CHAPTER 1

Introduction
1.1 Situating the study

This thesis examines aging, gender, and culture in Tanzania, with a specific focus on the body. As research on aging and gender identities in later life is relatively new in Tanzania, any investigation of this issue has to be explorative in nature. Grounded theory provides a methodological strategy that is well-suited to exploring the underlying themes and issues. To further deepen the explorative dimension, we employed grounded theory in its constructivist revision.

The research is guided by two broad questions:

- What are the cultural schemas underlying older adults’ perceptions of intergenerational caregiving?
- How do the cultural norms regarding gender shape older people’s perceptions of their gender identities (masculinities and femininities) and the meaning of being old?

The value this study brings to grounded theory and gerontology studies lies in our integration of various theories from a range of fields and disciplines with empirical findings; i.e., in its incorporation of emerging themes from qualitative research at different stages of the inquiry process (see Chapter 3). In this study, theories play different roles at different stages of the research, such as an inspirational role, a framing role, and an interpretative role (see sections 1.4, 2.3.2, and 2.8.2). For example, for question one (What are the cultural schemas underlying older adults’ perceptions of intergenerational caregiving?), the cultural schema theory played an inspirational role, a framing role, and an interpretative role. Moreover, the second question (How do the cultural norms regarding gender shape older people’s perceptions of their gender identities and the meaning of being old?) was inspired by the social constructivist perspective on gender. The emerging themes necessitated the use of various theories to interpret them. Bourdieu’s theory of capital was adopted for the analysis of the emerging themes “the aging body and ideals of femininity” and “the aging body and ideals of masculinity”. Intersectionality and life course approaches were used for the analysis of the emerging themes “the intersections of gender, age, and other structural (dis)advantages” and “the aging body and ideals of masculinity”. Sexual script theory was adapted for the analysis of the emerging themes “masculinity and sexuality in later life”. Using this strategy, we were able to engage in a dialogue between the empirical findings (inductive) and the different theories (deductive) at different stages of the research cycle. Moreover, this approach has provided us with a very powerful heuristic for use in interpretive research that has yielded rich, in-depth, authentic, and credible data. Approaches of this kind are especially important
for gerontological research, given that that the field of gerontology is, as Hendricks et al. (2010, p.287) put it, “data-rich but theory-poor”.

Furthermore, in our study we listened to and analyzed the ways in which both older women and older men articulated their experiences in interviews and focus group discussions. By contrast, many gerontological studies examine only men or only women, but not both. Researching the experiences of both women and men is important not only in its own right, but because gender is a socially constructed relationship between men and women. As we discuss in detail in chapters 4, 6, and 7, gender identities are shaped by socio-cultural factors. Since these identities feed into various domains of men’s and women’s lives and regulate their everyday behavior, they also affect how men and women perceive their aging experiences. A well-constructed study must therefore be able to provide detailed information on the wide range of life situations experienced by older women and men.

In addition to generating rich data, the grounded nature of this study uncovered some unexpected themes. Among the most surprising findings of this study are those on sexuality. For example, we were surprised to observe that sexuality emerged as the most prominent theme in the older men’s discussions of masculinity, given that sexuality is commonly regarded as a taboo topic for older people. In the in-depth interviews and group discussions with the male participants, it became clear that sexuality and masculinity are tightly interwoven, and often reinforce each other. It is, however, important to acknowledge that it was not easy to examine issues of sexuality in the study, as sex is a taboo topic in the research setting, especially among older people. As researchers, we were worried about the effects of opening “Pandora’s Box”. To ensure that we were respecting the boundaries of the participants when asking them about these delicate issues, we adopted several different information-gathering strategies (see chapter 6). Feelings of discomfort and tension (on the part of the interviewers and the participants) were mostly observed at the beginning of the interviews. As the research process continued and rapport was established, the participants were more inclined to share details of their intimate lives. We made sure we provided a safe place for them to share their experiences.

By contrast, older women’s sexuality did not emerge as a prominent theme. Even when we tried to probe the question of secrecy around sexuality, the moral prohibitions surrounding the topic became obvious. There was an observable change in the demeanor of the participants and in the answers they gave whenever we indicated an interest in learning about their sexuality. This made it impossible for us to continue with that line of questioning. Given the emic nature of the current study (grounded
theory), the individuals’ own perspectives were more important than the etic views we might impose on them. In chapter 8, we have suggested that future research should examine the question of why the theme of sexuality did not emerge in older women’s discussions of femininity. Why didn’t they want to talk about sexuality? Is it because the myths and norms surrounding femininity led them to feel embarrassed about discussing sexual matters? Or is it because older women have lost interest in sex, and therefore see questions about sexuality as less important? Or is avoiding talking about sexuality a way of doing gender, as refusing to discuss such topics shows that the speaker is respectable?

Finally, this study is unique in its blending of disciplines, including sociology, gender studies, gerontology, and demography. Since the study focuses specifically on the experiences of older women and men as gendered (Sandberg, 2011), it may be positioned within the field of gender studies. As the study looks at old age (and gender), it may also be situated within the fields of feminism and gerontology and aging studies. There has been a cultural turn in demography that encourages the use of qualitative methods to explain demographic behaviors and processes. The application of such methods adds to our understanding of the individual and social motivations for and the meanings attached to these behaviors and processes in the context of people’s lives. Thus, the insights provided by this research represent important contributions to the field of demography.

The theoretical positions that underlie the cultural gaze have long been present in the work of classical theorists of sociology (Shilling, 2012). As part of the cultural turn, gerontologists (specifically, cultural gerontologists) are influenced by these fields. A common element that unites these fields into gerontology, and that is central to this thesis, is the concern with meaning, and the sense that the social world is constituted by such meanings – i.e., that the meanings attached to being old are embedded in a cultural context (Twigg, 2015) – and by various identities, such as race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, religion, and nationality. This thesis fits within this cultural turn of “aged by culture”. Accordingly, in this study we understand that what it means to be old is shaped by culture, and that we are, as Gulette (2003) has pointed out, “aged by culture”.
1.2 Background of the study

1.2.1 Overview of Global Aging

A look at global demographic trends shows that the population aged 60 and older is increasing at an unprecedented rate (The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, -UN DESA 2017). In 2017, the worldwide population of people aged 60 and older was estimated at 962 million (UNDESA, 2017). A distinct feature of the aging of the world's population is the uneven speed of the aging process across regions and countries with different levels of development (He et al. 2016). For instance, in 2010, the average share of the population aged 60 and older was 11.1% worldwide. However, this share was above the global average in Europe (21.9%), North America (18.6%), and Oceania (15.2%); and was below the global average in Asia (10.1%), Latin America and the Caribbean (9.8%), and Africa (5.3%). The share of the population aged 60 and older was especially low in Sub-Saharan Africa (African countries excluding Northern Africa), at 4.8% (UNPD 2013). However, African countries will undergo dramatic demographic changes in the coming decades (UNDESA, 2017). In 2100, Africa is projected to be the second-most populous part in the world with 4.4 billion people; after Asia with 4.9 billion people (UNDESA, 2017). Tanzania is a relatively young country demographically, as 43.9% of the population are under age 15, and only 5.6% of the population are aged 60+ (National Bureau of Statistics 2013). But according to United Nation projections, the absolute number of Tanzanians aged 60+ will almost triple between 2020 and 2050 (United Nations Development Program 2013), rising from 2.5 million currently to 7.16 million in 2050 (UNDESA, 2015).

Globally, women outlive men, and thus account for the majority of the older population (UNDESA, 2013; Jhansi& Mishra, 2014). In 2013, the global sex ratio was 85 men per 100 women in the age group 60 and older, and just 62 men per 100 women in the age group 80 and older (UNDESA, 2013). The discourse on the “feminization” of old age reveals that old age is always gendered, and that gender is always defined by age (Arber, et al. 2003.p.3). Therefore, it is important to unravel the significance of gender, aging, and culture as interwoven themes in later life. Arguably, the meaning of being old is gendered and embedded within a cultural setting (Twigg, 2004; Schwaiger, 2012). As Gullette (2004, p. 211) noted, “we are aged by culture”. Thus, how older people respond to aging and how they integrate these changes into their perceptions are clearly embedded within a cultural framework.
1.3 Gender and aging in the cultural context of Tanzania

Aging in Tanzania is a gendered phenomenon. In line with global longevity trends (United Nations, 2013), women in Tanzania now live an average of four years longer than men: i.e., female life expectancy is 63 years, while male life expectancy is 59 years (National Bureau of Statistics, 2013). However, the context in which women live longer needs to be understood. There are still large gender disparities in access to and control over resources, access to work opportunities, and levels of labor force participation (Ezer, 2006; Otiso, 2013). Stereotypic notions of femininity and masculinity define gender roles (Rwakarema et al, 2015). Gender inequalities in income, education, and employment across the life cycle expose a majority of women in Tanzania to poverty in old age. A study on quality of life among older people in Tanzania reported that with increasing age, health status, quality of life, and physical abilities deteriorate much more among women than among men (Mwanyagala et al., 2010). Yet older women are the main caregivers in many households in Tanzania. For instance, research has shown that in Tanzania, 64% of the country’s 2.5 million orphans are living in a household headed by an older person, who is often a woman (HelpAge International 2004, 2008, 2011; Spitzer et al. 2009). Despite the centrality of gender in shaping the life courses of older women in Tanzania, women’s own voices and experiences of aging have been less well documented, and the implications of their perspectives remain largely unexamined.

Similarly, while there is a large body of research on the power, authority and masculinity of younger men (Lindhardt, 2015), little is known about the lived experiences of today’s older male population in Tanzania, and even less is known about their perceptions of masculinity in later life. Put simply, a gender perspective that embraces the diverse realities of older men is largely missing. In particular, little attention has been paid to how perceptions of masculinity change over the life cycle, and to the implications of these changes for men’s lives (specifically their self-identification as men). Yet feminist gerontologists have pointed out that men are not always powerful, and that the “experience of masculinity is also highly differentiated” (Pain, et al 2000, p.388). The invisibility of older men also means that their experiences and concerns are marginalized (Krekula 2007). Studies have shown that older men experience unique challenges in later life that may alter the forms of masculinity they embraced at younger ages (Arber et al., 2003; Russell, 2007; Thomeer, 2013). It has been argued that “this is due not merely to aging per se, but due to the intersection of age relations with those of gender, class, race, and sexuality, in ways that alter the masculinities on which they had based so much of their privilege (King and Calasanti, 2013,p.706-707). The basic argument we put forward in this thesis is that an individual’s experiences of aging are shaped not only by whether the person is a
man or a woman, but by the person’s intersecting identities, including his or her race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, cohort, sexuality, religion, marital status, nationality, and other socio-demographic markers (Russell, 2007). Put simply, women and men are not just gendered subjects; they are situated within multidimensional social factors or intersecting identities and other aspects of their lived experiences. Making any one of these dimensions visible within an analysis of intersectionality is likely to make the others visible as well (Andersen and Hill Collins 2001).

1.4 Family, intergenerational support, and policy responses to population aging in Tanzania

In Tanzania, aging is a rural phenomenon. A study conducted by HelpAge International (HAI 2011) indicated that nearly 82% of Tanzania’s older population (aged 60+) live in rural areas, and are vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity. Like in many other countries in the Global South, the main source of support in Tanzania has traditionally been the family. Thus, within multigenerational households, older people were viewed in a positive light, as sources of information and wisdom (Mwami, 2001; Makoni and Stroeken, 2002). Changes associated with modernization – such as the spread of formal education, urbanization, and the migration of young people from rural to urban areas – and the HIV/AIDS pandemic have weakened intergenerational ties and reciprocal exchanges. Concerns about these developments have been expressed by other scholars as well. Some authors have argued that African families have shown a great deal of resilience in the face of these shifts, and are generally still intact (Apt, 1996; Gyekye, 1996; Evans & Thomas 2009; Mouton & Southerland, 2017); whereas other scholars have asserted that the broad social and economic changes that are taking place in Africa threaten the continued viability of traditional arrangements for the care and support of older people (Stiglitz, 2011; Casale 2011; Help Age International-HAI 2011; Kashaga, 2012; Nortey et al 2017). As Isabella (2004, p. 211) has noted, today “all indications are that for many older people this family support no longer provides the necessary protection and is insufficient to meet even their basic needs”.

Tanzania’s policies and interventions on population aging are still in the nascent or formative stages, and policy-makers have not responded to the demographic transition by providing safeguards for the social welfare of older people (Spitzer et al 2009; Tobias and Omondi, 2014). Government policies and programs normally give low priority to the concerns of older adults, as it is expected that family members and older children in particular, will take on the responsibility of caring for their aging parents (URT, 2003; Stiglitz, 2011; Help Age International 2011). Moreover, pension
Introduction

...schemes in Tanzania are contributory in nature (Agwanda and Amani 2014: 55; NBS and OCGS 2014: 112). As was pointed out above, older people in Tanzania are highly concentrated in rural areas, and a majority of them are women. Most of these older women have little or no formal education, no formal employment history, and thus no retirement pension. It is therefore clear that we need to improve our understanding of the current situations of older people in Tanzania. To help fill this research gap, we applied a framework that allowed us to analyze how individuals construct/negotiate the meanings attached to old age in their day-to-day lives within their socio-cultural context (see section 1.4).

1.5 Research objective and thesis outline

1.5.1 The overall objective of the study
The meaning of being old is gendered and embedded within a cultural setting (Twigg, 2004; Schwaiger, 2012). It is therefore important to examine the cultural aspects that shape perceptions of old age and of gender identities in later life. Specifically, the goal is to identify the cultural schemas and norms regarding gender that older women and men in the Tanzanian cultural context bring to their interpretation of their experiences of aging. Thus, the overall objective of this study is:

- To explore and understand the cultural aspects that shape older adults’ perceptions of being of old (in an intergenerational context) and the meanings they assign to their gender identities in later life.

Two main questions followed from this main objective:
- What are the cultural schemas underlying older adults’ perceptions of intergenerational caregiving?
- How do the cultural norms regarding gender shape older people’s perceptions of their gender identities (masculinities and femininities) and of the meaning of being old?

The grounded approach to data collection and analysis used in this thesis resulted in the emergence of research themes that were not entirely fixed prior to the data collection, but were identified over the course of our interactions with older people. Several research questions were developed through a process of inductive and deductive reasoning:

1. Cultural schemas shape individual perceptions, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations. We adopted cultural schema theory to gain a deeper understand-
ing of the underlying cultural schemas that shape older adults’ perceptions of intergenerational caregiving. We asked:

What are the cultural schemas underlying older adults’ perceptions of intergenerational caregiving? (Chapter 3)

2. An important theme that arose from the fieldwork was that “the aging body is deficient and incompatible with femininity, and represents a loss of vital economic capital”. To help us gain a better understanding of how older women assign meaning to their (aging) body (as a form of capital) in relation to their ideals of femininity, we used Bourdieu’s theory of capital in our analysis. The following inductive research question was then developed:

How do older women with low socio-economic status give meaning to their (aging) body in relation to ideals of femininity? (Chapter 4)

3. The experiences of women in later life vary enormously, not only along intersectional lines, but also based on the cumulative (dis)advantages each individual experiences over her life course. We adopted the intersectionality and life course approaches to investigate how the intersections of structural (dis)advantages earlier in a woman’s life shapes her later life experiences, including her agency. The following inductive question was asked:

How do the intersections of structural (dis)advantages earlier in a woman’s life shape the meaning she assigns to her later life? (Chapter 5)

4. Another important theme that came up in the field was that two forms of masculinity are most honored by men: being a provider and being sexually active. Thus, to investigate older men’s experiences of sexuality in relation to dominant cultural norms of masculinity in Tanzania, we adopted sexual script theory. We asked:

What are older men’s experiences of sexuality in relation to dominant cultural norms of masculinity in Tanzania? (Chapter 6)

5. The body is regarded as a vital asset for performing masculinity, especially by men from less privileged or disadvantaged groups. To analyze this emerging theme, a synthesis of Bourdieu’s concept of capital and the intersectionality approach were applied. The following inductive question was then asked:

How do the intersections of gender, age and socio-economic status shape the meaning an older man assigns to his aging body in relation to ideals of masculinity?
1.6 Theoretical framework

In this project, various theories were applied at different stages of the research process. For example, to answer the first main research question, the cultural schema theory was applied from the design stage onwards. We went into the field with the goal of answering the following general question: What kind of cultural schemas are attached to being old in Tanzania? In the data collection stage we continued to apply cultural schema theory. The emerging themes (intergenerational caregiving) led us formulate specific research question: What are the cultural schemas that underlie older adults’ perceptions of intergenerational caregiving?

The second main question (How do cultural norms regarding gender shape older people’s perceptions of their gender identities (masculinities and femininities) and meaning of being old?) was inspired by the social constructivist perspective of gender. The open nature of the research questions and our use of the grounded approach to data collection and analysis resulted in research themes that were not entirely fixed prior to the start of the data collection process, but that emerged and developed predominantly through our interactions with older people. The qualitative research questions and the data collection process are embedded in existing theory (Hennink et al. 2011). In addition, in the course of data analysis, we drew upon various theories to interpret the emerging themes from the data.

- Bourdieu’s theory of capital was adopted for the analysis of the emerging themes “the aging body and ideals of femininity” in (chapter four) and “the aging body and ideal of masculinity” in (chapter seven).
- Intersectionality and life course approaches were adopted for the analysis of the emerging themes “the intersections of gender, age, and other structural (dis) advantages” in (chapter five) and “the aging body and ideal of masculinity” in (chapter seven).
- Sexual script theory was adapted for the analysis of the emerging themes “masculinity and sexuality in later life” in (chapter six).

1.6.1 Cultural schemas theory

Culture is a complex collection of beliefs, values, behaviors, and material objects shared by a group and passed on from one generation to the next. Thus, culture is learned, transmitted, and shared. Culture continues to develop as people interact and share experiences and meanings with each other. The meanings attached to aging are shaped by cultural differences in the organization of time and life stages, as well as by individual processes of biological, social, and emotional change (Baars, 2006, 2007). For example, the meaning of old age in Tanzania encompasses a range of chronological and social factors, such as physiological decline, the loss of
capacities, and changes in social roles (Spitzer, 2010). The definition of old age is gender-specific and context-dependent. For example, some older people especially those living in rural areas do not know their chronological age. Thus, in such contexts, old age is defined by changes in status, such as losing one's reproductive capacity, becoming a grandparent, or becoming a widow (Spitzer and Mabeyo, 2014).

Culture has been characterized by (D'Andrade 1984, p.116) as a meaning system through which a group of people adapt to their environment and structure their interpersonal actions/behaviors in order to make sense of their experiences of the world and of society. This study underscores the importance of understanding specific cultural nuances by examining the cultural schemas (i.e., shared cognitive schema and scripts) that structure individual goals. It has been argued that cultural schemas can represent motivational forces because these schemas not only label and describe the world, but establish goals (both conscious and unconscious) and provoke or encompass desires (D'Andrade, 1990; Strauss, 1992). Cultural schemas shape individual perceptions, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations (D'Andrade, 1992; Strauss and Quinn, 1997). In cognitive anthropology, there is a consensus that the internalization of cultural schemas occurs through learning/socialization processes, through people's interactions, and through each individual's past experiences (Holland and Quinn 1987; Strauss & Quinn 1997). These cultural schemas provide scripts through which people make sense of objects, situations, and sequences (Bieber & Worley, 2006). It has also been argued that "when the cultural beliefs become a part of inner sense of a being they become goal driven and acquire motivational force" (Strauss & Quinn 1997, p. 26). Gerontologists have, however, been slow to incorporate cognitive theories of motivation into aging research. Thus, through the use of a cultural schema framework, this thesis further enriches the theory base. We argue that individual perceptions of intergenerational care are embedded in cultural schemas that create a distinct set of opportunities and constraints, and that can be changed or preserved through interventions designed to improve the well-being of older people.

### 1.6.2 Social constructivist perspective on gender

Feminist gerontologists have highlighted the need to examine gender and aging as socio-cultural constructs (Cruikshank 2003, Holstein and Minkler 2003; Calasanti, 2010) and to explore how the cultural meanings ascribed to gender interact with individuals' lived experiences of the aging process (Oberg, 2003; Featherstone and Hepworth 2009; Calasanti, 2010). According to social constructivist theories of gender, and particularly Butler's work on gender performativity, gender is socially constructed. This means that gender is a set of learned behaviors accompanied by
cognitive interpretations of these behaviors (Butler, 1990; Fracher & Kimmel, 1995). Gender identity is culturally and socially determined. In other words, whether behavior is defined as masculine or feminine depends on cultural expectations. Femininity/femininities is conceptualized as a set of characteristics, practices and norms for female behavior, roles for females to perform, female rights and responsibilities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Masculinity/masculinities is a set of characteristics, practices and norms for male behavior, roles for males to perform, male power, rights and responsibilities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

Butler has argued that any theorizing about gender introduces the concept of the performance of gender in terms of masculinity and femininity. According to Butler (1999), gender is performative, rather than an expression of particular innate qualities (Butler, 1999; Westwood, 2014). Specifically, Butler has asserted that masculinity and femininity are cultural constructs produced and maintained by social/cultural norms that divide people into categories of male and female, and that create the structure of power relations that underlie the “doing” of gender (Butler, 1990, 1999, 2004). Thus, gender performance becomes spontaneous as gender is internalized through the socialization process within the dominant discourses of gender, and is performed at different levels within the family and society (Butler, 1990). Butler (1990, 1993) further argued that individuals have a limited number of gender enactment “options” because “the script” is always pre-determined within the regulatory framework (Butler, 1990: 25). The performative nature of gender identities means that gender identities are produced and maintained, and thus can also be undone. An important question that has yet to be fully answered in relation to gender performance and aging is how gender performance is redefined or maintained as people age and their bodies decline.

1.6.3 Bourdieu’s theory of capital and body capital

Social constructionists have argued that like gender, the body is shaped, constrained, and invented by the cultural norms of a given society (Laz, 2003; Pyke and Johson, 2003; Waskul et al, 2012). Gender is the repeated stylization of the body; a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework “that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (Butler, 1990, p. 45). In non-Western societies such as Tanzania, the aging body has remained at the margins of gender and aging studies. Until very recently, only a handful of studies had explored the body as a site of analysis (Weiss, 1997; Makoni and Stroeken 2002; de Klerk, 2011; Freeman and Coast, 2014). Yet to the best of my knowledge, none of these studies examined the aging body in relation to gender identities. Bourdieu (1986) provided a theoretical framework for understanding the body by discussing
the meaning older women and men give to their (aging) body in relation to ideals of gender. According to Bourdieu, the physical body is a form of capital (body capital) that can be converted into other forms of capital, including economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital. Defining “habitus” as a set of internalized, embodied ways of thinking, feeling, and acting shaped by social structures (Bourdieu 1977); Bourdieu argued that habitus is both a state of mind and a bodily state of being (Bourdieu, 1984: 190). Bourdieu’s concept of habitus illustrates the process through which practices are incorporated into the body, and are then regenerated through the embodied work and competence of the body (Crossley, 2001; Wainwright & Turner, 2006). Bourdieu asserted that individuals’ social positions (including their gendered positions) and social conditions of existence shape their habitus and engender social differentials in relation to the body; i.e., (inter) subjective perceptions of the body (1984, p.175). However, gerontologists have rarely looked at how older women and men in different cultural contexts negotiate complex cultural messages about gender ideals in relation to the aging body. This study helps to close this gap in the literature.

1.7 Organization of thesis
This thesis is organized into eight chapters. Five of the chapters highlight various themes concerning the meanings older adults assign to old age, as well as people’s perceptions, expectations, and experiences of old age that are embedded in cultural schemas and gender ideals of femininity and masculinity. As was pointed out above, it is important to note that the grounded approach to data collection and analysis used in this thesis generated research themes that were not entirely fixed prior to the data collection process, but that emerged and developed predominantly through our interactions with older people.

Chapter two begins with a discussion of our motivations for choosing the topic, and of the challenges we faced in studying older people. Specifically, the context of the study, the insider/outsider dynamics, and the positionality of the researcher are addressed. We also describe the methods we used in this thesis for the collection and analysis of empirical material. Moreover, the chapter includes details on some of the dilemmas we encountered in conducting this research.

Chapter three (Research question 1) presents an investigation of the cultural schemas that underlie older adults’ perceptions of intergenerational caregiving. In this chapter, we applied cultural schema theory to both the framing and the analysis of the research in order to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying cultural
schemas that shape older adults’ perceptions of intergenerational caregiving. The findings revealed that the participants derived their perceptions of intergenerational caregiving from their past experiences, and referred to the prevailing cultural schemas when interpreting these experiences and explaining the kind of care they expect to receive from their own children.

**Chapter four (research question 2)** explores the meaning older women with low socio-economic status who living in a rural community gave to their (aging) body (as a form of capital) in relation to cultural expectations regarding femininity. In this chapter, the analysis of the findings drew upon Bourdieu’s theory of body capital to better explain how older women with low socio-economic status assigned meaning to their (aging) body in relation to ideals of femininity. The findings suggest that the older women perceived their aging body as “a burden”; i.e., as a form of capital that they could not easily convert into other forms of capital or use to enact gender roles. This characterization of the body was linked to the inability of older women to maintain an appropriate level of gender performance.

**Chapter five (research question 3)** looks at how the intersections of structural (dis)advantages early in a woman’s life could shape the meanings she assigned to her later life. Specifically, the study focuses on how opportunities and constraints over the life course have shaped the ability (or inability) of the women in our study to exercise agency. We integrated the intersectionality and life course perspectives to analyze and interpret the findings. Our findings suggest that over the life course, most of the women experienced multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantages. The ability or inability of an individual to exercise agency thus depends on the interlocking sources of (dis)advantages and the forms of discrimination she experiences.

**Chapter six (research question 4)** examines older men’s experiences of sexuality in later life in relation to dominant cultural norms of masculinity. We applied sexual script theory to analyze and interpret the findings. The majority of the older men in our study reported feeling distressed about the age-related decline of their body and of their sexuality. It thus appears that older men’s experiences of sexuality in later life in relation to the dominant socio-cultural norms of masculinity should be taken into account when designing age- and gender-sensitive sexual health interventions.

**Chapter seven (research question 5)** examines how the intersections of gender, age and socio-economic status shape the meaning older men give to their aging body in relation to their ideals of masculinity. A synthesis of the intersectionality approach and Bourdieu’s concept of capital was applied to analyze and interpret the findings.
The results suggest that body strength is vital capital for gender performance, especially for men with low-socio-economic status; and that the aging body can prevent older men with low socio-economic status from embodying masculine ideals.

**Chapter eight** brings together the key findings and the implications of the study. The chapter opens with a short recapitulation of the research objectives, followed by an overview and a discussion of the main insights. Some of the main themes that emerged throughout this research are then discussed. Next, some reflections on theory and methodology are presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings, recommendations for policy and interventions, the study’s limitations, and directions for future research.
References


England: Ashgate.


