

In the autumn of their lives: exploring the geographies and rhythms of old[er] age masculinities

Introduction

The recently burgeoning scholarship on the geographies of masculinities has served to highlight the complex and nuanced ways that masculinities are (re)constructed in relation to other entities, such as material places and artefacts, social norms and particular geographical contexts (Gorman-Murray & Hopkins, 2016). Within this discussion, the spatialities of older age masculinities arguably ‘remain neglected’ (Tarrant, 2014, p.242), with age and masculinity continuing to be a somewhat ‘neglected intersectionality’ (Hearn, 2011, p.11) within geographical inquiry. Indeed whilst Berg and Longhurst’s (2003, p.352) oft-cited call to consider how “masculinity is both temporally and geographically contingent” has been readily taken up by those examining such geographical contingencies, temporal aspects of masculinities have been less explicitly articulated. Where critical work has focused on how different forms of masculinity may compete for social acceptance or dominance (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), or considered how individual masculinities might be performed across different sociospatial contexts (Gorman-Murray & Hopkins, 2016), it is commonly limited to a snapshot, static, picture at specific points in time. On the less frequent occasions where change over time has been considered, work has been restricted to looking at the dominant cultural scripts of masculinity within different temporal epochs or has considered how specific generations perform masculinity differently to their predecessors (Brandth, 2016). The following paper attends to this lack of attention to older age masculinities specifically, and the limited exploration of the temporal aspects of masculinity more generally, through a consideration of 32 older men who were engaged with over an 18-year period. The paper utilises a unique longitudinal approach of revisiting over an elongated time period to offer

new understandings of the geographies of masculinities, noting how older men (re)produce, organise and improvise rhythms in using and experiencing places as they age.

In focussing on older age masculinities, this paper brings into conversation, and extends, insights from intersectional approaches to masculinity with those on the critical geographies of ageing (Skinner, Cloutier, & Andrews, 2015) and the smaller body of work which focuses on more ‘temporally integrated geographies’ of older age (Kwan, 2013). Extant work on the geographies of age has shed critical light on how place and older age are mutually constituted, exploring, in particular, the notion of ageing in place (for a useful review see Skinner et al., 2015). This work has considered both the importance of familiarity within particular places, especially the home, as individuals seek to accommodate changes brought about by ageing and also how individuals might seek to deny or subvert dominant discourses of ageing in what has been termed ‘active ageing’ (Stjernborg, Wretstrand, & Tesfahuney, 2014). How such individual identities are worked out within broader structures and discourses is also evident within the critical work on masculinities which has highlighted how masculinities are dynamic and always provisional, noting how men may enact ‘flexible and strategic’ masculinities (Batnitzky, McDowell, & Dyer, 2009) between different spaces - such as those of home, work or travel. Much less attention has been paid to how such masculinities – often associated with privilege – may or may not be transformed as they intersect with age(ing) and, more specifically, how this plays out over (and within) time. Such an omission sits within the wider critique of geographical research that the temporal and spatiotemporal dimensions of inclusion and exclusion “have not always been foregrounded as often and analysed as explicitly or deeply in critical geography as their spatiality” (Schwanen & Kwan, 2012, p. 2043). In addressing this research gap, and foregrounding such spatiotemporal dimensions of older age masculinities, the paper utilizes insights from Lefebvre’s (2004)

rhythmanalysis in order to examine how masculinities are contingent on, and reproduce, rhythms and how such rhythms may change over time.

Whilst this paper is concerned with masculinity in one particular field – farming in a specific geographical context – this choice is purposeful as this is a group which is repeatedly reported as steadfastly exhibiting more ‘traditional’ forms of hegemonic masculinity associated with the historically patriarchal structure of the agricultural industry (see Little, 2002; Bryant & Pini, 2011 for useful reviews). Although recent work has challenged this blanket depiction of farming and rural masculinities – noting how structural and social changes might be reworking these more traditional masculinities, especially for younger men in rural areas (Brandth & Haugen, 2016; Pini & Mayes, 2019) – this group offers an ideal sample through which to explore the challenges which may arise at the intersection of masculinity and older age. In considering the experiences of these men, over time, this paper seeks to make several contributions. First, to respond to and extend the call to offer “situated, empirically grounded analysis of actual men in actual places” (Hopkins & Noble, 2009, p.813) - both in redressing the current bias towards a focus on more youthful masculinities and, also, by offering a fresh vision of how we might undertake such research by considering men’s experiences over time. In doing so, the paper answers the wider call for more ‘temporally integrated geographies’ (Kwan, 2013) and the specific call to examine the discussion of time more fully within geographers’ engagement with older age (Schwanen, Hardill, & Lucas, 2012). Alongside this, the paper seeks to extend a more relational understanding of masculinity and offer insight into the underexplored intersections of masculinity and older age by examining the interpersonal, contextual and fluid ways that older age masculinities are achieved and performed. Following an outline of the conceptual framing of the paper, details are given of the longitudinal methodological approach and this is

followed by an analysis of the experiences of older men, examining in what ways rhythms are important to masculinities and how such rhythms may change, persist and be reworked within the practices, positioning and performances of older men.

Background: Geographies of older age, masculinities, and temporality

Whilst the notion of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995) – that focuses on the normative, ideal type of masculinity which is seen as hierarchical to all other masculine and feminine subjectivities - has remained a key touchstone within geographical research, it is the deployment in its original formulation which has arguably obfuscated the discussion of older age masculinities. Simply seeing older age masculinities as subordinate to youthful masculinities - in relation to issues such as bodily capacity or economic power - has served to render older men less visible and to ignore the diversity of men's practices, positionings and performances in older age (Bartholomaeus & Tarrant, 2016). More usefully, within their reformulation of the ideas of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and colleagues see masculinity not as a 'fixed entity embedded in the body or personal traits of individuals', but as a 'configuration of practice' which is accomplished in particular social contexts (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.5). In this way, different cultural and temporal settings may see variations in the sets of gender relations and embodied practices which constitute masculinity. As West and Zimmerman (1987) concur, how we 'do gender' is an embodied achievement through ongoing interaction. This interaction occurs with others' expressions of masculinity and femininity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), such that they may achieve relative hierarchical positions within a particular context - what Gorman-Murray and Hopkins (2016, p.9) refer to as 'strategic accomplishments'. There is now a significant body of research which has considered the nature of such accomplishments in, and how they may vary across, a diverse range of spaces and places (see Gorman-Murray and Hopkins 2016;

Hopkins and Gorman-Murray 2019 for useful reviews). In recognising the potentially reductive and singular theorisation offered by hegemonic masculinity (Pini, 2008), the term ‘socially dominant masculinities’ is useful in placing emphasis on how particular masculinities may be celebrated, common or powerful within particular contexts, but offers recognition of how not all of these masculinities may be hegemonic (Filteau, 2014). Sherman (2011) offers a useful scalar exploration of this fluidity, noting how structural changes to the formerly dominant forest industry in a town in California meant that masculinities associated with production, the outdoors, strength and hard work become less attainable as men face unemployment. They trace how these men developed alternative forms of non-hegemonic, but locally dominant, masculinities in the shifting context of what was seen as a legitimate masculine practice – a theme similarly noted for younger men experiencing a decline of traditional social spaces in Estonia (Trell, van Hoven, & Huigen, 2014). Although these studies do not focus on older age, they are conceptually important, here, in highlighting that to recognise the situational quality of gender is also to recognise that masculinities are not static, but fluid and open to change. Such fluidity within masculine ideals have been less prevalent within the discussion of rural, and specifically farming, masculinities – where the long-enduring facets of masculinity associated with strength, physicality, stoicism, technical competence and aptitude within the natural environment are commonly reported (Pini & Mayes, 2019). The smaller body of research which has focused on youthful masculinities in rural contexts has similarly noted that although they may be performed in different ways these more traditional aspects of masculinity remain prevalent (Trell et al., 2014). Indeed studies have noted the potential challenges of the adherence to this masculine archetype, with Bryant and Garnham (2015) highlighting the feelings of vulnerability and shame amongst those farmers who have not been able to maintain their farming business following financial crises, and Little (2017) noted how the changing fortunes of rural industries might offer a

threat to these more traditional gender identities which in turn may encourage domestic violence as men seek to regain a certain type of masculine identity. Others have examined more overt changes to acceptable rural masculinities, noting how technological and administrative changes have led to the development of more ‘managerial’ performances of masculinity (Pini, 2008), and how new gender(ed) roles have arisen as farms engage in diversification and non-production activities on their farms (Brandth & Haugen, 2010). In one of the few studies to explicitly consider generational differences in rural masculinities, Brandth (2016) has noted how changing societal norms – such as discourses around active parenting – might be taken up by younger generations of men and how narratives of rural manhood become reworked within these. Whilst this work has highlighted the potential for more traditional rural masculinities to change, particularly amongst younger men who move away from rural areas (Trell et al., 2014), Little (2017, p.482) cautions that “‘unreconstructed masculinity’ struggles most in adapting to change and the traditional nature of rural masculinity is therefore a barrier to coping with alternative forms of gender identity”.

The geographies of age literature – in considering how older age is “culturally variable and underpinned by a range of social and economic processes, lived experiences and spatial practices” (Hopkins & Pain, 2007, p.287) – offers insight into how gendered identities may be (re)negotiated over the lifecourse. This work, straddling geography and gerontology, has considered how age and place – as well as social attributes such as class, race and sexuality – intersect, noting how relationships to place may change or strengthen in older age. Empirical work has focused in particular on the homespace – an arena well known to geographers as being central to creating a sense of identity, meaning and attachment (Blunt, 2005). This work has noted how the home may become increasingly important as people make (re)adjustments as they age (Winterton & Warburton, 2012), how such experiences may be

gendered (Varley & Blasco, 2000) and how challenges to identities may occur when people relocate within older age (Wiles & Allen, 2010). In the smaller body of social geographical work that has considered the geographies of older age masculinities, there has been a reflection on how older men may be drawn into geographies of care (Bowlby, 2012) - both for those with illness as well as in demonstrating expressions of care within grandparenting (Tarrant, 2014). This work observes not only how older men's sense of self may be reworked, but also how gendered divisions of labour may persist within, and be reinforced by, these changing positions.

Although it has been noted that “intersectionality remains an uncommon and unclear approach in ageing” (Calasanti, 2019, p.13), the application of intersectional approaches in studies of masculinities offers clear insight into how normative statuses such as white, heterosexual and male may see a transformation when they intersect with each other and other social characteristics (Gahman, 2017). Whilst intersectional approaches have their origins in black feminist thinking, which explored how black women faced being erased from discussions of exclusion which focus on a single axis of division (see Hopkins (2017) for a critical reflection on the history of intersectionality within geographical work), feminist scholars have extended intersectional analyses beyond the traditional focus on race, class and gender, to recognise “that there are a range of vectors of relationality present within masculinities in different places and at different times” (Hopkins & Noble, 2009, p.812). This feminist work has shown how gender, race, or class should not be as separate systems of oppression but ones that mutually (re)construct one another and this interplay may often take contradictory and unexpected forms as masculinity is (de)stabilised and alters at the intersection with other categories and, in turn, that both such categories and intersections may be contextually variable (Christensen & Jensen, 2014). Such intersections offer possibilities

for both inclusion and exclusion in different contexts. Abelson (2016), for example, undertook an intersectional analysis of transgender issues in rural United States – noting how transgender men drew on intersections of race and class to claim ‘sameness’ amongst other rural men and to minimize their exclusion in a context strongly associated with heterosexuality. Pini and Conway (2017) looked at rural fathers in considering intersections of (dis)ability and masculinity (see also Gahman, 2017), noting how they reformulated motifs of masculinity such as breadwinning, sports and the outdoors. Their analysis is conceptually instructive for the current papers’ consideration of masculinity and older age in recognising that men can “negotiate or reconstitute their identities around their changing bodyspace” (Valentine, 1999, cited in Pini and Conway (2017)). Significant, too, is their recognition that, even amongst a small number of men, this (re)negotiation varies – something which concurs with Calasanti’s (2019, p.13) caution, when seeking to apply intersectional thinking to older age, that “disadvantage does not double with age but alters in complex ways, which include not only structural constraints but also potential sources of strength or opportunities”.

The consideration of time and temporality has often been less explicit within the discussion of the co-constitution of gender and place. At one level, it has been observed that gender performances in particular places – such as the street – may vary between day and night (Anderson, 1999). More overtly to the discussion of masculinity, and the specific focus of this paper, Leap (2018) has observed how there may be seasonal variations, and patterns, to certain performances of masculinity - such as seasonally-contingent work and the seasonal nature of masculinised activities such as the harvest or hunting. These connections between gender and time have featured in the broader feminist critique of ‘gendered time’, which contrasts the common flexibility of men’s time associated with work/non-work and the more all-encompassing nature of women’s time associated with care (Bowlby, 2012). Whilst this

broad framing is useful in highlighting relative privilege, conceptualising ‘men’s time’ arguably lacks the fine-grained focus to understand the multifarious and nuanced nature of men’s actual experience(s). In seeking to frame older age masculinities, the paper draws on insights from Lefebvre’s (2004) rhythmanalysis. As the central tenet of rhythmanalysis suggests that “everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm” (Lefebvre, 2004, p.15), it provides a potentially useful framing for the consideration of relational older age masculinities. In recognising that everyday life is an ensemble of different temporalities, Lefebvre (2004, p.67) refers to the bouquet of different rhythms which may accord (eurythmia) or ‘break apart, alter and bypass synchronisation’ (arrythmia). Places, in this sense, are “polyrhythmic ensembles” (Crang, 2001) as everyday life is eurythmically ordered through the synchronisation of practices such as work, leisure, sleeping and consumption. Lefebvre places emphasis on the centrality of work in coordinating these rhythms – with other rhythms such as sleep and meals relational, and even subordinate, to the rhythms of work. Lefebvre uses the term *dressage* – which is similar to Foucault’s notion of the docile body – to consider the strategies and techniques employed to ensure bodies conform to dominant rhythms. As Edensor (2014) points out, such entrainment to rhythms might include disciplinary military training or the broader societal rhythms of the standardised (or enforced) timings of work.

Two aspects of rhythmanalysis are conceptually important for the consideration of rhythms of older age masculinities. First, that *dressage* brings not merely conformity, but also the possibilities of resistance, improvisation and the opportunity to remake identities– what Edensor (2010) calls ‘resistant rhythms’. A similar argument is made by Vergunst (2010) who, in their discussion of walking, notes that rhythms may be improvised in relation to changing terrain and conditions. Second, is the recognition that rhythms rely on materiality

and the non-human, being shaped, for example, by weather and diurnal and natural rhythms (Jones, 2010). Although Lefebvre's original analysis was quite singular in its demographic focus – the experiences of men in post-war France – he noted that temporal rhythms and entrainment may vary for different social categories. As Edensor (2010, p.2) notes, normative rhythms are “only ever partial and susceptible to disordering by counter rhythms and arrhythmia”. Hall (2010), for example, considers how the rhythms of the homeless are at odds with those working conventional hours in the city, whilst Schwanen et al (2015) have shown how participation in the night-time economy of a Dutch city differs across axes of gender, race and ethnicity – with women's participation greater during busy periods whilst men's was less affected by the collective presence and rhythms of others.

Where the discussion of rhythms has focused on older people, it has been observed that the tempo of everyday life may slow and that there may be a change in the way that activities are sequenced and timed (Schwanen & Kwan, 2012; Lee, 2013). New rhythms may be brought forward with older age, such a change in bio-social rhythms associated with ill-health, or new routines brought about by the reliance on medication and medicating times (Phoenix & Bell, 2019). Older age may also result in a withdrawal from public life, involve spending greater amount of time indoors and may lead to a feeling of being ‘left behind’ (Lager, Van Hoven, & Huigen, 2016). Neoliberally-informed discourses of ageing tend to devalue the non-working rhythms of older people, reduce their level of social capital and may leave them feeling ‘out of sync’ with wider society (Lager et al., 2016). Although it is often the case that older people may come to rely on the rhythms of others – in providing care or access to transport – it has also been suggested that individuals' rhythms may be reworked or punctuated in order to make post-(re)productive time more productive (Bildtgård & Öberg, 2015). Although not explicitly focusing on older age, Reid-Musson (2017, p.892) notes how

a consideration of rhythms can offer an insight into the “processual and repetitive patterns and routines within which social categories of difference are both constituted and contested”. Bringing this insight together with the intersectional discussion of masculinities and age(ing) offers a new and useful conceptual framing through which to consider counter-rhythms as people negotiate spatio-temporal constraints placed around them. Recognising their fluid and relational nature allows an exploration of how masculinities may change over time, whilst seeing these as accomplishments - achieved in specific contexts - allows a focus on how broader discourses of both ageing and masculinity intersect and are (re)worked at the local level in socially (non)dominant ways. Synthesising this with insights from rhythmanalysis enables an exploration of how rhythms both constitute and reinforce masculinities, and how such rhythms may be (re)worked in older age.

The research

This paper draws on a qualitative research project which has been ongoing since 2001. The initial research investigated farming practices and wider farming cultures and had a specific focus on gender and familial relations. Focused on the Peak District (UK)¹, the initial research involved 62 farms – mainly farming families² – which were purposively chosen (Mason, 1996) to represent different types of upland farms in this region, and involved a combination of in-depth qualitative interviews, most commonly walking interviews, and participant observation. Initial interviews (2001-2003) included as many members of each of

¹ The Peak District is an upland region, characterised by smaller farms focused on dairy, beef and sheep farming, with a smaller number of arable holdings. The area contains a National Park (being a priority area for a number of habitats of high conservation value) and has witnessed recent structural changes – most specifically in this area, a decline in dairying and a rise in environmentally-focused scheme participation.

² Family farms – defined as those under family management where 50% of the regular labour force is made of family members – account for 96% of the farms in EU.

the farms as possible and involved multiple interviews (both joint and individual) on all of the farms. Those initial farm members were re-interviewed again in three subsequent phases in 2006-07, 2011-12, and 2018-19, returning both to specific farms and, where possible, also interviewing members from the original interviews who had moved away from the farm. The material drawn on this paper comes from interviews with 32 farming men who were aged over 65 at the point of the final phase and who had been involved in the previous phases of the research.

The aim of this qualitative longitudinal approach was not only to consider changes to the occupation, but also to trace individual biographies over time. As such, the approach was designed to move beyond the limitation of much current research, on both ageing and masculinity, which commonly takes a one-off, snapshot, approach to considering experiences at one specific point in time. Whilst snapshot approaches have proved fruitful in gauging the varying experiences between different groups at the same point in time, and biographical interviews allow individuals to recollect, and reflect upon, differences to their past selves (Skinner et al., 2015), visiting at different time points allowed the more everyday and seemingly unremarkable practices – which may nonetheless be crucial to framing and forming gendered subjectivities – to be explored. Taking the view that people can talk about their everyday practices (Hitchings, 2012), in-depth interviews were the central pillar of data collection. These were emplaced interviews (Riley, 2010) in that they were undertaken on farms (or people's homes where they had moved off farms). This involved spending time with, and revisiting, (multiple) respondents – both as a method of observing their everyday activities and also considering the multiple lives that intersect in these places. Wherever possible, walking interviews were conducted as a way of exploring spaces and giving more deeply contextualised narratives (Riley, 2010). All interviews were recorded and transcribed

verbatim. Thematic analysis was undertaken cross-sectionally for each individual at each phase, following Braun and Clark's (2006) six-stage model, and then longitudinally in order to consider how the emergent themes persisted (or needed to be revisited) across phases and to examine change for individuals across the period.

The final sample consisted of 32 men who ranged from 65 to 93 years old. Although these respondents can be classed as 'older men', their work status was difficult to classify in the majority of cases. Those 11 men who had moved off their farms could be defined as retired, but 5 of these reported still helping on their successors' farms. Of the 21 other men, all recorded still having an involvement in the farm, with 17 living in the same house throughout and 4 living in a different house on the same farm. In the discussion which follows, respondents are given both pseudonyms and their ages given in ranges (rather than a specific age) in order to protect their anonymity, and extracts are accompanied with the phase (P1-P4) from which they were collected.³

Rhythms of older age

Older age is commonly associated with the cessation (or reduction) of work and a potential 'slowing down', and may require individuals to remake time-space "by seeking new everyday rhythms and places" (Lager et al., 2016, p.1573) – which might include maintaining routines and 'keeping busy' (Katz, 2000). Whilst reference to slowing rhythms, and what might be called 'rhythms of rest', were noted – both explicitly in interviews and more implicitly by comparing extracts and observations across the research phases - what was significant was how such rhythms were placed. The following quotes come from two

³ (a) 65-70; (b) 71-75; (c) 76-80; (d) 80+

interviews, at different points in time, with John – who remained on his farm – and one from Steven who had moved to a new home following his retirement in his late 60s:

I'm in the house to eat and sleep, or if someone calls me to the phone....that's about it (John,P1)

I probably have a bit longer after breakfast...perhaps have a sit at the table after lunch and catch my breath [wife interrupting: "you can see the black mark where he leans on the wall and dozes off [laughter]] (John,(a),P4)

I've not stop ticking...I'm not on the sofa all day. I'll get out to the shed or the garage and get my boiler suit on [...] I've got a portable radio that I'll listen to things on, and I've got a chair in there in case I need to sit down and have a minute if I'm tired (Steven,(b),P4)

John's extract illustrates the subtle changes to rhythms whilst remaining in a routine broadly similar to his earlier life, whilst Steven talks of the (re)development of his routine in a new place. Common to both is the way that rest was incorporated into both wider rhythms of busyness and anchored to specific places associated with work. It has been commonly noted that men may hold a particular relationship with the homespace – often being seen as antithetic to their masculine status as producer or breadwinner (Brandth, 2016) – and for these, and the majority of respondents, how their rhythms were tied to the homespace was significant. For John, his rest – discursively framed as 'catching [his] breath', but which his wife's interjection suggests was not uncommon – was enfolded within the long-established rhythms of his daily work. In this way, rest and stillness were not discrete or easily identifiable events or rhythms, but were wrapped into the temporary stops of mealtimes. So too, the kitchen was a domestic space of temporary pausing, and this pattern of being in the house just for meals was a continuation of a long-held pattern of daily activity, as evidenced

in John's phase 1 interview extract. The importance of the micro-space of the home to these rhythms was also seen in the extract from Steven – for whom the more overtly coded working space of the farm was not available to fold periods of rest into. Here, Steven utilised non-domestic spaces of the garage, garden and shed to allow the masculine status of 'still ticking' to be demonstrated by being active and out of the house (see Ormsby, Stanley, and Jaworski (2010) on the importance of sheds in older age). This status was buttressed by the daily rhythm of wearing of his boiler suit – acting as masculine and 'age-defying dress' (Twigg, 2007) and the timing of this wearing serving to signify that he was busy and 'working'. Whilst the presence of the chair was a recognition of the potential need for rest and changing physical capabilities – detracting from the oft-presented hegemonic masculinity of the able-bodied man without weakness – Steven's position was drawn in relation to the more lowly masculine position of being 'on the sofa'. Such a position was not only relegated as a result of being inactive, but also in being in the more feminised space of the home (Varley & Blasco, 2000) and, more specifically, being in this space at a time usually associated with work.

In addition to the moments of rest within the day, the interviews also highlighted how diurnal rhythms become important to the display of masculinity. The following extracts come from Bernard, who remained working on his family farm, and Bob, who had relocated:

*I'm still up first in the morning [...] and I'll go around and check what's in
bulling at night and that the silage is thrown up to the barrier⁴*

(Bernard,(c),P4)

⁴ Checking if cows are on heat (as part of their breeding plan) and moving feed so that cows are able to eat.

I'll be out with the dog first thing in the morning, he's raring to go, we're out whatever the weather, before most people are awake around here [...]
I'll do the washing up after supper...[addressing his wife] you're interested in the soaps aren't you? But I can't sit and watch that load of tripe..waste of time...so I'll do the washing up" (Bob,(b)P4)

Seen, here, is the spatiotemporal practice of what might be called “bookending” the day – starting early and finishing late – which enabled these men both to foreground their continued physical capabilities and to wrap any temporary periods of slowing or rest, within the day, into the broader rhythmic patterns of having undertaken a ‘long day’. In both cases, these long days served as ‘rhythms of resistance’ (after Edensor, 2010) against discourses of ageing and declining masculine status. For Bernard, his morning and night-time tasks, whilst both light in nature, were central to the successful operation of the family farm. His bookending offered a sense of continuity from the daily patterns of his earlier life – noted as important to people as they move into older age (Katz, 2000) – and a continued feeling of bodily capability and purpose. Both Bernard and Bob’s quotes highlight, too, the importance of non-human rhythms to this bookending, with the needs of cattle and dogs, respectively, acting as a pace-maker and intersecting with their own diurnal rhythms. Alongside this, a subtle display of masculinity was evident through the stoicism within which adverse weather conditions did not serve to disrupt these daily rhythms. At the other end of the day, Bob shows how the homespace might become reimagined within older age. It has been argued within gerontological research that people may see a ‘miniaturisation’ of their environment as they age (Rowles & Watkins, 2003) – relating particularly to the increased time spent in the home and the relatively short distances ventured – and Bob illustrated how this process may be rhythmic as well as spatial. Although domestic work is something that has been seen as the

antithesis of masculinity (Varley & Blasco, 2000) – and an area which Bob has not engaged with prior to retirement – it illustrates how age and masculinity intersect. For Bob, the kitchen has become reworked as space of work and activity within his miniaturisation of the homespace, and washing up thus prioritised as preferable to his wife’s practice of watching soaps which was seen as a ‘waste of time’.

Whilst the previous examples show that particular rhythms, and the placing of these rhythms, offered a framing device for the men to resist overt discourses of ageing and associated decline of masculine status, there were numerous examples, particularly where men continued their involvement on farms, where routine tasks started to challenge their physical capabilities. Although there was common acknowledgement of “not being as quick as I once was” (Albert,(b)) and having “had to slow down at my age” (Rodger,(b)), various spatiotemporal practices were drawn on in accommodating this slowing and in preserving their masculine identities. The two following extracts, from two men at different time points, illustrate their approaches to accommodating these changes:

I'm pretty fit ...I plough through a lot of work in a day. I've probably done as much before breakfast as many folk do in a whole day (Rex,P1)

I'm not as fast as I once was, but it's getting the job done that counts (Rex,(b),P4)

I've run hundreds of miles over this land, fetching and carrying livestock (Matt,P1)

I'd probably get the quad bike out more often if I'm fetching stock in...I can't really run these days, but can give anyone a run for their money on the bike (Matt,(c),P4)

Although there was a clear change in bodily rhythms noted between the two periods, the masculine traits of stoicism and endurance became foregrounded in the later extracts. Here, speed and tempo become relegated below the more highly prized display of endurance and perseverance. Stjernborg et al. (2014) have noted how technologies may open up possibilities for mobilities in older age and Matt's extract extends this in revealing how it might be used to maintain tempo and act as a substitute in order to mask physical limitations. Alongside this role of masking slowing bodily rhythms, Matt's extract also shows how the deployment of technology allows a (re)activation of the traits of competence and technical skill, which simultaneously allows a dominant positioning in relation to other, younger, men through the competitive reference of being able to give 'anyone a run for their money'.

Arrhythmia and older age

Hinted at within the last section of the paper is how the older men connect themselves and their rhythms to others. As Lefebvre has argued: "we know that a rhythm is slow or lively in relation to other rhythms" (2004, p.10), and the rhythms of others proved central to these older men and their gendered subjectivities. Two groups were commonly referred to – fellow farm members and those others living in close proximity. As Lefebvre (2004) argues, certain rhythms are more valorised than others – particularly those associated with youth and masculinity – whilst the broader literature on masculinities points to the young, muscular and fit body as the archetypal hegemonic masculinity (Gahman, 2017; Pini & Mayes, 2019). The older men commonly considered their own rhythms in relation to their sons and grandsons:

*Look at him [son] running around like a headless chicken....he'll learn to
slow down eventually (Rob,(a),P4)*

“I don’t need to rush the job, I know how to do it....I say to my son, stop and think a minute and you can save yourself an hour. He doesn’t often listen, but I suppose I never did at his age...” (George,(b),P3)

Through comparison to these young men, the older men identified their rhythms as slower, but rather than automatically conceding a less dominant position at the farm level, they were able to elevate their own position through their accumulated experience and associated skill. Rather than prioritising the rhythm of his son as preferential, George points to the unnecessary expenditure of energy and wasting time, in comparison to his own rhythm of “using your head a bit to save your body” (George,P3). Moreover, the reference of George to “I never did at his age” gives recognition to how rhythms may change over the lifecourse and that the relational consideration of masculinities is not only a present-centred comparison, but also to past rhythms and practices – a theme returned to later in the paper.

The rhythms of others were also evident through comparison to those outside the farm. The extracts below come from Norman and from two interviews with Geoff, straddling his time on and off the farm:

You see them driving past, not long after 5pm and then they are straight off to the gym...sat at a desk all day not doing any proper work and they’re ready to burn off some energy (Norman,(a),P3)

We go sequence dancing on a Saturday night [...] that’s our social life really, get us through the gate (Geoff,P2)

We still drive over and go to the same dance on a Saturday [...] keeps us fit [...] my wife goes to the afternoon dances around here...that’s not for

me...I see the bloke next door waddling off in the day, nothing better to do...I'll help set up, but I don't go to the dance (Geoff,(d)P4).

Echoing the earlier reference of Bob to walking his dog whilst his neighbours were still in bed, Norman highlighted the level of arrhythmia between himself and non-farming neighbours. Longer working days, tied to diurnal and natural rhythms, were contrasted to the shorter days of these others. This is taken further by framing office work as not 'proper work' and the lack of energy expenditure attached to the less masculine practice of going to the gym, as opposed to the more constant rhythms of his own manual labour which "keep me naturally fit" (Norman,P3). Whilst it has been suggested that older people may feel isolated as a result of being 'out of sync' with the working patterns of those around them (Lager et al., 2016), the observations here highlight how arrhythmia was also a way to maintain a distinction between individuals and those living close by and a sense of hierarchy in working longer hours or, in the case of Bob, showing his ability to be up early whilst those around him are sleeping.

Geoff's extracts note the intersection of rhythms of work and leisure. In the first phase interview, he highlights the eurhythmia with others, off-farm, in this leisure activity and hints at its role in 'getting us through the gate' – punctuating the otherwise dominant rhythms of work. As he moved off-farm and into retirement, this dance maintains a sense of social connectedness (cf. Rowles & Watkins, 2003) and a regular marker in the rhythm of his week. He is reluctant, however, to change the timing and placing of this dance – with the dances closer to his new home being in the day. His desire, here, is not for social isolation from those attending the dance, but to avoid what he considers the less masculine practice of dancing during the day. Such an activity arguably runs counter to his long-practiced diurnal rhythms of work and leisure to which he has become entrained. This practice – positioned as 'not for

me' by Geoff – was articulated through reference to the less socially-dominant position of his neighbour who was presented as less physically able (waddling) and having 'nothing better to do', and reinforced by the arrhythmic, resistant, position of helping (or working) rather than being seen to be dancing during the daytime.

Seasons out of time

In addition to the daily and diurnal rhythms of the people interviewed, there were also seasonal contingencies to how they did gender. The natural world has been pointed to in rural masculinity research - noting how the 'control' of land and nature is discursively placed as a masculine trait (Saugeres, 2002; Brandth, 2006) – but seasonal rhythms are arguably an important part of the display and performance of masculinity (see also Leap, 2018) and also older age masculinities in the case of the men considered here. The following extract, from Richard, considers his seasonal calendar and offers a useful entrée and reference point for the discussion of these longer-run rhythms:

Well we're in the spring, so lambing and calving have always been the big jobs around now, it's all hands on deck. Then you're looking to squeeze in getting some fertilizer on [...] when we've got the lambs out, there is a tonne of spring work to do...building up the walls, cleaning the sheds..dawn until dusk getting it done [...] then in early May we're getting the cows out and that takes the pressure off a bit [...] depending if it has been a warm spring, we can be thrashing into silage-making, earlier if the weather is right – that's when you really show your worth, handling the machinery and keeping it all rolling [...] making sure we get straw in⁵,

⁵ Straw used for cattle feed and bedding purchased from a haulier who collects it from a different county.

then it's getting as much done as you can with the light nights [...] first part of autumn is the lamb sales [...] then turning out the tups, bonfire night for April fools day⁶ [...] then you're into back end again...it's 365 days a year (Richard,(c),P4)

The seasonal patterns described were similar to those for many farmers in this region and beyond, and serve to illustrate not only the continual nature of hard work underpinning their masculinity, but also the collective nature of this engagement and how the past and present are connected together within these familiar rhythms. The reference to multiple tasks, working 365 days a year, and from 'dawn until dusk', all play to the common masculine traits of endurance and perseverance. The summer, in particular, represented the time men most overtly demonstrated their 'real worth', through long work days and also the skilled operation and maintenance of machinery - an area appropriated by men and to which women are excluded (Saugeres, 2002). Significant, too, is not just the persistence of work through the year, but its varying rhythms and placings depending on rhythms such as weather. Whilst the year presents broadly recurring patterns of work, their placing and tempo are cut across by the less predictable everyday rhythms of the weather – such as the need to “go, go, go” (Les, (c),P3) when the fine weather for harvesting is available. Such natural and seasonal rhythms were also significant for those men who had moved away from farms:

Well I've got a full time job here....I'm out mowing the garden, or sweeping the leaves up [...] I was out shovelling snow off the paths of all these old women in this row until dark the other night (Ian,(c),P3)

⁶ Tup is a local dialect for male sheep and the two dates refer to the gestation period of sheep (approximately 147 days).

I've got a good view right down the valley from the window....I've got the bird table set up, and the weathervane [...] I can tell you what the weather will do by the wind and the trees and the sky...tell [my wife] to get the washing hung out, or I'll phone [my son] and ask whether he is going to start mowing (Andrew,(d)P4)

For Ian, whilst the volume of work was not as intense as in his previous farming work, the seasons represented a pacemaker for the rhythms in creating a 'full time job'. Moreover, his activities, albeit on a smaller scale, demonstrate a masculine trait seen across the sample – the ability to react to and change rhythms quickly in light of changes to natural rhythms such as the weather. Again, there is a sense of arrhythmia here – as Ian's actions of shovelling snow after dark are decoupled from those rhythms of neighbours, which allows him to draw a dominant masculine status relationally to them and to maintain the sense of individual stoicism and hard work commonly associated with rural masculinities. For Andrew – who retired to a bungalow on the family farm after suffering a mild stroke between phase 2 and 4 interviews – 'somatic intrusions' (Edensor, 2013) brought a rapid change to his farming rhythms. Still, however, non-human and seasonal rhythms remained important. The layout of his house was similar to what Rowles and Watkins (2003) have referred to as a 'surveillance zone' and was structured in order to maintain this connection to the natural world. Although he was not able to lay claim to the physical attributes commonly associated with masculinity, Andrew retained the skill of understanding and predicting rhythms of weather despite his changed physical capabilities – with his son commenting in a parallel interview that "he is rarely wrong". Within the sample, there was a clear generational split, with older farmers laying emphasis on weather lore and more localised signs for weather prediction, whilst younger generations relied on more scientific, regional, weather forecasts. For Andrew, these

skills allowed a level of social dominance within this specific context – with his predictions being used to direct the activities of both his wife and his son.

Andrew's specific case is informative for the wider observation of how ageing masculinities are situated within "bundles, bouquets, [or] garlands of rhythms" (Lefebvre, 2004, p.20) and that such bouquets may allow the incorporation of "moments of improvisation" (Wee, Goh, & Yeoh, 2019, p.2). Seen too in Richard's broader narrative of the farming calendar – with repeated reference to 'we' and 'having all hands on deck' – Andrew's extract shows how individual rhythms of older men may be woven into the rhythms of those around them. Such synchronicity was important to how older age might be accommodated:

I'm on the main chopping machine now. Since dad has his hip replaced it's harder for him to work the clutch (Oliver,P2)

My son works the chopper and I do the mowing these days [...] it's a job that you have got to time right...I like to get some done later in the afternoon when the sugars are up [...] you can see the field, I think I've made a good job. Those corners have to be done right, especially if it's been a bit wet, or he'll sink in with the chopper and get stuck (Oliver,(a)P4).

Oliver highlights how multiple rhythms become bundled together. The somatic intrusion for his father (phase 2) meant a swap in individual tasks (operating the chopper) and a further change, to his son, evident in the most recent interview. The overarching rhythm of silage-making, however – as a collection of individual rhythms – remains unchanged. This synchronisation of rhythms, and the interchangeability of tasks, allows the masculine identities of older men to remain largely untroubled. In the same way as Bob and Bernard's

process of bookending mentioned earlier, Oliver's individual rhythms become indistinguishable from the broader rhythms of their farm and others – such that the individual changes of pace become less visible. For our broader understanding of masculinities, such examples highlight the process which might be termed 'de-individualising', whereby masculine status is maintained through this intricate synchronisation, or bundling, of rhythms. Place was central to this process as being physically proximate to the rhythms of others allowed any subtle changes in roles over time to be largely unnoticed or at least less conspicuous. In addition to masking any changes to their contribution brought about by older age, it allowed a sense of conjoined masculinity. That is, older men could place the skills and masculine status of their sons as co-dependent on their own contribution – in this case, the demonstration of his son's technical skills in operating the silage chopper were inextricably linked to Oliver's own skills and timing in mowing the land in preparation for him to do this. This process of de-individualising was also seen to take place over time. Here, the older men drew on a compressed temporal framework of past, present and future:

We've farmed it for over 100 years and there's another two generations following me now, so we should be here for another hundred years (Isaac,(b),P4)

I've carried on building miles and miles of stone walls over this place...chuck em out, build em up, chuck em out, build em up, year after year (Roland,P1) [in a later interview] they'll still be keeping stock in in the next century (Roland,(b),P4)

I've stood aside...I've done my share. We've set them up well [...] we're still winning awards for having the best cattle around here [...] I've taken the time to teach [my

sons] every skill possible [...] it's easier now, they'll not have to do the hard labour that I did, or the real hard hand-graft that my father did (Elliot,(a),P4).

Issac's extract is illustrative of the temporal approach taken by many farmers interviewed – where and past and future generations are often viewed, and talked of, collectively. Such conjoining of individual rhythms offered the potential for older men in these contexts to maintain a sense of masculine identity through sharing credit for current successes through their past rhythms and contributions. Roland (P1), for example, illustrates the cumulative nature of the seasonal rhythm of wall-building – in itself a demonstration of skill and strength – and later reflects on how it stands as a material reminder of these skills and rhythms and is still central to the farm's operation today. Elliot, too, uses past contributions (having 'done my share') as justification for his current slower rhythms (associated with ill-health) and employs the same process of de-individualising, but focuses on the skills of his son – seeing them, through this framing, as an extension of his own skills and masculine status. His example, too, illustrates two further performances of masculinity more specific to older age in this context. First, is the approach of 'stepping aside' – usually in the form of farm succession to their children but also, more subtly, giving greater levels of control to these whilst remaining working alongside them – which is the noble, masculine, action for these men in passing opportunity to the next generation. Second, and noted across the sample over the time periods, was how rhythms of work changed such that more processes have become mechanised and labour-saving, and that rhythms of manual labour have, accordingly, become less arduous over time. This is something which allows older men to relate to the present – with their successors both benefitting from their own past work, but simultaneously positioning these successors as having not had to endure the hard masculine rhythms that they

did themselves and, as such, giving themselves a continued sense of dominant masculine status based on this unchangeable past.

Conclusions

In moving beyond static and present-centred approaches, this paper has advanced understandings of, and debates around, the geographies of masculinities. Whilst much has been written about the spatialities of masculinities, the unique conceptual and methodological framing developed here has allowed the more temporal contingencies of masculinity to be articulated. Although the empirical focus of the paper has been around a particular social group and geographical context, the methodological and conceptual insights are more wide-reaching and contribute new understandings of masculinity, ageing and rhythms of everyday life. The paper exhorts the practice and value of a longitudinal ethnographical approach and offers a blueprint for future research. Whilst such approaches necessarily require researchers' longer-term investment, they simultaneously offer a commitment to participants and move the research relationship beyond one of researcher 'parachuting in' (and out) of participants' lives. More practically, the approach affords a new lens to understand how identities may be intricately (re)worked over time (and as people age) and through which individuals might articulate not only geographical contingencies but also temporal ones as they reflect on the expressions of their former selves. More so than approaches relying on participants' recollections, the practice of following individuals over time accommodates and highlights many seemingly unremarkable everyday activities that constitute how men do gender, not just how they talk of it.

The paper has seen that the notion of masculinities as relational (cf. Berg & Longhurst, 2003) is given fresh insight when considered through the lens of rhythms. This focus on rhythms

offers a less dualistic framing of men than those centred on bodily capacity and which, geographers have shown (Bartholomaeus & Tarrant, 2016), automatically present older men as subordinate, redundant, or inferior. The findings here suggest that micro-scale slowing - such as the need for rest or through reduced physical capabilities - may be subsumed within wider rhythms of continued work (and associated traits of stoicism and endurance) and periods of busyness. Following the same men over time allows an understanding of the gradual and subtle nature of this enfolding of rhythms. Place is central to this process, and it has been seen that remaining 'in place' allows older men to maintain eurythmia with those around them, such that their individual contribution remains vital to, but difficult to disentangle from, the wider polyrhythmic ensemble of this place - and avoids them being readily positioned as unproductive or out of sync. Although farming offers a particular privilege in enabling this continued engagement, this conceptual observation may hold wider resonance in light of the abolition of enforced retirement in many countries and the increasing number of people working in to what has historically been referred to as 'older age'.

Where moving place is necessary, the persistence of familiar rhythms and the subtle, performative, adaptation of such rhythms, are important to maintaining masculine identities in older age. Here, the paper contributes to understandings of the mutually constitutive relationships between older people and place - debated within the discussion of geographies of older age (Skinner et al., 2015) - in noting that the spaces of home may be reconsidered in (re)developing these rhythms as the masculine (productive) and feminine (reproductive) coding of indoor-outdoor spaces becomes reworked within the micro-spaces of the home. Whilst the findings here concur with earlier observations that older age may involve men spending more time in the homspace (Rowles & Watkins, 2003), it extends them in

recognising that particular rhythms – such as zoning and timing activities in the home – allow a familiar sense of masculinity to be continued in the micro-space of the home.

While common reference is made to how masculinities are developed relationally to places and other people (Gorman-Murray & Hopkins, 2016), this paper shows the need to also recognise how they are relational to the non-human. Natural and non-human rhythms and daily and seasonal contingencies may act as a pacemaker and working with them allows displays of masculinity ranging from long periods of busyness, facing adverse weather and demonstrating seasonally-specific skills. Whilst repetition and continuity have been noted as important to older age (Skinner et al., 2015), it has been seen here that arrhythmia and variations of rhythms may too be important to older age masculinities. Just as differing rhythms to those in close proximity may lead to a sense of discord and isolation (Lager et al., 2016), so too they may offer a level of distinction – allowing, for example, a distancing from age-graded spaces and prevalent discourses of older age as well as enabling socially dominant masculine positions compared to other older men at the local level. Alongside this, the ability to react to, and to work flexibly with, unpredictable rhythms – such as changing weather patterns - can be a prized masculine practice carried into older age. Even as rhythms such as mobility may slow in older age, men may take masculine status from working with this unpredictability and showing their ability to react to it.

The paper shows that masculine status is not only relational to other masculinities and masculine performances across space, but also across time. This relates not only to individuals' assessment against their former masculine selves, but through reactivating past rhythms and contributions in the present. Previous research has noted how artefacts such as photographs and other mementos may offer connections to previous selves, and that

accumulated wealth may undergird masculine power and status in older age (Calasanti, 2019; Pini & Mayes, 2019), and the findings presented here extend this in noting that the material outcomes of past rhythms and achievements, may allow a connection to the present, whilst the current practicing of skills that they have taught other, younger, people may allow a more conjoined sense of masculine status. Taken together, these observations also highlight the relevance for future work of recognising that individual masculinities are multiple and diverse and how these may, often, be reworked gradually over time. Whilst watershed events such as illness or enforced retirement may rapidly change men's rhythms, the approach taken here highlights how, more often, masculinities intersect with age in more gradual and cumulative ways over time. Such rhythmic patterns allow elements of pre-existing masculinities to be foregrounded as others slowly recede and patterns of both eurythmia and arrythmia – including others, technologies and natural rhythms – enable both new and reformulated senses of self and masculinity to emerge.

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Data Availability

Due to the personal and ethically sensitive nature of the research, supporting data cannot be made openly available.

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