

The Politics and Poetics of Aging

Author(s): Herminia González Torralbo, Menara Lube Guizardi and Francisca Ortiz Ruiz

Source: *Anthropological Quarterly*, Winter 2022, Vol. 95, No. 1 (Winter 2022), pp. 5-34

Published by: The George Washington University Institute for Ethnographic Research

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48786309>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



The George Washington University Institute for Ethnographic Research is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Anthropological Quarterly*

JSTOR

The Politics and Poetics of Aging: Ethnography of an Older Women's Club in Santiago

Herminia González Torralbo, *Central University of Chile*

Menara Lube Guizardi, *Universidad de Tarapacá*

Francisca Ortiz Ruiz, *The University of Manchester & Millennium Institute for Caregiving Research*

ABSTRACT

This article presents an ethnographic study of aging, gender, and the social organization of care in a women's ceramics course given in a Community Center of Santiago Centro (Chile). Its theoretical framework focuses on the concepts of gender, aging, and care in social sciences. The study is based on an ethnography carried out over three years in a Community Center. The paper highlights the narratives, modes of organization, and dynamics articulated in this women's club. Our analysis suggests that there is a political dimension to care. We argue that political dimensions are found in the women's collective organization within their club: they are subjects endowed with lines of action, interaction, and politically placed discourse that stem from their own key interpretations. Finally, our findings suggest that this political agency is linked to at least four aspects of our protagonists' experience in their club, which are described in the results. [Keywords: Gender, aging, community care, Santiago, Chile]

This article seeks to advance studies on aging, particularly regarding the intersection between female aging and community and/or community care. Feminist research has focused on the social organization of care associated with the aging process. However, less effort has been made to understand the political agency that emanates from these practices. Therefore, our research contributes to comprehend this political dimension of care through the collective organization from the older women's participation in the club. In addition, we focus on these women in their aging process because social diagnoses in Chile suggest that the marginalization processes they suffer (impoverishment, work and care overload, experiences of violence) are becoming generalized.

Chile is in an advanced stage of demographic transition as a result of its decreasing birth and death rates over the last 30 years, coupled with an increase in life expectancy. Since 2016, the country has had the second highest life expectancy of the entire American continent (80.5 years), outlived only by Canadians (WHO 2016). According to the 2017 census, 2,850,171 of the 17,574,003 inhabitants were over 60 years old: one in every six persons is an older person (INE 2017). Four social aspects characterize this Chilean aging process. Firstly, impoverishment and lack of social protection: 72 percent of those retired receive a pension that is lower than the minimum rate (set at 70 percent of the national minimum salary) (UNDP 2017:5). Low pensions create insecurity, especially for the population of the two poorest quintiles. Less than half of this population believe they will have enough funds for their old age (UNDP 2017:333).

Second, the existence of gender inequalities: in Chile the female proportion of the population increases with age. In those over 60 years old, 56.8 percent are women and 43.13 percent men (INE 2017). Only 27.4 percent of the women in this age group receive a retirement pension (UNDP 2017:25), while 54.3 percent of men do. The average female pension is 30 percent lower than the male one (UNDP 2017:333). Among women (especially those found in the first quintile), "welfare benefits" (basic solidarity pension and solidarity contributions) predominate as their source of income in old age (UNDP 2017).

Third, Chilean families still take on the responsibility of caring for the older population (Flores, Rivas, and Seguel 2012; Rodríguez, Russo, and Carrasco 2017), given both the limited development of formal care structures (operated by the public sector-State or the private sector) and the widely held belief that the best care is given by female family members.

However, research points to the establishment of a social crisis linked to this model (Arriagada 2010, Herrera 2011, SENAMA 2010) and pushes for a reorganization of the care and dependency relations assumed differentially by the diverse age groups. Despite this, women still take on the lion's share of this responsibility (Arriagada 2010).

And, finally, aging in Chile is characterized by inequality factors linked to the contextual incidence of policies aimed at this age group (Herrera 2011, Ganga et al. 2016, Gallardo-Peralta et al. 2017). So, even though aging problems are of national importance, they do configure in specific ways in different contexts, bringing into play the social, economic, and urban characteristics of the country's districts.

Addressing these issues, but through a specific ethnographic study, this article will be divided in six sections. First, we situate the theoretical debates that framed our research. Second, we describe the methodological approach used. Third, we narrate our approach to the Community Center, the older women's club, and the workshops. In the fourth section, we portray how the women appropriate the classroom with their relationship dynamics and how community care emerges as they paint their pottery pieces. Then, in the fifth section, we relate their political experiences. Finally, in section six, we present our conclusions showing how we link the politics and poetics of female aging.

Theoretical Frameworks: Female Aging and Care in Social Research

Three fields of theoretical debate frame the anthropological reflections that we propose in this article. The first refers to the relationship between female aging, social inequality, and care in anthropology. Studies on aging sparked only a marginal interest in the social sciences until the end of the 20th century (Gibson 1996). During the 1970s and 1980s, the general prevailing view was that old age was a "social problem" (1996:434). Most studies coincided with that idea, focusing on the accumulation of disadvantages and shortcomings faced particularly by older women (1996:435). With significant analytical pessimism, these studies identified a confluence of situations that, directly impacting on older women's wellbeing and pushing them to experience various problems, were closely related to gender gaps these women had suffered from at different moments of their life trajectories. The latter respond to the subjects of four lines of study.

Sociology developed a field of study that understands aging both as an integral part of a historic-collective process as well as a personal one: the “life course” (Dannefer 2011:4). This field delves into the role of circumstances and concrete events lived by individuals and social groups in the way they age (Elder 1975, Hess 1985). Female Anthropologists from different backgrounds began developing a transcultural perspective that, as covered in ethnographic research of diverse groups, sought to understand and contrast the symbolic representations about women at different points of their life experience (Rosaldo, Lamphere, and Bamberger 1974). In public policy studies, an articulation between research on female aging and the formulation of actions taken by the State is inaugurated (Estes 1979), leading to an approach focused on the inequalities faced by the women in relation to family care (Brody 1981). Thus, the link between the infringements suffered by them in old age with the responsibilities related to the social obligation to care for their children, husbands, grandchildren, and parents is analyzed as part of a political context. From 2000 onwards, the attention given to the “problem of older women” began to give way to a feminist perspective focused on the concrete experience of older women (Knodel and Ofstedal 2003:693).

In Latin America, these reflections resulted in the re-dimensioning of the role of women in the chain of reproduction of family social life. These critiques brought together efforts from anthropology, sociology and gerontology to set out the interconnected relationship between care and “trans-generational” transformations of the women in their life courses (Danely and Lynch 2015). They were structured around three concepts: “care,” “care work,” and “the social organization of care.”

The concept of *care* refers to the varied daily expressions that this practice can take on: paid or unpaid; with or without a contract; inside or outside the home; in one country or in various. All of these activities, culturally and historically assigned to women, allow for the reproduction of life. The problem is when this becomes naturalized and triggers disadvantages for women. *Care work* refers to three types of activities: 1) Direct care given to people, including physical care, (meals, bathing, hygiene), emotional care (listening, talking, consoling), and services that help people cover their physical and emotional needs (food shopping, days out); 2) The physical maintenance of the person's living space (changing and washing clothes, cleaning floors); and 3) The promotion of social relationships and connection between people, known as “kinship work” (Glenn 2010:5). *The social*

organization of care is the way in which those social actors who could take on a role in the provision of care (family, community, private sector, and the State) combine to provide it (Arriagada 2010).

In Chile, studies along this critical line recognize the crisis in the care of the older population, proposing a transversal perspective of gender that also investigates the moral norms (values and religious principles), the legal definitions (legislation), and the public policies that together (and in conflict) determine what is understood by good care, who should be caring for who, how, where, and in exchange for what. They suggest that the aging process is an increasingly longer stage of life in which responsibilities are prolonged or extended beyond the expected; it is also unequal in terms of gender, social class, and kinship (González 2017:184). Women grow old working both outside and inside the home, supporting the family through their unpaid work as informal carers and domestic workers.

Regarding this first field of theoretical debate, our ethnographic interest is directed at asking how women generate forms of self-care that allow them to solve their work overload as caregivers and to find solutions for their own demands for care which, due to their life course of accumulating social inequalities, are magnified in old age.

As we have observed in other ethnographic studies (González et al. 2019), in many areas of Santiago, the Chilean capital, women of different social classes solve these issues through the creation of meeting groups that, although advertising the development of artistic activities (such as ceramics, embroidery, painting) as their purpose, operate as spaces of “community care” where female agency is generated.

In the social sciences, there is a divergence in the definitions of the wide range of care practices that can be considered communitarian (Higgins 1989). Thus, practices as different as the services provided in private residences, by State employees, by the people who reside in a community—family, friends and/or neighbors—have been gathered under the concept of “community care” (Waerness 1987:133). Despite the above, most studies show that it is women who are overloaded by these community needs (Higgins 1989:10). Consequently, the concept of “community” is usually associated to a “women’s space” (Finch 1984).

The latter leads us to the second theoretical dimension that frames this article: the poetics that emerge when older women decide to constitute self-managed collective practices of care articulated through artistic activities. From our perspective, these poetics are eminently political.

In 1998, Susan Reed published the article, "The Politics and Poetics of Dance." It showed how in the social sciences of the 1990s the acceptance of the "political and incorporated" dimension of culture enhanced a forceful critique of the Cartesian analytical dichotomies (1998:503), denouncing problems of perspectives that we are now seeing being reproduced in studies on care. In these latter, there are numerous interpretations that segregate the public from private, the affective from the productive, the social bond of the biological, and the politics of family social reproduction (González 2017).

Although Reed focused specifically on dance, a general argument of assuming the political dimension can be applied to various art forms (Reed 1998:510). (And is precisely why the title of this article was inspired by the critical spirit that runs throughout Reed's text.) Others have shown how this relationship between poetics and politics emerges in practices widely associated with female gender mandates, such as embroidery, knitting, and sewing (Phillips 1995:89). They have observed that, in trans-historical and transcultural ways (Agosín 2014), weaving and embroidering have represented and enhanced women's political statements (Agosín 2008:16).

Inspired by these previous works, we hypothesize that the connection between politics and poetics would be the core of the women's relationship with the manufacture and painting of ceramics in the club where we performed our ethnography. The work on ceramics would then be an exercise of feminine production of meaning, connected with counter-hegemonic temporalities (not related to the logics of the productive world). Therefore, we are able to understand the ways in which making pottery collectively generates a self-reflective space for the older women. We inquire about the relationship between the artistic production of ceramics, the women's resignification of care (which they are called on to deliver and/or which they need) and their strategies for dealing with a coming challenge: assimilating the proximity of death.

The third theoretical field that frames our debate aims to understand the spatial dimension of care practices. Borrowing from Lefebvre (1974), we contemplate a three-dimensionality of space, observable in the way that subjects and groups experience social situations within it. Space is the set of concrete practices (flows, fixtures, interactions) which exists in it and takes place through it. But it is also the social perception that the different

groups and individuals have of it, and the signs and meanings that emanate from this perception. Additionally, the various uses of the specific space and expectations regarding it also require consideration. To complement these dimensions, we suggest a fourth. We assume that spatiality is as constitutive of the form and content of the elements that structure social life—e.g., the important economic and political frameworks—as is agency, the situated action of people (Harvey 2008). This fourth dimension implies that space occupies a fundamental role in political regimes: controlling spatial disposition constitutes one way in which the State intervenes in the reproduction of social relations (Lefebvre 1974:220).

At the same time, any restricted place—be it a club, a theater, or a Nation-State—generates rules on *how to cross its borders* and on *how it should be occupied* (Ardener 1981:1). Therefore, those who are part of it share common frameworks in these two ways of organizing, and on the agency that builds them up in different dimensions (Ardener 1981:2). It is this shared nature that turns a space “public”: as an area where we observe the tension between the built-in experience “at all scales in daily life,” and “the seeming spacelessness” structural character of global institutions and economy (Smith and Low 2013:3).

These reflections introduce the centrality of the subject’s agency in the production of spaces (Low 2009:21–22). The ethnography of concrete public places (the women’s club, in the present case-study) can provide us with a micro-ecological (small-scale) view of hierarchies, metaphors, and social condensations that are spread in large-scale social processes (Ardener 1981:2).

Nevertheless, borders, spatial practices, and agencies are structurally constituted by gender differentiation and asymmetries. In various societies, the public dimension of space is conditioned by the role that women have as “mediators” of their social reproduction (Ardener 1981:9). Thus, the spatial arrangement of objects, the flows of persons, and the ways of inhabiting a space refer to asymmetries of power shaped by gender (Ardener 1981:19). This does not prevent women from developing agency that exceeds these spatial limitations (Ardener 1981:23) through complex practices of “embodiment”: “The body (and bodies), conceptualized as embodied space(s), incorporates metaphors, ideology, and language, as well as behaviors, habits, skills, and spatial orientations” (Low 2009:22).

In our approach to the ceramic workshops of the older women's club, we focus on the relation between the care agency of the community and the older women's experience of incorporating and producing their own space. These two aspects are related to an embodied knowledge regarding the poetics and the political boundaries of space, molding pottery, and the women's care needs and possibilities.

The Case of the Older Women's Club

The research presented here is part of a three-year ethnographic project regarding the relationship between aging, gender, social inequalities, and the organization of care in three districts of the Metropolitan Region of Chile (RM): Providencia, Independencia, and Santiago Centro. By focusing on the female dimensions of aging processes, our research investigates the practices, knowledge, and meanings articulated through care relationships. We wanted to understand how old age was experienced by the women from the three aforementioned districts. What are the community, individual, and family strategies employed by them to deal with the challenges and opportunities associated with aging? What were the interpersonal relationships between the older women like? Did age determine specific forms of articulation and solidarity through gender?

This article specifically addresses results obtained in Santiago Centro, where we carried out fieldwork over 14 months between 2016 and 2017 in conjunction with a Ceramics Workshop given in a Community Center. The workshop was made up of and co-managed by older women from the "Older People's Club."¹ Ethnographic research was conducted by Herminia González Torralbo, Francisca Ortiz Ruiz, and occasionally research assistants. We used field diaries to register experiences, dialogues, and conflicts among the older women. This practice was especially helpful for the research, to memorize names, places, tools, and dates. Each researcher had a notepad to register ideas throughout the workshops, especially quotations. The researcher spent at least two hours writing up their notes on the computer after class, recording what had happened in that session. All the documents collected were organized by type and date and could be accessed by any researcher. The workshops took place twice a week (one full day, plus one morning) and included lunchtime. We were there almost every week, sharing the courses, lunchtimes, and some annual celebrations (such as Chile's national day) with them. Every month

we had a meeting to share our experiences and notes and to review the process. Our team reflections were about the care practices among the women, and the relationship of trust that we were building up with them. All the quotes found in this paper came from the field diaries that were kept during the courses and lunchtimes.

After the data was collected, we incorporated all these field diaries in MaxQDA software, which allowed us to go through the codification process collaboratively. The codification was carried out inductively and drew from the theories of care and community already mentioned in the theoretical framework.² Throughout this process, we met regularly to share our impressions and make changes to the codification, and we were all involved in the process of analysis and writing this article.

The ethnographic narrative that we develop follows an emic description of these micro-categories: it reproduces the organizational logic that we observed in women's own dialogues and practices. There are many ways to do this analysis, although we applied the three steps of Grounded Theory: open codification, axial codification, and selected codification (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Dunne 2011). This last step allows us to analyze the fieldwork diaries, with a hierarchical matrix made up of five macro-categories: 1) the history of the women's club; 2) dynamics of the workshop/club (including the uses of space, hierarchies, administrative tasks and rules, relational conflicts, economic problems, political relationships); 3) the relationship with materiality (physical ailments, reflections on crafts, manual practices); 4) the women's life stories (through different stages: childhood, youth, adulthood); 5) family relationships (care, work overload, violence, networks, and kinship). Each of these macro-categories was broken down into several micro-categories (156 in total). We analyzed the field diaries identifying those scenes that adapted to each of these micro-categories. The whole process was done taking into consideration the theories of care and community.

Our field-diary accounts recorded comments made by the 14 women who regularly attended the workshop, and ranged from 63 to 91 years old.³ Seven of them were widows, one was single, three had separated, and one was married.⁴ Many of them had outlived their male partner: the seven widows had been their husband's caretaker during his final years. Eight of them lived alone, one with her husband, three with children or grandchildren.⁵ As many as eight of the women had a proportion of their husband's pension as their only income: three of them received a pension,

one of them received the basic solidarity pension.⁶ These features intersect with their interactions inside and outside the Community Center, and reflect the precariousness their lives had accumulated. In the following sections, we will consider how this precariousness appears and how the women dealt with it.

At the Community Center

At the beginning of 2016, we approached the Community Center (run by Santiago's Municipal offices), located in an old commercial neighborhood in the heart of "Santiago Centro" that is dominated by low-rise houses. The Center is a large building made of cement and features some decorative yellow details in the front. It has many windows; though from the outside it is not possible to see inside. The "contemporary" design mainly features concrete and is reminiscent of the type of building used for gyms. A solitary tree, all on its own, marks the entrance. After entering through the building's perimeter fence, you are met by a large glass front spanning the height of the first floor. The interior architecture mirrors the exterior: spaces subdivided by many glass doors; rooms surrounded by transparent walls. Everything that goes on in the classrooms can be seen, affording no privacy or intimacy for the activities held within. These architectural dispositions make us aware of the intention to control this space, to remove it from the everyday mess that the proliferation of living relationships creates. In these transparent forms, the State, through the Municipality of Santiago, expresses a need to control this space (Lefebvre 1974:220).

Just to the right of the Center's reception area beside the entrance to one of the classrooms, stands a completely new display cabinet (two meters high by one across) with various pieces of pottery, each carefully placed and ordered with a price ticket. Stepping into that large classroom through its yellow door, a big table sits in the center. To the left are big windows. To the right, is the kiln room and shelves full of ceramic pieces at different stages of completion. There was a strong smell of paint. The "contemporary" design of the building was challenged by the public agency (Low 2009) of a group of older women. Fourteen women sat around a table in animated discussion, while the teacher gave instructions. They talked a lot, at times arguing, hugging, and saying hello to each other. Simultaneously, they continued working on their pieces.

One person was always there: the teacher. She was also an older woman, similar in age to many of her students. Her job consists of guiding the ceramic work done by the students and creating activities for each class. Many times, we saw her bringing new colors, figures, and patterns to the classroom to paint. She was part of the center's staff, hired to hold these workshops. However, her role was much more than that. She often attended some of her students' birthday celebrations, something she confessed to us late in our fieldwork. Many of the older women considered her a friend, while others as an instructor.

We approached the teacher during a lull in activities. She explained that the workshop was frequented by women (the majority widows) who belonged to the Older People's Club, a group established and run by the women themselves. They were very well organized. More than a decade ago, they had insisted that the local authority provide a space to carry out their cultural, recreational, and social activities; a "public space" in Low's (2009) terms. One of the ladies, Marisol (80 years old), told us that the activities had previously occurred in a little old house belonging to the local authority before moving into the current building eight years ago. It had not been an easy move: that the old house "was our space and we were very fond of it."⁷ Camila (69 years old), another of the club's members, explained that the old building had an inside square that was surrounded by small houses, each one housing a specific club: they could spend all day in theirs. In addition, there was a subsidized canteen that offered lunch at very reasonable prices. Now they were in this "concrete monster."⁸ The teacher agreed: the previous place was "much cozier and there they had felt closer to the municipal workers." Everybody felt as though they were "part of a big family, the environment was warm with everyone taking care of each other."⁹

Nevertheless, the women adapted. The shelves full of pieces, and the human warmth in the classroom that contrasted the transparent glass surrounding it, were proof of that. By doing so, these women appropriated the imposed "space dispositions" (Lefebvre 1974). Even in this new space, they maintained a certain autonomy in its management. And this brought responsibilities, as all communitarian forms of care usually do (Waerness 1987). The attendees gathered class materials and raised funds for their activities, as well as organizing many other different events (days out, parties, sale of their produce). The display case at the entrance to the

classroom was an exhibition of their art (which was for sale) that could be appreciated by all those who visited the Community Center. The women thus appropriated the benefits that the architectural transparency offered.

Any older person living in the district could register for the course. To do so, required filling out a form at the start of the year and paying registration fees to the Community Center's reception. The teacher told us that the club's participants spent a considerable amount of time in the Community Center. On Tuesday and Thursday mornings, they came to painting and ceramics classes from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Then, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., they had craft class. Between lessons, they would stay and have lunch, chatting and sharing food that they had brought from home.

The organization of the club and its workshops was not free of formalities. Being a legally formed institution, its management implies a hierarchy of functions and the keeping of records. It was run by a committee made up of a president, a secretary, and a treasurer. The secretary, Cecilia (69 years old), took the minutes of the sessions, organized the list of materials, and supported the general management of their activities. The treasurer, Silvia (68 years old), managed the budget, collected money, priced the objects for sale, made payments and kept the accounts. Overall, it was the president, Michelle (73 years old), who assured everything was working in an orderly manner. Michelle carried out her duties in collaboration with the teacher, employing a pleasant manner with her classmates. Michelle's responsibilities included taking class registration, going from seat to seat so each member could sign in, and confirming their attendance. This check was a powerful tool. Without this registration, the "club" could not exist. The local authority required this record for use of the Community Center, which imposed a rather foolish and unnecessary demand of "productivity" on the women. Whenever an administrative worker from the council entered the classroom, the women hushed and busied themselves, showing that they were "producing many pieces." The workers entered on a regular basis to "keep an eye on them."¹⁰ The logic of spatial control (Harvey 2008) was also visible in this constant inspection.

According to the women, this monitoring had never happened in the little old houses; it had been implemented in this building and had been given top priority in the hierarchy of vigilance by the municipal workers. To protect the "hygiene and cleanliness" of the center, eating and drinking in the classroom had been forbidden. The women did it regardless, bringing in biscuits and snacks that they picked away at in secret. That is,

until they revolted against the rules—exceeding its spatial delimitations (Ardener 1981:23)—and managed to get authorization to eat and have a kettle, cups, plastic spoons, coffee, and teabags in the classroom.¹¹ Here, time and again, the women demonstrated the “embodiment of their agency” as producers of this communitarian space (Low 2009).

Inside the Classroom

During fieldwork our position changed, affecting the way we related to the women and the workshop. In the beginning, we felt like *strangers*. All eyes were upon us with great curiosity. We were observed and evaluated.¹² Our transition from “strangers” to “apprentices,” then “friends,” and finally to “granddaughters” was gradual and not without some unforeseen events in our dialogue with the workshop’s dynamics.

The workshop’s routine produced scenes similar to those seen in a school: laughter, conversation, interruptions, fights, looks, and emotions. Often, the topic of conversation turned to the club’s collective day trips and the need to raise funds to finance them.¹³ In addition, they talked about their technical learnings. Ninety-one year old Elena told us, for example, that despite having attended for ten years she had only just started painting landscapes; a real challenge for her.¹⁴ Throughout these conversations, the teacher moved around the room and gave instructions. Everyone joked persistently with each other; there was a constant teasing going on.¹⁵

Mariela explained that the workshop was not only a place to learn how to paint ceramics, it was also a “moment of personal therapy that helped them emotionally to face daily life.” Especially for those who lived alone—like Mariela who did not have children—the club’s classes were “invaluable and it was wonderful to be there.”¹⁶ The women’s dynamics were articulated through the workshop, but they went beyond it. Through that space, they created a network of contention and care where they were collectively protected. At the same time that they were working on their ceramics, older women were looking for strategies to solve caregiving task with their families, friends, and others (exactly as debated by Finch 1984, Phillips 1995, Waerness 1987). In the workshop, they could say things that were not understood in other environments. There they found companions, who—sharing a common casuistry—understood their problems and their perspectives.

One scene exemplifies this. The oldest member of the workshop, Elena (91 years old), had had an accident and went through a long period of operations that caused a lot of suffering. During this period, her classmates had visited her, cared for her, and helped her. One day after re-joining the workshop, Elena—while modelling a giant egg—said, for all to hear, that she needed to ask them for a favor. Having gone through so many difficulties she had concluded that she could not leave this world without doing all the things she had always wanted to. She wanted to learn how to dance *cueca* (the Chilean national dance) and she wanted her classmates to help her do it. Immediately turning the powerful reflection on death into something digestible for all, her colleagues started with jokes making Elena and everyone else laugh. We realized that these jokes that proliferated in the class were not just a whim of insubordinate students. Rather, they were a mechanism of emotional balance that allowed them to talk about difficult issues without creating general unease. As a result, they could resignify the daily life of aging as something that did not necessarily have to be faced with pessimism.

But joking was only the first step. Next, Trinidad (73 years old) told Elena that she had a great contact for dance lessons. And so, numbers were exchanged, and they began to plan to take Elena, in the prime of her 91 years, to learn how to dance. Obviously emotional, Elena mentioned to her colleagues that she had a bucket list of all the things she wanted to learn before dying: in addition to dancing *cueca*, she wanted to learn how to swim. The jokes came back: “What, so she doesn’t know how to do anything?” blurted out one companion, sparking more laughs and containing the tears that had been about to spill. During this exchange, Elena stood up, sensitive and said that she had not learned these things in her lifetime because “men had stopped women.” She explained she had never had time: she had always had to look after the house, the meals, her husband, all of that was before. Now, a widow and alone, it was her turn. She wanted to learn. Once again, her friends rallied. She shouldn’t cry, she shouldn’t be sad; suggesting “you had to laugh about these things.” Laughter and jokes were *relational technology* with which they resignified the pain of having to face the condensation of the impediments and limitations they had dragged with them throughout their lives simply because of being female.¹⁷

Materiality and the Women's Bodies

Model the clay, shape it, talk to its whims, fire, and finally, glaze it. Far from being an anodyne experience, this practice allowed the women (and ethnographers) to connect themselves (ourselves) with their (our) most profound introspective feelings. We understood that getting together to do this activity pushed them, through the exercise, to reflect on their relationship with their own bodies and the materials they were interacting with and touching. And so, they were constituting their position regarding their physical limitations, the age-associated motor skills difficulties. But they persisted; by finding a way to carry on and produce the object, developing mechanisms to finish their tasks, and adapting creatively to their bodies. Modelling was a dialogue with materials, external technical instructions, and with the women's bodies. There were constant mentions of how the different materials used in class related to their lives. Thus, they dealt not only with physical pain (problems with articulations, muscles, osteoporosis), but also the fear of ruining their work-in-progress. It was Elena herself who said she did not have a steady hand. This made it difficult to draw lines on her piece; she got tense when it came to painting. She feared making a mistake and having to start over again.¹⁸ Confronting the fear of painting was one way (on a micro scale) of confronting the fear of physical handicaps.

This tense relation with their bodies' abilities was an everyday occurrence for our companions. They would share advice on how to cope with physical problems. While shaping the clay, there was a lot of talk on how to look after their health and appearance in general. Often these two concepts were mentioned as synonyms. They felt an enormous pressure given that their bodies were far from the stereotypes of female beauty (usually young bodies). Some of them reacted to this pressure by trying to eliminate any "signs" of aging. Cecilia told us, as she showed us her hands, that one of her fingers was swollen due to arthrosis, and that she felt ugly because she had been unable to put on her foundation and cover up marks on her face. Overhearing this story, Silvia told us that she had had 30 moles removed from her neck, but they had reappeared.¹⁹

Within the dialogues about their bodies, their relationship with sexuality came up constantly. The workshop was a locus where they could face the transformations in their bodies and lives that nobody had prepared them for. And, to resignify the naturalization of certain masculine powers over the female body. Cecilia told us that her friends from the workshop had

helped her confront her divorce. She had suffered a lot in her marriage. A jealous man, her husband thought she was always checking out other men. On several occasions, she had discovered he was having affairs with other women, but she had kept that to herself because she was “scared of breaking the family up.” In her marital relationship she had felt pressure to be “a lady by day and a whore by night.” She believed that men were betrayers and carnal: they were only interested in sex. But, as she said, sex was not forever. When her ex-husband got older, his penis no longer erected. Problems with her ex only got worse when his world stopped revolving around sex. He went crazy because she, “as a woman,” was much better at socializing with others. He began to prohibit her from speaking to anyone. One time he began to complain while she was putting on make-up in front of a mirror in the bedroom. He wanted to prohibit her from using make-up so no other man would look at her.²⁰ Cecilia’s ex-husband had died and, despite having separated from him, she had been the one who had looked after him. She was currently having problems with her daughter who couldn’t understand how she could feel “so liberated,” how she could travel and start courses. Cecilia cried. She felt guilty about this newly acquired freedom. More so because, on feeling more liberated she had begun to show interest in a man, (of her age) and she had no idea how to tackle this budding sexuality at 69 years old.²¹

Unpaid Carers

All of the women attending the workshop mentioned some family activity (or with friends) where their presence as an unpaid carer was “required.” Looking after grandchildren made up an important part of their routine for several of them: they modified their tasks to fit round school hours. During their grandchildren’s winter holidays (two weeks in mid-July), the workshop’s attendance dropped significantly.

Javiera confessed to us that she came to the workshop to pass time, that it was the only thing she did apart from look after her grandchildren. Due to a lack of funds, she lived with her daughter: taking care of the grandchildren was a way of “paying” for her stay.²² Carolina (63 years old) told us that she couldn’t stay for the Tuesday afternoon session since she had to pick up her grandson from school, give him lunch, and look after him. Her daughter needed her as a carer, there was no other option. As she told us, her expression gave away a subtle contradiction: she frowned

explaining that the boy was a lot of work and that she needed to have a lot of patience with him; but then she smiled with affection, saying that during these days she could “spoil him.”²³ She was not the only one to express this contradiction between feeling love and being tired when caring for family and friends.²⁴

In other cases, the women talked of the work involved when they had to care for their husbands if they had health problems. Marisol had stopped coming to the workshop for six years, when she had had to dedicate herself completely to looking after her husband. She returned to the workshop after he died.²⁵ Reflecting on this experience, she explained to us that women are better prepared to deal with old age because they have family and friends. And because they keep on doing what they have always done: “actively looking after others.” Men, who are unfamiliar with life outside the productive world, suffer in retirement.²⁶ So, having care skills, according to Marisol, empowered women to deal with aging by giving them capacities men had never cultivated.

The Economy of Female Aging

The women shared their experiences and the efforts they made to make sure that their scarce resources—pensions and/or welfare payments—could cover as much of their expenses as possible. They swapped tips of how and where to get the best prices. This was their way of getting help to deal with financial problems. For the widows, this help was key: several of them had been housewives while the husband worked out of the house. They received half of their deceased husband’s pension, even though the work of both had been necessary for them to retire. For the few women who cashed in pensions for their own paid work (three of them), the amount they received was so low that they continued working (as saleswomen). Cecilia told us that she sold jewelry, and that it would be impossible for her to stop doing so.²⁷

Just as Cecilia did, most of the women had to supplement their income in one way or another. Some could rely on their children who gave them money, did grocery shopping for them, or even took them in to live with them. This was Michelle’s case. Given that her widow’s pension did not cover even her basic expenses, she had moved in with one her daughters.²⁸ Camila was another example. Her grandson, who was from southern Chile, had moved in with her and her husband when he came to study

in Santiago. To cover this cost, her daughter sent monthly financial help.²⁹ For many women like Cecilia, Michelle, and Camila, selling some of the objects they made in the workshop or selling at a food stand at Community Center celebrations were important sources of income. Every time there was an event at the Center, they rushed to organize it with Michelle and to sign up for tasks.

Within their group, they were very aware of each person's economic situation and were conscious of making sure that those facing the most difficulties were supported. This subject was approached with great sensitivity because of the general feeling that financial difficulties were hard to swallow. In addition, given the hard work they had done all their lives, to end up in this situation without adequate tools was unjust. The help and protection offered by the State was too little to meet their most basic needs, e.g., their health costs. The club was a support network for all of them in relation to these difficulties.

An example of this was the organization of days out. In these cases, funds raised by the club—by applying for public funds—were prioritized to pay for those who were in the worst financial situations, thus ensuring that everyone could participate. There was consensus about the use of these resources. During the organization of one group trip, for example, Emilia spoke up saying that she “was having money problems.” Immediately, the women got up from their seats around the table and approached their classmate to assure her “those in financial difficulties did not have to pay, the rest were there to help each other out.”³⁰

The women felt that they were in a process of increasing impoverishment and they made attempts to try and stop it. The materiality of the objects, instruments, and products used by the workshop were a vehicle of this tension, particularly the women purchased materials used in the workshops. While modelling clay, they often talked about where they had discovered discounts for products and tools.³¹ Cecilia told us that she covered the price of new materials by selling the pieces she produced; whereas some of her colleagues were too sentimental and ended up giving away their pieces to family as presents.³² Through the workshop's needs the women realized and discussed that certain caregiving towards the families had to be cut back, put in second place in relation to the needs of the women themselves. Selling or giving away the pieces they produced was a decision linked to critical reflections that the women made about the hierarchies of the social organization of care. The workshop allowed

them to—in many cases for the first time in their life—denaturalize their care obligations.

With regards to the above, the placement of objects in the Community Center's display cabinet was fundamental. Trinidad, the treasurer, sat with the teacher to price the pieces, and once the price was agreed, to label them. Everybody worked the sale, but the money made was distributed to the people who had made the sold items.³³

Politically Positioned Women

We were witness to the political positioning of the women in relation to the issues being debated in Chile³⁴: particularly, their critical opinion of the way in which the country managed the aging process. A recurring topic of conversation was the huge national protests which had taken to the streets of Santiago since the beginning of 2016, marching against the private pension fund administrators (AFPs). These companies managed the obligatory 10 percent payment towards retirement that all Chileans must make monthly.³⁵ Trinidad and Javiera fully supported these protests. According to them, the pensions received in this system were “good for nothing”: “it was impossible to live off them.” They agreed that if it was not for the help of their family or the fact that they owned their homes, they would not be able to pay their way on their respective pensions alone.³⁶

Far from being an exception in their conversations and practices, political positioning was central to the way in which their club was run. In the Community Center, they had won a political space: they used several symbolic and relational strategies to make their presence known and to safeguard their capacity of influencing some of decisions taken on how the space was managed. The Community Center's administration needed them in political terms: the whole existence of that building was, precisely, to house “the community”; the space was literally a display case from where they could show the neighbors the emphasis given to social projects by the local authority.

On several of the days we accompanied them, they were visited by candidates seeking political positions. Candidates would come in, say hello, dedicate some words, leave a gift, take a couple of photos, and then continue on their way. The women would frame these visits with their jokes: they took advantage of the opportunity to flirt and joke with the

candidates. However, they would also express their indignation with those candidates who only appeared at election time.

The politicians knew that a photograph with the older women won votes. The women did too. And so, it gave them the opportunity to be very direct with the politicians. On some occasions, they kept their comments to themselves, pandering to the visitor's whims; however, in private, they maintained the power of having their own opinion regarding the person and their interests. One day, a man accompanied by two young people arrived at the workshop, all of them dressed in their campaign jackets. The man, a candidate for local councilor, began to speak of his dreams for the district. He highlighted his concern for the older people, for those who participated in this type of activity, given that "they were the ones who took most advantage of what the State offered them." Marisol burst out laughing. She looked down and said softly under her breath so only the women sitting around her could hear: "Ha! Now they remember us, later they will forget all of this." The president, Michelle, in her role as moderator between the club and these politicians, supported the candidate's words, praising a little recipe book that he had given to them as a gift. The politician left quickly, accompanied to the door by Michelle. Comments in agreement with Marisol multiplied.³⁷

The Center's administration often came to the classroom to summon them to activities in the presence of "illustrious visitors." Celebrations (particularly those related to Chile's Independence, in September) were one example of these politically important occasions. The Community Center's celebration always attracted these politicians—some already holding office, others aspiring to. In class during the days leading up to the event, the club's president and the teacher would actively remind the women about the importance of appearing at the event, "that they showed that they participated"; that they allowed themselves to be photographed so that, later, "they had leverage to ask the council for things."³⁸ On one occasion, Trinidad also spoke up, reminding them that it was not just about asking for things: this was one of the few times they had music, food, and a party to share together.³⁹

In August 2016, all the older women (and the men too, although they were in the minority) who participated in the Community Center's different activities were invited to an information meeting about pensions that was being given by The National Service for Older People (SENAMA). The event's presenter appeared on the stage, took the microphone, and

announced that the coffee break would be offered at the end of the talk, rather than at the beginning as advertised. Behind us, two of the older women laughed and commented: “don’t worry, we’re no longer hungry.” Just then, the presenter informed us that this coffee break was special because the food was from “our Mapuche brothers.” The older women sitting in front of us burst out laughing. Raising their voices, they said to him: “Are you canvassing for votes?”⁴⁰

Here, irony and jokes appear as strategy through which the women reminded these “visitors” that they (the women) had their own interpretations about their political intentions which they kept to themselves. The food was held back until after the talk to make sure that they would stay until the end. They did stay, but they made sure to reiterate to the organizers that they were not open to manipulation (“they were no longer hungry”). With their usual quickness they punctuated their comments about the quality and importance of the food made by Chilean Indigenous people, saying that a politician would only think of them when they are on the campaign trail.

A few minutes later, Carolina Tohá (Democracy Party) who was the then mayor of Santiago Centro, arrived.⁴¹ She greeted, hugged, and took photographs with the women. Next in line was, Marcos Barraza Gómez (Chilean Communist Party), the then-Social Development Minister, and Rubén Valenzuela Fiuca (Christian Democrat Party), the national director of SENAMA at that time.⁴² The minister and the mayor talked about the measures that Michelle Bachelet’s (Chilean Socialist Party, 2014–2018) government was going to implement in order to address the pension crisis. While they promised substantial improvements, the women were commenting, as always with irony, on their speeches. One said openly: “it’s too good to be true.” When the minister affirmed that women lived longer and suffered more than men in old age, they retorted in unison behind us: “Of course!” When the mayor said that the pension system debate had taken center stage, and that Bachelet’s government had been the creator of all the necessary reforms, many women made their disagreement known. Then, Tohá began to talk about the average pension received by older men and women in Chile. Two women looked at us and said out loud “I only get 80,000 Chilean pesos, not the average.” These women were a demanding public.⁴³

By the end of the event, the only dignitary left was the director of SENAMA. The questions from the men and women in attendance began

to multiply. They asked the director why they had started the AFPs; they stated that it was a lack of respect that the minister had left before taking their questions. They also demanded an improvement to the older people's situation, reiterating that the situation was unacceptable: "we always get left the dregs. Many of us started working at 9 years old. The people are fed up! Out with AFPs!" Then, they argued that the least the government could do was match the pensions to the minimum salary (and not give the stipulated 70 percent). They asked the director if it were possible that the 10 percent of income from copper that currently went to the military be redirected to make up the solidarity pillar of the pension fund, to make up the contributions to the poorest people. They women ended their intervention stating: "our eyes are already wide open."

Conclusions

In these final remarks, we aim to reflect on the political dimensions of care that are interwoven with the collective organization of the women who get together to do their art: pottery "glazing." That they are political protagonists was made visible in our ethnographic accounts: they are subjects endowed with lines of action, interaction, and politically placed discourse stemming from their own key interpretations. Our analysis finds that this political agency is linked to at least four aspects of our protagonists' experience in their club.

Firstly, we conclude that the club constitutes a space for community care. This means that it offers a way to solve the different demands care makes by mobilizing, articulating, and reinforcing social networks, creating a link between the women themselves and their surroundings (Waerness 1987:133). As community care, the club also became a social capital: "a set of current or potential resources related to the possession of a lasting network of relationships more or less institutionalized in inter-knowledge and inter-recognition; or, in other words, to membership of a group, as a set of agents who do not only have common properties [...], but who are also united by permanent and useful links" (Bourdieu 2011:221).

Through the club, the women built "their space." One where they could find answers to their needs that the current social organization of care in Santiago did not provide. The club constituted a response created by the women to the care crisis they faced that neither the private sector, the State, nor their families managed to provide for them. In the context of the

workshop, they looked for solutions to shared economic problems and they formed a network of carers looking out for classmates who, having survived their partners, did not have anyone to turn to for their care needs. They had found a place where they could express their views on these issues from their own interpretative perspectives: without having to mediate with the hierarchy of authority of the family domestic space, where they were obliged to act as “universal carers.” Thus, the workshop was a locus where their own interpretative framework could be developed and understood and shared by other women.

The experience of accompanying others in the construction of one’s own vision of things constitutes a challenge to the political validation of the most hegemonic discourses which tend to look down on the perspective of older women. As these political agents’ own space, the club and its workshops also gained a dialectic dimension in the measure that it promoted negotiations in this shared sense. Contrary to what it may seem, the collective construction of this space reproduces that the women themselves are responsible for finding solutions to their care needs. However, despite reproducing themselves “as carers” in this space, they manage to turn this position on itself: they are “carers of themselves” and under their own rules. So, the club and the workshops constitute a political space, firstly to challenge the hierarchies of distribution of *care work*, allowing the women to take on the power of deciding and defining who to look after, under what interpretations of care, and according to what needs. In short, putting themselves at the center of the question.

Secondly, when we refer to the women as “creators of a space” (Low 2009, Smith and Low 2013), we are alluding to the strongly political dimension of spatial disposition (Ardener 1981).

As we debated in the second section, the inversion of the infrastructure of urban spaces—and the Community Center is an example of this—is connected to political rationality (Lefebvre 1974:223, Harvey 2008:17). Through decisions about form, the State centralizes the materials and the design of public spaces, the type of use, and under what conditions people can integrate or participate in them (Harvey 2007:210–211). In the case of the Community Center, the huge investment in its construction and the choice of expensive materials speaks of the strategic importance that managing such a place for community participation has for Santiago’s local authority. Through the center’s architectural layout, with its lines and excessive transparency, the local authority is letting people know the limits

of their actions. The disposition of space—the move from the old houses to the new center, determined by public planning—changed and affected the type and possibility of relations that the women established not only among themselves and with the local authority's employees, but also with their eating and transport costs. The local authority gave them the space and paid for the workshop teachers. Therefore, the workshops, although organized by the women, were free of charge and open to the public. This placed certain limits on the activities of the club. Amongst other things, because the spatial disposition offered by the center did not consider the needs or uses of these women. Thus, through the management of the space and the imposing nature of its architecture, the local authority had inhibited collective dynamics that had turned the club into a “family of care.” Often, as Foucault (2004) puts it, these spatial interventions are accompanied by disciplinary rules. For example, that the women had to keep up their “productivity,” showing the center's administration that they were “working as ceramists.” Or the obligation to close the door after 30 minutes; not being allowed to eat in the classrooms; having to keep that glassy space “tidy.”

Our protagonists resisted most of these orders. Of course, they took on some of the demands, but they were aware of their nature. The level of intervention in their classroom showed evidence of this. The room had taken on the shapes of the women: the huge shelves with disorganized pieces, unclassified (which to the administration was “a mess”). They also gave the room their smells, and tastes (taking in food, putting a flask with cups, tea, and sugar in the classroom). Let's remember that the women were moved from the little houses “that seemed like home” to this “huge cement building.” In response, the women made it theirs, converting the latter into a new “home”: they appropriated the space showing that they were prepared to resist the disciplinary impositions of control. Thus, they showed that a public center could be more prone to the affectivities of the collective if it allowed itself to take on some characteristics of a home, of the domestic space. And so, they “domesticated” the center, and turned their knowledge of private logistics into a public good: open to whoever, like us, wanted to participate. These dialectic ruptures between the public and the private in the disposition of space constitute a strong political stamp. But our classmates were not hesitant to take advantage of what the new surroundings offered: quite the opposite. The use of the glass window as a display cabinet to sell their work is an example of that.

Thirdly, the order of the table and its seating arrangements followed a societal and relational logic articulated by the women over the decade or more they had shared together. By sharing they had found ways of collectively redefining their pains, physical and emotional problems, and increasing solitude. Time and again, they used jokes as a mechanism of resilience. At times, this language allowed them to discuss serious issues (such as death). Other times, they talked about repressed sex drives and how to deal with sexuality in old age. Finally, jokes emerged once again in their dialogues with the political figures who turned up at the workshop or at the Community Center's celebrations. With their peculiar jokes, they established a light negotiation between cooperating (and being co-opted) and established limits from which they would participate in this co-optation. In other words, they "let themselves be photographed," but always let the other (the politicians) know that their cooperation could just as easily be withdrawn. The irony and the jokes in response to what was said to them, was their way of maintaining a position of "strategically placed collaboration." This dialectic between resistance and settling down was present in all the ways in which the women related with the Community Center, their families and amongst themselves. But it was very evident in the relationships with political figures. This implies considering, as Comaroff (1985) did, that the political agency of subjects resides in this contradiction between breaking and reproducing. The women fought to determine their own future in the Community Center. But they did so through eminently contradictory mechanisms (Comaroff 1985:1).

Fourthly, the capacity the workshop granted the women to create their own political agency was, fundamentally, a result of the activities carried out in the classroom. Through modelling and painting, handcrafting, and the experiential "dialogue" with materials, instruments, classmates, and space, the women built a corporal way of assimilating, reflecting, and positioning themselves around their aging. It was from there, that, in a cathartic manner for them (and for us), their reflections on their bodies, illnesses, beauty, and how to solve in the flesh the challenges that aging brought them appeared. Modelling and painting were ways to self-reflect and reflect collectively. But they were also, and to refer to Foucault's (2004) debate, a political technology lived in and from the body. From our perspective, in the workshop's space, the women's practice created ways of becoming conscious of themselves that overcame the dichotomy of body/mind.

The women's experience of the club, the body, and the conscience constitute dialectically interwoven dimensions: they modelled clay while they reflected, and they reflected while they modelled clay. Through this continuous activity, having shared decades working ceramics, they had articulated conscious ways of enunciating their perspectives. They had their own elements and discourse to refer to the criticism of the organization of care priorities: Like when they told us you could not let affection cloud you, the pieces were there to be sold, not given away to family. Or when they all got actively involved regarding the freedom and desire of their 91-year-old classmate who wanted to learn how to dance. Through dance, they liberated this colleague from almost a century of bodily, emotional, and vital castration. And they said that this was to "put on a good face," "without crying." They were conscious of the dimension and magnitude of the violence that they were confronting with this political action in the form of dance. With this permeability between conscience and the incorporation of one's own perspective, the women acted and updated a dialectic political relation between resisting the limits of their gender and generation, and the (re)signifying of them from their bodies.

From this dialectic between resisting and settling from the body and the conscience, the women built their multidimensional strategies of survival, but they structured them from the logic of self-care and the care of others. Shaping these care dialectics, they gave life to their own way of dealing with them, surviving them and, whenever possible and necessary, of breaking them. In this practice, which exceeds the limits of Cartesian reasoning, there resides a particular way—political and poetic—for women to grow old. ■

Endnotes:

¹Policies aimed at the older population in Santiago are managed by the Office of the Older people of the district's local authority. This office is part of the Undersecretariat of Social Development, which incorporates the Direction of Community Development. The Undersecretariat of Social Development promotes various programmes aimed at older people (Municipalidad de Santiago 2017). One of these is the "Workshops", which offer activities linked with self-care, personal development, recreation, tourism, and cultural and artistic expression. These latter are a fundamental space for socializing. They take place in Community Centers that belong to the local authority but that are co-managed by women, who predominate as participants, and oversee buying materials, equipment, and the administrative organization.

²Ruiz did the first codification, which included a codebook in the same software, allowing the co-construction of categories. Next, Torralbo carried out the same process, making the codification more precise and clearer. These two authors went through this process at least a couple of times before giving everything to Menara Lube Guizardi. Then, Guizardi read the field diaries and their coding, which helped to configure an interpretative structure from the results.

³Adhering strictly to ethical research procedures, we have given each of the women a pseudonym in order to refer to them in our field-diaries.

⁴Two gave no information.

⁵Two gave no information.

⁶Two gave no information.

⁷Field diary, July 19, 2016.

⁸Field diary, July 12, 2016.

⁹Field diary, July 19, 2016.

¹⁰Field diary, June 28, 2016.

¹¹Field diary, September 26, 2017.

¹²Field diary, June 28, 2016.

¹³Field diary, August 2, 2016.

¹⁴Field diary, July 12, 2016.

¹⁵Field diary, July 26, 2016.

¹⁶Field diary, August 2, 2016.

¹⁷Field diary, August 16, 2016.

¹⁸Field diary, August 2, 2016.

¹⁹Field diary, August 2, 2016.

²⁰Field diary, July 26, 2016.

²¹Field diary, July 26, 2016.

²²Field diary, June 28, 2016.

²³Field diary, August 2, 2016.

²⁴Field diary, July 19, 2016.

²⁵Field diary, July 12, 2016.

²⁶Field diary, August 2, 2016.

²⁷Field diary, July 26, 2016.

²⁸Field diary, June 28, 2016.

²⁹Field diary, July 12, 2016.

³⁰Field diary, September 27, 2016.

³¹Field diary, July 12, 2016.

³²Field diary, June 28, 2016.

³³Field diary, September 20, 2016.

³⁴Field diary, August 30, 2016.

³⁵The Pension Fund Administrators were implemented in Chile in 1980 (through Law 3.500), during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, as a result of the social security reform that privatised the management of retirement funds.

³⁶Field diary, July 26, 2016.

³⁷Field diary, August 30, 2016.

³⁸Field diary, September 13, 2017.

³⁹Field diary, September 13, 2017.

⁴⁰Field diary, August 24, 2016.

⁴¹Tohá served as mayor from 2012–2014.

⁴²Field diary, August 24, 2016.

⁴³Field diary, August 24, 2016.

References:

- Agosin, Marjorie. 2008. *Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love: The Arpillera Movement in Chile*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- _____, ed. 2014. *Stitching Resistance: Women, Creativity, and Fiber Arts*. Kent: Solis Press.
- Ardener, Shirley. 1981. "Ground Rules and Social Maps for Woman: An Introduction." In Shirley Ardener, ed. *Woman and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps*, 1–30. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Arriagada, Irma. 2010. "La crisis de cuidado en Chile." *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 23(27):58–67.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2011. *Las Estrategias de la Reproducción Social*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.
- Brody, Elaine. 1981. "'Women in the Middle' and Family Help to Older People." *The Gerontologist* 21(5):471–480.
- Comaroff, Jean. 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Danely, Jason and Caitrin Lynch. 2015. "Introduction – Transitions and Transformations: Paradigms, Perspectives, and Possibilities." In Caitrin Lynch and Jason Danely, eds. *Cultural Perspectives on Aging and the Life Course*, 3–20. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Dannefer, Dale. 2011. "Age, the Life Course, and the Sociological Imagination: Prospects for Theory." In Robert Binstock and Linda George, eds. *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*, 17–32. London: Elsevier.
- Dunne, Ciarán. 2011. "The Place of the Literature Review in Grounded Theory Research." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 14(2):111–124.
- Elder, Glen. 1975. "Age Differentiation and the Life Course." *Annual Review of Sociology* 1(1):165–190.
- Estes, Caroll. 1979. *The Aging Enterprise*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Finch, Janet. 1984. "Community Care: Developing Non-sexist Alternatives." *Critical Social Policy* 3(9):6–18.
- Flores, Elizabeth, Edith Rivas, and Fredy Seguel. 2012. "Nivel de sobrecarga en el desempeño del rol del cuidador familiar de adulto mayor con dependencia severa." *Ciencia y Enfermería* XVIII(1):29–41.
- Foucault, Michael. 2004. *Vigiar e Punir: Nascimento da Prisão*. Brasil: Vozes.
- Gallardo-Peralta, Lorena, Alejandro Cuadra-Peralta, Ximena Cámara-Rojo, Betty Gaspar-Delpino, and Renato Sánchez-Lillo. 2017. "Validación del inventario de envejecimiento exitoso en personas mayores chilenas." *Revista médica de Chile* 145:172–180.
- Ganga, Francisco, María Angélica Piñones, Diego González, and Francisca Rebagliati. 2016. "Rol del Estado frente al envejecimiento de la población: el caso de Chile." *Convergencia* 23(71):175–200.

- Gibson, Diane. 1996. "Broken Down by Age and Gender: The Problem of Old Women Redefined." *Gender and Society* 10(4):433–448.
- Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 2010. *Forced to Care: Coercion and Caregiving in America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- González, Herminia. 2017. "Ser Mujer Mayor en Santiago de Chile: feminización de los cuidados en la vejez y desigualdades acumuladas." In Antonieta Vera, ed. *Malestar social y desigualdades en Chile*, 173–194. Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado.
- González, Herminia, Menara Guizardi, Alafonsina Ramírez, and Catalina Cano. 2019. "El club como trinchera. Una etnografía sobre cuidados comunitarios entre mujeres mayores en Independencia (Chile)". *Revista de Antropología Social* 28(19):137–166.
- Harvey, David. 2007. *Espacios del Capital. Hacia una Geografía crítica*. Madrid: Akal.
- _____. 2008. "La libertad de la ciudad." *Antípoda* 7:15–29.
- Hess, Beth. 1985. "Old Women: Problems, Potential, and Policy Implications." In Elizabeth Markson and Gretchen Batra, eds. *Public Policies for an Aging Population*, 39–60. Lexington: Lexington Press.
- Herrera, María Soledad. 2011. "Predictores de un buen envejecer." In María Soledad Herrera, Macarena Rojas, Francisca Campos, and Beatriz Fernández, eds. *Chile y sus Mayores. Resultados tercera encuesta nacional calidad de vida en la vejez*, 92–109. Santiago: PUC.
- Higgins, Joan. 1989. "Defining Community Care: Realities and Myths." *Social Policy & Administration* 23(1):1–16.
- INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas). 2017. *Censo de población 2017*. Santiago: INE.
- Knodel, John and Mary Beth Ofstedal. 2003. "Gender and Aging in the Developing World: Where Are the Men?" *Population and Development Review* 29(4):677–698.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1974. "La producción del espacio." *Papers: Revista de Sociología* 3:219–229.
- Low, Setha. 2009. "Towards an Anthropological Theory of Space and Place." *Semiótica* 175(1/4):21–37.
- Municipalidad de Santiago. 2017. "Dirección de Desarrollo Comunitario (DIDECO)". Available in: <http://www.munistgo.info/dideco/organigrama.php>
- Phillips, Brenda. 1995. "Women's Studies in the Core Curriculum: Using Women's Textile Work to Teach Women's Studies and Feminist Theory." *Feminist Teacher* 9(2):89–92.
- Reed, Susan. 1998. "The Politics and Poetics of Dance." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27:503–532.
- Rodríguez, Juan, Moisés Russo, and Marcela Carrasco. 2017. "Políticas públicas para una población que envejece: panorama y propuestas para el sistema de salud chileno." *Temas de la Agenda Pública* 12(92):1–13.
- Rosaldo, Michelle, Louise Lamphere, and Joana Bamberger. 1974. *Woman, Culture, and Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- SENAMA (Servicio Nacional del Adulto Mayor). 2010. *Estudio deja al Descubierto Importantes Diferencias Según Clase, Edad, Género y Zona de Residencia*. Santiago: SENAMA, Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia.
- Smith, Neil and Setha Low. 2013. "Introduction: The Imperative of Public Space". In Setha Low and Neil Smith, eds. *The Politics of Public Space*, 1–17. New York: Routledge.
- UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2017. *Desiguales. Orígenes, cambios y desafíos de la brecha social en Chile*. Santiago: Uqbar.
- Waerness, Kari. 1987. "A Feminist Perspective on the New Ideology of Community Care for the Elderly." *Acta Sociologica* 30(2):133–150.
- WHO (World Health Organization). 2016. *World Health Statistics 2016: Monitoring Health for the SDGs*. Ginebra: WHO.

Foreign Language Translations:

The Politics and Poetics of Aging: Ethnography of an Older Women's Club in Santiago

[**Keywords:** Gender, aging, community care, Santiago, Chile]

La política y la poética de envejecer: Una etnografía sobre un club de mujeres mayores en Santiago

[**Palabras-clave:** género, envejecimiento, cuidado comunitarios, Santiago, Chile]

老化的政治与诗学: 智利圣地亚哥一个年长女性俱乐部的民族志

[**关键词:** 性别, 老化, 社区照顾, 圣地亚哥, 智利]

A Política e a Poética do Envelhecimento: Etnografia de um Clube de Mulheres Mais Velhas em Santiago

[**Palavras-chave:** Género, envelhecimento, comunidade de cuidados, Santiago, Chile]

Политика и поэтика старения — этнография одного клуба пожилых женщин в Сантьяго

[**Ключевые слова:** гендер, старение, Сантьяго, Чили]

سياسة وشعرية الشيخوخة: اثنوغرافية نادي النساء المسنات في سنطياجو
الجنس، الشيخوخة، الرعاية المجتمعي، سنطياجو، شيلي