

Just a Walk in the Park, Or is it?
A Case Study Analysis of a Seniors Community Park
in Oak Bay, British Columbia

by

Kathryn J. Bills
B.A., Keene State College, 2010

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Geography

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Abstract

A major demographic shift is projected to begin in 2011 due to the retirement of those born between 1946 and 1965, or the post-World War II baby boomer generation. Due to this trend, it is pertinent for Canadian communities to concentrate on creating ‘senior-friendly’ spaces, infrastructure and support services. One such initiative throughout British Columbia is the establishment of 18 designated Senior Community Parks (SCPs) across the province in 2008. This case-study research project, taking place in Oak Bay, British Columbia on the grounds of the Henderson Recreation Centre (HRC), examines park visitation levels, types of utilization and effectiveness of park accessibility, and infrastructure. A mixed methods approach was employed combining seven park observations, sixty-five quantitative questionnaires completed by patrons of the Henderson Recreation Centre, and 16 qualitative interviews with community-dwelling older adults between the ages of sixty-one and eighty and with six staff members of the HRC. Results indicate steady but low park visitation amounts as only 55 total people were seen during observations. Almost all persons were observed walking or jogging and only one person was seen using the equipment within the park. Quantitative data revealed under-utilization of the park and a wide discrepancy between the number persons aware of the SCP (90.8%) and those that visit more than once a month (38.5%). Qualitative interviews uncovered aspects of the park favored by participants (chip trail, park upkeep, exercise opportunities) and those that require improvement (exercise equipment, awareness). Two infrastructural shortcomings were identified; signage and equipment stations. Based on results, the ineffectiveness of the outdoor exercise equipment and awareness of the SCP need to be investigated further.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my Mom, Dad, Sarah and Deb for their endless love and kind words of encouragement in moments of need

and

Brenton for continuous motivation and comedic relief.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

A major demographic shift is projected to begin in 2011 due to the retirement of those born between 1946 and 1965, or the post-World War II baby boomer generation. Beginning at this time, the population of older adults in Canada will double (Hodge, 2008). Due to this upcoming trend, it is meaningful for Canadian communities to concentrate on creating ‘senior-friendly’ spaces, infrastructure and support services. The province of British Columbia (BC) consistently experiences increases in the number of senior citizens (65 and older) within the population, both from within, but also due to the in-migration of seniors from other parts of Canada. As of the 2001 Census, the percentage of the population age 65 and over in BC was 13.6% in 2001 and 14.9% in 2006 (Hodge, 2008). Particular regions of the province have become even more attractive to in-migrants including the City of Victoria and many smaller communities on Vancouver Island. For instance, the city of Victoria has the highest percentage of seniors of any larger Census Metropolitan Area in Canada, 18% (Hodge, 2008).

In Victoria, and essentially across all of Vancouver Island and parts of the mainland, there is a pressing need to consider creative and innovative ways to support healthy aging. From a life course perspective, according to the Government of Canada, “Healthy aging is a lifelong process of optimizing opportunities for improving and preserving all aspects of health, promoting quality of life and enhancing successful life-course transitions” (Healthy Aging in Canada, 2006, p. 4). One such recent initiative throughout British Columbia has been the establishment of 18 designated Senior Community Parks (SCPs) across the province in beginning in 2008 (see Appendix A). The role of these parks is to facilitate exercise and improvement of health while also promoting socialization and engagement of seniors’ in their communities (ActNowBC, 2008).

Current research regarding use of these SCP's is lacking in quantity and breadth. For example, none of the established SCPs in BC have been evaluated in terms of the extent to which they are being used by seniors and others for healthy aging activities. Nor were they evaluated at the time they were established as to their potential for use. This case study of the SCP in Oak Bay, BC, on the grounds of the Henderson Recreation Centre, will begin to fill this research gap. This study will contribute data on the SCP's visitation amounts, types of utilization, programming in the park and patron experience. The intended target population for these parks (older adults) were not involved in the initial discussions so this research will provide an opportunity to determine if and how well the parks are serving their needs.

1.2 Research Problems and Objectives

The research problem that will guide this project is two-fold. In understanding the goals of park development as specified by ActNowBC (2008), two overarching research problems became apparent. In light of these goals concerning improvements to health and socialization of older adults, two problems of importance surfaced:

1.2.1. Examine visitation and usage patterns of SCPs and understand what, if any, barriers to usage are present.

1.2.2. Recreational programming in the parks has yet to be researched or systematically studied in terms of type, attendance, benefit and perceptions.

To my knowledge, since no research has yet been conducted on the SCPs due to their recent development, these research problems will best provide preliminary data of park usage and visitation patterns that could assist in future research endeavors. Next, obtaining data regarding recreational programming in the parks will help to understand the role of the recreation centre in SCP usage and marketing the park. Lastly, this research could help to inform future

decisions regarding the management and establishment of new and existing Seniors Community Parks in British Columbia and throughout other provinces either in Canada or abroad.

The two research problems umbrella five detailed objectives of the case study. The objectives are more specific aims of the research. Therefore, each objective contributes to the two overarching problems.

1. Profile users and explore current levels of use including the activities being performed in the SCP.
2. Explore older adult's perceptions of benefits of SCP use (physical activity, social, meeting place) and physical activity participation.
3. Identify whether SCPs 'built infrastructure' influences use of the park (poorly located, challenging trails).
4. Examine how the built environment around the SCP i.e., neighborhood/recreation centre might promote or hinder park use in study area.
5. Analyze the type, frequency, perceived benefits, and attendance of recreational programming in the parks.

1.3 Significance of the Research

First, geographic research of parks is scarce with most park-related scholarship coming from the leisure sciences (Byrne & Wolch, 2009). Byrne and Wolch (2009) state that, "few geographers have studied the questions of who uses contemporary parks and for what purposes" (p. 748). This research will tackle these often unanswered questions from a geographic perspective. A geographic approach is important as it can address the notions of space and place that are not commonplace in other disciplines.

This study is also significant as it contributes to another research gap within the literature regarding the role of parks in the lives of older adults and the health benefits they provide. According to Payne et al., (1998):

To understand how local parks can serve as part of a preventative approach to health care for the aging baby-boom generation, research must be undertaken that better documents the relationship between local park use and health and wellness among those 50 and over (p. 66).

This research aims to uncover connections between SCP visitation, use and perceived health benefits by concentrating on participant experiences with the park. This systematic investigation of the park's effectiveness will shed light upon possible improvements that can be made to better manage the park to serve older adults and contribute to healthy aging. As stated by Alves et al. (2008), "Little is known about the relative importance of a range of different environmental features on older people's choice of behavior, which influences their activity levels" (p. 434). By focusing on the barriers and facilitators to park visitation, the factors that contribute to the decisions to visit the SCP among older adults can be better understood. Research conducted by Mowen et al., (2007) similarly states, "Less is known about the relative/unique contributions of park-based environmental, social, and behavioral characteristics in shaping physical activity and perceived health" (p. 168). Therefore, not only is this research beneficial to the Henderson Recreation Centre and specific community of Oak Bay, but also to the greater body of knowledge regarding parks and recreation for older adults and more specifically Seniors Community Parks. Lastly, this research will help to inform future decisions regarding the management and establishment of new and existing Seniors Community Parks in British Columbia and all of Canada.

1.4 Methodology

An ethnographic case study methodology will be employed to address the research objectives and examine the SCP located in Oak Bay, BC. Within this case study approach, qualitative research techniques (i.e., interviews) will be relied on in combination with a

quantitative survey instrument. This classifies my study as mixed-methods research. To begin, an introductory quantitative questionnaire was distributed to older adult patrons of the Henderson Recreation Centre (see appendix C). This was done in person following senior programming classes. Sixty-five completed questionnaires gathered information regarding the participant's general health, SCP awareness and use or non-use of the park, activity patterns, and health attitudes and beliefs. At the conclusion of the questionnaire, older adults were invited to take part in a face-to-face interview. Sixteen face-to-face interviews with consenting older adults were completed and questions that were asked inquired about participant's individual experiences with the park (see appendix D). These methods are used in combination to attain descriptive data describing participants as well as insight into their own lived experiences in regards to the park.

In addition, seven observations of the park (n=7) took place over the course of one month to investigate how often the park was being used and in what ways. Each observation took place on a different day of the week in order to compile a representative week of park visitation and use. Lastly, I conducted face-to-face interviews with recreational staff at the Henderson Recreation Centre. Recreation Centre staff were questioned about: their involvement with the SCP, programming in the park, park equipment and infrastructure, and future activity programming (see appendix E). Including both older adult recreation centre patrons and recreation centre staff, various points of view can be investigated regarding facilitators and barriers to park use. Coupling these perspectives allowed me to draw conclusions based on the input of the population the SCP is meant to serve as well as recreational staff with useful expertise.

1.5 Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters including this introduction. A literature review of academic scholarship relevant to the research constitutes chapter 2. Bodies of knowledge in the literature review include the health benefits of physical activity for older adults, the ‘everyday geographies’ of seniors’ lifespaces, and senior health and parks and recreation literature. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology with a detailed description of the mixed-methods chosen and how the research was carried out. In chapter 4 the two samples used in the case-study, older adults and Recreation Centre staff are described followed by the park visitation and utilization data and findings. Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the qualitative interviews. Lastly, a conclusion sums up research findings, determines if research objectives were met and offers final recommendations.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Approach and Concepts

To understand the role and importance of Seniors Community Parks benefits from a concentration on three facets of the aging literature, in no particular order; the benefits of physical activity for older adults as well as the barriers and facilitators to physical activity among seniors, ‘everyday geographies’ of older adults, and parks and recreation literature. Scholarship in these three areas has been reviewed and compiled into an integrated body of knowledge that is most relevant to this case-study. These foci are most pertinent to my research because of their interrelated links to the study objectives and their relation to the specific circumstance of the SCP in Oak Bay, BC.

First, the research will be theoretically oriented within humanistic geography. Then the relationship between physical activity and the health of older adults, a primary goal in SCP development, is examined. Also included in this section is scholarship on the barriers and facilitators to physical activity participation among older adults. The notion of seniors ‘everyday geographies’ is vital to consider and takes into account the community spaces seniors frequent will have great effect on their individual visitation and use of the park. Similarly, research regarding parks and recreation in the lives of seniors is worthy of review since the SCP in Oak Bay is linked to Henderson Recreation Centre and is a community park space. Lastly, conclusions based on these three facets of aging literature and their relation to the research will follow.

2.2 Theoretical Orientation: Humanistic Geography

Before delving into these three facets of aging literature, the theoretical orientation in which this project is situated must be discussed. The theoretical framework of humanistic

geography informs this project. According to Tuan (1976), “Humanistic geography achieves an understanding of the world by studying people’s relations with nature, their geographical behavior as well as their feelings and ideas in regards to space and place” (p. 266). The everyday geographical experiences of individuals have been a consistent focus of humanistic geographers (Buttimer, 2001). Experience is the holistic term for all the ways an individual knows and constructs reality (Tuan, 1977). As related to the perspective’s origination, humanistic geography emerged to rebut scientific geography, which lacked consideration for the individual. The experiential perspective is in direct contrast to this, as its aim is to bring the value of everyday human experience to the forefront. Rodaway (2006) explains the avenues which humanistic geography made available.

[Humanistic geography] Gave geographers the opportunity to reassert the importance of human experience, that is a concern with the individual and the unique, the subjective experience of people and place, a geography of feeling and emotion, involvement and participation (p. 263).

Through this research, I seek to gain personal insight into an older individual’s everyday engagement with the park. Therefore, the experiences of older adults regarding the SCP in Oak Bay are a central research focus of the case study. Obtaining insight into how participants experience the park will comprise the bulk of data. This is aligned with the experiential perspective within humanistic geography. According to Grant (2001), this stance is currently under-represented in aging research.

By relying on quantitative research, the stories of aging may be accurate without being true, may represent the experience yet omit the essence of it: the humanity of the person whose experience it was (p. 781).

Additionally, as a humanistic geographer conducting this case study, my own individual perceptions and subjectivity will be acknowledged. As suggested by Rodaway (2006), it is unrealistic to suppose that the researcher’s humanity can be ignored. Thus, this is not my

intention. Instead, through data analysis, writing, and result dissemination, my own subjectivity will not be overlooked. I adopt the description put forth by Smith (1981) that the humanistic researcher is “engaged in a constant stream of experience, observation, reflection and selection” (p. 296). Instead of relying on empirical data collection and analysis, the humanistic geographer emphasizes the worth of experience and critical reflexivity. Furthermore, grounding this research within humanistic geography will allow the participant’s experience to be the primary focus while acknowledging the presence of my own humanity throughout the research process.

2.3. Physical Activity and Older Adults

First, scholarship regarding the beneficial aspects of physical activity for seniors will be a focus followed by a review of literature outlining the barriers and facilitators to physical activity participation among older adults.

Literature describing the importance of physical activity for older adults is extensive. The presence of abundant research in this area helps to justify the establishment of the SCPs, to promote exercise and the overall improvement of health (ActNowBC, 2008). Much research has been conducted regarding the importance of physical activity in the lives of older adults (Haber, 2003; Freiburger, et al., 2007; Purath et al., 2009, Hughes et al., 2009; White et al., 2009). The benefits of exercise for senior citizens are multi-faceted.

Beneficial effects of regular exercise may slow the physiological decline associated with aging, reverse the consequences associated with disuse; prevent, reduce, or modify disease effects, reduce falls and disability; and decrease all-cause mortality” (Wyman, 2011, p. 10).

The benefits of physical activity range from improved immune systems to prevention of some cancers (Bartlett & Peel, 2005).

Physical activity positively affects various systems and bodily functions of older adults. Exercise in later life can prevent cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis (Haber, 2003) and also

help to maintain a healthy gastrointestinal system, immune system and improve respiratory health (Aldwin & Gilmer, 1999). Being active can prevent the onset of diabetes or increase the length of life for a person with the disease (Haber, 2003). Conversely Bartelett and Peel (2005) share the health problems that can result from being sedentary.

Physical inactivity has been linked to many health conditions including type-2 diabetes, heart disease, musculoskeletal disorders, some cancers, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and atherosclerosis, as well as contributing to excess body weight and risk of falls (p. 99).

Research suggests that exercise is one essential component in the health of the endocrine system, in particular “insulin and growth hormone levels and effectiveness” (Aldwin & Gilmer, 1999, p. 132). Exercise can have significant impacts on cognitive brain function in later life. A study of physical activity among older women, which lasted eight years in duration, reported that those who partook in higher levels of physical activity had a lesser likelihood of cognitive decline (Haber, 2003).

Physical activity among older adults does much to ward off disease and maintain healthy bodily systems and functions, but also can help to prevent injury. Falls are of primary concern for Canadian seniors. Across Canada, fall-related hospitalizations account for 85% of all injury related hospitalizations among older adults age 65 and over (Scott et al., 2010). In fact, fall-related hospitalizations comprise 8.2% of all hospitalizations in BC, the highest of any province (Scott et al., 2010). Moreover, “Falls are the most frequent cause of injury-related hospitalization for Canadian seniors and account for 78% of injury-related deaths” (BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit, 2006). Exercise regimes among seniors can help to prevent falls. For example, in a study of 217 people between age 70-90 researching the relationship between fitness intervention and number of falls, it was found that “during the 12-month follow-up period, there were 23% fewer fallers in the fitness intervention compared to the control group” (Freiberger et

al., 2007, p. 303). Furthermore, reduced physical activity among older adults can lead to poor balance and mobility issues, both being risk factors for falls (Kaplan, 1997).

Yet, it is understood that physical activity decreases with advancing age (Conn, 1998; Schutzer & Graves, 2004). In fact, of older adults age 65 and over, less than 40% exercise consistently (Sarkisian et al., 2005). With all the known benefits of participating in physical activity in later life, older adults are largely sedentary. Thus, effort towards health promotion and quality of life can be achieved by means of physical activity a creative initiative to support healthy aging, like SCPs. Grant (2001) states, “Our understanding of physical inactivity could possibly change by adopting a more humanistic and subjective perspective rather than relying solely on a normative, mechanical, and scientific view” (781), hence situating the research within humanistic geography. However, it is difficult to measure the improvement of health exercise provides due to the relatively small proportion of older adults who are regularly active. Therefore, research considering somewhat active older adults (see chapter 4) will be conducted in order to provide insight into the activity patterns and health beliefs of older persons with at least average activity levels.

Also when considering physical activity participation among older adults, attention must be given to prior research on the barriers and facilitators experienced by seniors regarding exercise (Newson & Kemps, 2007; Buman et al., 2010; Costello et al., 2011; Moschny et al., 2011; Bjornsdottir et al., 2012). Costello et al., (2011) sum up the many known barriers to exercise participation among seniors evident in the literature including lack of time, health problems, fear of injury, accessibility, convenience, cost and awareness. In a study conducted by Moschny et al., (2011), 1,937 older adults between the ages of 72-93 were surveyed about their physical activity patterns. If participants indicated they did not get enough physical activity they

were questioned about the barriers they experience. The most frequently noted barrier was poor health (Moschny et al., 2011). In similar research carried out by Newson and Kemps (2007) 217 older adults between the ages of 63-86 completed questionnaires about the barriers they face to physical activity. Again, the most frequent barrier listed was physical ailments (Newson & Kemps, 2007).

Along with acknowledging the known barriers older adults experience to physical activity, facilitators or motivators to exercise are of importance. Buman et al., (2010) summarize the most common motivators to activity throughout the literature including physician encouragement, peer support, presence of organized programs and health benefits. In research conducted by Costello et al., (2011), thirty-one seniors age 60 and older participated in focus groups to determine the facilitators to exercise they experience. The most common motivators to physical activity experienced were maintaining health and socialization. Newson and Kemps (2007) revealed a similar finding in their sample of 217 older adults as the most popular facilitator discovered was the mitigation of health problems.

2.4 'Everyday Geography' of Older Adults

To examine park use or non-use, it is useful to examine the body of knowledge concerned with the 'everyday geographies' of seniors. These everyday geographies refer to the community spaces and places that seniors navigate regularly (Hodge, 2008). Modifying and maintaining these spaces and places to be 'senior-friendly' is vital to the independence of older adults. The spaces and places in which seniors reside can greatly affect their mobility and overall independence (Rowles, 1978; Hodge, 2008). Hodge (2008) defines the 'everyday geographies' of older adults in terms of the regularly navigated places and the lifespaces in which seniors maneuver on a consistent basis (e.g., home to grocery store, to visit friends, etc.). Activities that

seniors partake in, whether out of necessity or for other reasons, compel older adults to navigate through their communities regularly. Hodge (2008) states, “The conduct of these activities generates patterns in the use of space and time, the result of which is a geography of everyday lives” (p. 103).

As previously noted, the everyday geography influences the ways in which communities are navigated, both positively and negatively. Many community factors can inhibit seniors’ including; transportation, infrastructure, and support services. Furthermore, “Spatial constriction can be viewed from two complementary perspectives: increasing personal restriction, and progressive environmental constraint” (Rowles, 1978, p. 22). Rowles’ (1978) understanding of spatial constriction stems from the idea that as individuals age there is a progressive constriction of the geographic lifespace and an inverse growing attachment to the proximate environment.

All scholars working in the fields of aging do not generally agree upon this idea. In fact, some believe that the geographical restrictions on seniors are not all that limiting. Two processes have been outlined that reduce environmental press on older adults (Rowles, 1978). The first concerns public policies that are designed to replace infrastructure within the community with age-friendly substitutes (Rowles, 1978). For example, some public transit buses have the ability to ‘kneel’ down (i.e., have their entryways lowered) to become more level with the area in which rider’s board. A second process concerns the decisions made by seniors. Rowles (1978) articulates, “older persons are extremely proficient at overcoming or circumventing environmental barriers” (p. 31). Rowles (1978) indicates that older adults will consciously avoid challenging environments for routes or destinations that are more comfortable.

In all, the built environment determines the daily activity patterns of older adults. This influence is both negative and positive, it is always present, as seniors must navigate the spaces

that constitute their ‘everyday geography’ to thrive. All people live across and within space. By altering community lifespace to be more accommodating to older adults, overall independence and health can be improved and maintained. Bartlett and Peel (2005) articulate this notion eloquently; “Where the built environment is age-friendly, older people are more likely to remain independent even if their functional capacity has deteriorated” (p. 108).

2.5 Parks and Recreation in the Lives of Older Adults

The SCP and Henderson Recreation Centre are a part of the lifespaces of the older adult participants in this research. However, the parks were not systematically chosen based on demographics or usefulness to the communities and residents in which they were established. Therefore, attention must be given to previous studies conducted that research factors that influence park use and visitation (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005; Payne et al., 2005; Mowen et al., 2007; Alves et al., 2008; Byrne & Wolch, 2009; Rung et al., 2011). Until recently, research within this larger genre has focused primarily on the presence and role of senior centres (Haber, 1994; Aldwin & Gilmer, 1999; Hickerson et al., 2008). This literature largely concentrates on the various functions of senior centres within communities and virtually not on parks at all. For example, in research conducted regarding programs that facilitate physical activity within community senior centres, it was concluded that there was a strong connection to the space as if it was ‘their own’ and that seniors felt comfortable and safe within the environment (Hickerson et al., 2008). An additional study on the utilization of senior centres concluded that 20-25% of older adults receive health information from their neighborhood senior centre (Haber, 1994). Research on senior centres has transcended the notions of health and environment. As senior centres provide forms of social support to older adult participants, studies regarding social support and older adults are relevant (Orsega-Smith et al., 2007; McDonald & Brown, 2008; Lee

et al., 2009; Golden et al., 2009). The Government of Canada has identified knowledge gaps exclusively concerning social support among older adults, “Additional research is required to better understand how community-based services and programs that enhance social connectedness contribute to promoting healthy aging and reducing chronic disease, injury and health costs” (Healthy Aging in Canada, 2006, 20).

Additionally, senior centre research is relevant as there is often a connection or affiliation between local senior or recreation centres and SCPs in close proximity, as there is with the SCP in Oak Bay and the Henderson Recreation Centre. Due to this affiliation acknowledging research on senior centers is crucial. However, there are obvious dissimilarities between the nature and purpose of senior centres compared to SCPs despite the connections that can be made. SCPs are an outdoor space whereas senior centres are primarily based indoors. Time outdoors for older adults is vital for many reasons including Vitamin D uptake from the sun, which is crucial to maintaining healthy bone density (Aldwin & Gilmer, 1999). Outdoor spaces promote mobility much more so than indoor senior spaces as it is likely that more walking is involved outside. Overall, linkages between the function and utilization of senior centres and SCPs do exist, but because of their differences, research tailored exclusively to SCPs is necessary.

Research has been conducted on the benefits of park utilization (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005; Payne et al., 2005; Alves et al., 2008; Byrne & Wolch, 2009). Byrne and Wolch (2009) summarize many advantages to park use including mitigation of sedentary lifestyles, improvement of mental health, increased property values, improvement of socialization, and the ecosystem services benefits parks provide. Although it is meaningful to understand the general benefits of park use, investigating the known advantages of park use for older adults is most useful. Therefore, the limited body of knowledge that addresses the relationship between older

adults and community parks is most fitting for the research (Payne et al., 2005; Mowen et al., 2007; Alves et al., 2008).

Payne et al., (2005) conducted research on the use of Cleveland Metroparks in Cleveland, Ohio by 1,515 older adults. The study aimed to address the relationship between local park use and overall health. Payne et al., (2005) distributed questionnaires to older adult participants to investigate park usage patterns and perceived benefits of using local parks. The results indicate “some support for the assertion that park use is associated with better ratings of perceived health and that older adults experience health related benefits from using parks” (p. 13). The majority of respondents listed that the primary benefit of their park visit was exercise and renewal (e.g., stress relief and improved mood).

Similarly, this same study produced another academic article examining how park proximity and social support effect park visitation, physical activity and health among 1,515 older adults in Cleveland, Ohio (Mowen et al., 2007). Findings suggest “significant, but weak indirect relationships between park proximity, park visitation, daily physical activity, and perceived health and direct, but moderate relationships between social support and perceived health” (p. 176). A strong relationship was found between park proximity to home and park visitation amounts. Another positive relationship identified was between “social support satisfaction, size of social support network, and perceived health” (p. 176).

In research done by Alves et al., (2008) the importance of “environmental attributes with respect to older people’s preference for a local park” (p. 434) were examined. The study methodology consisted of eight introductory focus groups followed by a questionnaire completed by 282 older adults between the ages of 60 and 97 in the United Kingdom. Older adult participants were asked about the importance of various environmental characteristics to their

preference for local parks. Results indicate “the attribute ‘nuisance’ (youngsters hanging around, dog fouling, signs of vandalism and no particular nuisance) were the most important, followed by ‘facilities’ and ‘trees/plants’” (p. 439). Findings illustrate that a combination of man-made facilities and aesthetically pleasing natural elements make local parks most attractive to older persons.

Prior research conducted by Payne et al., (2005), Mowen et al., (2007), and Alves et al., (2008) are helpful in academically situating the study of Oak Bay’s SCP but a distinction must be acknowledged. These studies were all conducted on local parks targeted for persons of all ages despite their samples only including older persons. This research project considers a different type of park, one developed and tailored to be most effective for older adults. Research on a park of this kind is non-existent. Although the literature reviewed in this section are meaningful, this case-study of the SCP in Oak Bay will pioneer the research of parks built for older adults.

2.6 Conclusions

Adhering to the principles of humanistic geography helps to theoretically ground this case-study and permeate the research process. Three facets of aging literature inform this case study: the relationship between physical activity and the health of older adults with emphasis on the barriers and facilitators to exercise experienced by seniors, the ‘everyday geography’ of seniors’ lifespaces, and the benefits of recreation and park use for older adults. These three facets create a body of knowledge most suitable for the study of SCP’s since no prior research on these parks have been conducted. In the next chapter, the methodology and individual methods used in this case-study will be focused upon.

Chapter 3. Research Methods

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this case-study. This chapter is organized into seven sections. The first section summarizes the study's methodological underpinnings and the literature that supports the multiple methods that are employed. The next section describes the sample selection and recruitment of participants for this case-study. After, the study community of Oak Bay, BC, and why it is suitable for this research is discussed. Next, the general research process is reviewed. In the fifth section, a detailed explanation of that data analysis plan is outlined. Lastly, limitations of the research methods are noted and a conclusion follows.

3.1 Research Design

The overarching methodology for this research study is ethnography which informs the research decisions and the methods employed within the project. Ethnography was chosen to inform this research as, according to Fetterman (2010), "Ethnography gives voice to people in their own local context, typically relying on verbatim quotations and a 'thick' description of events" (p. 1). Through ethnographic research, participants have ample opportunity to share their individual experiences, perspectives and behaviors regarding the SCP in Oak Bay, BC. This methodology will contribute to my research while providing participants occasion to speak out about beneficial or troubling aspects of the SCP located within their community. In doing ethnography, the study of human behavior in cultural context is paramount in order to comprehend and make sense of cultural norms and patterns (Holloway, 1997). Ethnographic methods were first incorporated into human geography research during the 1970s in reaction to the lack of attention to the individual human experiences of everyday life on behalf of positivist geographers (Cook & Crang, 1995). In this research, ethnographic approaches allow for the most

in-depth study of a participant's individual experiences and perceptions of the Seniors Community Park (SCP) in Oak Bay.

Additionally, a case study approach is utilized in research when there is an interest in gaining more in-depth information from a single study site. This method provides the most comprehensive insight into the study of a particular geographic phenomenon, Oak Bay's SCP. Crowe et al., (2011) state "A case-study is a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context" (p. 1). Case studies often focus on a particular phenomenon being studied in its natural context (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The merits of case-study research lie in the use of multiple sources of data collection to help arrive at the best possible answer to research questions (Gillham, 2000). However, the primary means of data collection within case studies are largely qualitative (Gillham, 2000). This research will utilize a mixed methods approach, but the primary reliance is on several means of qualitative data collection to formulate the most complete picture of the SCP in Oak Bay. As said by Gillham (2000), "The meticulous description of a case can have an impact greater than almost any other form of research report" (p. 101). The focus on this particular case will illustrate the complete circumstances and allow for detailed understanding of the parks many aspects.

The overarching ethnographic and case-study methodologies work in conjunction with one another for this research. By combining both approaches, multiple goals of the study can be met. First, several methods can be used to meticulously study one particular case, the SCP in Oak Bay. Case-study promotes the use of multiple methods, which this research capitalizes upon. Next, ethnographic methodology allows for detailed investigation of the personal experiences older adults have of the park. The definition of ethnography is complex and a concrete definition

for this methodology does not exist. Instead, in an attempt to define ethnographic methodology, Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) list common characteristics of ethnographic research in an effort to provide a credible description. The itemized list includes, “a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, a tendency to work primarily with ‘unstructured data’, that is, data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories, and analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions” (p. 248). This list of characteristics has prompted the inclusion of qualitative interviews and emphasis on participants’ personal experiences with the park.

This research project addresses or explores the lived experience of older adults in relation to the study of a Seniors Community Park in Oak Bay. To do so two primary qualitative research methods were used; a small scale survey (i.e., qualitative interviews) and the use of a ‘constructed week’ sampling method to try to understand what kinds of usage patterns can be observed within the park. These methods are supplemented by a quantitative questionnaire that is used to gather introductory data. Together, these three methods serve to develop the case-study and categorize the project as mixed-methods research. A mixed method approach calls upon different research tools and perspectives to foster or support triangulation (Valentine, 2005). According to Farmer et al., (2006), triangulation emphasizes the use of multiple methods “to enhance the validity of the research by increasing the likelihood that the findings and interpretations will be found credible and dependable” (p. 378). Mixed-methods research provides varied perspectives in regards to one specific geographic phenomenon to increase the validity and credibility of research findings. Morse (2010), also suggests, “Mixed methods enable qualitative researchers with designs and principles to handle problems of increasing

complexity” (p. 491). With this, abundant literature supports the merit of incorporating multiple methods in one research study (Valentine, 2005; Farmer et al., 2006; Morse, 2010).

In this research, quantitative questionnaires have been used as an introductory tool to collect socio-demographic and other information that is easily gathered through this format. By doing so, qualitative interviews can focus more on the issues that require detailed, in-depth explanation rather than on general data for the purpose of sample description. Questionnaires also served as a recruitment tool in order to secure older adult participants for the qualitative interviews that comprise the second phase of the study (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Research Phases

Phase	Description	Dates
Phase 1a	Questionnaire distribution and completion	April 11 –April 28
Phase 1b	Constructed week sampling method	April 11 – May 12
Phase 2	Older adult and recreation staff interviews	April 11 – May 12
Phase 3	Transcription, coding and data analysis	May 12 – December 30

Qualitative interviews provide the most rich, in-depth data regarding participant’s experiences with the SCP. Holloway (1997) describes, “The qualitative interview is a ‘conversation with a purpose’ in which the interviewer aims to obtain the perspectives, feelings and perceptions from the participant(s) in the research” (p. 954). The purpose of qualitative interviews for this case-study is to better understand the personal experiences of participants regarding the SCP in Oak Bay, BC. Seidman (1991) discusses the interview method by stating; “interviewing provides access to the context of people’s behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior” (p. 4). The qualitative data gathered during interviews will provide great insight into the personal experiences and perspectives of participants.

The 'constructed week' sampling method has been employed to conceptualize the current levels of park usage and visitation. The purpose of undertaking this sampling method was to formulate a picture of how broadly or narrowly the park is used on a weekly basis. Furthermore, this method provides insight into how often the park is used and in what ways. Luke et al., (2011) explain, "Constructed week sampling is a type of stratified random sampling technique popular in media studies in which the final sample represents all seven days of the week" (p. 78). Despite its regular use in media research, the method has incredible merit within the study of the Oak Bay SCP to depict a clear picture of current park usage. By randomly sampling certain days of the week, a representative week of park usage can be created and the data for it compiled.

The two groups involved in this research are community dwelling older adults and staff of the Henderson Recreation Centre. All interviews were conducted between April 11, 2011 and May 12, 2011. During this time, 65 questionnaires were completed by recreation centre patrons. Of this, 16 older adults aged 60 and over volunteered to be interviewed. Six recreation centre staff working in various positions were interviewed as well regarding their perceptions of park effectiveness, accessibility and to explore the opportunities for scheduled recreation centre programming aimed at increasing park use. During this time the constructed week sampling method was carried out, as well.

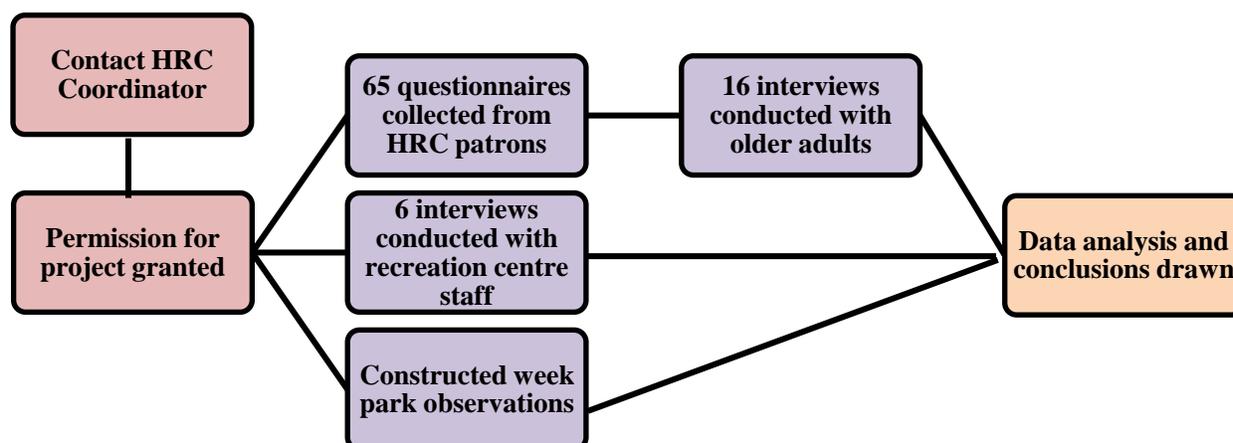
3.2 Sample Selection and Recruitment

The sample for this case-study research includes both older adult visitors of HRC and employees of the recreation centre. The older adults vary in gender, age, health, activity-level and SCP awareness. Recreation centre staff hold various positions that carry a range of responsibilities in relation to the recreation centre and the SCP. With this, the recreation centre staff members have had different levels of involvement with the development of the park. Since

these personnel were deliberately selected for their expertise, all the sample participants represent a non-random, purposive sample of older adults that visit the HRC and recreation staff with some knowledge of the SCP.

The coordinator of the HRC was contacted in order to seek approval for this project and to recruit participants (Figure 3.1). The project was approved and further permissions were granted allowing questionnaires to be administered to passing visitors in the HRC lobby. Efforts to recruit older adults to participate occurred between April 11, 2011 and April 28, 2011. The older adult sample for the research project was approached in the lobby of HRC on eight separate occasions. As patrons passed, I would briefly describe the project and the need for questionnaire data and ask if they would be willing to complete a questionnaire. Sixty-five questionnaires were completed by HRC patrons during that time. At the conclusion of each questionnaire, I would ask the respondent to indicate if they would be willing to take part in the second phase of the research, this being a follow-up in person, in-depth interview. Twenty-six phase 1 questionnaire respondents indicated they would be willing to participate in the second qualitative stage of research. After contacting those individuals by phone or by e-mail, sixteen in-depth interviews were scheduled and completed with older adult participants, and the interview sample was determined.

Figure 3.1: Flowchart of Methods Utilized in Study



To generate a sample of HRC staff, the Recreation Oak Bay website, recreation.oakbaybc.org, was used. Recreation centre administrators, fitness programmers and recreation programmers were then contacted by e-mail to ask for their participation in the project. Interview appointments were scheduled with those willing to take part in the research. The coordinator of the HRC also assisted with sampling by suggesting recreation centre staff members who could provide valuable insight into the SCP and its components. These staff were then contacted by e-mail or in-person at the recreation centre. In total, six recreation centre staff were interviewed between April 20, 2011 and May 12, 2011 (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Sample Sizes

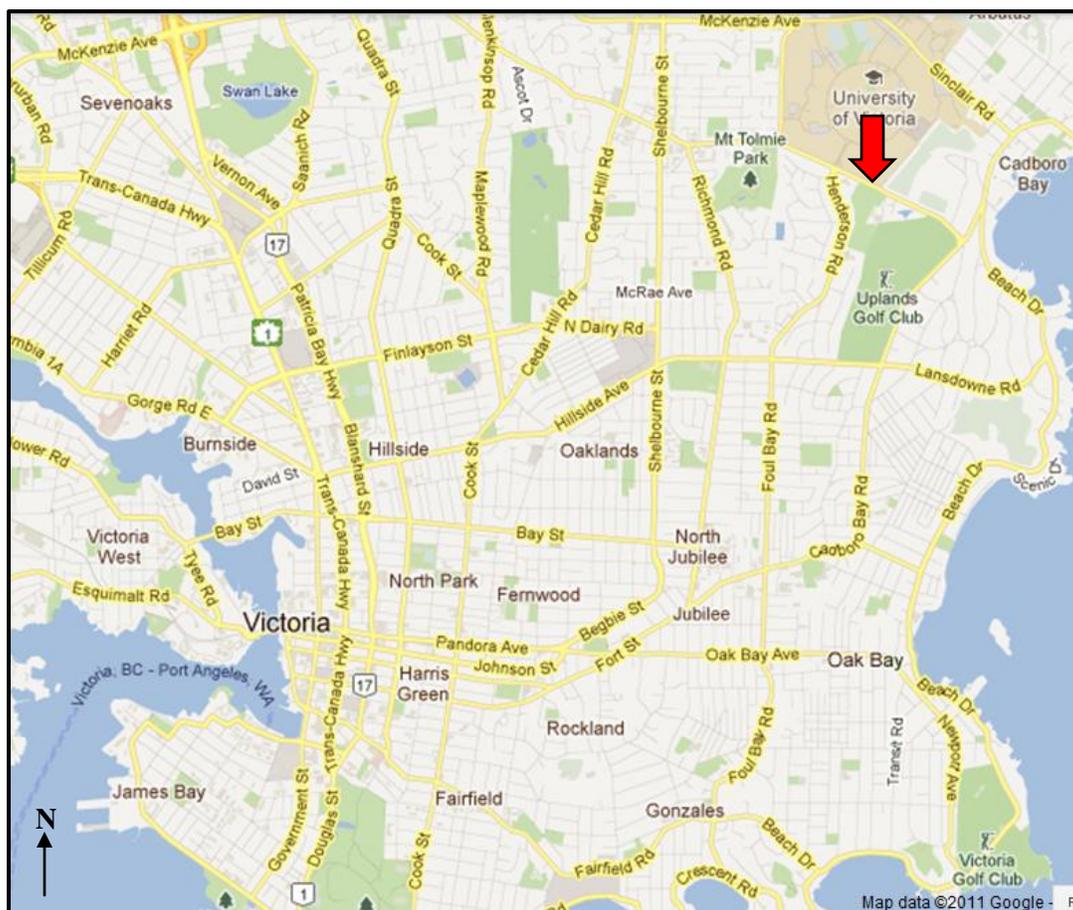
	n
Questionnaire Respondents	65
Older Adult Interviews	16
Recreation Staff Interviews	6

3.3 Study Area: Oak Bay, BC and the Henderson Recreation Centre

The study area for this case-study is the SCP located in Oak Bay, BC on the site of the Henderson Recreation Centre (Figure 3.2). Oak Bay is a municipality within the City of Victoria, located in the southern portion of Vancouver Island on the northeastern edge of the Saanich peninsula. Oak Bay's population as of the 2006 census data was 17,908 and of this, 25.2% of the population is 65 and older (Statistics Canada, 2007). This is considerably higher than the 15.3% of the population who are aged 65 and over in BC (Statistics Canada, 2011). With older adults comprising one quarter of the population in Oak Bay, there is no lack of persons in the area that this park is meant to serve. Moreover, the median age of residents in Oak Bay is 49 years (Statistics Canada, 2007). Since demographers consider locales with a median age over 30 to be considered 'old' (Chappell et al., 2008), Oak Bay would certainly fit within this definition. For

comparative purposes, the median age of the province of British Columbia is 41.1 years which is lower than the median age of Oak Bay yet still considered demographically ‘old’ (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Figure 3.2: Map of greater Victoria (Henderson Recreation Centre indicated with arrow)



Source: Google Maps

Next, various recreational and leisure activities are available in Oak Bay. Throughout Oak Bay there are several recreation centres present including Henderson Recreation Centre as well as Monterey Recreation Centre and Oak Bay Recreation Centre in the area. This provides some rationale as to what makes Oak Bay an appropriate study site for this research, as the uptake of previous recreation initiatives has been positive. The parks' close proximity to the University of

Victoria was also a pragmatic consideration. Therefore, the park is located in a geographically, demographically and recreationally appropriate locale.

3.4 Research Process

An ethics review was conducted and approved by the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board. In accord with the University's ethics board, informed consent was obtained prior to participant completion of questionnaires and again before interviews took place. In this way consent was obtained twice by individuals who completed a questionnaire and were also interviewed. This occurred because the in-person interview questions were of a more sensitive nature than those on the questionnaire, so additional explanation regarding this and other matters not applicable to the questionnaires had to be consented to. In reference to interview data, pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of all participants.

3.4.1 The constructed week and park observation

In order to conceptualize current levels of park usage and visitation a constructed week sampling method was utilized. Normally used in media studies, a constructed week sampling method randomly samples a phenomenon to ascertain data that reflects a representative and complete seven day week (Luke et al., 2011). The purpose of the constructed week sampling method is to quantify levels of park use over an average week by observing patrons of the SCP. These results show how many people are using the park, and in what ways, during a representative week. The constructed week sampling began on Monday, April 11, 2011 and completed on Thursday, May 12, 2011. Throughout this one month period, I visited the SCP on each day of the week at varying times of day to observe and annotate park usage and visitation using a common instrument to record findings (see appendix B). Days were chosen at random to ensure overall that an observation took place on every day of the week. On each visit data

pertaining to the number of people in the park, the age, sex, and grouping of patrons, and activity type being performed by visitors were collected (Table 3.3). The average amount of time spent in the park at each observation point was 28.6 minutes. Observation times in which I visited the park varied to randomize the sample as much as possible and so trends in visitation based on time of day could be detected. When observations were conducted, no routines were disrupted and instead I took the stance of a quiet observer.

Table 3.3: Sample Park Observation Data

MONDAY, April 11, 2011	
2:50-3:15pm	Sunny, 10.6° (C)
Total number of people	4
Total men	2
Total women	2
AGE COMPOSITION	
Total kids	0
Total young adults	1
Total adults	2
Total older adults	1
SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCE	
Total number of people alone	2
Total number of persons in pairs	2
Total number of persons in groups of 3 or more	0
ACTIVITY TYPE	
Total number of persons walking	2
Total number of persons jogging	2
Total number of persons using equipment	0
Total number of persons doing 'other'	0

After all observations had been made, data were analyzed in an effort to quantify visitation and usage patterns and create the constructed week. To do so, each day was first considered individually. The total number of people observed, the sex, age, activity being performed, and the social grouping in which visitors were observed were recorded. After each

day was quantified separately, computations to determine totals of the representative week were done. All analysis was completed by the researcher with the aid of a calculator.

3.4.2 The interview process

In the second phase of data collection, sixteen older adult interviews took place with phase one questionnaire respondents who indicated they were willing to participate in a one-on-one, face to face interview. Twelve of the 16 interviews took place in the Muffin Nook, which is the local café at the recreation centre, during times when the Nook was closed to regular business. The remaining four interviews took place in participant's homes according to their individual requests. Qualitative interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview guide in which the same set of questions were asked of each participant in identical order (see appendix D). The semi-structured interview guide was used to ensure ample opportunity for comparison between participant responses. Questions included in the interview guide were adapted from various sources (e.g., the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and the International Social Survey Program (ISSP)) as well as being self-generated. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to elaborate regarding their own personal experiences and perspectives. In this way the interviews were only semi-structured. Participants were able to speak freely and sometimes participant responses necessitated further questioning that was unforeseen. Qualitative interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. On average, these older adult interviews lasted between 25 and 30 minutes in length.

An interview guide was also used for the interviews with recreation centre staff (see appendix E). The semi-structured interview format was employed for reasons identical to the older adult interviews. This format allowed recreation centre staff to share personal views and opinions regarding the SCP. On average, interviews with recreation centre staff lasted

approximately 30 minutes. All interviews took place in the office space of the participant at the recreation centre and were tape recorded and later transcribed.

Qualitative interviews promote elaboration and insight into not only the response, but also how the participant arrived at this response. Seidman (1991) addresses this by stating; “interviewing provides access to the context of people’s behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior” (p. 4). Therefore, in this research the role of the qualitative interviews is to act as an informative and insightful way to gain the knowledge of older adults and recreational staff regarding the SCP. The information gained in interviews could not be gathered through quantitative methods exclusively. Valentine (2005) articulates that questionnaires are not as representative of how participants experience life. Instead, the purpose of the in-depth interviews is to gather data that simply cannot be ascertained through quantitative means.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data collected for this research was done so by means of a questionnaire (see appendix C). The questionnaire was only completed by older adult participants. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-eight mostly close-ended questions of various types. Questions were primarily dichotomous, likert scale, and contingency questions. Questions one through five added descriptive information about the respondent in order to accurately describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample. Remaining questions were categorized into three broad groups: those questions related to the Seniors Community Park, to the health of individuals and to their activity patterns. Questionnaire data were analyzed manually without the assistance of outside software. Frequencies were generated and percentages calculated to quantify the level

of SCP awareness, the self-reported health status of participants, and to become familiar with the basic activity patterns of respondents. In this way, the questionnaire data supplements or triangulates the information contained in the qualitative interview data.

3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

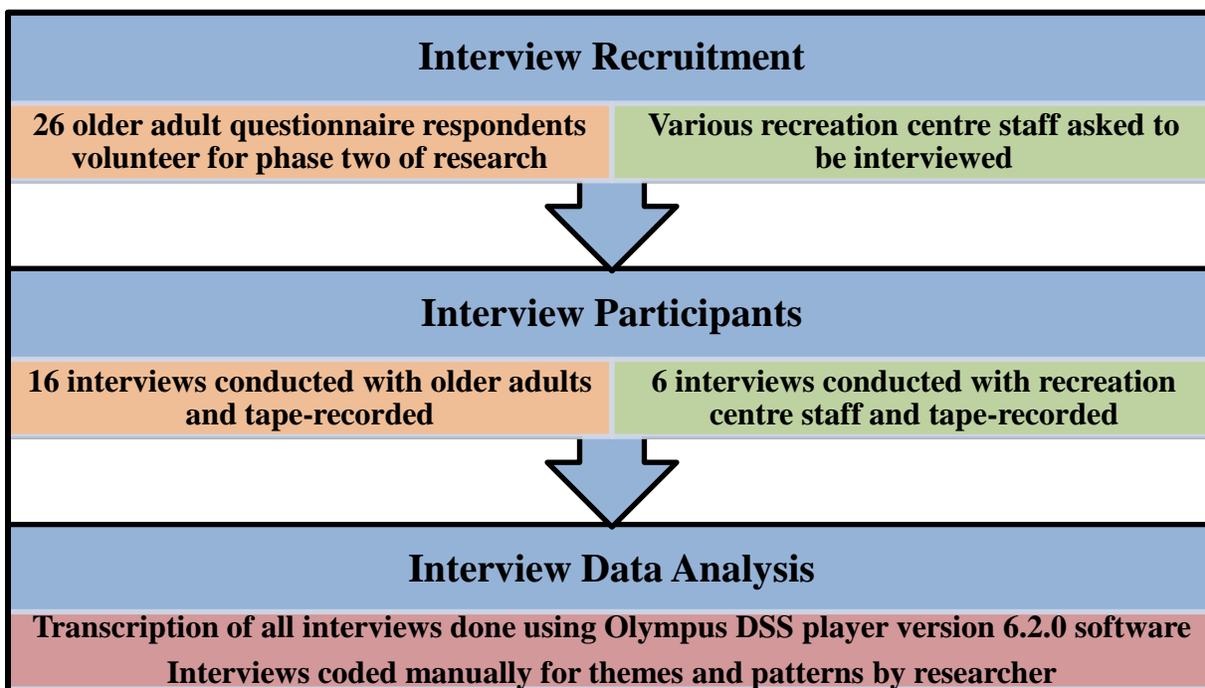
All interviews conducted were tape-recorded to allow transcripts to be made and analyzed (Figure 3.3). Transcripts allow the researcher to actively participate in the interview rather than being distracted by constant note taking. Transcription was done using the Olympus DSS Player version 6.2.0 software that accompanied the Olympus DSS voice recorder. After transcription, coding for like themes and patterns was undertaken. Coding was done manually without the assistance of qualitative data analysis software. Manual coding was carried out because the amount of interview data collected did not seem to demand the use of software for data management or other purposes. When coding, the older adult interviews and the recreational staff interviews were considered independently from each another.

Manual coding strategies were influenced by the qualitative research technique of content analysis. Content analysis is, “a method of analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages” (Elo & Kyngas, 2008, p. 107). In this research, the qualitative interview transcripts constitute the written communication messages or text data. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) there are three approaches to analyzing text data for content analysis: conventional content analysis, the direct approach and summative content analysis.

When manually coding, both conventional and summative content analysis were relied upon. The direct approach was not used because it requires adherence to a theory or prior research findings of a similar nature to guide coding (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), and this was not done. In conventional content analysis there are no predetermined codes. Instead, “coding

categories are derived directly from the text data” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). This technique was utilized as there was no deliberate inclusion of coding categories prior to analysis of the transcripts. As stated by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) summative content analysis, “involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of underlying context” (p. 1277). When manually coding, both of these techniques were used in tandem. After transcription of all interviews, I created separate documents for each identified code (i.e., park condition, park location etc.). All interview excerpts pertaining to each code were inserted into the appropriate document. After coding was completed in this way, I then coded each document independently for like patterns and themes. For example, in the document for the code ‘park condition,’ I coded for themes including setting, upkeep, trail surface and layout. By doing so I could reveal particular themes and patterns for each particular code.

Figure 3.3: Flowchart of Interview Method



3.6 Limitations

There are several limitations to this research project that require attention. First, as a case-study research project of the SCP in Oak Bay, BC, generalizability to the remaining seventeen parks in communities across British Columbia is limited. Since the Oak Bay SCP is the only park being considered here, the results of this project have the greatest applicability to the Oak Bay area and may not directly pertain to the other parks in the province. With this in mind, it is meaningful to understand that a primary goal of qualitative research is not generalizability; instead case studies of this type are designed to help us to understand a phenomenon in greater depth and to highlight the ways in which the data may be extrapolated into other settings. Therefore, some findings from this case study may still be applicable to aspects of others SCPs that share similar characteristics to the park in Oak Bay, for example, proximity of the park to a recreation facility or the general trend towards low usage. It is suggested that those considering the results of this study in reference to other SCPs in the province do so with this in mind.

Second, the purposive sampling strategy employed in this research is required in order to obtain recreational staff with SCP knowledge and a diverse sample of older adults, but this does result in additional limitations. All older adults were recruited from the lobby of the Henderson Recreation Centre, eliminating those individuals who are not active members from being considered. Also, the sixteen older adults that were interviewed likely exhibit similar personality traits, as more talkative and opinionated individuals are likely to volunteer for an interview. Lastly, since the most in-depth data are being collected by means of qualitative interviews, the accuracy of what the older adults and recreational staff disclose must be depended upon as the nature of qualitative data analysis relies upon the truthfulness of participants in the research process. For instance, most of the background information regarding the parks development and

establishment is not publicly documented. Instead, information gained regarding the initialization of the park was ascertained through recreational staff interviews.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined in detail the methodological underpinnings and various methods used for this research. The general purpose of this mixed-methods, ethnographic case-study is to understand the role of the SCP in the community and in the lives of older adults. By coupling quantitative and qualitative data, the methods supplement each other creating the most comprehensive understanding of Oak Bay's SCP. In the following chapter, a descriptive profile of the older adult sample and recreation centre staff sample will be meticulously described. Following this, park visitation and usage patterns as gathered from the constructed week sampling method are outlined.

Chapter 4. Descriptive Profile of the Sample and Seniors Community Park Utilization Patterns

This chapter covers the basic demographic characteristics of the research sample and the constructed week methodology to highlight how the park was used in a representative week of observational work. First the descriptive profiles of both the older adult and recreation centre staff will be presented followed by the park observation data collected.

4.1 Descriptive Profile of the Sample Group

4.1.1 Profiling the Sample Groups

Two independent sample groups were used in the research, a sample of older adult patrons of the Henderson Recreation Centre (HRC) and recreation centre staff. A broad range of questions were asked in order to generate a more complete picture, of the participants associated with the Seniors Community Parks (SCP) and programming in the park. The purpose of the first portion of this chapter is to describe the characteristics of both the older adult sample and the recreation centre staff using data gathered from the questionnaire administered to the patrons and the qualitative interview data gathered from in person interviews with recreation centre staff. The section is organized into two main parts to reflect these two participant groups. Regarding older adults, the research questions addressed detailed information about the sample including socio-demographic data, physical activity levels, and SCP awareness and patterns of park visitation. In the second section, recreation centre staff were asked about their employment history, current job responsibilities as well as their level of involvement with SCP development and recreational programming in the park. The final sub-section discusses the overall patterns from these two groups.

4.1.2 The Older Adult Sample and their Park Usage Patterns

Of the 65 respondents who completed the questionnaires, 86.1% were aged 55 and over. Questionnaires were completed by 25 men (38.5%) and 40 women (61.5%). This gendered breakdown is typical of the composition of older adults in Canadian society as the most recent census data indicates that 56.5% of persons aged 65 and over are women (Statistics Canada, 2010). The qualitative sample of sixteen older adult interview participants ranged in age from 61 to 84. The average age of interviewees was 70.3, and the median age was 69.5. Six men and ten women were interviewed in this phase of the research. Again, this parallels the population composition of Canadian older adults.

Of the occupations indicated among the 65 questionnaire respondents, 66%, or 43 participants, considered themselves retired. The occupations stated with the next highest frequencies after retirement include homemaker (7.6%) followed by careers in education and nursing (4.6% each). Eleven additional occupations were listed on questionnaires. Thirteen of the 16 older adult interview participants indicated they were retired. The remaining three are employed as a registered nurse, a university professor, and as a mental healthcare worker.

The vast majority of the 65 questionnaire participants, 52 or 80%, indicated they are either married or in common-law relationships. Those that are widowed make up 9.2% of the sample, followed by 7.7% of respondents being divorced or separated, and only two respondents, or 3.1%, indicated they are single or never married. Of the qualitative interviewees, thirteen of the sixteen are married or in common-law relationships, one is divorced/separated, another single or never married and the remaining individual is a widower.

Questions included in the questionnaire asked the respondent to self-report on their overall, mental and physical health statuses (Table 4.1). Understanding the health status of participants is important. Added to demographic characteristics, activity patterns and park

awareness, health status provides a more complete picture of factors that influence daily activities and park use.

Table 4.1: Self-reported Health Status of Respondents

Health Status	Overall Health		Mental Health		Physical Health	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Excellent	14	21.5	24	36.9	12	18.7
Very Good	36	55.5	30	46.2	33	51.6
Good	13	20.0	11	16.9	13	20.4
Fair	1	1.5	0	0	5	7.8
Poor	1	1.5	0	0	1	1.5
Total	65	100%	65	100%	64	100%

Based on what the questionnaire respondents shared about their health, many conclusions can be drawn. In each category, overall, mental and physical health, almost all of participants rate their health as *good* or better. In fact, in all categories the majority selected *very good* or *excellent* to describe their health status. Mental health was rated even more highly as no participant ranked their mental health to be *fair* or *poor*. This is also well illustrated in the overall health of those questioned since only one participant (1.5%) rated their health as *fair* and one participant (1.5%) rated their health as *poor*. The physical health category contained the highest number of respondents labeling their health as *fair* (7.8%) or *poor* (1.5%). In general, respondents had the most positive mental health status followed by overall health and then physical health. It can be concluded that the health of the participants is *very good* on average.

In addition to learning of participants' health status, respondents were asked about current diagnoses. Such questions inquired about the presence and type of chronic conditions the respondent has been diagnosed with. According to the World Health Organization (2011), chronic conditions are defined as "diseases of long duration and generally slow progression." Of the 65 respondents, 29 (44.6%) answered that they have been diagnosed with a chronic condition while 36 (55.4%) have not. The most common chronic condition listed was high blood pressure

with nine of the 29 persons (31%) stating that they have this condition and it has been diagnosed. This finding is relatively consistent with the prevalence of this chronic condition in British Columbia's seniors. According to the most recent 2008 data published by the Public Health Agency of Canada (2011), 42.6% of persons 65 and over in BC suffer from high blood pressure. According to prevalence, the most common conditions listed on questionnaires after high blood pressure were: high cholesterol, heart disease, arthritis, osteoporosis and chronic knee pain. Three respondents indicated suffering from each of these.

To gain an understanding of the physical activity levels of the older adult sample, participants were questioned as to how they perceive their physical activity level compared to persons of same sex and similar age to themselves (Table 4.2). Overall, the majority of participants (84.6%) stated that their activity level is average or above average in comparison to others. The remaining 15.4% defined themselves as *somewhat active*. Considering these findings, this older adult sample can be categorized as a physically active group.

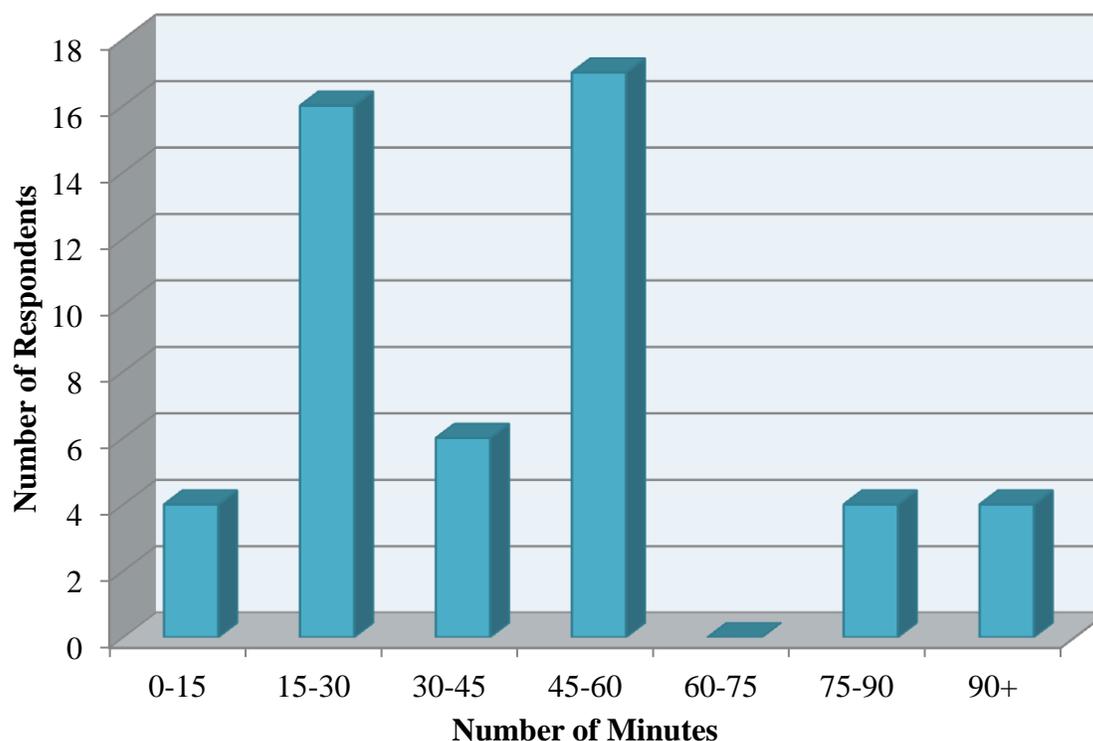
Table 4.2: Self-Reported Physical Activity among Older Adult Participants

Physical Activity Level	Number of Participants	% Total Sample
Not Active	0	0%
Somewhat Active	10	15.4%
Average Activity Level	24	36.9%
Very Active	25	38.5%
Extremely Active	6	9.2%
Total	65	100%

After determining physical activity levels on behalf of the older adult sample, respondents were further questioned about the types of physical activities being engaged in. In an open-ended format, participants were asked to list all physical activities that they partake in. The most common activity listed was walking followed by gardening, going to the gym, strength

training, and yoga or Pilates. Questions as to the frequency and duration of time spent walking were then asked due to the activity's popularity (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Number of Minutes Spent Walking a Day, on Average



When queried as to how many days within the past week walking had been part of their exercise regimen, eight participants stated 0-2 days, 19 respondents said 3-5 days and 25 respondents indicated either six or seven days. The duration of time spent walking ranged from 10 to 180 minutes, though the average walking time was 52.6 minutes. These results further legitimize that this sample of older adults are of average physical activity level or greater, considering that Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines suggest that persons age 65 and over should perform at least 150 minutes of moderate (e.g. brisk walking) to vigorous physical activity each week (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2012). Based on this guideline, the older adult sample, with 83% of respondents walking an average of 52.6 minutes a day

between 3-7 days a week, participate in well-above the suggested amount of physical activity. Also, Vancouver Island's seniors are the most active in the province of British Columbia coming second only to Vancouver and the North Shore/Coast Garibaldi regions (BC Atlas of Wellness Seniors Supplement, 2008). The activity level of the sample is important to consider in regards to Oak Bay's SCP, an outdoor recreation initiative aimed at promoting physical activity in the lives of seniors. Using a sample of already active older adults is a good starting point for research of the park, as they would be the group most likely to be interested in and make use the facility.

Health beliefs contribute to decisions made about how often physical activity should be completed and what type. Health beliefs are a vital determinant of individual and population health, which assist in giving meaning to personal experiences when healthy and in times of illness (Chappell et al., 2008). These beliefs have been taken into account in this work as they can provide insight into the thought process leading to either healthy or unhealthy decisions. Health beliefs vary and can concern many aspects of health including diet, disease, controllability and physical activity. In this research questions regarding respondents' health beliefs focus on the ways in which physical activity effect the occurrence and severity of chronic conditions.

When asked if participating in regular physical activity helps reduce the risk of developing chronic conditions, 62 of the 65 questionnaire respondents, or 95.4% answered *yes*. Only two people answered *no* (3.1%), and the remaining individual indicated that they had *no opinion/don't know*. Participants were then questioned as to whether they felt that participating in regular physical activity would help to prevent the worsening of existing chronic conditions, 61 (96.8%) responded *yes*. One individual selected *no* and the other selected *no opinion/don't know*. Two participants declined to answer. These results show that the vast majority of participants

understand that physical activity is beneficial to chronic conditions, and thus these health beliefs are consistent with the academic scholarship.

4.1.3 Senior Community Park (SCP) awareness, visitation, and patterns of use

Recognizing the awareness of the older adults about the existence of the SCP is crucial. Quantifying the number of older adults who are aware of the park was an important first step to understanding the role that the park plays in the lives of participants. When asked if they knew of the existence of the SCP, 59 of the 65 respondents, or 90.8%, answered *yes*. Only 6 participants (9.2%) were unaware of the presence of the SCP. Inquiry was further made as to whether the older adults had ever visited the park. Forty-nine, or 75.4%, had visited the park while 16 (24.6%) had not. Frequency of visitation varied greatly among participants (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Frequency of Visits to SCP in the Past Year

Frequency	Number of Participants	Percent of Total Sample
Never	14	21.5%
Between 1-12 times a year	23	35.4%
Once a month	3	4.6%
More than once a month but less than once a week	6	9.2%
At least once a week	17	26.1%
Daily	2	3.2%
TOTAL	65	100%

When considering the visitation patterns of the older adult sample, various conclusions can be drawn. First, 61.5% of participants indicated that they had visited the park once a month or less in the past year. The remaining 38.5% of respondents stated they had visited the SCP a few times a month to as much as every day. Overall, these findings illustrate the under-utilization of the park. Despite 90.8% of participants being aware of the parks existence, only 38.5% are visiting the park more than once a month. This disconnect is something that will be investigated

in great depth in chapters 5 and 6. Despite this, almost one-third (29.3% of the sample) do visit the park at least once a week. Though small in size, this provides a group of older adults who are able to be questioned about what they find favorable about the park and their direct experiences with the SCP.

In an effort to make sense of patterns of park use among older adult participants, questions were asked of this smaller group as to the ways in which respondents use the park and the reasons as to why they do not, if that is the case. Respondents indicated that they most often use the park for walking and physical activity followed by socialization purposes, relaxing and for other uses. These other uses include bird watching and playing in the park with children. When asked about non-use of the park a range of reasons were offered. The most common response was lack of awareness followed by lack of interest, exercise taking place elsewhere, uncertainty as to how the equipment should be used, poor location and weather.

4.1.4 General Characteristics of Recreation Staff

Six recreation staff members were interviewed for this research. All recreation staff members were women. Disregarding males in the sample was not a deliberate decision as approximately 86.2% of employees of Recreation Oak Bay are women. In fact, all recreation programmers, fitness programmers and administrators at the Henderson Recreation Centre are female. For this reason no males are represented in the sample.

The six staff members included in the study have various positions associated with the recreation centre. Two individuals are fitness programmers, one is a recreation programmer, the next is a community recreation programmer, another is a recreation administrator and the last is a fitness instructor. An effort was made to include employees of several different positions within the recreation centre to capture diverse perspectives. Five of the six staff members have

employment backgrounds exclusively in the recreation and fitness industry. The remaining participant has an employment history that includes positions in the restaurant and housekeeping business. Recreation centre staff participants have been employed at their current positions for various lengths of time ranging from six months to thirteen years, though the average amount of time they have held their current position is three years.

Current job duties and responsibilities vary for each individual position. The fitness programmers oversee and schedule the programming that takes place at Henderson and other recreational spaces in the community. Additionally, they ensure that all programs are running smoothly and safely. Patron satisfaction is of great importance to the fitness programmers, as well. In order to maintain satisfaction among visitors, much effort goes into researching and developing new programs to meet the needs of the community. Fitness instructors are those that actively lead the programs in place. The fitness instructor interviewed for this research described several roles she has within the recreation centre that include designing and implementing programs if she identifies a need, leading group fitness classes, personal training, and supervising the fitness studio to answer questions and offer assistance as needed.

The recreation programmer at Henderson supervises and oversees the afterschool care program at HRC and three other recreation centres in Oak Bay. The community recreation programmer oversees all of Henderson Recreation Centre and is responsible for what goes on in the building and at the outdoor facilities. She manages the building staff and all programs and activities taking place within it. Finally, the recreation administrator is responsible for overseeing all of Oak Bay's recreation centres, including Henderson, and the parks within the municipality.

4.1.5 Past and current involvement with SCP development and programming

Involvement with the development and current programming taking place at the SCP varies among the six recreation staff members included in this research. Five of the six staff

members were not involved at all in the development and establishment of the park. This is not surprising as, on average, recreation staff have only held current positions for approximately three years. Since the park was established in 2008, many of the recreation staff were not yet employed at Henderson Recreation Centre. The one staff participant familiar with the parks development, the recreation administrator, was peripherally involved with the development process. Her primary role was to promote the park within the community and to train staff regarding instruction of programming once the park was already established. Additionally, the recreation administrator was responsible for establishing the SCP orientation program aimed at familiarizing patrons with the park and equipment stations within it (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Photo of an Equipment Station within the SCP



Although the five remaining staff members had no role in the development of the SCP, their current positions include some form of association with the park. For example, the community

recreation programmer oversees the staff that schedule and lead programming in the park, including the fitness programmer responsible for scheduling all programs that are held in the SCP. These programs include the free SCP orientations (*outdoor equipment orientations*) and boot-camp style classes (*outdoor circuit challenge*). The recreation programmer that supervises the afterschool care program often encourages nature walks through the park as a frequent activity for the kids. Lastly, the fitness instructor has lead group training classes (e.g. boot-camp) in the park for recreation centre patrons. The extensive experience these staff have in the recreation and fitness industries provide valuable perspectives as to the effectiveness of the park.

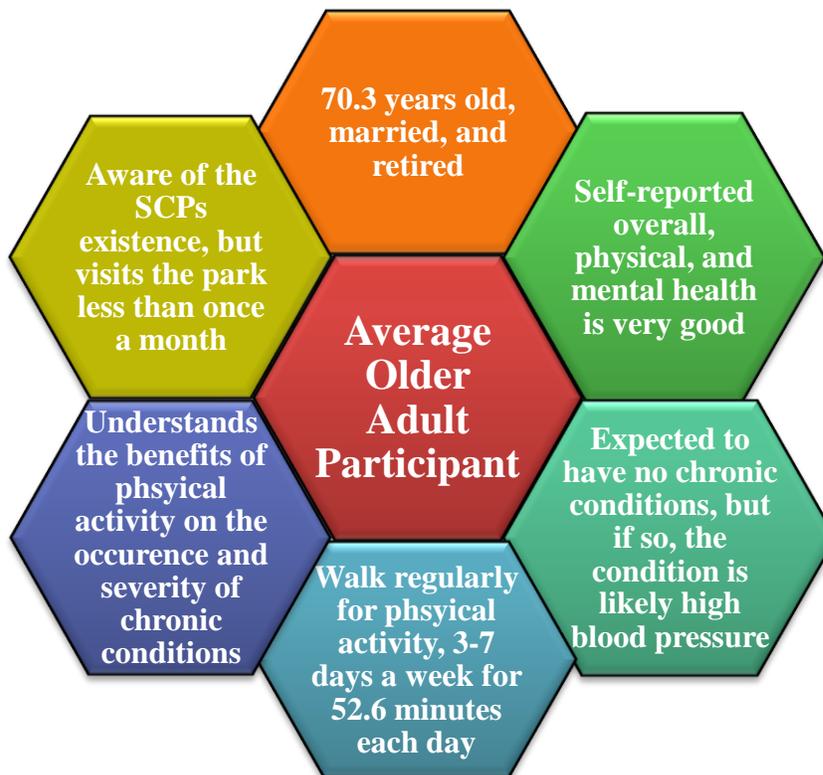
4.1.6 Discussion

As mentioned previously, the older adult sample parallels the diversity of the older adult population in Canada in terms of age and gender. Generally, the sample also exhibited above average self-reported health and fitness levels with a reasonably good understanding of the benefits of physical activity in relation to chronic conditions. Though the majority of participants are aware of the SCP's presence, the number that have actually visited and used the park is substantially lower. It is clear that awareness influences use, but beyond that, the relationship is not well understood. Therefore, a disconnect between park awareness and visitation is present. All of these characteristics have been compiled to describe the average older adult participant in the research (Figure 4.3).

The all-female recreation centre staff that were sampled occupied a broad range of positions at the Henderson Recreation Centre. Their multiple areas of expertise provide meaningful insight into the many aspects of the SCP. The majority of these staff are experts in aspects of recreation and fitness industries and this knowledge informs their perspectives and opinions regarding the SCP. Although many of the staff members were not directly involved

with the development of the SCP, their continued involvement with the promotion, programming and instruction in the SCP has familiarized them with the park's quality and effectiveness.

Figure 4.3: Depiction of Average Characteristics of Older Adult Participant



4.2 Seniors Community Park Utilization Patterns

4.2.1 Preliminary Analysis Using the Constructed Week Methodology

As mentioned in chapter 3, in order to measure current park visitation levels and describe park utilization, the constructed week sampling method was employed. Luke et al. (2011) explain, "Constructed week sampling is a type of stratified random sampling technique popular in media studies in which the final sample represents all seven days of the week" (p. 78). In this geographic research, seven park observations took place within a one month time frame on each day of the week. By doing so, a representative week highlighting park visitation and usage was compiled. Quantifying park use and visitation rates was a primary objective of this research. The results provide valuable information to recreation leaders in the community regarding the SCP's

utilization leading to the recognition of the need for increased promotion. As the researcher, I went to the parks at regular intervals and recorded the following characteristics of park users: age (estimated), gender and the social groupings (if persons were alone, with a partner or in a group). The findings and implications based on the results of the constructed week sampling method are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

4.2.2 Number of Park Visitors Observed

Seven park observations took place between April 11, 2011 and May 12, 2011 in order to construct a representative week. During these observations, there was a wide amount of variation in the number of patrons observed in the SCP on each occasion (Table 4.4). Observations took place at different times to identify patterns based on time of day. On average, each observation period was 28.6 minutes in length. In total, 55 people were observed in the park during the seven observation periods. Six of the seven park observations occurred during pleasant conditions. The remaining observation took place on a day with overcast and chilly weather.

Table 4.4: Observation Details, Conditions and Visitation Amounts

Day	Date	Time	Conditions and Temperature (C)	Number of Visitors
Monday	April 11, 2011	2:50-3:15pm	Sunny, 10.6°	4
Tuesday	April 19, 2011	12:19-12:47pm	Sunny, 10.5°	6
Wednesday	May 4, 2011	5:25-6:00pm	Sunny, 12.3°	3
Thursday	May 12, 2011	9:19-9:47am	Overcast, 8.7°	15
Friday	April 29, 2011	11:36-12:03pm	Sunny, 11.5°	6
Saturday	April 16, 2011	10:35-11:05am	Sunny, 10.6°	14
Sunday	May 1, 2011	1:55-2:22pm	Sunny, 11.6°	7

In discussing park visitation results, it is important to consider the nature of the park. This park is not an open green space; instead it is a chip trail through a forested area. Therefore, one cannot observe the park from one vantage point to count visitors. Rather, the trail was walked

and as patrons were encountered they, and their characteristics, were recorded on the common instrument (see appendix A). For consistency, I walked the same route on the chip trail during each of the seven observation periods. There is a possibility that persons in the park were not seen if my walking route and theirs never overlapped.

4.2.3 General Characteristics of those Observed in the Park

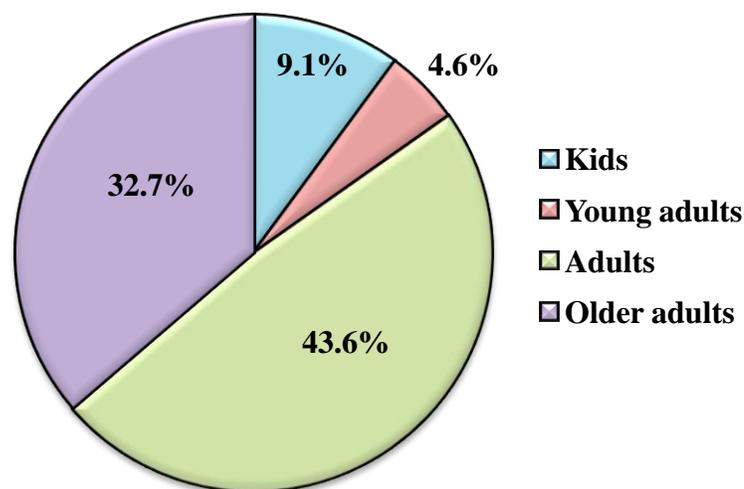
Great diversity in park patrons was observed during the constructed week sampling method. Persons of various ages, sexes, and social groupings were witnessed. Social groupings refer to if the visitor was alone, with a partner, or in a group. It was of the utmost importance to the research to understand the characteristics of those observed in the SCP. By doing so, conclusions can be drawn as to the populations making the most use of the park and those that are not. This can have implications for those promoting the park and those that research and schedule recreational programming. For this reason, particular attention has been given to describing, in great detail, the characteristics of park visitors as observed.

Patron age was a characteristic recorded on the common instrument during observations of the SCP. However, no persons in the park were disturbed by observations. Therefore, SCP users were not asked of their exact age; patron age was based on my own deductions and patrons were recorded as being in one of four categories: kids, young adults, adults and older adults (Figure 4.4).

As illustrated in the figure, it is clear that adults were the most commonly observed visitors to the park with 43.6% of patrons seen falling into this category, followed by older adults (32.7%), kids (9.1%) and lastly young adults (4.6%). Although it is favorable that persons of various ages are taking advantage of the SCP, its formation was tailored to the older adult

population. For this reason, it is useful to consider why adults, as opposed to older adults, are visiting the park in greater numbers. This trend is discussed in greater depth in section 4.2.5.

Figure 4.4: Age composition of People Observed in the SCP

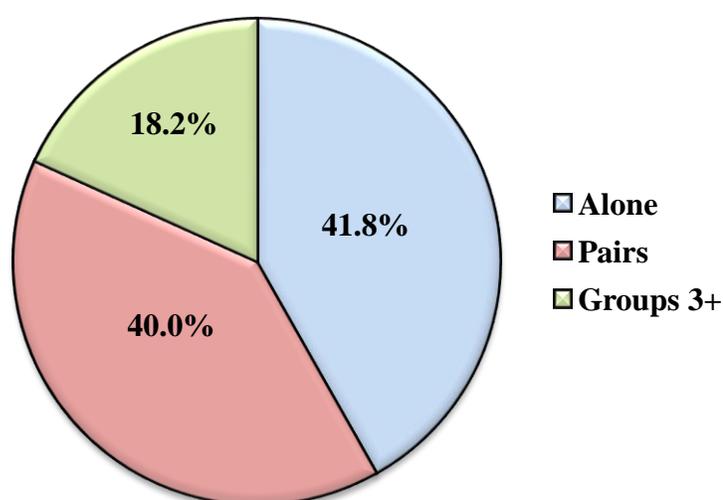


The genders of those persons observed in the park were also recorded. Of the 55 visitors seen in the SCP, 25 (45.5%) were men and 30 (54.5%) were women. As this research is predominantly concerned with park use by older adults, specific data as to the genders of older adults observed in the SCP is also of significance. With this, of the eighteen older adults seen in the park, ten were women and eight were men. This finding is comparable to the gendered breakdown of the total number of persons observed in the park as well as the population composition of Canadian older adults previously discussed. Thus, this finding suggests that the park is used as expected by men and women.

The final characteristic of park visitors recorded during the constructed week sampling method were the social groupings of patrons (Figure 4.5). The social circumstance in which people visit the park was important to investigate because, as stated by ActNowBC (2008), one of the goals of the park is to encourage socialization. By noting the social groupings of patrons, social situations in which people visit the park can be better understood. During observations, it

was noted whether observed patrons were seen alone, in a pair, or in a group of three or more. Of the 55 people observed in the SCP, 23 a slight majority were alone (41.8%), 22 (40%) were with a partner and 10 (18.2%) were in a group of three or more persons. These data makes it clear that virtually the same number of people visit the park alone as in a pair, with the least number of persons visiting the SCP in a group of three or more individuals. The implications of this finding will be outlined in section 4.2.5.

Figure 4.5: Social Grouping of Park Visitors

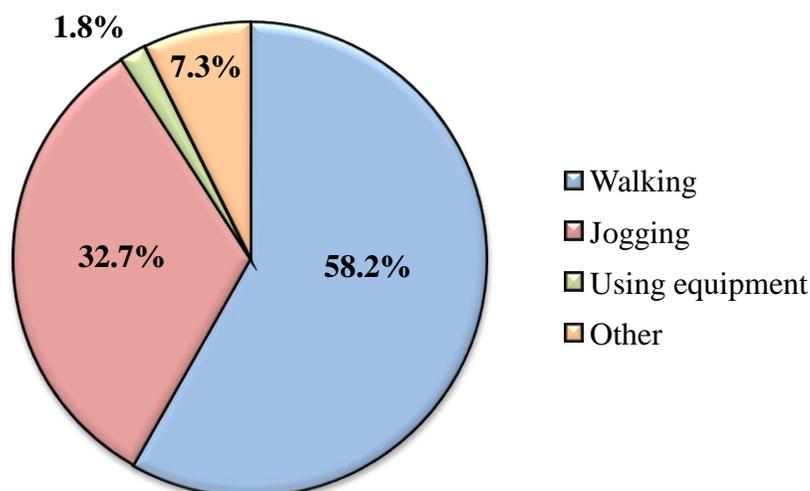


4.2.4 Activity type

During the constructed week sampling method, the activity being performed by park visitors was also recorded on the common instrument. Activities being performed by those observed in the park fall within four categories; walking, jogging, using the equipment and 'other' (Figure 4.6). The other category includes situations observed in which toddler-age children were playing on the equipment with adult supervision and instances when young adults were not using the equipment in their intended manner. These were not categorized as equipment

use since the very young children were using the equipment as a playground and the young adults were not seriously exercising on the equipment, they were simply sitting on it.

Figure 4.6: Activity Being Performed by Patrons Observed in the SCP

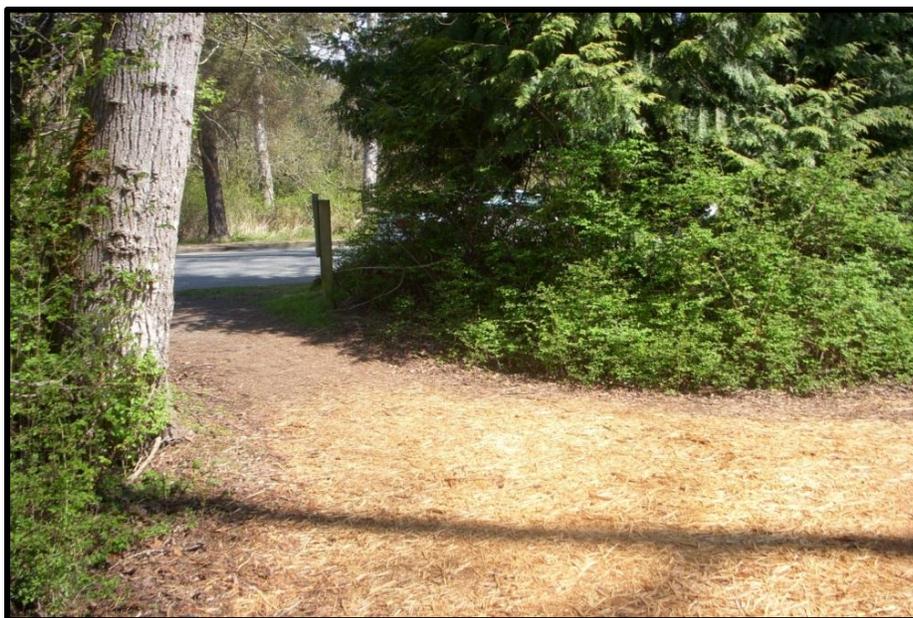


As depicted in the figure above, park visitors were most often using the park as a space to walk, followed by jogging, 'other' and lastly using the equipment designed to facilitate exercising. The large disparity between walking or jogging and equipment usage is one of special interest to this research. During the constructed week, only one observed visitor was seen making use of the equipment for exercise purposes out of the total number of people observed (n=55). This represents a great under-utilization of the equipment stations within the park. This trend, though observed, was not examined in great detail during park observations since visitors were not disturbed by observations or asked any questions directly about why they were not using the exercise equipment on their park visit. The under-utilization of the equipment is especially puzzling since it is clear that people are visiting the park to walk or jog. This discrepancy is investigated in greater detail in chapter five where the focus is on the qualitative interviews with older adults.

4.2.5 Discussion

Conclusions can be drawn based on the visitation data collected. First, during the representative week, observations totaled a time of 3 hours and 20 minutes. In this time, 55 people were seen in the park. Although it is favorable that 55 visitors were observed, there is still great room for improvement in terms of visitation. One avenue for increasing use of the park would be through further promotion and signage. For example, the only sign denoting the presence of the SCP and describing the nature of the park is just adjacent to the entrance doors of the recreation centre. Although this placement is logical, additional signs by the roadside, for example could be beneficial as there are several other points of entry into the park (Figure 4.7). The sign seen in figure 4.7 only informs visitors that dogs are prohibited in the park. By installing other signs at these ‘informal’ entry points, awareness of the SCP equipment could increase and the number of patrons using the equipment could potentially increase.

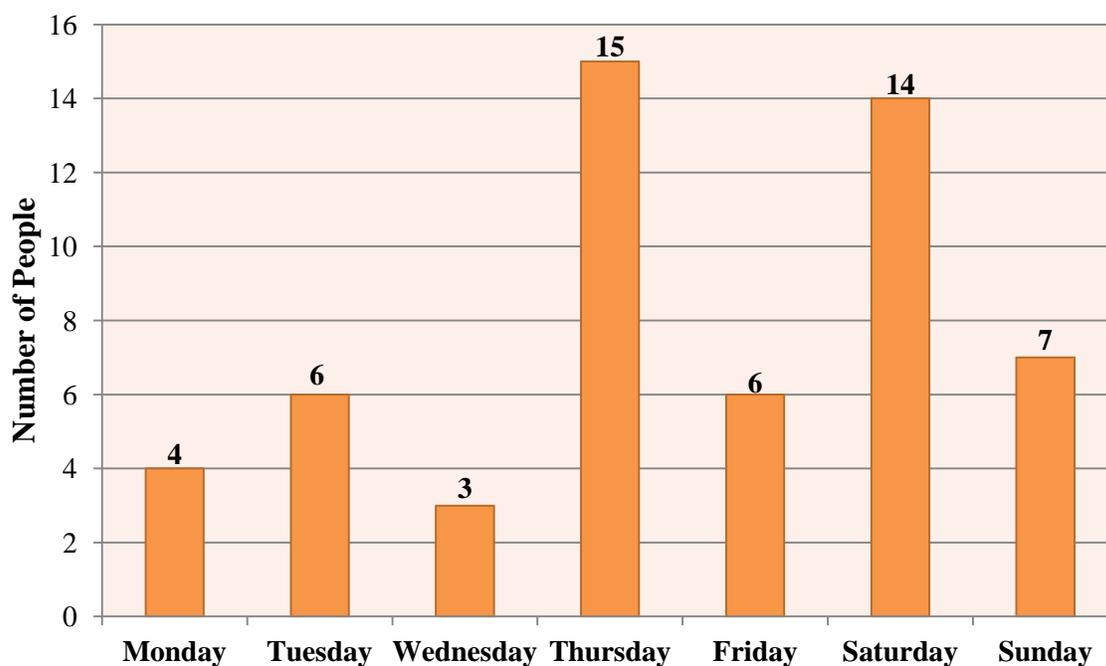
Figure 4.7: Photo of an Informal Entry into the SCP



Next, it is clear when considering the total number of persons seen during each day of park observations, that less people frequent the park during the beginning of the week (Monday,

Tuesday, Wednesday) and more people visit the park in the later days of the week (Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday). In fact, in the beginning of the week only 13 people were seen, or 23.6% of the 55 total persons observed. In comparison, on the later days of the week 42 people were observed or 76.4% (Figure 4.8). The discrepancy in visitation numbers between the beginning and end of the week can likely be attributed to a few factors. First, the observations on Monday and Tuesday took place during normal business hours, so individuals could have been working and therefore not able to visit the park. Also, the high number of people seen during the latter days of the week could be due to the weekend days as 14 people were seen in the park on Saturday, the second highest number of any observation day.

Figure 4.8: Number of People Present in the SCP Each Day during Observation



However, Thursday's visitation numbers are the most surprising. Fifteen people were observed in the park on Thursday, the highest number of any day. The observation on Thursday took place at 9:19am, during business hours just as on Monday and Tuesday which both experienced low visitation amounts. Additionally, Thursday was the only day in which an

observation took place during fair/poor weather. Every observation occurred during sunny and pleasant conditions, except Thursday in which it was overcast and cooler than on any other observation day. Despite the questionable weather, more visitors were seen in the park that day compared to any other.

However, the high number of visitors in the park on Thursday was likely enhanced by scheduled recreational programs on that day. On Thursday mornings three *Fit for 50+* classes are held which may have contributed to the popularity of the park that morning, as persons attending those programs may have decided to use the park since they were already at the recreation centre. Also on Thursday, eight of the 15 persons seen were older adults which helps to legitimize the assumption that the *50+* programming at the recreation centre may have increased the number of park visitors. This pattern of park use will also be investigated through the qualitative data collected from older adult interviews (Chapter 5).

Next, park visitation data indicates that overall, women frequent the park in greater numbers than men but further analysis of visitation data in light of gender is required (Table 4.5). This is consistent with the questionnaire and qualitative interview samples, as there were more women than men in both groups. In addition to greater numbers of older adult women visiting the park in comparison to their male counterparts, greater numbers of adult women visit the park than adult men. When considering the social groupings of park visitors men are more likely to visit the SCP in a group of three or more persons than are women. This is surprising as academic scholarship largely indicates that socialization is an integral component of a women's exercise regime much more so than men (Gottlieb & Baker, 1986; Conn, 1998; Grant, 2001; Wu et al., 2009). However, women are more likely to visit the park with a partner. This result is supported

by the scholarship when considering that women most often were observed in the park with a companion.

Table 4.5 Gendered Breakdown of Persons Observed Within the Constructed Week

AGE COMPOSITION	Women (n=30)	Men (n=25)
Kids	1	3
Young adults	4	4
Adults	14	10
Older adults	10	8
SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCE		
People alone	13	10
Persons in pairs	15	7
Persons in groups of 3 or more	2	8
ACTIVITY TYPE		
Persons walking	22	9
Persons jogging	7	12
Persons using equipment	0	1
Persons doing 'other'	1	3

The differences in the activities being performed by men and women in the park are perhaps the most distinct. Twenty-two women observed, compared to only nine men, were seen walking. Jogging was the second most popular activity being performed in the park. A total of seven women were seen jogging, compared to 12 men. These findings make clear that women are more likely to be walking while men are more often jogging in the park. Nearly identical among both genders, equipment use is virtually non-existent. Only one man was seen using the equipment. In fact, in the 'other' category, more persons were seen joking and playing on the equipment than actually using it in its intended manner.

Lastly, as indicated in section 4.2.3, more adults were observed in the park than older adults. Although it is advantageous that people of various ages can enjoy the SCP, it is unexpected that older adults are visiting the park in fewer numbers when the SCP is specifically tailored to their needs and demographic. A few factors could contribute to this finding. First, as stated in chapter two, it is understood that physical activity decreases with advancing age (Conn,

1998; Schutzer & Graves, 2004). Therefore, there are fewer older adults exercising compared to adults. Since adults are more often physically active, this could contribute to their higher numbers in the park. Also, there are more persons within the adult population than the older adult population in Oak Bay, though Oak Bay's percentage of seniors is high. In fact, in the 2006 census, 49.1% of Oak Bay's population was between ages 25 and 65, while only 25.2% of Oak Bay's population was 65 or older, meaning that 1 in 4 persons are seniors compared to 1 in 6 at the provincial level for example (Statistics Canada, 2007). Thus, there are greater numbers of adults within the municipality that can potentially make use of the park compared to older adults. This is not to say that the park is misplaced in the community, as having a quarter of the population over 65 is still high in comparison to other Canadian communities, as stated in chapter 3. Lastly, there is a possibility that I may have misidentified some of the older adults as younger since exact ages were not known. In the next chapter, park effectiveness will be explored from the perspective of both older adults and recreational staff.

Chapter 5. Using Qualitative Data to Understand the Effectiveness of the Seniors Community Park

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyze the qualitative interview data. This chapter is organized into six sections. To begin, the barriers and facilitators to park use are discussed followed by a review of the park's characteristics and their effect on park visitation and the experiences of visiting patrons. Then the overall awareness of the park's existence and the accessibility of the SCP are outlined. To follow, the activities conducted within the park are addressed, including that of the outdoor exercise equipment. Next, socialization as it occurs and is fostered through the park will be a focus. Lastly, a discussion concludes the chapter with a review of the topics presented by all participants regarding the overall effectiveness of the SCP. Throughout the chapter, profiles of individual older adult participants will be presented to supplement the research findings and provide context for conclusions drawn.

5.1 Preliminary Analysis

In order to meet the objectives of this research, qualitative data were collected to explore older adult and staff perceptions of whether the 'built infrastructure' of the park influences use and whether the built environment surrounding the park promotes or acts as a hindrance to park use. These two objectives are addressed in this chapter by soliciting the opinions of the older adult participants (Table 5.1) and recreation centre staff. Responses from both groups speak to the effectiveness of the park in different ways. Participants were encouraged to share their opinions openly about the parks efficiency relative to their own experiences.

Table 5.1: Older Adult Interview Participants

Name	Age	Marital Status	Occupation	Self-Reported Health	Visitation in Past Year	Utilization
Mrs. Blake	61	Married	Retired	Good	A few times	Walks
Mrs. Brown	62	Married	Professor	Very Good	Once	Walks and tried some equipment
Mr. Cander	67	Married	Retired	Excellent	3 times a week	Jogs
Mr. Clark	69	Married	Retired	Very Good	Once a week	Walks
Mrs. Creely	77	Married	Retired	Good	A few times a year	Walks
Mrs. Dickson	66	Married	Retired	Very Good	Once	Walks
Mr. Lynch	77	Married	Retired	Very Good	A few times	Walks and experiments with some equipment
Mrs. Perry	70	Married	Retired	Fair	3 times	Walks
Mr. Perry	78	Married	Retired	Good	3 or 4 times	Walks
Ms. Pierson	84	Single	Retired	Good	A few times	Walks
Mrs. Sherman	71	Married	Mental HealthCare Worker	Good	At least once a week	Walks and uses equipment
Mrs. Splade	62	Divorced	Retired	Good	2 times a month	Walks and runs
Mrs. Tanner	76	Married	Retired	Very Good	2 times	Walks
Mrs. Tucker	64	Married	Retired	Excellent	Once	Believes she just walked
Mr. Upton	80	Widowed	Retired	Very Good	A few times a week	Walks and uses equipment
Mrs. Welch	65	Married	Registered Nurse	Excellent	A few times a month	Walks, jogs, and uses equipment

5.2 Barriers and Facilitators to Park Visitation

5.2.1 Barriers to Park Visitation

Older adults and recreational staff were questioned about the barriers to park visitation and use. This topic is of importance as it is valuable to identify obstacles to park use so these can be addressed and mitigated. Of the sixteen older adults interviewed, eight (50%) identified some barriers to park use. Two of the six recreation centre staff discussed their perceived barriers to park visitation. Older adult participants identified ten barriers while recreational staff mentioned seven barriers (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Barriers to Park Visitation

Older Adult Barrier	Frequency	Recreational Staff Barrier	Frequency
No Dog Walking	2	Accessibility	1
Nearness of the Gym	2	Trail Surface	1
Outdoors/Weather	2	Outdoors/Weather	1
Parking	2	Safety	1
Proximity to SCP	2	Distance of Trail	1
Uncertainty	1	Uncertainty	1
Health Problems	1	Health Problems	1
Too Busy to Visit	1		
Awareness	1		
No Company	1		

As illustrated in Table 5.2, a large number of barriers were identified but none were stated with high frequency. It can be concluded that no one significant deterrent is present, instead a variety of factors contribute to individuals not making use of the park. There are three similarities between the barriers identified by older adults and recreational staff. Barriers in common include the outdoors/weather, uncertainty and health problems. In regards to the park's outdoor setting, Tracy, a fitness programmer indicated that "for some people, because its outdoors, that may be a deterrent." Older adults made specific claims like, "In the summertime I wouldn't mind it, but in the wintertime I would stay inside" and "What prevents me, of course, is

if it is wet out or too cold.” One recreational staff member and one older adult stated that general uncertainty limits park visitation. For example, Mrs. Splade, age 62, walks and runs in the park about twice a month. However, during our interview Mrs. Splade suggested that she is often deterred from using the equipment due to her uncertainty. She said, “I am sort of watching to see who else is around because I am not sure if I am using it [equipment] correctly so I am always a little bit embarrassed if I am not using it properly.” Mrs. Splade’s doubt about the proper use of the equipment stations prohibits her from incorporating them fully into her exercise regime. Health problems were the last barrier in common between both samples. Vicky, a recreation administrator, said, “health and abilities” may prevent people from making use of the park. Only one older adult indicated that his health prohibits him from making full use of the SCP. Mr. Perry, age 78, stated that his own personal health is one thing that makes visiting the park difficult.

The remaining barriers listed (Table 5.2) differ among both groups. The item stated with the greatest frequency among older adults was the ban on dog walking, nearness of the gym, parking and proximity to the SCP. Each of these barriers were mentioned by two participants. No dog walking was mentioned as a deterrent by husband and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Perry. Prior to the park being designated as a Seniors Community Park dogs were allowed to be walked on the trail. Dogs were banned when the SCP was officially established.

I think there were issues because you get runners on there and then you had dogs and they were jutting out and you know, for safety reasons. And it’s really difficult the dogs because there is two camps, the dog lovers and the non-dog lovers and I guess we thought there is lots of other places in the community for dogs to go and the chip trail probably isn’t the most appropriate place for dogs.

Vicky, Recreation Centre Administrator

Prior to this change Mr. Perry and Mrs. Perry would walk their dog every day on the chip trail and had been doing so for approximately 30 years. Due to the ban, they now only visit the park

three or four times a year. All participants were questioned about their feelings on the dog ban. No consensus could be reached. Some participants believed dogs should be allowed on the trail while others thought they should not. Another group believed dogs should be allowed in the SCP but with some restrictions including a leash or a signed agreement stating the dog will be looked and picked up after. Although the dog ban does hinder the visitation of some individuals, Oak Bay is rich with dog parks and other locations where dog walking is permitted and encouraged. Ultimately an agreement could not be reached in the research whether this ban should be lifted or continued.

The nearness of the gym (HRC) to the park was mentioned by two older adults but not at all by recreation centre staff. Of the eighteen SCPs across the province of BC, almost all are affiliated with a recreation centre, senior centre or community building just as the park in Oak Bay is with the HRC. When Mrs. Tanner was asked what had contributed to her reasons not to visit the park she simply stated, “Because the gym is just across the way from it.” This will be outlined further when park accessibility is discussed in section 5.4.

Another barrier linked to park accessibility is the availability of parking. Parking was mentioned as a hindrance to use by two older adults. In response to the question *is there anything that makes visiting the park difficult*, Mrs. Splade said, “Sometimes parking. Not often, but sometimes parking.” Another individual expressed a similar viewpoint. Again, this will be outlined further when park accessibility is discussed (section 5.4).

Lastly, the proximity of the SCP to participants’ residences was the final barrier mentioned by two older adult participants. When Mrs. Blake, an infrequent park visitor, was asked if she would begin using the park on a regular basis she replied, “If I lived closer I would but I am very far away from here. So when I am coming to this part of town to visit my friends in

Oak Bay, I incorporate it into what I am doing...If I lived within a mile I would probably be here five times a week at least.” Mr. Lynch was asked what makes visiting the park difficult and he responded, “The distance that we have to come, that is the only thing.” These two participants made clear that the distance between the park and their home is the only obstacle to their regular use of the park. Unfortunately, this is a barrier that cannot be eradicated save relocation by the individual. Proximity will be discussed further in section 5.3.1.

The remaining barriers were identified by one older adult participant and not at all by recreation centre staff. These barriers include awareness, being too busy to visit and not having any company to visit the park with. Mr. Brown simply stated that unawareness has prohibited him from visiting the SCP, “I wasn’t aware that it was there.” Mrs. Tanner said, “I’m busy.” Finally, when I inquired about Mrs. Creely’s preference for the indoor gym instead of doing exercise in the SCP she said, “All the others [her friends] don’t.” These barriers, though only mentioned by a single participant, are still vital to consider. These and all other barriers mentioned will be reviewed along with suggestions for mitigation in section 5.7.

Four barriers were mentioned by a single recreation centre staff member but not at all by older adult participants. These four barriers are accessibility, trail surface, safety and the distance of the trail.

Well I think, um, I think maybe just the uncertainty of it. Like maybe they don’t know about the surface. Maybe they don’t know if there are railings or how accessible it is for them. Maybe the chips, well the one thing about the chips is that they are great because they are low impact for running or doing things like that, but they do go onto your shoes and onto your pants. So maybe for some people that could be an issue. The fear of slipping, or it’s not, and for some people, because its outdoors, that may be a deterrent as well as something that draws people there. So I think those two things, and not knowing how long it is.

Tracy, Fitness Programmer

The dissimilarities among barriers indicated by recreational staff and older adults make clear the divergent perspectives of the groups. Acknowledging this division stresses the importance of speaking to the people for which the park is meant to serve. Barriers identified by Recreation Centre staff are logical and seem viable, but most do not align with those indicated by older adults. Although there is immense value in expert opinions, these data show that it cannot be assumed that their claims are going to be identical to those made by older adult participants.

5.2.2 Facilitators of Park Visitation

Coupled with the consideration of obstacles to park visitation is the understanding of what factors motivate persons to visit the park. In this research, these motivators are also known as facilitators. Data about facilitators were gathered exclusively from older adult participants (Table 5.3). Twelve of the 16 interview participants (75%) mentioned one or more facilitators to park use. The four remaining participants are relative non-users of the park with visitation amounts ranging from one to three times in the past year. Due to their lack of use, facilitators of visitation could not be discussed with these individuals.

Three of the facilitators of park use identified were also listed as barriers to use by older adults. The factors mentioned as both barriers and facilitators were the outdoors, proximity, and socialization/company. As a motivator, the outdoors were mentioned by five older adults, the second highest in frequency. Statements about the outdoors as a reason to visit the SCP include one made by Mrs. Welch asserting, “I prefer to be outside than in the gym” and another by Mr. Cander indicating, “I love the woods, the outdoors and the woods...you get some fresh air.” Although some identified the outdoor setting of the park to be a barrier to use largely due to weather, others consider it a facilitator.

Table 5.3: Facilitators of Park Visitation

Facilitator	Frequency
Chip Trail	6
Exercise	5
Outdoor Setting	5
Convenience	4
Proximity	4
Socialization	3
Safety	1
Relaxation	1
Chance	1

Proximity was mentioned as a barrier and a facilitator by four older adults. Those who viewed proximity positively included Mr. Lynch who stated, “We come to Henderson for exercising anyway and we live only five minutes away.” When Mr. Clark was asked *what motivates you to visit the park*, he replied, “The fact that it is close to where we live.” Others said “the location, simply the location” and “I live close by.” As noted previously, proximity is not a barrier that can be mitigated or a facilitator that can easily be capitalized upon. Rather, it is all determined by where potential patrons live and their idea of what is near and what would be too far to travel on a regular basis.

The third factor that is both a barrier and a facilitator is socialization and being with company. As a barrier, one older adult indicated that others do not use the park so she is not inclined to visit. As a motivator to visitation Mrs. Tanner said the park is lovely, “especially when you have company, it is a good thing to do, have a chat.” Mrs. Dickson stated she would be encouraged to use the SCP if, “I think that if friends wanted to do it then that would be something.” The influence socialization has on park visitation and use will be reviewed further in section 5.6.

The most commonly mentioned facilitator was the chip trail. This feature of the park was most popular and can be considered the biggest draw for participants to visit the SCP. When

asked, *what motivates you to visit the park*, Mrs. Blake stated, “The chip trail. And it is very well-kept. It is really well-kept. Nice and thick. Excellent.” Similarly Mrs. Welch said, “I think the chip trail is good” and Mr. Clark indicated, “The fact that it is a nice walking surface.” It is clear among these statements that the chip trail is highly regarded. Many favor it because of the soft surface and its regular upkeep. This will be elaborated upon in section 5.3.2.

The remaining facilitators were not indicated by any participants as barriers to visitation. Physical activity and health were mentioned as motivators for visitation and use by five older adults. Participants responded to the question, *what motivates you to visit the park*, by stating “Movement and walking”, “Hiking”, “Primarily to walk”, “I want the exercise”, “I would say the machines”, and “I enjoy running.” These statements illustrate that performing some type of physical activity in the SCP is a facilitator to visitation and use. Individuals enjoy the exercise options available in the park including walking, running, hiking and, for some, using the exercise equipment. For these persons, the SCP as a space for exercise is a great motivator.

Convenience was cited as a facilitator by four older adults. Statements about convenience fell within two categories: convenient to visit and convenient to use. Comments about convenience of visitation were made by Mrs. Sherman, “It is convenient for me because I don’t have to pay or spend extra time somewhere else.” Mrs. Splade made a claim about convenience of use by stating, “And what I like about it [the trail] is that it is a measured distance so you know exactly how far you have gone.” Both of these assertions centre on the convenience of the SCP but different facets, visitation and use. One explains that the SCP is an easy, financially accessible place to visit while the other notes the convenience of the trail being a 1km loop ensuring easy tally of distance traveled. Both exemplify how convenience is a facilitator of use for some individuals.

The remaining three facilitators were identified least frequently, each by only one older adult participant. These three facilitators are safety, relaxation and chance. Mrs. Splade indicated safety as one reason she is motivated to visit the park.

It is familiar; I feel that it is safe. It is safe, partly I think, particularly at this time of year, because with there being a golf course, there is always somebody within earshot or almost within sight. And as somebody who comes by myself to use it, that is important to me. **Mrs. Splade**

Relaxation was noted as a motivator by Mrs. Tanner who stated, “It’s relaxing.” Finally, Mrs. Dickson stated that her motivation to visit the park was merely chance. She said, “It was just chance. We were going for a walk.” Nine total facilitators to park visitation were identified in the research. In the discussion section (5.7) these will be reviewed further with consideration given to the ways in which the recreation centre and community can capitalize on these motivational factors to increase visitation. The many facilitators attributed to persons visiting the park are well summed up in a statement made by Mrs. Splade, “Well again I think because I like the nature, it is close to home, it is safe, it’s soft, it’s convenient.”

5.3 Park Characteristics

5.3.1 Park Location

The location of the park was spoken of favorably by five older adult participants (31%). Praises for the parks location included its overall convenience, proximity to the recreation centre, and proximity to the individual’s home. Most older adults spoke of the parks location concisely stating, “Because it [SCP] is so available, so here, and it’s next to the rec centre” and “it’s close, it’s cheap, it’s outdoors.”

For example consider the situation of Mr. Clark. Mr. Clark, a 69 year old park visitor, resides only a short distance from the SCP. Due to the park’s close proximity, he and his wife

walk to and visit the SCP at least once a week and take part in the *Fit for 50+* fitness classes at Henderson twice a week. Mr. Clark attributes his consistent SCP visitation to the park's ease of use and closeness to his home. I questioned Mr. Clark asking why he chooses to do some of his physical activity in the park as opposed to another location.

Proximity to where we live is probably the number one, um, and because it is such a great facility. It is much nicer to go there and walk than just walk around the block here. **Mr. Clark**

When Mr. Clark was questioned about improvements he would make to the park, he had no suggestions. Mr. Clark is a weekly park user for many reasons, first being its convenient location relative to his home. However, this is not the only reason he makes use of the park. Mr. Clark walks in the park with his wife as means of exercise and spending time with family due to the pleasant surroundings and comfortable trail surface. From Mr. Clark's perspective, the park is adequate as it is currently.

5.3.2 Park Condition and Maintenance

Of the sixteen older adults interviewed, 11 individuals (69%) spoke about the park's condition. Six people spoke positively about the condition of the SCP while five participants expressed concerns. Comments about park condition largely focused on the chip trail. Those praising the condition of the park made statements saying "It is really well-kept" and "the chip trail is in really good condition" and "it is nicely maintained." Mrs. Welch said, "It is really well done. It's well-kept. It is kept clear of anything that might trip you up." One individual spoke in great detail praising the maintenance of the chip trail. Mr. Clark said, "They are very diligent about the way in which they identify some of the tree roots. They spray them with the orange paint and I have never been on a trail where they go and do that kind of thing" (Figure 5.1). The

community recreation coordinator at Henderson concurs with those older adults who compliment the park's condition.

But in terms of the infrastructure of the trail, the condition of the trail, the trees and brush and everything around it, I think they do a really good job of maintaining that and making sure there is nothing that's falling debris, making sure the trail is clear, making sure it is level and well-chipped. So I don't think the rec centre could do much more. **Beth, Community Recreation Coordinator**

Figure 5.1: Photo of Roots Sprayed Orange on Chip Trail



Although many participants spoke favorably about the park's condition and maintenance five participants expressed some concerns. The bulk of shortcomings shared regarding park condition focused on the effects wet weather can have on the SCP. Mrs. Sherman said, "I'd put more chips on the backside because it is wet. There is just the backside of it there, there is one spot where a couple of weeks ago it was like a swamp." Similarly, Mr. Perry stated, "Occasionally there are some wet spots even when they put the chips on it, it is too wet so your

shoes get wet and you sink in.” Mrs. Splade suggested, “I suppose that in the winter if it was somehow covered over even with a canvas awning or something just on the top that would help, because it is not that it is too cold out, it is just that it is too wet out.”

Another problematic area noted were the trail’s sharp corners in places that increase the likelihood of collisions. Another worry was about the density of trees in the park. Mr. Cander said, “One of my concerns is that there is not enough density of trees and so in wind storms each individual tree is susceptible to more pressure.” The final concern regards the area of the chip trail in which extra chips and mulch are stored (Figure 5.2).

On the far side of the park there is a place where there are town bins for them to bring in sand and I think top soil and an access driveway from the street over on the west side of the park crosses the chip trail. So of course the chip trail is disrupted for a space of 50 feet or something which is not very much, but I think if I were looking at that I would want to find a way to keep that little patch in good repair, like maybe pave it. **Mr. Brown**

Figure 5.2: Photo of Mulch Storage Area along Chip Trail



More specific than comments made about the parks overall condition were participants' opinions regarding the SCP's terrain. Five older adults (31%) spoke extensively about the advantages of the park's dynamic terrain and soft surface due to the wood chips. One participant stated, 'I like the terrain' and another said, "It's level so it does not require any huge exertion going up or down." Mrs. Blake indicated that the soft wood chip surface provides great walking conditions. When I inquired about Mrs. Blake's decision to exercise in the park she stated, "Because it goes back to the chip trail and the surface being well maintained and therefore being a very good place to walk especially when my back is driving me nuts."

For instance, consider the circumstance of Mrs. Welch, a 65 year old registered nurse and a consistent park visitor who uses the park frequently to walk, jog and use some of the exercise apparatus. Mrs. Welch's perspective is important due to the numerous ways in which she utilizes the park during her visits and her familiarity as a result. In our interview, Mrs. Welch described how she makes use of her time in the park.

Yes, mostly walking, from time to time and sometimes I'll run if I am really energetic. I will do the stepping up thing because I also like to hike. As a part of our holidays we will go hiking so I have to keep my knees, you know, active.

Mrs. Welch

Mrs. Welch visits the park for walking, as opposed to another location, due to the surface of the trail which became apparent when she stated, "I find walking on the chip trail is much better than walking on concrete." Mrs. Welch stated repeatedly that the benefits of the park lie in its outdoor setting and the terrain. These factors contribute to Mrs. Welch's decision to exercise in the park, as it helps her to keep fit for the hiking she enjoys doing on vacation. This was reiterated when Mrs. Welch stated what she believes to be the assets of the SCP.

Well I think it's just an extension of the gym really, and only in an outdoor environment, which I really like. From my point of view, it is aerobic and I think there is more benefit to walking in a dynamic situation that there is on a treadmill

because you are working against whatever your feet are doing, more resistance and it is just more real. I find when I go hiking if I have been practicing or at least if I have been doing that kind of walking, I'm much more fit than if I was in the gym doing it. **Mrs. Welch**

When asked, Mrs. Welch could not suggest any improvements that could increase the effectiveness of the SCP. In all, Mrs. Welch is satisfied with the park in its current state.

Another trait of the park that was commented upon, by nine older adults (56%), was its outdoor setting and overall atmosphere. The aspect most commonly mentioned as contributing favorably to the park's setting were the trees. Six participants (38%) spoke highly of the trees and forested, natural park landscape. During each interview I asked participants what their favorite aspect of the park was. Individuals responded by saying, "The tall trees" also "Well just the nature of it. That it is outdoors and it's under a canopy of trees" and, "It is a nice little park with the trees and the ambiance is nice." Another aspect of the setting that was viewed positively by some participants was the SCP's peaceful atmosphere. Mrs. Blake shared that her favorite aspect of the park is its beauty noting that, "They keep the trees so lovely here and the bushes and it's very lovely. It's very serene, so it's also good for your spirit." Other contributors to the parks setting were highly regarded including the SCP's overall beauty, the presence of wildlife and the outdoor environment.

The layout of the park was favored by three participants (19%) and its versatility was mentioned most often. Mrs. Splade simply said that one of her favorite aspects of the park was its configuration. Mr. Clark articulated, "I kind of like the way it winds and twists around that various little golf course fairways and it has a few uphill and downhill." Similarly, Mr. Perry stated, "The design of the trail is very nice and the zigzagging back and forth." Although these three individuals praised the parks layout, many older adults (81%) made no mention of how the configuration effects there visitation and use of the park. This may signify that the layout has

minimal effect on desire to exercise in the park or may only be a factor for few persons. Conversely, this could illustrate that the layout is satisfactory and therefore has little impact on visitors as only a few participants mentioned it. Next, data and results on park awareness and accessibility will be summarized.

5.4 Park Awareness and Accessibility

Understanding peoples' awareness of the park is critical, as it effects visitation and utilization. By questioning participants' awareness of the park's presence and features, suggestions can be made to ensure community residents know about the park and its benefits, especially when considering that questionnaire data revealed a wide disconnect between park awareness and visitation. Four older adults (25%) spoke about park awareness and these four individuals were generally unaware of the park prior to being involved in the research. Mrs. Blake indicated that she was first introduced to the park from a friend, "She suggested that we walk on it and I had not known it was there before. I must have driven by many times but I didn't know it was there. And that is maybe something that would help, is a sign, or signage." Mr. Lynch's situation is similar, "I'm not sure many people who don't come here for tennis and golf and stuff are even aware that it is there... Yeah, maybe put something up, a sign to make people aware that it is more than golf." Another older adult participant, Mrs. Tucker was completely unaware of the SCP despite having been enrolled in a *Fit for 50+* fitness class at HRC for six months. Due to her non-use, most of the interview focused on why she had never visited the SCP despite being a regular patron of the recreation centre. The reasons that have contributed to Mrs. Tucker's lack of use are two-fold.

I wasn't aware of its existence and it is not that close. And my husband at this point can't walk very far or vary fast, he has health issues. So, yeah, if I go

someplace for a longer walk I go by myself out the front door and down to the marina and up by Esteban and around, that kind of thing. **Mrs. Tucker**

Mrs. Tucker's, general unawareness of the park and its features have contributed to her lack of visitation. Mrs. Tucker said, "You see I didn't have any information especially about, the part about exercises along the way." Introducing Mrs. Tucker to the general nature and specific features of the park elevated her interest and increased the likelihood of her visiting the park in the future. Mrs. Tucker indicated this in her interview when she said, "Oh I really didn't even know about it, that it was designed for older adults, so maybe I will try it out." In sum, Mrs. Tucker has not made use of the SCP primarily because of her unawareness, though this study may have altered this pattern.

Four of the six recreation centre staff addressed SCP awareness during their interview. Park promotion, marketing and advertising were most often discussed by staff. When I questioned the staff about what additional measures could be taken to increase park awareness Vicky, a recreation centre administrator said, "More promotion. You just got to keep getting the word out there" and Jess, the community recreation programmer stated, "I think it is definitely awareness." More specific statements were made about advertising when asked what more the community or recreation centre could do to increase awareness. Kathy, a fitness instructor, indicated, "Well I think maybe advertising it more." Vicky made similar comments.

I think we try really hard, with you know, marketing and, we are re-doing our website so, again people are using that to find out and get the word out there. It is really marketing and getting the word out, whether its word of mouth or through our patrons. **Vicky, Recreation Centre Administrator**

Nearly all comments made by recreational staff regarding awareness emphasized the need for increased advertising, marketing and promotion. In fact, during the park's conception, promotion was a primary focus. Vicky explained, "Once we actually got the park we had to guarantee

ActNowBC that we would do some promotion of the equipment and some free lessons on the equipment so we could orient people to the equipment.” Staff concerns about awareness all focus on the need to maintain continuous promotion and marketing to ensure community members are aware of the park’s existence and nature. This was evident in a concluding statement made by Vicky, “We can always do a better job of getting that information out there, but no matter how hard you try somebody doesn’t know.”

People’s awareness of the SCP is intertwined with the notion of park accessibility. Thus, understanding how older adults and recreation centre staff perceive park access was a goal of the research. Beth, a community recreation coordinator, explains the emphasis on accessibility by Recreation Oak Bay.

I think that is a big thing with Recreation Oak Bay is that we take accessibility really seriously because we do have a large senior population but also people with disabilities. We want, in leisure, I think our mandate is ‘leisure for everyone’ and so with that comes accessibility. **Beth, Community Recreation Coordinator**

Eleven older adults (69%) shared their perspectives on the accessibility of the SCP. Most of their claims regarded parking, signage and information, and the presence of the HRC. For example, Mr. Cander is a frequent jogger in the park. In his interview he spoke to the accessibility of the SCP positively, indicating its ease of use and the presence of appropriate facilities.

The things you normally think of like access, there’s no gates. You just show up. The building is open, generous hours, shower facilities. If you want to do weights after...those facilities are there if you want to use them. **Mr. Cander**

Coupled with the views of older adult participants are those of the recreation centre staff. Five of the six staff interviewed spoke to the park’s accessibility. Among staff, parking and the presence of the recreation centre were most often discussed.

Parking was brought up by three older adults and two recreation centre staff. Most comments about parking were positive. Mrs. Dickson said, “It’s convenient and there’s good

parking and I think parking is important” and Mr. Cander said “It has adequate parking.” The recreation centre staff concurred. Tracy, a fitness programmer, stated, “There is accessible parking that is close by” and Beth, the community recreation coordinator indicated, “The parking lot, yeah it can be full at times, but it is accessible off Cedar Hill X Road, so there is lots of parking.” Mrs. Blake was the only participant with concern about the accessibility of parking. Her parking woes stem from the close proximity of the SCP to the University of Victoria. Due to their closeness, many students park along Cedar Hill X Road namely because it is free, which can result in limited parking for SCP and recreation centre goers. Therefore, the Henderson parking lot can be more crowded.

As you probably know, you get students galore parking here to avoid the horrible charges, I mean it’s just insane the parking charges. So, they park and walk and if you were here mid-week during the school term and its beautiful out, this parking lot can also sometimes be full. So if you are driving you may end up having to walk nearly a half mile from where you can park...to get to the entrance of this place and come through onto the trail. So parking can be problematic. **Mrs. Blake**

Although Mrs. Blake made clear the parking issues she observed, “I haven’t had it be a problem because I know about this parking thing with the students and I just work around it.” Thus, it can be concluded that parking is a positive attribute of the SCP’s accessibility. Most participants believe there is ample parking available and the one individual with concern for parking has mitigated the issue on her own accord.

Another aspect of accessibility mentioned, by five older adults and one staff member, was how the presence of Henderson Recreation Centre and the facilities available influence the accessibility of the SCP. The nature of comments made by older adults and recreational staff presented vast differences in their viewpoints. Recreational staff spoke positively about the park being on the grounds of Henderson. Tracy, a fitness programmer, stated, “It is near a community rec. centre, so I think it pulls it all together. It’s somewhere, it is not just stand alone, no

resources. It is close to a centre that has resources of all kinds.” Here, Tracy indicates that the accessibility of the park benefits from having the centre close by and the resources within it. Although the presence of Henderson may seem favorable, the five older adults made contradictory statements.

No older adult participant explicitly stated that having the SCP on the grounds of Henderson was making the park inaccessible. Instead, participants indicated that because the Recreation Centre and gym within it were so near, they did not feel the need to use the park. For instance, Mr. Lynch states, “I do similar things in the gym” and Mr. Upton said, “On days that I work out in here [rec centre] I wouldn’t use it.” Also, when I asked Mrs. Creely why she doesn’t use the SCP she said, “I use it [the equipment] in the gym.” It seems that the resources, mainly the gym, may be too near and deter patrons from utilizing the SCP. Along these same lines, Mrs. Perry indicated, “I have equipment in my house which I use, so I don’t need to have equipment in the park.” Considering the statements made by these older adults, it seems that since the gym is on the premises there is no substantial draw for Henderson patrons to visit the park and use the equipment. However, this is not unanimous, as Mr. Cander’s statements indicated at the beginning of this section.

The last aspect contributing to the SCP’s accessibility is signage and information in which five older adults (31%) made comments. Two types of signs were mentioned; entrance signs and informative signs about equipment use. In regards to entrance and welcome signs, participants believe they are lacking in quantity. Mr. Brown articulated, “It would be nice if there was some, something more prominent to tell people it is here. Where is the start point”? Likewise, Mrs. Tucker said, “Now I know more about the park, but if there had been signage,

you know, just saying ‘1k chip trail, golfing’, just what was available from the street side then, uh, I think I would have been more attracted.”

Related comments were made about signage at the equipment stations. Mrs. Tanner suggested better signage to indicate where visitors should begin the outdoor equipment circuit. Mrs. Tanner said, “I think if you could see the start of the exercise program or the, that would be better. There are quite high shrubs here and I think that would put a lot of people off.” Mr. Brown had much to say regarding signage at the equipment stations (Figure 5.3) and was able to speak from a valuable perspective.

Figure 5.3: Photo of an Instructional Sign at an Equipment Station in the SCP



Mr. Brown is a non-user of the SCP. The only visit he has made to the park took place the day before our scheduled interview in which he stated, “Well I thought if I was going to come and talk to you about the chip trail I should at least walk it. So that was my first experience

with the trail.” Although he does not regularly exercise in the park, Mr. Brown does provide insight into the park’s effectiveness from the perspective of a first time visitor. The information gained from a first-time visitor is important to the research because the areas of confusion and suggestions stated by Mr. Brown are likely common among those visiting the SCP for the first time. These points are unlike those spoken of by long time visitors who, in their familiarity with the park, could have forgotten the feelings they may have experienced on their first park visit.

Mr. Brown explained his impressions on his initial visit.

I was really surprised when I went around and looked at the equipment at how little information there was about how to use it. There is a sign right at the beginning that sort of says ‘well try once a week and then work up to two weeks, or two times, and when you get really good you will be coming here every day’ type of message. But as you go to any of the pieces of equipment it doesn’t have something like saying so, if this is your beginner level, climb this set of stairs once in each direction or just go over the hump once or twice. It does warn people not to over exert, but I don’t think there is much information there about how much you should do. **Mr. Brown**

Mr. Brown expressed initial confusion about proper use of the outdoor equipment. He indicates that more detailed informational signage could have mitigated this feeling.

5.5 Activity

5.5.2 Exercise Equipment

All older adult and staff participants were questioned about their experiences and the effectiveness of the equipment stations in the SCP. All recreational staff shared their opinions of the equipment except for the recreation administrator. However, only seven older adults (44%) spoke in detail about the equipment. The nine remaining participants most often indicated that they do not use the equipment and therefore felt uncomfortable making claims about their attributes and quality. As outlined in chapter 4, there is a wide disconnect between park use and equipment use. There is steady park visitation for walking or jogging but virtually no park

visitors were observed using the equipment. The qualitative data collected from older adults helps to conceptualize why this disconnect is so prominent and to suggest possible changes that can be made in order for it to narrow.

Only two older adults (13%) spoke positively about the equipment. Mr. Upton said, “Well I think the equipment is good. It is all-weather and I am amazed that they are still in good condition.” Mr. Lynch indicated that there is good selection among the equipment stations although he has only experimented with the equipment and does not use them on a regular basis. Instead, Mr. Lynch uses the fitness studio, on average, three times a week in the winter and two times a week in the summer. Despite his many weekly visits to HRC, he uses the park quite infrequently. Questioning him about this pattern was important as it is clear he is regularly on site, but still not making consistent use of the SCP. When asked what deters him from visiting the park more often, he spoke of the similarity between the equipment offered in the SCP and what can be found in the indoor gym.

Well everything else there I could use, I do similar things in the gym anyway. We have stairs at home so I am up and down stairs all the time at home. **Mr. Lynch**

The similarity between indoor exercise equipment and the equipment stations within the park can be viewed as beneficial because visitors are likely to have some pre-existing familiarity with the apparatus. Instead, for Mr. Lynch, it acts as a hindrance since the equipment within the park is not unlike what he now uses in other locations, so there is no additional motivation for him to visit the park to exercise in new ways. However, Mr. Lynch does occasionally make an effort to incorporate park use into his visits to Henderson. Mr. Lynch expressed, “Sometimes if we come early we can have a go around and that can be part of our warm-up.”

Similar to the reasons contributing to Mr. Lynch’s inconsistent use of the equipment are many other points of ineffectiveness discussed by other older adult participants. When I

questioned older adults about why they do not use the equipment and why they feel the stations are not satisfying their needs, answers fell into three categories; uncertainty, lack of interest and ease of use. Mrs. Tanner expressed uncertainty about using the equipment alone, “As you get older you really shouldn’t be doing things like that without a buddy.” Mr. Brown was apprehensive about the intensity in which he should be using the equipment.

How many times should a 62-year-old man approach the chin-up bar, or the pull-up bar and how many pull-ups should he realistically be able to do on day one? What should your target be?...If people approach exercise equipment then, it’s very easy to sit down at a piece of equipment and overdue it. **Mr. Brown**

While some participants felt uncertain about the equipment, others shared that they simply were not interested in the stations. Mrs. Dickson merely said, “I am not really interested in it...it didn’t appeal to me.” Mr. Perry spoke more specifically stating, “I saw the equipment but I never used it really because I went there to walk not use it.” Other participants stated they felt the equipment was not easy to use for a beginner. Mrs. Tanner said, “It’s not that easy.” Mr. Upton expressed, “There are some I don’t find that great, but there are a few, the stair thing and the push-up with your shoulder thing [squats], it hurts my shoulders, too bony I guess. It’s hard plastic. It hurts my shoulders and I have to put my hands underneath there.”

Recreational staff also spoke critically of the equipment stations although some had praise for their versatility and the health benefits regular use could provide. Beth, a community recreation programmer stated, “I think the equipment itself provides that cross-training aspect which is beneficial for seniors.” Jess, the community recreation programmer at Henderson, favors the simplicity of the exercise pieces, “It is pretty simple and it’s obviously one piece of machinery so you don’t have to move pieces or change parts.” Despite this assertion, as discussed previously, some older adults found the pieces daunting and complex.

As the SCP was designed and established to serve older adults in the community, a portion of each interview with staff was dedicated to discussing the appropriateness of the equipment for seniors. When I inquired about the appropriateness of the equipment, the presence of handrails was most often mentioned by staff as a means of tailoring the park to older adults. Kathy, a fitness instructor, said, “They were sure to put handrails. So there are handrails beside everything so they don’t have to try to not, they can hold on if they need to.” However, when considering the actual function of the equipment, Kathy asserted, “I don’t think it is as appropriate for them [seniors] as it is for younger people.” Similarly, Jess said, “Some of it is step-ups and things which might be a little daunting to some of the older and frail population. I think for that middle range that are still active and get out there, it is pretty good.” Here Jess indicates that the equipment is better suited for somewhat active seniors as opposed the older adults of a lesser activity level. However, considering that the sample worked with in this study (see chapter 4) was deemed at least somewhat physically active, according to Jess, these people are best suited for the stations. Rather, through the data collected most of the older adult sample either could not speak to the equipment due to non-use, or spoke negatively about the stations.

Versatility of the equipment was mentioned both positively and negatively. Kathy stated, “You could do a lot of different things with that equipment.” Conversely, later in her interview she indicated the need for additional pieces of equipment, “I would definitely want to put in a few more pieces of strength training stuff. There just isn’t very much of that.” Tracy, a fitness programmer, suggested working toward making the exercise stations in the park more multi-functional. Instead of a singular purpose, multi-functionality would ensure that seniors of different abilities and differing interests could utilize the same pieces of equipment in varying ways most appropriate for them.

Through the course of interviews with recreational staff, several suggestions were made regarding the ways in which the equipment could be improved as there was dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the stations. Jess stated, “I don’t think it [equipment] is promoting physical activity in the park. I think you see more people walking and things like that. Yeah, I don’t think it is doing its job.” To alter this, along with multi-functionality, Kathy suggested additional signage and Tracy said, “Some of those things [equipment pieces] you would want someone who knows what’s happening to help guide you.” Statements suggesting changes to the equipment to incorporate more balance and strength-training pieces were also made. The elimination of certain pieces due to ineffectiveness was also mentioned with emphasis on their replacement with more appropriate apparatus. Further discussion of the equipment and suggested modifications will be made in section 5.7 and chapter 6.

5.5.1 Recreation Centre Programming

Programs at the Henderson Recreation Centre differ in type and facilities used. Two programs occur in the SCP: orientations and circuit training classes. The *outdoor equipment orientation* program is described in the Spring/Summer 2011 Oak Bay Parks and Recreation Program handbook.

Outdoor equipment is located throughout 6 stations on the Henderson Chip Trail. This 1 hour orientation will teach you the proper techniques and adjustments for using the equipment in small groups. These free sessions have limited space, ensure your spot by registering early (p. 26).

The *outdoor circuit challenge* program is also described.

Get outside and enjoy the beautiful weather while keeping fit! In groups of no more than 6 participants, you will work your way through the outdoor circuit workout that utilizes the outdoor fitness equipment and chip trail at Henderson Recreation Centre. Circuits will include use of the outdoor equipment, tubing, body weight exercises and walking/running between stations. Finish each class with a relaxing stretch (p. 26).

Nine of the sixteen older adult participants (56%) spoke in detail about the recreational programs that take place in the SCP. No older adults interviewed had ever participated in the *outdoor equipment orientations* or *outdoor circuit challenge* program. Despite the lack of enrollment, three of the nine older adults mentioned some potential benefits that attending programs in the SCP could provide. For example, Mrs. Sherman said, “Well it keeps you going...other than sitting at home.” Mr. Clark had some prior knowledge of the outdoor equipment orientations.

I noticed in the brochure for the upcoming activities I think they have one that is an orientation that you can register for...that is a good idea...If someone actually goes along with you and physically takes you through the routines, it's easier to kind of get into a habit, perhaps. **Mr. Clark**

However, when I asked Mr. Clark why he has chosen not to take part in the programs in the park he explained, “I am not thinking of doing it at the moment. We kind of have a schedule. We usually go to the Tuesday and Thursday classes and we often walk Monday, Wednesday, Friday so that is, kind of, sufficient at this time.” Lastly, Mrs. Splade shared what she believes the benefits would be of attending the *outdoor circuit challenge* program in the SCP.

Sometimes the weather is so nice and you are in this cool room next door and I keep thinking, ‘I wish we could just be outdoors and do this’...That is what I would like to use it for. So that I was sure I was using it correctly and then there would be the social aspects of it as well. **Mrs. Splade**

Conversely, the remaining six older adult participants (38%) explained what has prevented them from enrolling since none of the sample had ever attended the programs. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Perry shared that “financial and health reasons” have prevented them from taking part in the programs. For Mr. Cander, his preference to exercise alone, at his own pace and without a set schedule has deterred him from enrolling in park programs. Mr. Lynch said, “I didn’t know [about the courses].” Mrs. Sherman is content with her current exercise

regime and feels no need to include programs in the SCP. Lastly, Mr. Upton expressed his comfort with the SCP and equipment by stating, “I think I probably know as much about it as anybody there...because I have probably been going there a lot longer than the person giving the course.” Barriers to enrollment in the programs held in the SCP are vast and most are a matter of personal preference which presents difficulties when considering their resolution.

Recreation Centre staff were also questioned about the recreational programs that are held in the SCP. All of the recreational staff interviewed shared their knowledge and viewpoints on the park’s programs except for Beth, the community recreation coordinator. Beth is unfamiliar with these specific programs because her primary responsibility is to plan and supervise the afterschool care program. The other five staff members made comments about the programs that fell within two categories: benefits to attending programs in the SCP and factors that contribute to program attendance. Tracy, a fitness programmer at Henderson, articulated the many benefits she attributes to program enrollment.

Well I think first of all is people love the outdoors, it is a great attraction. Because sometimes they don’t want to come into a gym and workout so it is utilizing the outdoors. It is also utilizing the stations that are there all year round and it’s free. So if they learn and come to a session and then from then on they know how to use the stuff in the future. And I think it is also great to get to know people, maybe they are coming with a friend or it’s a way of meeting people and it’s a way of getting fit. And using the outdoors and I think it is a way of reaching people at all levels. You don’t have to worry that your, like I said, a track star. You can come in with no fitness background and we’ll work on your fitness in a real functional way, which I think is great. **Tracy, Fitness Programmer**

Some benefits to program attendance shared by Tracy were agreed upon by other staff members. For example, Samantha, the other fitness programmer at Henderson, expressed the exercise and health benefits that can be attained through SCP programs. Kathy, a fitness instructor, also stressed the importance of learning proper and safe use of the outdoor equipment during the

programs which could transcend into independent use when comfortable. It is clear the recreation centre staff attribute vast benefits to program attendance.

Despite the many benefits to program attendance shared, many factors contribute to patron's actual participation in these programs (Table 5.4). These perceived factors were shared by recreational staff and must be considered in order to increase program enrollment. However, some of these factors are controllable and others are not. For example, the weather is a factor that cannot be alleviated as the SCP programming is obviously outdoors. Also, the park's location is static. If patrons feel the SCP is too far from home or in any way inconvenient, the likelihood of their attendance is slight. Another factor that is difficult to control is the time of programs and how that affects patron schedules. The time in which a program runs is based on many reasons including fitness instructor schedule and availability and timing of other programs. Although patron preferences can be taken into consideration, it is unlikely that everyone interested could be satisfied.

Table 5.4: Factors Contributing to Recreational Program Attendance

Factor	Frequency
Cost	2
Weather	1
Location	1
Awareness	1
Peer Pressure	1
Time/Schedule	1

Although it would be challenging to alter some factors that contribute to program attendance, others can be addressed. Cost was the factor identified most often as determining program attendance. Fitness Programmer Tracy stated, "Cost is always a factor. Whether something is free, or if it is something they can afford to do they are going to be more likely to do it." Fortunately the *outdoor equipment orientations* are free to patrons. However, the *outdoor*

circuit challenge costs \$30 for four sessions held once a week. This cost may deter some individuals from enrolling, but measures could be taken to alleviate costs to those that are financially strained but still have a desire to take part. For example, interested individuals could apply to be included in the City of Victoria's Leisure Involvement for Everyone (LIFE) Program. This program acknowledges the importance of recreation and leisure involvement for everyone in the community.

The LIFE Program provides a combination of annual credit and program savings to eligible low-income individuals and families to use towards recreational programs and services in all City recreational facilities and ten of our jointly operated centres. (City of Victoria, 2012)

The LIFE Program does require interested individuals and families to complete an application and meet certain income guidelines. However, if granted access into the LIFE program individuals can take part in fitness programming and increase their familiarity with the SCP without financial burden.

Awareness of the park's existence has been a focus of this qualitative research (section 5.4) but awareness of programming in the park is also important. Jess, community recreation programmer, said, "Awareness is one, because I don't see them [SCP programs] advertised greatly, because unless you are looking for that specific thing I don't think it would jump out at you." Actions can be taken to increase awareness of these programs. Perhaps a "Spotlight on Seniors" or an "New Ways to Work Out" bulletin board at the recreation centre could highlight the park and the programs held within it. This could increase awareness of the park's features and curiosity about the space prompting increased visitation and program attendance. Encouraging those who regularly make use of the park or that are enrolled in the programs to share their experiences with friends is vital. Recreation administrator Vicky said, "A lot of it is peer pressure. A lot of it is friends, you know word of mouth and people saying 'I went to this

great program' and 'I've heard about this from my friend'. That is really what gets people out.” Increasing awareness will contribute to word of mouth but other actions can be taken to highlight the park's effectiveness especially when used by small groups during programs and otherwise. Perhaps a program that emphasizes socialization could be effective. For example, a “Chip and Chat” program could be developed that gives equal attention to exercising in the SCP and socializing in the muffin nook afterwards. A self-created group of this type already exists. This will be explained further in the next section, 5.6.

5.6 Socialization

According to ActNowBC (2008) one purpose of the Seniors Community Parks in British Columbia is to “promote socialization and engagement of seniors in their communities” (p. 1). For this reason, attention was given to qualitative data that revealed the socialization taking place in the park and how the park fosters such interactions. First, it is clear that there is a sense of community at the Henderson Recreation Centre that could encourage use of the park space. This was evident in the qualitative interviews of five older adult participants (31%). Statements made about the community fell into three categories: togetherness, comfort and the observed demographic of the Recreation Centre. Said with the most frequency, four older adults mentioned how aspects of togetherness entice them to visit the centre. Most of their accounts concern the group of friends they enjoy interacting with at HRC. Mr. Clark said, “The people that are going, most have been going for quite a long time, so it becomes a bit of a social group, too.” Similarly, Mr. Lynch asserted, “We are with a group that we have been with for several years now.” Mrs. Welch simply said, “I think it's a really good community experience” and “It is more congenial.”

Feeling comfortable at the Henderson Recreation Centre was mentioned in reference to community by three older adults. Mrs. Welch described her preference for the HRC over other centres in the community stating, “Mostly, it is more comfortable to be here.” Also, Mr. Clark expressed his comfort with the fitness program he is enrolled in, “We [he and his wife] are very comfortable taking the class.” Finally, two older adults described that the demographic they observe at the Henderson Recreation Centre is an asset to the facility. For example, Mrs. Welch explained, “For my age, because at Oak Bay [Rec Centre] it is much younger and it’s a bit of a meat market sometimes and I am out of the market now.” Additionally Mr. Brown expressed his preference for the HRC.

I tried a couple of other rec centres and I like the size of this one. I went to Oak Bay [rec centre] a couple times near the high school and there’s all these athletic young men and women and they don’t create any sort of a problem or anything like that. But they are all there and they are pretty fit. And, ‘I lift 15 times my body weight!’ Nice kid, nice, nice, nice. For my own comfort, I feel really comfortable here and there are young people and old people here but they are not super jocks. **Mr. Brown**

Although it is encouraging that select participants made positive comments about the sense of community they experience at Henderson Recreation Centre, none explicitly mentioned a sense of community in reference to the SCP. Instead, statements were made about the relationships held with other patrons of the centre and their socialization patterns in the park. To begin, six older adult participants shared that they are part of a group of HRC patrons that participate in a fitness class each Saturday followed by a weekly coffee date in the Muffin Nook post-class. The after class coffee date is not organized by the centre but is a weekly tradition upheld by the Saturday program attendees. Mrs. Tanner described the Saturday ritual stating, “There is a group of us, we meet and we come on Saturday and that’s very encouraging because we always finish up with coffee and talking about the world.” Mrs. Dickson explained why

chatting over coffee after class is enjoyable, “There are women whom I can have good conversation, because we have a lot of similar interests, similar concerns, similar worries, that sort of thing. So, that’s nice.”

As mentioned previously, a program adapted from this ritual could be run effectively in the SCP. Perhaps a “Chip and Chat” program could be created and modeled after this current group. This class would incorporate outdoor physical activity on the chip trail followed by a social aspect, like coffee in the Muffin Nook or even a cool down walk around the trail where interacting with others is encouraged. Not only could this be a motivational tool for participants to attend but also help to meet the socialization goal for the SCP put forth by ActNowBC (2008). When recreational staff were interviewed they shared that a program of this type could be feasible. Kathy, a fitness instructor said she believes something like this may be taking place already, “When they [SCP users] come in here to the muffin nook and you can hear them talking about the park and they just went for a walk and you know, so it does create that. They love being able to come in here after.” Support for a program of this type would be needed from the community recreation programmer, fitness programmers, fitness instructors and would likely be held only in the late spring and summer months. Luckily, there is flexibility in developing and carrying out new programs at Henderson. For this reason, programs like this one or others suggested through the research could be experimented with if all recreational staff members are in agreement.

The next focus was on the social situations in which older adult participants visit the park. Eight older adults (50%) described the social capacity in which they visit the park in an effort to describe the socialization patterns of participants in the SCP (Table 5.5). The data indicates that individuals visit the park in many different social groupings. Three of the eight

participants only visit the park on their own, while the remaining five persons go to the park with others. This aligns with the ActNowBC’s goal for the parks, to “promote socialization” (2008). However, additional measures could be taken to increase the current amounts of socialization taking place. These will be outlined in section 5.7.

Table 5.5: Social Situation in which Older Adult Interview Participants Visit SCP

Social Situation	Frequency (n=8)
Only Alone	3
Alone or With Friends	2
Only with a Partner	1
With a Partner or With Friends	1
Only with Friends	1

5.7 Discussion

Examination of the qualitative data has provided insight into the SCPs many areas of effectiveness and others that would benefit from improvement. In the first section, various barriers and facilitators to park use were revealed in order to understand what motivates and discourages people from visiting the SCP. Ultimately, there is no major barrier preventing people from visiting the SCP. Instead, several barriers may act in tandem to make visiting the park difficult for some, such as proximity and parking. Perhaps the most surprising deterrent to park visitation was the SCP’s location on the grounds of the HRC. The placement of Oak Bay’s SCP at the Henderson Recreation Centre seems logical as the natural progression would be for active persons at the HRC to be curious and begin making use of the park. Instead it appears that in most instances the location of the centre and the gym within it deters persons from using the SCP because they are comfortable with their current routine and physical activity. No recreational staff acknowledged that the nearness of the HRC to the park could be a drawback. In fact, many

articulated that their proximity to one another was a great asset. In order to lessen the influence the HRC may have on SCP visitation an effort must be made to acknowledge the benefits that can be gained from SCP use compared to exclusive use of the indoor gym at Henderson. Benefits of this type have been uncovered in the research although they may not be well broadcasted to potential SCP visitors. Beth

I think it's fantastic because I think a lot of our fitness can be indoors, outdoor activities are really important not only just to get out in the fresh air, get some sun but also have that natural ground resistance versus being on the treadmill. I think being out in the elements are great. **Beth, Community Recreation Programmer**

This perspective should be shared with potential visitors to increase visitation to the SCP.

However, many facilitators to SCP visitation became apparent in the research. The most highly regarded feature of the park was the chip trail. Praised for its soft surface and diligent upkeep, the trail is the biggest lure for park visitors. Due to its popularity the trail must be better promoted and advertised according to recreation centre staff. This could increase awareness while highlighting the most revered aspect of the SCP. Emphasizing the benefits of exercising outdoors on dynamic terrain would serve the park well. Consider the systematic review by Coon et al., (2011) in which literature on the effect of exercising outdoors compared to indoors on physical and mental well-being was conducted. Coon et al., (2001) found “evidence that physical activity in an outdoor natural environment may bring additional positive effects on measures of mental well-being that are not seen when participating in similar physical activity indoors” (p. 1767). Patrons must be informed about the benefits of exercising outdoors compared to in an indoor gym. For example, if fitness instructors made an effort to lead the ‘cool down’ of their programs along the chip trail more patrons would be exposed to the park and encouraged to make use of it independently. By capitalizing on the popularity and exercise benefits of the trail, it could become better utilized.

Fortunately, programming in the SCP does currently exist but not without complications. None of the 16 older adult participants had ever enrolled in the *outdoor equipment orientations* or *outdoor circuit challenge* programs. This obviously limited the knowledge gained from these persons about the nature and effectiveness of the programming. Some individuals did share what benefits they believe could be received from these programs, but most noted what has prevented them from attending these programs, such as finances, awareness, cost, and lack of interest. However, many of the participants are enrolled in other programs at the centre, like *Fit for 50+*. Further questioning is required to determine why the older adults are enrolled in programs like these (*Fit for 50+*) but not those that take place in the park. Also, data gathered indicated a need for some new programs that could better serve the community and older adults. The qualitative interviews have shed light upon the enjoyment older adults find in combining exercise and socialization. One program in particular (“Chip and Chat”) has already been outlined in section 5.6.

Qualitative data has exposed pitfalls in the park’s infrastructure, namely the exercise equipment and signage. The equipment stations were discussed critically by both older adults and recreational staff. Older adults expressed that their uncertainty, lack of interest and the ease of use of equipment stations make the pieces problematic. Staff members of the HRC believe the appropriateness of the equipment for older adults is questionable and the limited versatility of the stations are the primary weaknesses. Additional interview data indicates a need for further entrance and informational signage. Relatively simple measures can be taken to alleviate the infrastructural shortcomings identified in the research. In fact, a few small changes will likely affect many of the challenges the SCP is facing. For example, some older adults expressed the need for more detailed informational signage at equipment stations. Changing the current

signage could be difficult and costly but creating a packet of information clarifying proper use of the equipment is a viable solution. The packet could outline specific directions explaining how to use the apparatus properly and be available for pick up inside the recreation centre. Developing a resource of this kind would eliminate the need to change or add informational signage while helping to mitigate people's uncertainty about proper equipment use.

Entrance signage was also mentioned as many participants believe these signs are lacking. The only entrance sign is in the formal entryway to the park adjacent to the front doors of HRC. By erecting signs at the informal entry points along Cedar Hill X Road persons walking by can be attracted to the park and made aware of its features. Expanding entrance signage would increase awareness and thus, visitation. These entrance signs do not need to be as elaborate as those at the formal entryway. A small sign indicating the presence of the SCP and the features in the park would suffice. Although this would need to be cleared with Recreation Oak Bay administration, the research supports that entrance signage is currently insufficient and by improving the signage additional persons will be attracted to the SCP.

The qualitative data gathered has shed light upon the effectiveness of the park according to older adults and recreation centre staff. Advantageous aspects of the park have been found whilst areas of improvement have been revealed. Suggestions by participants and me have been given attention in this section and will also be a focus of the concluding chapter.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This chapter will summarize the research findings, discuss the limitations of the study and directions for future research. The purpose of this research was to examine SCP visitation and utilization patterns to reveal barriers and facilitators to use as well as determine the popularity and nature of recreational programming taking place in the park. Emphasis was given to the lived experiences associated with the SCP shared by participants. A mixed methods approach was adapted combining an observational sampling method, known as the constructed week sampling method, a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. This chapter will conclude by outlining the study's key findings, limitations, recommendations for the SCP, and prospects for future research.

6.1 Usefulness of the Sample and Research Design

Two participant groups were included in this research, older adults recruited at HRC and staff members of Henderson Recreation Centre. These two sample groups were selected in order to gather data from community dwelling older adults this park was meant to serve and recreational staff with valuable expertise about the SCP and recreational programs for seniors. The older adult sample exhibited variations in age, gender, marital status, self-reported health and park visitation patterns while the recreation centre staff sample was diverse in terms of job type and associated responsibilities. Chapter four outlines the nature of both samples in detail.

Mixed-methods were employed in order to study the case of Oak Bay's SCP in the most thorough manner. First, to measure current park visitation and usage patterns the constructed week sampling method was employed. Use of this method allowed a representative week of park visitation and use to be compiled where visitation and usage amounts were previously unknown. An introductory quantitative instrument questioned older adult HRC patrons about their SCP

awareness and visitation, health, and activity patterns. Descriptive data of the older adult sample was collected during this research phase. Next, qualitative interviews were conducted with 16 consenting older adults and six recreation centre staff members. Qualitative interviews yielded rich data rooted in participants' personal experiences and opinions of the park.

6.2 Addressing the Research Objectives

This research contributes to the understanding of the SCP's value in the community as a public space for physical activity tailored to persons 65 and older. First, current visitation and usage amounts were determined. During seven 30 minute park observations 55 men and women were seen in the SCP. Persons observed were diverse in terms of age, social groupings and activities being performed. Only 23.6% of visitors were observed in the beginning of the week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday) compared to 76.4% in the latter part of the week (Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday). The highest number of people observed (15) occurred on Thursday followed by 14 people seen on Saturday. Steady but relatively low visitation amounts were observed and park use varied between walking and jogging with only one person seen on the equipment. Also, questionnaire data revealed a discrepancy between park awareness and visitation as 90.8% of participants indicated they were aware of the park while only 38.5% visit more than once a month.

Next, this project sought to explore participants' perceived benefits of park use especially in regards to physical activity. Older adults shared their adoration for the chip trail and the exercise options the SCP provides. Also included was the preference, by some, for exercising outdoors in the fresh air as opposed to in the indoor gym. However, this was not agreed upon by all participants. Recreation Centre staff attributed many benefits to park use but most commonly health and fitness. The third aim of the research was to identify whether the 'built infrastructure'

of the park influences use. To address this objective, questions were asked during the qualitative interviews prompting participants to share their experiences with park infrastructure. Two primary infrastructural shortcomings were revealed: lacking signage (entrance and informational) and the function of the exercise equipment stations. Suggestions to address these shortcomings will be made in section 6.3.

Another objective of the project was to examine how the ‘built environment’ around the SCP might promote or hinder use. Some older adult experiences indicated that the location of the SCP on the grounds of the Henderson Recreation Centre deters them from making use of the park due to their preference for the indoor gym. Conversely, recreational staff expressed the advantages of the park being near to Henderson due to the resources available including washrooms and drinking fountains. To motivate older adults to supplement their exercise in the indoor gym with SCP use, the benefits of outdoor exercise must be disseminated. By doing so older adults could diversify their physical activity and achieve greater benefits.

Lastly, analysis of the recreational programming held in the SCP was a focus. The two programs conducted in the park were outlined and discussed with both samples. No older adults had ever attended these programs limiting the information that could be gathered. Participants shared their perceived benefits of the programs and also what has prevented them from attending. Recreational staff discussed the benefits that can be acquired through program attendance and the factors that contribute to program attendance. Opportunities for future research on recreational programming in the SCP will be outlined in section 6.4.

6.2.1 Limitations

Limitations to this research are minimal in scope but still require attention. First, this project is a case-study thus limiting generalizability of findings to the other 17 SCPs in British

Columbia. Also, a purposive sampling strategy was undertaken in order to secure staff participants with appropriate knowledge of the SCP and a diverse older adult sample. By recruiting from the lobby of the HRC, older adults are limited to those who are in some way active at the recreation centre. These limitations were discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.

Other limitations concern the qualitative interview method and data analysis. During qualitative interviews participants shared meaningful experiences and personal opinions, but these may not be based on fact. Also, there are some inherent limitations in the use of qualitative methods. Qualitative findings cannot be extrapolated to a wider audience as the results depict the views and experiences of only the participants involved. Also, in taking a humanistic approach my presence as the researcher cannot be overlooked. Participants were required to share personal experiences with me during interviews and aspects of those experiences may have been omitted if persons were not comfortable with full disclosure. However, in almost all interviews participants were willing to answer all questions and elaborate when requested. Another limitation concerns the analysis of data gathered. Transcription and coding was done manually without assistance from outside software leaving room for minimal human error.

6.3 Suggestions for the SCP Based on Findings

Various suggestions can be made to improve the SCP based on research findings. Overarching themes for change exist in the research and include the need for integrated exercise and socialization programs in the SCP, additional entrance and informational signage, increased park awareness, and the non-use of the equipment stations. Some recommendations have been made in earlier chapters to address these research outcomes.

1. The creation of a “Chip and Chat” program emphasizing physical activity and socialization in the park.

2. The installation of a “Spotlight on Seniors” or “New Ways to Work Out” bulletin board in the HRC to increase awareness and promote the nature of the SCP.
3. Measures to lessen the cost of the *outdoor circuit challenge* program for those individuals that may be financially strained including admission into the LIFE program.
4. Creation of an informational packet to provide additional directions for proper use of the exercise equipment (available in the HRC) to lessen uncertainty without changing current signage.
5. Installation of entrance/welcome signs at informal entry points along Cedar Hill X Road.

These suggestions are based on my own interpretation of the results and will require support from Recreation Oak Bay and the Henderson Recreation Centre. A desired outcome of this research was to provide realistic and attainable suggestions based on the results. These five recommendations meet these criteria. However, these specific suggestions do not need to be adopted without alteration. It would be beneficial if recreational staff participants as well as other recreational experts in the community weigh in on the nature and purpose of these suggestions. These persons view the SCP and recreation through a lens I do not, due to their extensive knowledge. Therefore modifications to my suggestions from this group would be welcomed and a probable asset to the improvement of the SCP.

In fact, some Recreation Centre staff identified changes they would like to see made to the park during interviews. The improvements suggested include the installation of equipment pieces geared toward children at the park’s current stations. Jess, community recreation programmer, expressed the need for kid-centered equipment in the park to satisfy families visiting the SCP.

If moms and dads could get their kids out for a walk around the park and then there is some play equipment that is also physical activity type equipment, I think that would be great. Or you don’t even have to replace it [the equipment], you could have one of each. So then you have moms and their kids and older people interacting and using the equipment. **Jess, Community Recreation Programmer**

Recommendations like Jess' are much more difficult to put into practice as funding for such changes may be hard to obtain. The existing equipment was financed by ActNowBC and the Province of British Columbia. Adding equipment for children may not be option due to finances and the nature of the park being for older adults. However, suggestions like these are meaningful to consider if ever changes of this magnitude could be made. Other suggestions made by older adults were discussed in chapter 5 including modifications to equipment pieces and installation of additional signage.

6.4 Future Research

Directions for future research are vast and topically diverse. As previously stated, no research had yet been conducted on British Columbia's SCPs prior to this project. Therefore, there are numerous research gaps that demand attention. First, the seventeen other SCPs and British Columbia have never been studied, so introductory research (similar in nature to this project) would be meaningful in understanding current visitation, appropriateness for older adults, areas of effectiveness, potential improvements and recreational programming in those parks, where applicable. Although this case study is an adequate beginning to the study of British Columbia's SCPs, additional research is required to ensure the quality and usefulness of these facilities currently and into the future.

This research has revealed a prominent disconnect between park visitation and equipment use. Despite steady park visitation amounts, almost all patrons were observed walking or jogging past idle sitting equipment stations. Knowledge about the park would benefit from further research exclusively on the exercise apparatus. Future research projects of this kind could gain an understanding of the effectiveness and appropriateness of each individual equipment piece

rather than grouping them collectively, as was done in this research. More specific claims could be made about the equipment if research of this type was carried out. Also, projects seeking to determine what changes, if any, could be made to entice persons to make use of the equipment would be valuable.

Although a focus of this project, supplemental research is necessary regarding recreational programming in the SCP. As previously stated, no older adult interview participants had taken part in any of the SCP's recreational programs. Therefore, limited information could be collected regarding the quality and effectiveness of the park's programs. Future research including persons who do attend those programs would be beneficial. Projects like these would be valuable to determine the attendance, benefits and perceptions of SCP programming. Lastly, if any of the suggestions made in section 6.3 are put into practice, research to determine their effect would be helpful in understanding the usefulness and success of these recommendations.

6.5 Summary

The ethnographic case study analysis undertaken for this research provides valuable insight into the current levels of use and the overall effectiveness of the SCP. The research findings can be used to make improvements in the park to increase use and value in the community. Creative initiatives of this kind are not commonplace so consistent reflection on efficiency and patron satisfaction are necessary. This research has launched a dialogue in Oak Bay as to the current state of SCP and how community members experience the space. I expect this research to initiate further community discussion about the SCP and its value while consideration is given to the results and suggestions put forth.

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Appendix A
Seniors Community Parks in British Columbia

Community	Park Location	Known Affiliation
Abbotsford	Mill Lake Park	Not Known
Burnaby	9523 Cameron Street	Cameron Recreation Complex
Courtenay	358 Anderton Avenue	Florence Filburg Centre
Cranbrook	17 th Avenue and Baker Street	Cranbrook RecPlex
Dawson Creek	Corner of 13 th Street and 110 Avenue	Not Known
Kamloops	On the McArthur Island Parkway adjacent to Norbrock Stadium	Not Known
Kelowna	1800 Parkinson Way	Parkinson Recreation Centre
Nanaimo	6000 Oliver Road	Oliver Woods Recreation Centre
Nelson	2001 Lakeside Drive	Not Known
North Cowichan	5847 Chesterfield Avenue	Cowichan Sportsplex
Oak Bay	2291 Cedar Hill X Rd	Henderson Recreation Centre
Prince George	2121 Massey Place	Masich Place Stadium
Richmond	Hugh Boyd Park	Not Known
Sidney	10091 Resthaven Drive	Sidney/North Saanich Library
Surrey	North of 83 rd Avenue and west of 160 th Street	Fleetwood Community Centre
Terrace	4620 Park Avenue	Not Known
Tsawwassen	5027 11A Avenue	Lions Wellness Park
Vancouver	6210 Tisdall Street	Tisdall Park

Source: SeniorsBC (<http://www.seniorsbc.ca/activeaging/parks/>)

Appendix C
Questionnaire

**Just a Walk in the Park, or is it? A Case Study Analysis of a Seniors Community Park
in Oak Bay, British Columbia**

Introduction

Hello! My name is Kathryn Bills and I am a Master's student in the *Department of Geography* at the *University of Victoria* and am currently conducting my thesis project. In my project I will be analyzing the Seniors Community Park in Oak Bay, BC. I intend to study how often the park is visited and in what ways it is being used, with an emphasis on healthy aging and physical activity. This survey is designed to gain an understanding of your physical activity and exercise habits, your current level of health, and to gather information on your other activity patterns. Your responses will be kept entirely confidential. You may refrain from answering any question you do not wish to answer. Results of this survey will be included in my Master's thesis and presented in various academic environments (i.e. professional conferences, scholarly publications). Your responses are very important to me and your participation in this survey would be greatly appreciated! Please read the enclosed informed consent form prior to completing the questionnaire. If you have further questions about this research project please feel free to contact me at: [contact information removed] or contact my supervisor Denise Cloutier-Fisher at [contact information removed].

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION. Please circle, fill in the box, add a checkmark or answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

(Note: this identifying information will not be included in the results but can be used to provide you with a summary of the research findings). Please indicate if you would like a summary of the results when ready. (circle) Yes No

Socio-demographic Information

1. Gender: (please circle) Male Female

2. Please indicate which age bracket you fall into.

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75-84

85+

3. How many years have you lived at your current residence? _____

4. What is your marital status?

Single/Never Married

Married/Common-Law

Divorced/Separated

Widowed

5. What is your occupation? _____

Seniors Community Park

6. Are you aware of the existence of the Seniors Community Park in your neighborhood? (On the grounds of the Henderson Recreation Centre)

Yes

No

7. If so, have you ever visited the park?

Yes

No

8. Approximately how many times have you visited the park in the past year?

_____ Never

_____ Once a year

_____ More than once a year but less than once a month

_____ Once a month

_____ More than once a month but less than once a week

_____ Once a week

_____ Several times a week

_____ Daily

9. If you **have** visited the park, in what way(s) have you used the park? (*please check all that apply*)

_____ Walking

_____ Socialization with others/meeting place

_____ Physical activity (using exercise equipment)

_____ Relaxing (i.e. reading or journaling)

_____ Other (please identify _____)

10. If you **have not** visited the park, what reasons have contributed to your decision not to spend time in the park? (*please check all that apply*)

_____ Difficult to get to the park

_____ Was not aware of the parks' existence

_____ Not sure how to use the exercise equipment

_____ Cannot safely travel to the park

_____ Other (Please identify _____)

10b. If you have not visited the park, what might it take for you to begin visiting the park on a regular basis?

11. Would you be willing to use the park?

Yes No

If no, what conditions would need to be present in order for you to use the park?

Health

11. Please select what status best depicts your current level of health:

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
In general, my health is:	<input type="checkbox"/>				
In general, my mental health is:	<input type="checkbox"/>				
In general, my physical health is:	<input type="checkbox"/>				

12. Have you been diagnosed with any chronic conditions?

Yes No No Opinion/ Don't Know

13. If yes, what chronic conditions do you have? *(Please list all)*

Activity

14. What types of activities and hobbies do you partake in? *(Please list all activities)*

15. What types of physical activities, if any, do you partake in? Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement that requires muscle movement and more energy expended than when resting. Examples of physical activity include jogging, yoga, weight lifting, and basketball. (Please list all activities)

16. Does your job require you to be active throughout the day? (i.e. mail carrier, laborer, personal trainer)

Yes No No Opinion/ Don't Know

If yes, what kinds of activities that relate to health and wellness do you do?

17. During the **last 7 days**, on how many days did you **walk** for at least 10 minutes at a time **in your leisure time**?

_____ **days per week**

No walking in leisure time ➔ **Skip to question 19**

18. How much time did you usually spend on one of those days **walking** in your leisure time?

_____ **hours per day**

_____ **minutes per day**

19. Think about only those physical activities that you did for at least 10 minutes at a time. During the **last 7 days**, on how many days did you do physical activities like aerobics, running, fast bicycling, or fast swimming **in your leisure time**?

_____ **days per week**

No vigorous activity in leisure time ➔ **Skip to question 21**

20. How much time did you usually spend on one of those days doing **vigorous** physical activities in your leisure time?

To compete against others:

To look good:

Other: _____

28. Please indicate how much enjoyment you get from the following free time activities: (check one box for each)

	No enjoyment	Not much enjoyment	Some enjoyment	A fair amount of enjoyment	A great amount of enjoyment	I never do that
Reading books/ newspaper:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting together with friends/family:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking part in physical activities:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching TV/DVDs:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Future Participation in the Second Phase of the Research (Note: this stage will be for persons age 50 or older)

Would you be willing to participate in a one-on-one face to face interview, at your home or at another designated location close to your home, in order for me to attain a greater understanding of your experiences related to the Seniors Community Park in your neighborhood?

Yes No

If yes, please provide a contact phone number and the times when it is best to contact you, or else send a message to me at my e-mail address, [contact information removed]. I will contact you in the upcoming weeks. Thank you!

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Additional Comments

Thank you very much for completing this survey. Please feel free to include any additional comments you have regarding the contents of this survey in the space provided below.

Appendix D
Older Adult Interview Guide

A Walk in the Park, or is it?
A Case Study Analysis of a Seniors Community Park in Oak Bay, British Columbia

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Older Adult

Interviewer Name

Start Time

Date

Interviewee Name:

Address

Gender

Male
Female

Demographics/Housing Characteristics

1. What is your current age?

2. Marital Status

Single/Never Married
Married/Common-Law
Divorced/Separated
Widowed

3. What is your level of education?

Completed elementary school
Some high school
Completed high school
Vocational training or apprenticeship after high school (specify)

Some college/university (specify degree)
Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
Ph.D.
Don't Know

4. Type of Housing

Detached Home
Apartment
Senior's Apartment
Town House
Mobile Home
Other

5. Do you?

Own your accommodation
Rent your accommodation

6. Do you live here year-round?

6a. If no, how many months per year do you live here?

7. How many years have you lived in this community?

Personal Health

8. How would you describe your current state of health? Would you say, in general, your health is:

Excellent
Good
Fair
Poor

9. Is your health now better, about the same, or worse than it was one year ago?

10. Do you require the help of another person with:

No tasks
Some tasks
Most tasks
Almost all tasks
All tasks

11. How much do your health troubles stand in the way of your doing the things you want to do?

12. How would you describe your current state of health compared to other people your age?
Would you say, in general, your current health is:

- Excellent compared to others my age
- Good compared to others my age
- Fair compared to others my age
- Poor compared to others my age

13. On average would you say that your health:

- Never prevents activities
- Rarely prevents activities
- Occasionally prevents some activities
- Very often prevents activities
- Usually or always prevents activities

14. Do you smoke?

15. I would like to know if you suffer from any chronic conditions. Could you please tell me which of the following conditions you have had within the last year or had earlier but still experience after effects from?

- Heart problems, angina
- High blood pressure
- Stroke
- Cancer
- Respiratory ailments (i.e., asthma, emphysema)
- Stomach or digestive problems
- Bowel or urinary problems
- Arthritis or rheumatism
- Diabetes
- Osteoporosis
- Orthopaedic problem or injury
- Eye problems not relieved by glasses (i.e., cataracts, glaucoma, retinal degeneration)
- Hearing impairment
- Skin problems
- Parkinson's disease
- Alzheimer's disease
- Other serious memory problem
- Mental or emotional distress
- Drinking problem
- Other (specify)

16. Which of these illnesses you do consider to be the most serious? Second? Third?

First

Second

Third

17. What measures are you taking to cure or manage the illnesses you have? (i.e. medication, controlling diet)

Seniors Community Park

18. Are you aware of the Seniors Community Park located in your neighborhood on the grounds of the Henderson Recreation Centre at 2291 Cedar Hill X Rd. Oak Bay, BC?

19. Have you ever visited the park?

*Questions to be asked if they **have** visited the park:*

20. Over the past year approximately how often did you visit the park?

Once a year

More than once a year but less than once a month

Once a month

More than once a month but less than once a week

Once a week

Several times a week

Daily

21. On average, what was the duration of time you spent at the park? (in minutes)

22. Please tell me all the ways in which you have used the park over the past year. (i.e. physical activity, socialization, meeting place)

23. What do you do in the park (explain) regarding use of equipment, walking through it, etc.

24. What motivates you to visit the park? (i.e. exercise, spend time outdoors)

25. What best describes the social situation in which you visit the park?

Alone

With a friend

With many friends
 With family members
 With neighbors
 Other (please identify) _____

26. Do you participate in any of the recreational programming offered in the park?
- 26a. If not, why do you choose not to participate in this programming?
27. What are the benefits of using the park?
28. How successful do you think the equipment within the parks is at satisfying your needs?
29. Would you make any changes to the equipment within the parks? If so, what changes?
30. Is there anything that makes visiting the park difficult? Please explain.
31. What is your favorite aspect of the park?
32. If there were one thing you could change about the park that you have not mentioned previously, what would it be?

Questions to be asked if they **have not** visited the park:

33. What has contributed to your reasons not to visit the park?
- Difficult to get to the park
 Was not aware of the parks' existence
 Not sure how to use the exercise equipment
 Cannot safely travel to the park
 Do not want to go alone
 Health concerns
 Other (please identify) _____
34. Are you content not visiting the park, or would you like regular park visitation to become part of your routine in the future?
35. What, if anything would encourage you to visit the park?
36. Do you think the community could make changes that would persuade you to visit the park?
37. Currently, the SCP prohibits dogs within the park. If this ban was lifted, would it increase the likelihood of you visiting the park?
38. How good is your local community at providing events for older adults? Explain

Physical Activity

39. In your daily life, what types of activities, interests and hobbies do you participate in?

40. In your daily life, what types of physical activities do you participate in?

41. How satisfied are you with your leisure activities?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

42. How satisfied are you with your physical activities?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

43. In the past 7 days, on how many days did you do high intensity physical activity like running, fast cycling, or fast swimming? How much time each day did you spend doing so?

44. In the past 7 days, on how many days did you do moderate intensity physical activity like bicycling and swimming at a regular pace? How much time did you spend each day doing so?

45. Why do you participate in physical activity?

46. What best describes the social situation in which you participate in your regular activities?

- Alone
- With a friend
- With many friends
- With family members
- With neighbors
- Other (please identify)_____

47. Do you believe that participating in regular physical activity will reduce your risk of developing chronic conditions or worsen existing conditions?

48. How satisfied are you with the way your body performs?

Very satisfied
 Satisfied
 Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
 Dissatisfied
 Very dissatisfied

48a. If *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied*, what tasks or activities are difficult for you?

49. Do you feel as if you should be spending more time on physical activity each week?

49a. If yes, what is preventing you from doing so?

Questions to be asked if they **have** said they use the park for physical activity:

50. What physical activities do you do in the park?

51. Do you use any of the equipment in the park when doing these physical activities?

52. If not, why don't you use the equipment in the park?

53. Why have you decided to do your physical activities in the park as opposed to in another location?

54. Is there anything that could be changed in the park that would make participating in physical activities there easier?

Recreational Programming

55. Please describe the current membership you have at the Henderson Rec. Centre.

56. How long have you been a member at the Henderson Rec. Centre?

57. How often do you visit Henderson Rec. Centre and what activities do you participate in?

58. Why do you go to your neighborhood recreation centre?

59. What do you believe to be the benefits of taking part in recreational programming?

Final Questions

60. Average Monthly Household Income (**Show Cards and allow person to choose**)

Below \$500
 \$500-\$999

\$1000-\$1499
\$1500-\$1999

\$2000-\$2499
\$2500-\$2999

\$3000-\$3499
\$3500-\$3999

\$4000-\$4499
\$4500-\$4999

Over \$5000
Don't Know?

61. Would you be interested in seeing a summary of the results of the survey?

Yes
No

62. Is there anything else you would like to share that you have not had the opportunity to speak of yet?

Thank you so much for your time and trouble. It was a pleasure interviewing you.

Finish Time

Appendix E
Recreational Staff Interview Guide

A Walk in the Park, or is it?
A Case Study Analysis of a Seniors Community Park in Oak Bay, British Columbia

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Recreation Centre Staff

Interviewer Name

Start Time

Date

Interviewee Name:

Gender

Male
Female

Employment Characteristics

What is your current job title?

What are the duties and responsibilities associated with your job?

Did you have a previous job? If yes, what was it? Please describe?

How long have you had the job at the recreation centre?

What made this job attractive to you?

Involvement with Seniors Community Park

Were you involved with the establishment of the Seniors Community Park that is located in close proximity to the recreation centre?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe all aspects of your involvement.

Recreational Programming in the Parks

Since the park was established, has there been any recreational programming offered that takes place in the park?

Yes

No

*If programming **does** exist:*

Please describe the nature of the recreational programming that occurs in this park?

How often are programs held in the park over the course of a week during peak season?

What are all programs that are offered in the parks throughout the entire year?

What do you believe the benefits are for older adults that attend these programs?

When programs are developed, what are the primary goals of programming? (i.e. fitness, socialization)

What is the average number of older adults present at each program?

What do you believe the greatest factors are that contribute to programming attendance?

Do you believe there is something the community could do to make the programs better received or attended? What might this be?

What would you consider the primary barrier to older adults attending the programs?

*If programming **does not** exist:*

Do you think it would be worthwhile to hold recreational programs in the park?

Yes

No

If no, why do you think recreational programming in the parks would not be worthwhile?

If yes, what is prohibiting the recreation centre from scheduling programming in the parks?
How well utilized do you believe the park is during peak season?

Very well utilized
Well utilized
Somewhat utilized
Under utilized
Severely under utilized

If answered that the park was *somewhat, under or severely under-utilized*, why do you believe this to be so?

Do you believe there is something the recreation centre could do to help the park to be better utilized?

Do you believe there is something the greater community could do to help the park be better utilized?

Currently, the SCP prohibits dogs within the park. If this ban were lifted, do you believe you would be more likely to visit the park?

Equipment in the Parks/ Park Infrastructure

Is the equipment appropriate for older adults? Why or why not?

How successful do you think the equipment within the parks is at promoting physical activity in the park? Please explain.

How successful do you think the equipment within the parks is at promoting rehabilitation in the park? Please explain.

How successful do you think the equipment within the parks is at promoting socialization between older adults in the park? Please explain.

Do any of the recreational programs in the park utilize the equipment?

Would you make any changes to the equipment within the parks? If so, what changes?

Do you believe the layout of the park is accessible to older adults?

Yes
No

If no, why do you consider the layout to not be accessible for all? What do you think could be a changed to make the park more accessible?

Future Programming

Are there plans to continue the current level of programming in the park or establish consistent programming in the park?

Yes

No

If no, in what ways is programming going to change?

Amount of programs offered

Type of programs offered

Program registration

Other (please specify) _____

Please describe how things are changing and why.

If yes, why are there no plans to alter the current levels of park programming? (i.e., what are the limiting factors e.g., staff, funds)

To the best of your knowledge, did ActNowBC ever approach the rec. centre about marketing the park or conducting programs within it?

Final Questions

Would you be interested in seeing a summary of the results of the survey?

Yes

No

If yes, please ensure that I have your full email and mailing addresses.

Thank you so much for your time and trouble. It was a pleasure interviewing you.

Finish Time