by Mr. DeVos who lived in AL B, maintaining a sense of purpose and capacity to contribute is important to the overall experience of hospitality, power and agency of elders (Eckert et al., 2009; Erikson, 1997; Erikson et al., 1986; Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012). His belief that if “you don’t use it, you lose it” kept him focused on contributing and pushing himself and he became an integral part of community operations. I learned from my interactions with him, as well as the other three elders, that elders living in AL need to be engaged in meaningful, life-giving ways, as much as possible, in the immediate AL community and beyond those boundaries too if they can (Brown & Lewis, 2003; Davidson, 2011; Eckert et al., 2009; Erikson, 1997; Erikson et al., 1986; Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012). Creating opportunities to apply life skills learned from previous employment and life experience becomes an asset to the AL staff, the community, and the elder too.

### **Encountering Hospitality Impacts Quality of Life**

As the dystonic characteristics in the life stages noted by Erikson (1997) become more evident in everyday life, the ways in which elders can offer and accept hospitality change, but still remain extremely important to their greater quality of life experience in

the AL change (Brown & Lowis, 2003; Davidson, 2011; Eckert et al., 2009; Erikson, 1997; Erikson et al., 1986). For example, Mrs. Fuentes struggled with the pain she was experiencing in her arm and was less able to independently go through her morning routine of showering, getting dressed, eating and keeping a timely schedule. She was bothered by her failing health and how it was impacting her. The challenges prohibited her from serving as an ambassador for new residents, which she deeply regretted, but she still found ways to be gracious, host guests, and make them feel welcomed and included (meal times, chocolates in her apartment, and taking friends to the nurse on her floor). Her routine, relationships, participation in Mass, and sense of connectedness to others nourished her spirit, even though she admittedly, was lonely without her husband and previous friends and family (Eckert et al., 2009; Erikson et al., 1986; Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012).

### **Staff are Both Host and Guest**

The ethic of care, openness and generosity of staff was remarkable and impacted the way in which the elders experienced and shared hospitality, inviting power and agency during a time and place in their lives when elders may not experience it (Eckert et al., 2009; Erikson, 1997; Noddings, 2007; Pohl, 1999; Wroblewski, 2012). When I spoke to staff during my interviews, as well as preparing in advance for the site visits, they were extremely helpful, communicative, service-oriented and generous of their time and thoughts. Many of them had worked in the AL for multiple years, spoke positively and knowledgeably of the Catholic mission and community values of the greater organization, and their general commitment to and respect for the elders who lived there.

Even if staff did not know who I was, I was welcomed as a guest (Aristarkhova, 2012; Levinas, 1979; Minister, 2007) assisted as needed, and warmly received. When Ms. Acebo could not connect with fellow residents, her stories of engagement with staff, as well as the staff members' stories of engaging with her, spoke to a human level of mutual connectedness—not just a service-oriented, professional presence (Eckert et al., 2009; Erickson et al., 1986; Nouwen, 1974; Noddings, 2007; Quinn, 2010). The staff saw a need and responded, creating a level of vulnerability and acceptance that is noteworthy.

The valuable interchange of host and guest asks something significant of staff, especially when this level of interaction and engagement takes more time, energy and commitment than their paycheck or position likely reflects (Aristarkhova, 2012; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000; Kessel, 2008; Nouwen, 1974; Wroblewski, 2012). The importance of staff exhibiting presence, mutual respect and understanding, relationship building, trustworthiness, and a holistic ethic of care is critical to sustaining hospitality in the AL as people move in and out, as well as around the greater community (Appiah, 2006; Eckert et al., 2009; Erikson, 1997; Erikson et al., 1986; Noddings, 2007; Quinn, 2010; Wroblewski, 2012). The example of Mrs. Johnson even further underscores this need, as when she shared about losing trust in staff, who in some cases were her friends.

### **Elders are Transformative Educators**

My final insight is that the more we can place elders in the role of educator (Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012), in a “grand-generative” role (Erickson, 1997, p. 63), the more we can learn about aging, living in right relationship with each other in community, and expressing hospitality, solidarity and compassion toward one another, no matter how

different or alike we are. As a researcher, I experienced AL as a living and learning space (Merriam et al., 2007), not a dying space. My teachers were the elders in the community and my entire understanding of AL transformed because the elders taught me to see AL differently (Erikson, 1997; Merriam et al., 2007; Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012). By listening to their stories of hospitality, power and agency, I learned from them about what to expect, what was possible, what I need to prepare for, as I age and anticipate what is to come. Elders in the role of educator allow for generativity to be fulfilled (Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012; Erikson, 1997; Erikson et al., 1986). Erikson (1963) defined generativity as a desire to provide guidance to the next generation, and also said,

And indeed, old people can and need to maintain a grand-generative function.

For there can be little doubt that today the discontinuity of family life as a result of dis-location contributes greatly to the lack in old age of that minimum of vital involvement that is necessary for staying really alive. (Erikson, 1997, p. 63)

Schoklitsch and Baumann (2012) sum it up nicely by explaining that generativity is “an important contributor to a successful aging process” (p. 262) and therefore the more opportunities we ensure elders are positioned to be generative, the better for all of us.

### **Implications at the Systems Level-Organizational Strategies**

While the data gathered through the narrative inquiry methodology are specific and particular to the participant elders, it is critical that we connect the analysis to a broader context. In other words, how can what I learned be applied to other communities, more directly, assisted living facilities, where AL communities exist? I want to make the connection to the organizational aspect of an assisted living facility—

the existing infrastructure and operations of the organization that are essentially a series of systems that interconnect to provide services and an experience. In order for this research to be useful and impactful on a broader scale with the potential to positively impact a greater number of individuals, a systems level approach may be considered.

This research study offers implications for formal and informal caregivers, as well as for all of us moving toward the ninth stage of development (Erikson, 1997), and future developers of elder community living. About the ninth stage of development, Joan Erikson (1997) says,

Should you be living and coping with all these hurdles and losses at ninety or more, you have one firm foothold to depend on. From the beginning we are blessed with basic trust. Without it life is impossible, and with it we have endured. As an enduring strength it has accompanied and bolstered us with hope. Whatever the specific sources of our basic trust may be or have been, and no matter how severely hope has been challenged, it has never abandoned us completely. Life without it is simply unthinkable. If you are still filled with the intensity of being and hope for what may be further grace and enlightenment, then you have reason for living. I am persuaded that if elders can come to terms with the dystonic elements in their life experiences in the ninth stage, they may successfully make headway on the path leading to gero-transcendence. (pp. 113-114)

### **Engage with Elders as Powerful and Life-Filled**

Thus, my research reinforces how caregivers, whether they are informal friends and family, or staff and developers of elder communities, and even elders themselves,

should be compelled to envision elders as powerful and life-filled, as the stories (data) suggest, no matter the evidence of dystonic characteristics (Erikson, 1997). Caregivers can appreciate the encounter with the dystonic elements of the ninth stage of development and consider how to help elders foster generativity and transcendence, side by side.

The stories of hospitality experienced by elders in AL help to bring to the surface the possibilities of generativity and “transcendence,” a term Joan Erikson (1997) explains as a state that some aged people obtain when facing the “deterioration of their bodies and faculties” (p. 123) and with it, a sense of peace and life satisfaction. This is a different stance to maintain as a care giver and demands rejection of a deficit lens, medical model, seeing elders in AL as patients, near death (Eckert et al., 2009; Erickson et al, 1986). In order for those in formal and informal caregiver roles to operationalize such standards of behavior, consistent and high quality training and orientations (for staff, families and elders themselves) must communicate and generate values, expectations and incentives that reinforce such an approach to service, standard of care, and community building. Additionally, higher education programs and professional associations can teach professional caregivers how to create, or build, a culture within an assisted living organization that exists to foster progressive elder communities where generativity and transcendence is sustained.

Besides education, professional development, and hiring and training practices, specific programs and services offered must create spaces where elders are in the position to be generative and are authentically experienced as educating others, having the opportunity to continue to engage with immediate and greater communities. I also

believe that the promotional narratives that reach out into broader communities and symbolize the AL must reflect the generative, fulfilling community the caregivers and elders are working so hard to sustain.

### **Elder Stories are Worth Telling**

Another implication of this research is that elder stories must be told because they are important to our greater communities and we have much to learn from them. Elders as teachers, story tellers, serve both the elder and the learner. Appiah (2006) writes about the importance of story-telling in relationship to cosmopolitanism, “We wouldn’t recognize a community as human if it had no stories, if its people had no narrative imagination” (p. 29). In order to broaden the narrative about aging, to disrupt the deficit oriented stories in AL, there must be a community of elders with voice, where acts of hospitality, including connectedness, learning and generativity are shared with others, and a sense of purpose is owned by those elders, where power and agency are present and death can be gracefully considered.

While there are some attempts at bringing children and adult volunteers into AL communities in an effort to engage in community service, this is often manifested in a way that positions elders as the receivers of good intentions, while reinforcing the message they *need* others’ assistance. What if AL communities hosted events for the external community and elders designed the programming so that elders are sharing stories of life experience and knowledge with others? The AL community could transform into a *life classroom* for children, teenagers, young adults, and the middle aged, depending upon the topic of the community education program. Another venue for elder stories is through the entire marketing and promotion dimension of the AL experience, as

well as placing elders in positions to share stories with new staff and new residents during their orientations to space and roles.

After spending time with the elders and listening to the stories of hospitality, I believe the easier it is for elders to naturally engage in storytelling, the better, so their voices are organically evoked in circumstances where they are comfortable, included, and respected. Symbolic and structural initiatives can also be made on the part of leadership in an effort to ensure elders are in positions of authority and expertise by sharing stories as part of an elder advisory board to leadership, capturing elder stories in writing and video as part of community meaning making, and engaging elders in ways that allow them to guide programmatic decisions that are often made by leadership who are furthest away from the living experience. It is important to note not all elders will feel comfortable or have the capacity to engage at all of these suggested levels. However, with enough different, convenient, options to connect with storytelling opportunities, it is my belief these efforts can impact the greater elder residential experience in a way that cultivates a change in the larger, more negative, perspective of this time of life and type of facility.

### **Catholic Mission is Transferrable to Non-Catholic Organizations**

Finally, the appreciation and expression of the Catholic mission of the AL through acts of Catholic hospitality, as naturally constructed within Catholic contexts, can be moved beyond those traditional Catholic spaces. Reconstructing elements of Catholic Social Thought in elder communities, by sharing and receiving acts of hospitality, as an expression of solidarity and compassion (Vogt, 2007) is a way in which

to position elders and caregivers to foster generativity and transcendence in one another through relationships, community building and appreciation of difference.

Fostering AL communities where such meaningful interactions take place suggests intentional efforts with specific purpose, in other words, a focused approach as opposed to hoping staff and elders will catch on to a particular way of living and being in community. The core values espoused and enacted by the staff and elders whom I encountered reflect a greater understanding and embodiment of what the community is truly about. Considering the range of education, training, experience, position description, salary and supervision of staff as formal caregivers working in ALs across the country, an intentional and targeted approach to foster rich relationships, grounded in core values of the mission (whether Catholic or otherwise), is critical to the experience of elders.

Staff are not robots to be programmed, but rather people, welcomed into the AL community, and provided resources, to help them model the way for others and engage in a manner far beyond medical, custodial, and supervisory. My experience as an administrator in a Catholic university, or in a broader context, organization, is that we move beyond education as a one way experience, and that it is not just intellectual and mind specific, but rather, about educating hearts and minds, so that one is not sacrificed for the other, and it is a mutual and transformative set of encounters for all in the educational community. I liken this same philosophy to the Catholic AL and believe there is much to be learned about how those thoughts and behaviors are cultivated and transferred beyond traditional Catholic spaces.

While there are institutional limits for ALs, that does not mean the organization's mission must be compromised, but rather prioritized as most important, to the overall operation in service of elders. This research is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather, compelling leadership and management, as well as staff at all levels, to engage in strategies and inculcate core values so that they are not just espoused, but personified. Such strategies may include hiring staff for mission, including recruiting, interviewing and hiring based on core values of the mission as it relates to elders' quality of life. How is staff performance evaluated, as well as, compensation determined? What metrics within these evaluation tools reflect the core values in support of elder generativity and hospitality? How are staff rewarded, celebrated and trained in effective, regular ways that reinforce the mission, their own learning and transformation of self, and in relationship to the elders and greater AL communities for which they are responsible? What experiences are in place through orientation and staff development that translate the mission according to the work each person must complete daily? In my experience, most people struggle with translating the abstract to the concrete—in other words, we must help staff understand how the mission directly informs their work and impact in the elder community, especially in the face of prior work in other similar organizations.

My observations of the staff in the Catholic AL consistently revealed hard working, underpaid, stretched to the maximum, employees who repeatedly shared the need to *go the extra mile* with the greater good in mind. They also helped one another out and stepped up *their game* when someone was out sick or needed to take care of a family matter. They were also forgiving of one another's mistakes and shortcomings while managing the pressures of multiple tasks and needs all at once. Again, this does

not happen naturally, but rather can be cultivated in a way that is life giving and nourishing, and takes time and thoughtful work and reflection to generate such a culture. The inclusion of employees at all levels of the organization, as well as informal care givers and elders, while considering organization goals, resource allocation, and operational decision making, helps foster a community and culture of care givers and elders open to the possibility of a transformative and generative experience in the last stages of human development.

The nature of this particular Catholic AL where the founding order of sisters lives amongst residents as residents is noteworthy. I noticed a level of modeling that may take organizational strategies to the next level. Consider the investment these sisters make in order to share their community with fellow elders, no matter their religion or belief system. Complete immersion in the space in which you are forming allows a level of engagement, sensitivity to experience, and appreciation for both the light and dark sides of growing old together. I witnessed staff, who left at the end of the day, or beginning of the day, or the middle of the day, to return to their homes, engaging at the same level as the sisters—as though this was their home and the elders were their community.

While community strategic planning and other strategies mentioned above can help anchor what is most desired for our elders in AL space, there is something transformative that happens when everyone in the community, formal and informal care givers, elders, leaders, managers, all own the space and the larger mission, together. It is a powerful place to work, live and continue to grow because the members of the community begin to personify the mission and operate not just as individuals but as a collective.

## **Limitations**

My sample of participants was limited. There was a lack of diversity amongst the four elders, as only one male was recommended to be a participant and all were White but one. Additionally, the one male was in AL B, not AL A, as the other three elders were, so there was some difference in the nature of the communities. Also, one of the three elders had only been in the AL for approximately one year, while the others had been there for two years or more, giving her less time to engage with the community as a whole.

The other limitation related to the participants themselves is that they were selected by staff with community engagement, hospitality, and agency in mind. Thus, the staff perspective influenced the nature of the range of story I was collecting, and consequently, I may have collected only one type of experience.

Another limitation was that two of the four elders had significant medical circumstances which shortened the number of interviews I had with them. I met with Mr. DeVos and Mrs. Johnson on three separate occasions, while I only met with Ms. Acebo and Mrs. Fuentes twice. That decreased my time to observe and engage with them, really get to know them and develop a stronger relationship. My stories may have been more details, further developed, had I had more time with them.

My own previous experiences with my father in AL, as well as working within and for a Catholic higher education institution, surely bias me in some capacity. No matter how open and objective I try to be, my thinking and understanding are influenced by all of my life experiences as I apply the theoretical framework to assist me with interpretation of the stories.

## Personal Reflections

In the face of my own fear of suffering and death, whether for a loved one like my father, or myself, as the aging process continues, it is very difficult to see possibilities other than those which I fear...because I knew of nothing else. Now, after engaging in this research, I know what I did not know before—there is the possibility, even likelihood—for growth and development, and a quality of life, for elders in AL. I believe what we say out loud, and the stories we put in writing, our stories, create reality. The power of story is strong. If the stories we tell about AL are about isolation, living on the margins, being silenced, or being institutionalized to die, then that is what we will co-create and re-create. Josselson (2007), when speaking of narrative inquiry and ethics, says,

...the researcher is now left to grapple with the problems ensuing from analyzing a narrative that has changed ownership. What was once the participant's story now becomes a co-constructed text, the analysis of which falls within the framework of the interpretive authority of the researcher... The written word, at least in Western society, has a power far beyond that of words that are spoken. Thus, access to print and the authority to indelibly inscribe a point of view in regard to participants gives the narrative researcher special (even if unwanted) powers that must be acknowledged and ethically managed in a published report. (p. 548)

The opportunity to learn of and tell new stories that transform my own understanding, and potentially those of others, is overwhelming, but also necessary. I appreciate the

grave responsibility I have as a researcher to ensure the stories are ethically re-produced and useful to others.

Considering the habits of hospitality of thinking, feeling and acting (Vogt, 2007)—there is a pathway into and through AL communities that is life giving for elders and caregivers. I heard about how giving and receiving hospitality influenced elders' experiences by listening to their stories. I wonder how to develop the capacity for gerotranscendence (Erikson, 1997)—what can elders teach me, us, about developing and sustaining such a *muscle* and how does that connect to the greater effort of generativity? There is much left to study and learn about aging in a manner that is spiritually healthy and life giving, especially where the intersection of Catholic social thought, spiritual and identity development, and aging come together.

There were seven significant thoughts I developed as I went about my research, thinking that if more research could be done, these seven items would be worth exploring. They include:

1. How elders see themselves fitting in may be a personal interpretation of what they see around them.
2. It takes significant emotional intelligence and life skills to balance boundary setting and relationship building in a setting where people are frequently coming and going and are very different from one another. What more can be learned about this experience, particularly in terms of doing it well and how do we prepare our staff and elders to do so?
3. Elders living in the margins and welcoming others into community is a dance worth exploring further.

4. A Catholic feminist framework includes an ethic of care that influences the nature of hospitality expressed and received.
5. In order for hospitality to flourish, a community must exist.
6. Obstacles to community building in AL result in loneliness but may be misunderstood by formal and informal caregivers as resistance to care or invitations, as demonstrated by the elder.
7. Hospitality flows in multiple directions in an AL community and may welcome power and agency that once did not exist.

At the completion of this research, my interpretations of both my own experience and my father's story about living in an AL, have transformed. Although the personal nature of my own situation enhances the level of my involvement and anxiety, I still believe that my understanding of what my father went through, as well as the rest of the family, can be seen differently now. I am encouraged and hopeful, while still genuinely troubled that I and others remain unprepared. I also am extremely interested in understanding more about the intersections of age, spiritual development, community and hospitality in AL. I think there is much to learn about how these dimensions support and foster successful aging (Brown and Lowis, 2003; Erikson, 1997; Erikson et al., 1986; Nouwen, 1974; Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012; Tornstam, 2005).

## **APPENDIX: SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### Interview 1

45-60 minutes

Topic: Living in community

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What is it like to live in community here?
3. How do you and others build community?
4. Give me an example of a time when you experienced community here.
5. Tell me about some of the important people in your life here at the AL?

### Interview 2

45-60 minutes

Topic: Hospitality in community

1. How were you welcomed into this community?
2. Give me an example of a time when you welcomed new residents to the community?
3. How do relationships between residents form and how are they sustained?

### Interview 3

45-60 minutes

Topic: Power and agency in self and others

1. How do decisions get made that impact your daily life?
2. Give me an example of how you influence change in your environment?
3. How does advocacy look here? Give me an example of how you advocate for other residents and how they advocate for you?

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