An increasing number of people living with dementia (PLWD) age in community. In North America, this number ranges from 61-81% of the total number of PLWD. As many as one in three PLWD do not live with a care partner. Since most PLWD do not drive, many may spend a significant proportion of time within half a mile of their homes. Yet, the neighbourhood may or may not provide “ways of being in the world that are more accepting and embracing of the kinds of disruptions that dementia can produce” (Hillman & Latimer, 2017). To support continued social participation, meaningful everyday networks are required. PLWD and care partners may identify more or less strongly with a community depending on their position in the network, its spaces, and activities. According to Nancy (1991), “community” has been construed as an antidote to the loneliness of the human condition, which explains its allure. In response, Costello (2014) argued that “community” requires one to constantly try and “fall short” in caring for another’s changing experiences. The value of a community thus depends on the quality of its friendships – the ability of otherwise lonely individuals to empathize – which may be threatened by challenges to PLWD’s personhood. This symposium brings together expertise in community gerontology, philosophy, and neuropsychology to advance current conceptualizations of personhood in community amid cognitive decline. These will be discussed in relation to lived experiences, with the aim to inform future research and practice of dementia care and prevention in community.

Session 3540 (Symposium)

FRIENDSHIP AND LONELINESS AMONG PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA: TOWARD COMMUNITY AND SHARED HUMANITY
Chair: Daniel R. Y. Gan
Co-Chair: Habib Chaudhury
Discussant: Jim Mann

An increasing number of people living with dementia (PLWD) age in community. In North America, this number ranges from 61-81% of the total number of PLWD. As many as one in three PLWD do not live with a care partner. Since most PLWD do not drive, many may spend a significant proportion of time within half a mile of their homes. Yet, the neighbourhood may or may not provide “ways of being in the world that are more accepting and embracing of the kinds of disruptions that dementia can produce” (Hillman & Latimer, 2017). To support continued social participation, meaningful everyday networks are required. PLWD and care partners may identify more or less strongly with a community depending on their position in the network, its spaces, and activities. According to Nancy (1991), “community” has been construed as an antidote to the loneliness of the human condition, which explains its allure. In response, Costello (2014) argued that “community” requires one to constantly try and “fall short” in caring for another’s changing experiences. The value of a community thus depends on the quality of its friendships – the ability of otherwise lonely individuals to empathize – which may be threatened by challenges to PLWD’s personhood. This symposium brings together expertise in community gerontology, philosophy, and neuropsychology to advance current conceptualizations of personhood in community amid cognitive decline. These will be discussed in relation to lived experiences, with the aim to inform future research and practice of dementia care and prevention in community.

MUTUAL RECOGNITION: EMPATHY AS THE FOUNDATION OF COMMUNITY IN DEMENTIA
Peter Costello, Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island, United States

This paper explores the challenges of developing a healthy, genuine community as some of its members experience cognitive decline or dementia. I draw upon philosophical discussions on community (Stein, 2000) and Husserlian empathy...
(1931;1939) to identify these challenges. First, community
is organic; it relies on the differentiated roles of individual
members to remain healthy. The ability to recognize the con-
tribution of each member is essential for its health. Second,
dyadic relationships may similarly be healthy or waning
depending on the presence or absence of mutual empathy.
Empathy is embodied. Persons living with dementia (PLWD)
need to experience being recognized as persons, in person, in
order for dyadic relationships and communities to thrive. As
such, some communities may become unhealthy in the ab-
sence of mutual recognition. In these instances, careful inter-
ventions, e.g., through shared experiences and embedded
memories, may be required to promote the well-being of the
community and its members.

SHARED HUMANITY: ADVANCING THE
PERSONHOOD OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA
Steven Sabat, Georgetown University, Georgetown
University, District of Columbia, United States

During the past three decades, the idea of personhood,
and the degree to which people living with dementia (PLWD)
possess it and ought to be treated as such, has been discussed
by a number of important scholars such as Tom Kitwood
and John Swinton. Although both asserted that PLWD ought
to be treated as persons, their notions of personhood appear
in quite different. Kitwood noted that personhood was a
 status “bestowed” on another individual, whereas Swinton
asserted that personhood was endemic to human beings.
Yet, these approaches are complementary. I show, using case
studies, how supportive communities are required for PLWD
to teach us about our humanity, so long as we remain “finely
aware and richly responsible” (Nussbaum, 1990). Our hu-
manity is shared, in the Zulu concept of “Ubuntu” (Tutu,
1981;1989), when each individual’s humanity is ideally ex-
pressed in relationship with others. This has important impli-
cations for clinical practice.

Session 3545 (Symposium)

FROM MARGIN TO CENTER: INTERSECTIONALITY
AND THE POLITICS OF ENVIRONMENTAL
GERONTOLOGY
Chair: Austin Oswald
Co-Chair: Jarmin Yeh
Discussant: Jarmin Yeh

As the population becomes increasingly older and cul-
aturally diverse, so too does the need for critical scholarship that
examines the complex lives of differently positioned older
adults in relation to their social and physical ecologies. This
innovative symposium reflects the importance of putting
intersectional frameworks (Collins & Bilge, 2016) in con-
versation with environmental gerontology to critically
examine structures of power in assessing who matters and
who benefits from place-based initiatives that intend to sup-
port healthy aging (Phillipson, 2004). Perry et al.’s paper
addresses the politics of responsibility, asking who is res-
ponsible for keeping older people safe in light of Covid-19
though a citywide senior housing coalition in Detroit. The
second paper, authored by Johnson, speaks to the politics
of access and structural inequalities that create disparities
in end-of-life care for unhoused older adults. The third and
fourth papers, by Stinchcombe and colleagues and Oswald,
critically examine dominant paradigms of age-friendliness in
Canada and the United States though a politics of represent-
ation that highlights who is (in)visible in these initiatives.
The final paper by Reyes, on the civic participation of Latinx
and African American older adults, illustrates how structural
change cannot happen without engaging these populations
in the political process. Together, these papers exemplify
the politics of environmental gerontology and demonstrate that
without acknowledgment of multi-layered identities and the
structures contributing to their inequities, environmental
gerontology is inadequate, as it may overlook important so-
cial and environmental factors that connect older people to
the places where they live and die.

CRITICAL AGE-FRIENDLY RESEARCH AND
REPRESENTATIONAL ETHICS
Austin Oswald, CUNY Graduate Center, New York, New
York, United States

As the efforts of the Global Age-friendly Cities and
Communities movement mature and continue to grapple
with society’s shifting dynamics, blind spots and knowledge
gaps are exposed. This research applies critical discourse
analysis to examine the evolution of Age-friendly NYC using
an intersectional lens committed to an ethics of representa-
tion. Over 1,000 pages of public records were analyzed to
trace the history of this movement in relation to age, race,
sexuality, gender, ability, and class. Findings suggest that Age-
friendly NYC is a global leader of the age-friendly movement,
yet social identities are represented neither equally nor uni-
versally in its initiatives. Discussions of race, sexuality, and
gender are subtle. They also overlook how these identities
may intersect and shape the aging experience for differently
positioned older adults. A comprehensive understanding of
the aging experiences of those with multiple intersecting
identities is needed to inform future age-friendly policies and
programs.

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF SENIOR HOUSING:
PROMOTING EQUITY THROUGH ENSURING SAFE
SPACES
Tam Perry,1 Zach Kilgore,2 Michael Appel,3
Michele Waktins,4 Claudia Sanford,3 and
Dennis Archambault,4 1. Wayne State University, Detroit,
Michigan, United States, 2. CSI Support & Development,
Warren, Michigan, United States, 3. Develop Detroit,
Detroit, Michigan, United States, 4. Volunteers of America-
Michigan, Southfield, Michigan, United States, 5. United
Community Housing Coalition, Detroit, Michigan, United
States, 6. Authority Health, Detroit, Michigan, United States

As affordable senior housing communities aimed to ad-
dress the health and well-being concerns of residents in the
COVID-19 pandemic, special attention to safety during
renovation had to be addressed. This paper offers case
studies from members of a city-wide advocacy group, Senior
Housing Preservation-Detroit. Eighty one percent of covid
deaths in the City of Detroit are those 60 and above; 81.2%
of deaths have been among African Americans (Detroit
Health Department, 2021). With the grief and challenge in
a city hit early on in the 2020 pandemic, these case studies