

Generations Review

The Newsletter of the British Society of Gerontology



British Society of
Gerontology

Message from the President and Secretary

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GENERATIONS REVIEW

The Newsletter of the British Society of Gerontology is published by the Society four times a year, and sent free to members of the BSG.

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<http://www.britishgerontology.org/publications/generations-review.html>

As Spring gets well and truly underway, the pace of the Society's activities also gathers speed as this issue of GR testifies to!

Over the past year, the Executive has been actively forging links with key organisations and partners in ways which we hope will be mutually beneficial, which will help raise the profile of the Society and which will provide members with potential outlets for their work and their thoughts on all matters concerning ageing and older people. We would encourage members to think seriously about whether their research would lend itself to publication as a **BSG/ILC-UK 'Think Piece'**. If you are



Sue Venn
Secretary

interested, please contact Sheila Peace who is co-ordinating this initiative on behalf of the Society and read her update in this issue of GR.

Under the tenacious guidance of Alisoun Milne, the **International Strategy Group** has been doing sterling work in steering us through the complex maze of European and International organisations. We will be providing updated and detailed information about these organisations – with links – on our website. We are also inviting members to showcase their international work: details of how to do this will be winging their way to you all very soon. In addition, it won't have escaped your notice that this is EY2012 – European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between the Generations. We are now represented on the UK Steering Group and will be inviting BSG members to use this opportunity to badge their activities and projects under this banner.

Awards and bursaries

This is also the time of year when we remind members about the Outstanding Achievement

Award. This award is made annually to an individual or organisation that, in the opinion of the judges, has made a significant and lasting contribution to British Social Gerontology and in particular has made a significant impact on the policy process to help



Mim Bernard
President

improve the quality of life of older people. It is important to note that the award is not intended for an academic contribution alone. Further information on how to make nominations is available on the website (<http://www.britishgerontology.org/membership/bsg-outstanding-achievement-award.html>). This year, the closing date for nominations is 12 noon, **Friday 31st May 2012**.

Executive Committee Vacancies

The 41st Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held during the annual conference this year and we will be seeking nominations for the following roles:

1. President-elect
2. Treasurer-elect
3. Three Executive Committee members

Two members of the current Executive Committee will be standing for re-election. This is an excellent opportunity to help move forward the strategy for the BSG so please do consider putting yourself forward for nomination. More information about the procedure for nomination and what is involved in these roles will be made available on the website and through the monthly e-mail bulletins, or please feel free to contact Sue Venn (s.venn@surrey.ac.uk) for further details.

Message from the President and Secretary

Social Media

We have also been working hard at launching the BSG into the world of social media in the form of a Blog, Twitter and LinkedIn. More detailed information about this can be found in this issue of GR in a fascinating article written by Debbie Price, but to summarise, we now have a blog open to the public called 'Ageing Issues' where members of the BSG can post items of shared interest, promote discussion and publicise research which the public can read about. If you wish to contribute to the blog, you will need to be accepted as an author first by Debbie, who will act as our moderator.

For those who are already on LinkedIn (<http://uk.linkedin.com>), we also have a BSG group where members can share ideas and have discussions – so if you have a LinkedIn profile, please do join our group. Finally, we also now have a Twitter presence – for those who 'tweet' you can follow us on @britgerontology – we already have a strong following, and also follow a range of national and international people and organisations ourselves, such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, AgeUK and the Gerontological Society of America.

Our thanks especially go to Debbie Price, John Miles and Rachel Hazelwood for driving these initiatives forward and please do read Debbie's article.

Averil Osborn Award

We had an unprecedented number of applicants in 2011 for the Averil Osborn Award with fourteen people submitting proposals. The Awards Panel were pleased to make awards to the following two projects who clearly demonstrated the ethos of the fund by incorporating older people throughout the research process:

1. 'Ageing without children: understanding the implications in older age'. Manchester Valuing Older People and Keele University
2. AFRESH: A study on FosteRing Empathy between Students and older people - a practical approach, AgeUK West Sussex and the University of Surrey

A further award may be made subject to receipt of a revised proposal.

Our thanks to the Awards Panel for all their hard work in assessing the applications – Clive Newton (Chair), Bob Peacock, Kate Davidson and Susan Tester.

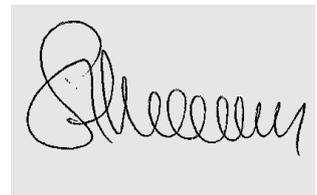
Last but by no means least, the programme for the **Annual Conference being hosted at Keele (July 11th-13th)** is taking shape: having held our nerve over the abstract submission date, we had a tremendous – if rather last minute(!) response to the call - and will be informing people of the outcome and publishing a draft programme very soon now. It promises to be a fabulous few days with delegates coming from far and wide to present. We urge you to register as soon as you are able, and remind you all that the early bird deadline is **Friday May 11th**. Please look at the website for details of how to register: <http://www.keele-conferencemanagement.com/bsg2012>

The new Co-Chairs of BSG-ERA, are also working hard to put together a pre-conference day – so put **Tuesday July 10th** in your diaries too!

As ever, we welcome feedback from members about all aspects of the Society's work and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the AGM in July.

Very best wishes,

Mim Bernard – President
Sue Venn – Secretary


Not a member of BSG?

Visit <http://www.britishgerontology.org>

If you would like to receive further copies of the Generations Review and/or future ones please let us know. Also comments on the content and design of the Generations Review are welcome.

News and Reviews

British Society of Gerontology (BSG) Scotland Symposium: Keeping Fit in Later Life

Pauline Banks,
University of the West of Scotland

BSG Scotland held a symposium focusing on the benefits of older people remaining active at Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) on 15th March. The event attracted forty-three people including speakers. The event kicked off with lunch and a welcome from Louise McCabe, BSG Scotland Co-ordinator. The programme included presentations from four invited speakers as well as four student presentations.

Invited speakers: The first presentation, *Active Ageing, Evidence, Context and Policy*, was given by Professor Dawn Skelton from GCU. Dawn's presentation focused on the challenges of moving research into practice, and highlighted the problems associated with different messages being communicated by different stakeholders leaving older people unsure what to believe. Dr Fergal Grace, Senior Lecturer at the University of the West of Scotland, followed with his presentation *The Role of Exercise in Successful Ageing*. Fergal presented an interesting tour of biological ageing, population demographics, and the relationship between exercise and longevity, before focusing on the benefits of different types of exercise. The third presentation was given by Dr Ruth Jepson, Senior Scientific Advisor, Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP), MRC Human Genetics Unit, and Senior Research Fellow, Co-Director Centre for Public Health and Population Health, University of Stirling. Ruth's presentation, *The Evidence for Physical Activity and Dementia* was based on her work which sought to identify how physical activity may be of benefit to people with dementia, and drew attention to the 'continuum of evidence' that is available from systematic reviews of lab based studies, through activity/outcome studies, to ecologically valid studies with socially relevant outcomes. She concluded that all approaches should be valued. The fourth invited speaker was Dr Emmanuelle Tulle, a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at GCU, whose presentation *Sport and Physical Activity in Later Life: Accounting for Time and Structure*, included data from three studies involving people's life stories with a view to understanding pathways or triggers to sport and physical activity.

Student presentations: As always, it was pleasure to include students and hear about work currently being undertaken. The first presentation, *Delivering Community Physical Activity Initiatives*, was given by Angela Beggan, a PhD student at the University of the West of Scotland. Angela reflected on an evaluation of a pilot project involving physical activity for older adults in four geographically different localities.

This was followed by *Dual Tasking and Falls: Assessment and Interventions*, presented by Jennifer Muhaidat from GCU. Jennifer's work questioned whether walking was 'automatic' and drew attention to the lack of ecologically valid tests.

The third student presentation, *Professional Perspectives of Animal Assisted Interventions*, given by Billie-Jo Sharp from the University of Stirling, described a preliminary study involving interviews with professionals and volunteers. The findings will underpin her later PhD work. The fourth and final student presentation, *I'm actually quite chuffed, I'm more active than I thought: examining expectations of physical activity in three generational families*, was given by Victoria Palmer, a PhD student at GCU. Jennifer's work will look at relationships between generations, socioeconomic status, and level of activity.

As can be seen it was a varied and interesting afternoon. Time had been scheduled for networking at the end of the day, unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the level of interest in all presentations restricted this. However, there was time for people to highlight upcoming events in Scotland relevant to participants. These will be circulated to the BSG Scotland mailing list. Hopefully there will be some new members of BSG following the success of this seminar.

If there are BSG members based in Scotland who are not part of the BSG Scotland group, please do let us know by email (louise.mccabe@stir.ac.uk) and we will add you to our mailing list so you are kept up to date with our activities.



Dawn Skelton,
Glasgow Caledonian University &
Angela Beggan,
University of the West of Scotland

Maturing Nicely – The Third Season of Kilburn Debates at the Kingsgate Resource Centre, Camden: ‘No return to the stressful streets!’

John Miles
Keele University

Over the last two years the BSG has facilitated two encounters between members of the Kilburn Older Voices Exchange and academic researchers investigating older people's experience of the built environment. At the first, in 2011, presentations were made by Rita Newton from Salford University and Jo-Anne Bichard from the Royal College of Arts; in the second, on February 21st, 2012, Rita returned on her own. The work of the I'DIGO consortium is nearing completion and she wanted to share some of their findings and test out reactions with an informed and committed audience. At the same time, as chair Barry Peskin pointed out in his introduction, KOVE, and those who work alongside it in the borough, are keen to review their own progress and set a new direction at a time of acute challenges for the public sector.

In her presentation Rita explored a number of issues that have proved of particular interest. These led to extended discussions of: first, crossing design and signals (the Puffin system, in particular); second, different types of tactile paving and the problems of dropped - or undropped – kerbs; and, lastly, the matter of bench design - where the Camden transport planner Tim Long was also able to make a highly informed contribution. The I'DIGO consortium is working on its final recommendations and it appears likely that they will try to balance many differing interests – those of partially sighted people and those with mobility impairments, for example. A theme that looks set to persist, however, will be the relationship between our perceptions and reality: installations we think are unsafe, for example, that turn out not to be. It's unclear yet how far increased familiarity and better public education might contribute to changing our responses. At other times the solutions may be of some technical subtlety: in the case of tactile paving, which many older people are convinced is unsafe, the problem may be as much one of the camber at which it is set as the surface texture. Similarly, with Puffin crossings (where there is no longer a green man to keep your eye on), there may be gains for pedestrians if we understand better the role the computer-managed scanning system plays in regulating the traffic flow. From the floor, Roy King made a robust defence of the social contract behind the old-fashioned zebra, while he and Frances Eley gave graphic accounts of the impact of shadows on confidence – indirectly supporting some of Rita's most interesting findings about the colour, and lightedness, of paving.

Mel Wright brought everyone up to date about KOVE's current campaigns on public seating, road crossings, public toilets, buses – and the varied journeys people make. Teresa Lefort, for the London Older People's Advisory Group, helped set KOVE's work in wider, regional, context. Whereas in 2011 the day's main recommendations had a slightly manifesto-like edge calling for older people's greater involvement and better public

education, the 2012 meeting was able to develop a more specific agenda for KOVE itself. For the first time it was suggested (by new member June Perrin) that KOVE might investigate a couple of particular problems in the neighbourhood, one relating to a dangerous junction at Quex Road, and the other to a poorly laid out kerb on Cotleigh Road. Secondly, as some people reacted warily to Tim Long's recently commissioned movable concrete benches (which are being installed in Holborn after public complaints about anti-social behaviour led to the removal of seats), there may be an ongoing need to improve public confidence in law enforcement and to demonstrate the vital importance of seating for older people – seating, as Rita put it, along the route as much as at the destination. Thirdly, although there was little time to explore it, I commented on the fragility of national campaigns about toilets: after several months, for example, a government ePetition still had less than 4% of the signatures required for it to be raised in parliament.

Fourthly, Rita brought together many of the themes in describing a new study of the



John Miles,
Keele University, and colleagues

neglected topic of 'falling over outdoors'. KOVE members were invited to consider working alongside Camden Council to help take this national research initiative, supported by the Medical Research Council, and with which Age UK will also be involved, forward. A large proportion of the 25 people present had fallen outdoors recently, some more than once. Several contributors wanted recognition of psychological and medical aspects of this problem, which the study is not designed to tackle, but which might well be within the scope of the BSG to facilitate once things are under way. Lastly, Rita set KOVE a challenge: to get involved with the radical proposals behind the Manifesto for Cycling and see where there might be common ground.

The Kilburn Debates are starting to take shape as a durable partnership: it was striking how much less of a novelty Rita's detailed and sophisticated blend of mixed methods – observation, laboratory work, simulations, interviews and focus groups – seemed than it had a year ago, and what a flexible container it proved for the diversity of views people brought forward. Councillor Mike Katz, who again attended a regular collaborator with KOVE, showed a close technical interest in a range of matters relating to older citizens. Newcomers to the Debates, Mary Tucker, who spoke about the work of West Hampstead Amenity and Transport, and

Councillor Gill Risso-Gill, seemed impressed. In fact, it was in my conversation with the latter, who was only elected a year ago, that a theme for a future Debate may have emerged. West Hampstead, with its exceptional transport links, is increasingly a site for housing development, often targeted at younger people and students, many of whom were likely, in her experience, to be transitory and live rather detached lives as residents. Yet although most of the associations in the area seemed to be run by older people, it was hard to see how they have a voice in this kind of planning. These concerns echo recent work undertaken by Tony Warnes, and highlighted by Chris Phillipson and others. A future Kilburn Debate could hear about some of the demographic data and focus on the need to develop the 'bridging capital' across diverse and often conflicting interests at neighbouring level without which single-issue campaigners may lack the purchase, or 'critical mass', as Camden engagement officer, Frank Dove, put it, to make much impact on policy. Securing top-down influence in planning and commissioning processes may no longer count in the straightforward way it was once assumed to do. Thanks, as ever on these occasions are due to the staff team at the Kingsgate Resource Centre for their ongoing work with KOVE and their brilliant interactive support on the day of the Debate itself.

To follow up:

www.kove.org.uk

www.idgo.ac.uk/index.htm

www.surface.salford.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26&Itemid=6



Rita Newton
University of Salford

Ageing & Society Update: What can we learn from the top 15 most viewed papers online in Ageing & Society in 2011?

Suzanne Moffatt
Newcastle University

This brief overview of the top 15 most viewed Ageing & Society (A&S) papers on Cambridge Journals Online (CJO) between January and December 2011, is intended to inform readers of Generations Review about how key debates have been represented in A&S over the years. Three papers from the very first issue of A&S figure in the top 15, Peter Townsend's seminal work on *The Structured Dependency of the Elderly: A Creation of Social Policy in the Twentieth Century*, and in a related vein, Alan Walker's *Towards a Political Economy of Old Age*. The third paper from this issue is Wan and Odell's *Factors Affecting the Use of Social and Health Services Among the Elderly*, a US based community needs assessment survey. That these papers are still highly viewed is a reflection of the quality of the scholarship as well as the relevance of poverty, health and social care and social policy to current gerontological debates. The remaining 12 highly viewed papers date from 2000 and include empirical papers covering quantitative, qualitative and systematic review methodologies, as well as conceptual papers. Three papers are on the topic of loneliness and social isolation, Cattani et al's (2005) *Preventing social isolation and loneliness among older people: a systematic review of health promotion interventions*, Findley's (2003) *Interventions to reduce social isolation amongst older people: where is the evidence*, also a systematic review and Victor et al's (2005) *The prevalence of, and risk factors for, loneliness in later life: a survey of older people in Great Britain*. Clearly, this remains a topic of major importance within gerontological research. Two papers cover ageism, one a qualitative study from Australia, Minichello et al (2000) *Perceptions and consequences of ageism: views of older people*, the other, a fascinating textual critique by McHugh (2003) from Arizona State University USA, *Three faces of ageism: society, image and place*. Interestingly, the two papers on dementia are also respectively a qualitative analysis and a textual critique, Sixsmith and Gibson's (2007) UK based study *Music and the wellbeing of people with dementia* and the US analysis by Behuniak (2011) *The living dead? The construction of people with Alzheimer's disease as zombies*. Four other empirical papers within the top 15 are concerned with quality of life, assistive technologies, caregiving and social capital: Gabriel and Bowling's (2004) *Quality of life from the perspective of older people*; McCreddie and Tinker's (2005) *The acceptability of assistive technology to older people*; Grundy and Henretta's (2006) *Between elderly parents and adult children: a new look at intergenerational care provided by the 'sandwich generation'* and Gray's (2009) *The social capital of older people*. The final conceptual paper is the seminal work by Gilleard and Higgs (2002) *The third age: class, cohort or generation?* This brief snapshot of the 15 most viewed papers online in 2011 reflects the enduring nature of a number of themes in gerontology, but also the emergence of new concepts and methodologies that are significant to ageing scholarship in the 21st Century.

Recently, the Editors of Ageing & Society have collaborated with Cambridge University Press (CUP) and collated a series of key articles from the journal for an Active Ageing online special issue. This will be available online from April 1st in recognition of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012. If you have any ideas for an online special issue, please contact Professor Christina Victor (Editor) or Dr Suzanne Moffatt, BSG representative on the editorial board. We look forward to hearing from you.

ILC-UK/BSG Update

Sheila Peace
Open University

The International Longevity Centre - UK (ILC-UK) would like to raise the public profile of ageing research in partnership with the BSG. So, we are always looking for 'Think Pieces' (1-2000 words) that will communicate key ideas from empirical research. In particular the following are joint priorities:

- Log term care debate
- Ageing Research
- Non Health and Social Care research
- Built environment
- Intergenerational conflict
- Bringing more people into ageing research (e.g. different backgrounds)
- Financial aspects of ageing
- Climate change and sustainability
- Technology and Ageing

In December 2011, Dr. Charles Musselwhite at UWE published a piece with ILC-UK on Older People and Giving Up Driving see:

http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/index.php/publications/publication_details/successfully_giving_up_driving_for_older_people

and at present we are considering a piece on 'Older People's Engagement in Local Governance: What 'Big Society' can learn?' by Chaz Simpson at the University of Hertfordshire.

So, if you think that you might have something to put forwards, then contact Sheila Peace on s.m.peace@open.ac.uk and we will see if we can move things forwards.

 European Year for **Active Ageing** and **Solidarity between Generations 2012**



Book Review: *Belief and Ageing: Spiritual Pathways in Later Life*

By Peter G. Coleman, Policy Press

Holly Nelson-Becker
Loyola University, Chicago

Key and critical to understanding how spirituality and religion may function for older adults is to invite their views. Coleman (2011), in his book *Belief and Ageing*, shares compelling qualitative data from interviews obtained from several studies with colleagues over a number of decades. Principally, these look at several perspectives of older adults on their aging experience including their religious beliefs, spiritual values, and coping with spousal bereavement. As referenced in this book, the term belief is used in place of religion/spirituality and meaning because it is viewed as more inclusive and expansive. Spirituality remains a term in search of a common definition; this has remained somewhat elusive especially given generational differences in ideas about what this term denotes. Coleman provides a solid background around these themes.

The changing social context of belief in the UK from 1960 forward is addressed with some helpful historical references across chapters. Individual narratives of belief are included in the third chapter, beginning with a short section on general approaches to eliciting older adult narratives. One important line of development throughout this book is a comparison between US and UK societal frames describing what features are relevant to both and what is not. Particular attention is paid to the need to develop specific measures that better fit the UK environment, rather than solely applying ones used in the US. Common trajectories of belief illustrating stability as well as increasing and decreasing level of belief in older adults are discussed in chapter four.

A study of spousal bereavement led to four themes of benevolent religious cognition, Biblical assurances, religious ritual, and spiritual capital illustrated in chapter four. Spiritual capital as used here is defined a bit surprisingly and narrowly as “engagement in roles, jobs, or activities. related to their church.” One of the most enlightening chapters discussed British Humanists who cope with life difficulty sans religious faith. This is often little addressed in the literature on spiritual and religious coping or meaning making, and thus provides a much needed window into the important ways humanists and existentialists add meaning to their lives. Absent was specification about details of this study, e.g. sampling and number of interviews conducted, but as with other omissions, this may have been done for greater readability.

The last two chapters address two other fascinating areas: 1) history of religious life in the USSR, Bulgaria and Romania, and Italy; and 2) interfaith understandings in the UK today.

Tied as it was to political changes, acceptability and persecution of religious faith led to some very different outcomes in shaping cultures which supported or marginalized religious faith in the USSR and Europe. Further, the UK population is presented as lacking in sorely needed knowledge about religion and religious plurality. A detailed case is presented on Muslims who need to make health decisions that may conflict with their faith in regard to diabetes and depression. While some of this text covers familiar territory, comparisons between the UK and other world contexts, inclusion of a humanist/existential approach to belief, and projections about future areas to address in research and practice are considerable contributions offered by this well-known scholar in the area of religion, spirituality, and ageing.

Book Review: *An Errant Age: Approaching Ninety* By Gordon Hawkins, Pen2Print

John Miles
Keele University

At the age of 85, in 2007, Gordon Hawkins decided to investigate gerontology, and comment on 'events in the passing scene which might hold special interest for someone in my age bracket' by keeping a journal over a five-year period. His title - that hint of 'knight-errant', the shadow of two possible meanings of 'erring' (the misguided and the deviant) - suggests a rich ambiguity, but the outcome is closer to an exploration of ambivalence. Hawkins wants to be himself, while addressing an anxiety that that same self is in decline. One strand of his enquiry is therefore concerned with maximising his ability to counter any further loss of physical and cognitive powers. (Here he is frequently dismissive of, and exasperated by, the tentative conclusions in much of what he comes across in medical and neuroscientific journals.) And he finds himself 'splicing in notes on his own ageing... to round out the record'. The result is a diverting, and sometimes challenging and penetrating, document which deserves some attention. That said it might have fared better if it had appeared as a monthly column, than it may now as a self-published book.

The first thing to say is that Hawkins, on the back of what I take to be a lifelong commitment to a serious cultural life, more than does his homework. I doubt anyone over the same period has read as widely, attended as many conferences and debates, and trawled the media as comprehensively as he has. Someone like Helen Small, whose book 'A Long Life' is comparable in its range of allusion and enquiry, has obviously worked at much greater scholarly depth, but Hawkins adds a dimension of his own by the sheer diversity of his reading. Coming across a paper by Mike Hepworth, for example, he goes on to read four novels by Stanley Middleton, and then to comment acutely on a story by Bernice Rubens. This at a period (the late spring of 2008) when he is also 'having difficulty making his mind up' about Diana Athill's memoir, rereading Larkin, noting sourly that it appears to be 'Recognise-the-Aged-Month' in the media, considering Julia Neuberger's call for local councils to establish 'standing committees of over-seventies', and reflecting (having just read JG Ballard's autobiography) on his

obsessive fascination with the film 'Crash'! Even more impressively, at the same time, he reads the nineteenth century biologist Metchnikoff's *The Nature of Man*, just six months after an intriguing and informative account of G Stanley Hall's *Senescence, the Last Half of Life* from 1922. Does anyone entering mainstream ageing research still make this kind of archival enquiry? I have to admit I've never read either.

Hawkins writes in an informal, even conversational, style. He can be droll and funny, but there are strands of sarcasm and self-deprecatory humour which not everyone will find appealing. Partly this is generational: there is a point early on when he pinions something ironically as 'A Good Thing', which I think derives from '1066 and All That', a book he would perhaps have read as a young teenager and which had largely lost its power when I was introduced to it in the early 1960s. Then, referring to Joan Bakewell as 'this lovely older lady' seems rather laboured, not so much because it is dated, but because Hawkins has adapted the original patronising phrase in a way that implies an ongoing ambivalence about women in public life. We are all the victims of our 'generational objects', habits we retain half-knowingly from earlier phases of our growing up and acculturation: it's more than a concession to political correctness to remind anyone seeking to publish of the value of an editor. I say this partly because, when he's writing straight, Hawkins is often astute about gender difference and frequently spot on about contemporary jargon and the self-referentiality of much post-modern gerontology.

So where does he get to? It's part of the book's power that (with one or two exceptions in relation to amateur dramatics) Hawkins does not do reminiscence; indeed, he barely does autobiography. There are thoughtful observations on sex but no context. And, while he refers to current friends with an appealing tenderness and concern, what you learn of his life (he lives alone and is close to his daughter), apart from his entertaining tussles with memory enhancing computer software, is largely from the blurb on the cover. This sets the book apart from recent memoirs by Joan Bakewell, Diana Athill, or Jane Miller, where recollection, and reordering, are central to an overall appraisal of growing older. Hawkins is in a sense more troubled by his actual age, and what might be called the generational isolation in which he finds himself.

His primary themes are two. First, he is not raging against the dying of the light. By and large he seeks to accommodate himself: politically, he is mistrustful of special pleading about age discrimination, fearing a backlash. But this is not passivity: he can be challenging and tetchy from a wish to set the agenda rather than have it imposed. He is repeatedly, and a little guiltily, drawn to the magazine 'The Oldie' and its pose of self-reliant exasperation. But he also writes in a spirit of genuine, urgent, reflective, enquiry: throughout he tries to tease out the balance between the useful maxim (which he generally finds in novels or philosophical reflections) and the wearying homily (which all too often, I'm afraid, he is able to locate in research journals).

The book's richest vein, though, concerns the pull of narrative and the false comforts Hawkins discerns in the writings of those, like Lars Tornstam, who promote 'gerotranscendence', or Marie de Hennezell with her need 'to reconcile ourselves to our past'. Helen Small devotes one of her best chapters to a supple critique of narrative theory and its limitations for those who (largely because of dementia) no longer have a story they can tell. But this is not Hawkins' objection. First, as 'someone who is still functioning independently with reasonable cognitive power but no public footprint' he believes one 'should try to live... as though one has a still unfinished life'. And second (p 160):

"Life has not appeared to me to be a narrative. I fail to see it as a structure of linked stages and do not believe that my ageing identity resided in my capacity 'to keep a particular narrative going'. Life is and has been, much too full of the surprising, the accidental and the disrupting to give a clear linked sequence... an unexamined life *can* be worth living."

For all the resonant clarity of this statement (and the firm dismissal of Socrates) I did not anticipate Hawkins' conclusion. Rather in the spirit (ie. in passing) that he has earlier mentioned a mid-life gap-year spent in a camper-van in Death Valley, he announces at the end of the book his decision to emigrate to Canada 'to put into practice a long-held wish to dispose... of all my possessions and start again'. I found this rather magnificent and am glad I've had the opportunity to encounter this elusive character who has done us good service with the breadth of his enquiry and his tenacity in prising out our least satisfactory efforts. His final verdict is in fact quite generous. While he doesn't like the growing sense of finding himself 'a member of a category' (rather than being 'a particular mix of human characteristics') he has 'learnt a lot from what the professionals have been finding out about us, and [is] amazed that so little of it is seeping into public discourse about age'. Sadly, I suspect that Hawkins would now have no wish to find himself on the conference platform rather than in the audience: his project is complete. The best we can do perhaps is to seek out his provocative little book and read it. It articulates an idiosyncratic viewpoint from within that highly-educated mainstream whose numbers are growing and to which gerontologists will increasingly have to pay attention.

References

Small, Helen 2007, *The Long Life*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.



BSG Outstanding Achievement Award Nominations:

Visit <http://www.britishgerontology.org>



British Society of Gerontology 41st Annual Conference

BSG2012@Keele: 11th - 13th July 2012

Visit the BSG website and click on BSG 2012 Conference for more information.

E-mail:
conference_management@kfm.keele.ac.uk

Tel:
01782 734 600



Emerging Researchers in Ageing Workshop

26th April 2012
Brunel University

Contact:
robert.ewers@brunel.ac.uk
01895 266197

BSG Strategy Reports

Emerging Researchers in Ageing

Deborah Cairns, Brunel University and Naomi Woodspring,
University of the West of England

From Autumn 2011 to the present ERA has seen lots of activity. Deborah and Naomi met with the Executive Committee to set priorities for ERA in the coming year. A new look for ERA with a logo and dedicated leaflet are on their way. We discussed the importance of reaching out to postgrad and postdocs to provide them with opportunities to present, network and stay informed through presentations by experienced people in the field. One day conferences seem to be the most effective way to make this happen.

A 'thank you' to John Miles who put together the first such conference at Keele University in December. The day was successful with over 20 people coming together. A number of attendees later completed an electronic survey that asked about their needs and expectations of ERA. The results were helpful in terms of pointing the Co-chairs in a direction that is useful to its members. In addition to career entry, networking and methodology, respondents were interested in online communication with ERA and the wider BSG membership. This option is in process and will be live and ready for use in the not so distant future.

Deborah has planned the **next one day conference at Brunel University on 26 April**. The agenda has been informed by ERA members' stated needs. Deborah and Naomi plan to continue this format so please consider hosting a one-day ERA conference at your university. It's a great opportunity to network and present your emerging research.

The co-chairs have finalized our plans for the **10 July ERA pre-conference** to be part of the annual BSG conference. All ERA members should have received a flier with the schedule.

Finally, the co-chairs have discussed widening our membership. ERA is not just for PhD students and early career researchers. There are a few Masters level people who are currently involved and we would like to grow those numbers as well as including members from a real variety of disciplines. A wide and varied membership serves us all in exchange of ideas and networking opportunities. If you would be interested in joining please go to the following link: <http://www.britishgerontology.org/membership/join.html>

If you are already a member of ERA and would like to join the ERA committee, please contact Deborah (Deborah.Cairns@brunel.ac.uk) or Naomi (Naomiwoodspring@yahoo.com) for more information.

Deborah and Naomi would very much like to stress that ERA is here to serve its membership so, please let us know what we can do to make ERA vital and responsive to member needs. We invite you to get involved.

If you build it, they will come... The British Society of Gerontology Online

Debbie Price
King's College London

Social media and online communities have their fans and their detractors, the dabblers, the conversationalists, the networkers, the curious and those who just don't see the point. When they serve a real purpose, they really work. If they don't, they writhe for a bit, then wither and die. It's a new kind of thing, organic, dynamic, democratic, and built from the ground up – you can't tell people that they should or ought or would benefit from something that takes up their time, energy and emotion. Henry Tapper, who created the hugely successful [Pension Play Pen on LinkedIn](#) and is also really influential in [Mallowstreet](#), a virtual place where pension people discuss, well, pension stuff, said this in a recent blogpost '[Building an Online Community](#)':

“The Pension Play Pen, an [online community](#) I started 26 months ago, is full of people going about their lives this morning - nearly 2000 people! It is because of the Play Pen, that I am at Little Rollright near [Chipping Norton](#) in the mist on the side of the hill.

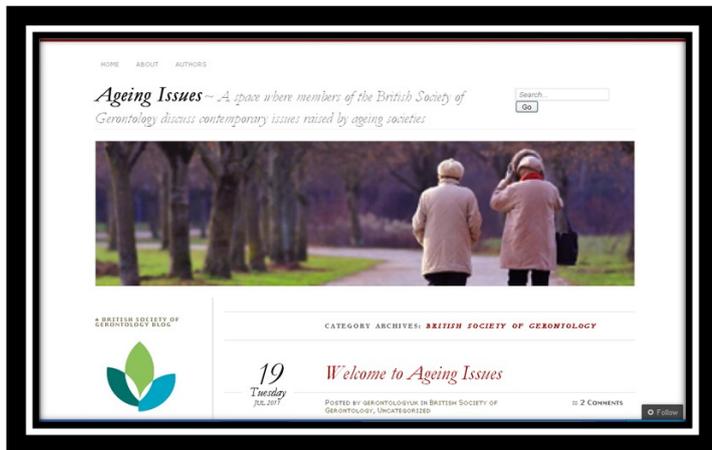
For any community to exist, there must be a reason. On-line communities do not grow like Cotswold villages or neolithic stone circles - they are not a place to live or a lasting memorial to those who have. They exist as a means to enhance one's everyday living by getting insight into other's thoughtstyles and lifestyles.”

So here is my vision for the British Society of Gerontology online community. We have a space where members of the BSG can have their say, vent their views, talk about their work, publicise events, and other BSG members can comment and join in those debates, and some of these become much read debates by all sort of people from children doing a project at school to people looking for information about a subject, practitioners and academics looking to engage, and journalists and politicians too might find themselves enlightened by high quality debate. This space is a multi-author blog, where any member of BSG, even if they have *never used the internet before!!* can use the BSG blog to have their say. They can do it once in as lifetime, or once a week. And lo! We have created this space! And we have called it [Ageing Issues](#), and it looks like this:



European Year for Active Ageing
and Solidarity between Generations 2012



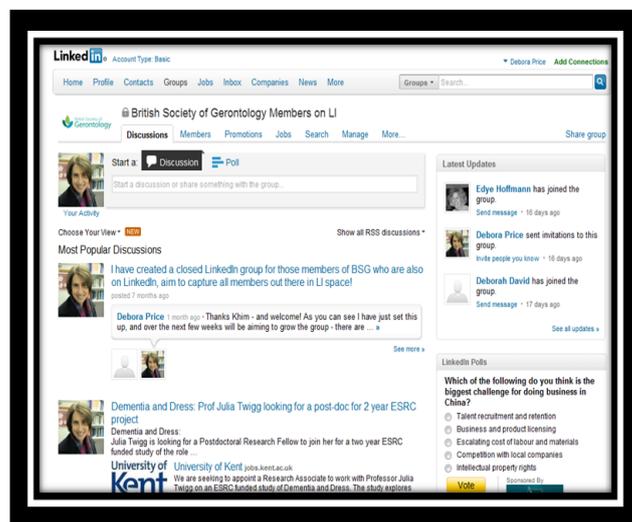


So please click through, and if you'd like an email whenever there's a post, click on the +Follow button, bottom right hand corner. And if you think you might like to try posting something (flagrant self-publicity is completely fine!) email me, deborah.price@kcl.ac.uk, and it shall be done.

Twitter is part of my vision too – if you're a tweep (and you'll know who you are), then follow us on [@britgerontology](https://twitter.com/britgerontology). Twitter is positively alive and brimming with some of the highest quality social and political commentary of the day, a great big public conversation, and if you haven't yet been out to see what it's all about, do dip a toe. I have made new friends and been influenced by and influenced people, in one liners about pensions, care, housing, health, even had a discussion about the vulnerability of older people to floods.



And LinkedIn. Many of you are on it, many of you don't really know why, and it's never worked for you. But link enough people with a common interest, and a reason to speak to each other, who want to share knowledge quickly and painlessly and pointedly, and wahay, away you go. I'm a member of the LinkedIn group [Age and Work](#), and [Societal Impact of Pain](#), and if you are out there in LinkedIn space, then come and join the [British Society of Gerontology Members on LinkedIn](#). Or create your own group around the issues that matter to you. You know you want to.



And what are we at the centre of BSG going to do to direct all this new activity? Hmmmm. Nothing. It will work or it won't or it will take a long time to get going. The potential is there to make of it all what we will. But in my vision, I see that the Twitter community benefits from timely information and links from [@britgerontology](#) and [@britgerontology](#) is able to retweet salient tweets for members; BSG members blog and interact and let themselves be heard, and so the whole world benefits from [Ageing Issues](#); and those of us on [LinkedIn](#) have a place to have conversations, ask each other for help, discuss things on our mind, advertise our jobs or ask for jobs, and generally hang out online over a cup of coffee. Hope to see you, virtually, somewhere soon!

Who's Who?

Professor Pauline Banks
University of the West of Scotland

Introduction

Pauline Banks, Professor Older Persons' Health, University of the West of Scotland.

Describe yourself in three words.

Short Scottish woman.

How did you get here today (i.e. career/research)?

I returned to education when my third daughter went to play group, beginning part-time and eventually being fortunate enough to secure a full-time PhD studentship in Department of Psychology at Glasgow Caledonian University. In 1995 I moved to the University of Paisley to work with Mary Gilhooly who had just established the Centre for Gerontology and Health Studies. In 1999 I was appointed Deputy Director of the Strathclyde Centre for Disability Research, at the University of Glasgow. My role here involved working on a range of disability related projects which focussed particularly on the impact of chronic illness on those affected and their families, as well as the potential for employment for people with a range of disabilities. Following appointment as a core member of HealthQWest staff (one of three research collaborations in Scotland) I moved to what was to become the University of the West of Scotland following a merger between Bell College and the University of Paisley. My appointment as Professor of Older Persons' Health in 2010 has coincided with increased political acknowledgement of the challenge and needs of our older citizens. I feel privileged to be able to lead the timely establishment of an Institute for Older Persons' Health and Wellbeing at UWS.

What's the best piece of advice you've received?

Go for it.

Who's the most influential person in your life and why?

My husband is the most influential person in my life - he is part of the jigsaw.

What's the best book you've ever read?

Of Human Bondage by W. Somerset Maugham.

What do you do when you are not doing ageing research?

I like to read novels and go hill walking.

What's the future for ageing research?

The 'current' period of austerity is having a major impact on individuals' behaviour, future planning, and the choices available. We need more interdisciplinary research focusing on alternative models of care with a view to reducing isolation and loneliness in later life.



Pauline Banks,
University of the West of Scotland



Not a member of BSG?

Visit <http://www.britishgerontology.org>

Cutting Edge

Older People, Well-being and Participation

Marian Barnes and Lizzie Ward, University of Brighton
Beatrice Gahagan, Age Concern (BHP)

The University of Brighton and Age Concern, Brighton, Hove and Portslade have been collaborating on participatory research with older people since 2007. Our first project explored older people's use of alcohol. This was carried out through a partnership also involving health and social care agencies, and the city's drug and alcohol service (Ward et al., 2011a). We are currently completing research on experiences of well-being, and have received ESRC Follow on Funding to apply learning from this project, and from our experiences of working with older people as co-researchers, to develop learning resources for older people's involvement. In this article we briefly describe what we have learnt from the well-being research and how we plan to apply this.

The Research

The project was carried out over 3 years in Brighton and Hove. Thirty interviews were undertaken with older people: 40% were aged between 65 and 79, 43% were in their 80s, and 17% in their nineties. Half were users of Age Concern services and others were recruited using snowballing methods to include older people in diverse circumstances. The interviews were designed to enable older people to talk in their own terms about what well-being means to them, and how this is produced. Prompts based on team discussions meant we explored common themes such as money; where people lived; their health, and relationships with others. We also carried out focus groups with another 59 people, and interviews with staff and volunteers working for Age Concern. The interviews and focus groups were carried out by older peer researchers. Analysis involved team discussions as well as detailed coding of transcripts by most members of the team. A full report is available (Ward et al., 2011b) and older members of the research team have produced a booklet for older people based on this work.

Older People and Well-being

Whilst many older people enjoy their lives, for some it can be hard to sustain a sense of well-being in old age. They may be dealing with losses: of friends, family, health, and the identity and structure offered by work. Some find it hard to adjust to personal changes and to changes in the world around them. Our research demonstrates not only the challenges that older people face to sustain their well-being, and the hard emotional and organizational labour that goes in to this, but also the resources that they draw on to 'be well' in old age. Our work also demonstrates the different adaptations people face at different stages during a period of 30 years or more.

The importance of different types of relationships to older people's well-being is very clear. The quality of relationships not only with family and friends, and with health and social care providers, but encounters with GP receptionists, people at the bus stop or at checkout counters in shops, can make a difference to how people feel about themselves. For those who are either/both giving and receiving care because of illness, disability or mental health difficulties, the quality of caring relationships is especially significant. Neither care giving nor serious illness necessarily mean older people do not feel 'well'. Giving care to others can contribute to a sense of value, and the recognition that comes with attentiveness and good care sustains a sense of worth even when people's horizons are much reduced.

People's relationships with the places in which they live also make a difference. Their capacity to enjoy everyday things, like a good view from the window, growing orchids on a balcony, and having places to walk and enjoy life going on around them, provide intrinsic pleasures, and enable older people to feel they remain in touch with the world. Conversely, if the design of physical spaces ignores their needs, they can be excluded from those things that contribute to wellbeing.

Practical things make a difference. Our research confirms the view that well-being is not straightforwardly associated with having lots of money. But feeling secure in having enough, and being able to deal with unexpected expenses is important. And those who are financially comfortable do have more choices when it comes to deciding where to move to if looking after a big house becomes too difficult, or getting about is problematic because of restricted mobility. New technologies can be both a means of keeping in touch when physical activity and travel become problematic, and a source of frustration if it is assumed everyone feels comfortable with using ICT. If ICT helps sustain and develop relationships it is valued, if it gets in the way of interpersonal relationships it can be a problem.

Older People and Participation

This project was carried out by a team involving university researchers, a voluntary sector manager and older people. It is one example of the increasing opportunities for older people to play an active part in making policies; designing and delivering services and developing new knowledge. Other examples include older people's forums that act as sounding boards and a means of channeling older people's voices into policy; older people's involvement in the development and implementation of specific programmes, such as the National Service Framework for Older People (NSF) and the Partnerships for Older People (POPP) programme. At an individual level advocacy has developed to enable older people's voices to be heard, but the main way in which older people who need health and social care services are being encouraged to become 'empowered' is by taking advantage of personalised budgets to choose what services to use.

Our well-being research, plus previous experience of initiatives to involve older people, suggests that an individualised approach that relies on choice is not enough: either in ensuring individual older people get the help they need in a way that contributes to their well-being, or ensuring that broader policies and practices are sensitive to older people's needs and circumstances. At an individual level older people certainly don't want to simply be told they have no option but to take what they are given, but the choices they face are not simply about what services to use. They need help to make difficult decisions about when it is time to give up a loved home because it is getting too much for them; or when it is the right thing for a husband or wife with dementia to move into residential care. They need a good relationship with the person helping them make decisions, and they know that such decisions are rarely just about them as individuals, but about them in relation to other important people in their lives. They need to feel that others care enough to help them through this, and they sometimes want people who care enough to take on the burden of making decisions when this feels too much. Being well looked after is rarely identified as a factor in well-being, but our work suggests that it may be just as important as being able to make choices in some situations.

Those involved in initiatives to give a collective voice to older people have sometimes been disappointed by the 'token' nature of such practices. They sense that decisions have already been made; that the rules familiar to 'officials' determine how participation takes place, and that officials can be uncomfortable dealing with the sometimes emotional experiences associated with ageing. This suggests that there is still much to be learnt about doing participation in a way that gives proper recognition to older people.

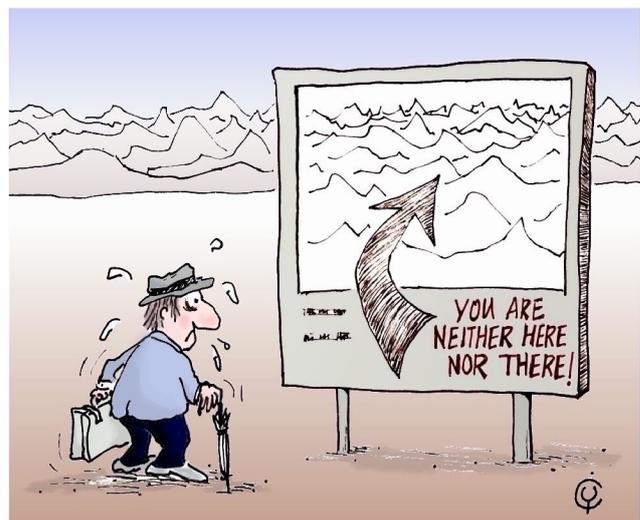
Working on this project with people aged from 60s to late 80s meant we needed to develop inclusive ways of working that were attentive to the different needs and circumstances of our colleagues. We recognised that involving older people is not just a matter of good design, but of ethical practice. In reflecting on our own practice we have drawn on an ethic of care which we think is useful in understanding what older people were saying about what well-being means to them. This work starts from recognition that human beings need others to survive and flourish, and that we all need care. It suggests how 'care thinking' offers a way of thinking about social justice, as well as what caring relationships look like. And it recognises that we need to think about care from the perspective of both care giver and receiver.

So we think there is a connection between how we involve older people and what older people say about well-being. In the next phase we will be working with older people, statutory and voluntary sector practitioners to apply this learning to practice. Our aims are to model ethical practice in the way we work together, and to generate learning resources based in findings from the well-being project. We will disseminate these so they can be used in practitioner training and practice development.

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Idiom-Magic® © John & Ching Yee Smithback



NEITHER HERE NOR THERE

As usual, Ken is lost. "This is becoming troublesome," Ken sighed. "It's **neither here nor there**, Ching Yee, but why do you keep getting me lost in your illustrations?" he asked. "Because you're helping me explain idioms," Ching Yee answered, "and **neither here nor there** means 'it doesn't matter'; 'it's not important'."

www.idiom-magic.com



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Phenomenology and the Meaning of Lived Experience: Anticipating Falling

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Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario

Introduction

Qualitative approaches to research in gerontology, and phenomenology in particular, have immense potential to inform service providers' understandings of the meaning older adults make out of their everyday experience. As a health service providers, we are inclined to enable and empower the older persons with whom we work to create new meanings of ageing in collaboration with their health care team. Understanding how older adults make meaning out of their lived-experience is essential for health service providers to enable new meanings to be made by older persons as they continue to grow and change. Phenomenological approaches to exploring lived-experience have helped me to understand how to engage older persons in their health care and encourage the continued creation of meaningful health care experiences.

Background

Accidental falls account for significant detriments to the functioning, health, and quality of life of older adults throughout the world, leading to growing strain on health care systems as the global population ages. This pervasive problem of falls in older adults has been the subject of recent news-media, policy, and health care reform attention, which has raised questions regarding whether it is being addressed in meaningful and effective ways. Fall prevention has been identified as a responsibility of the formalised health care system, and thus health service providers across the continuum of care are expected to understand and address fall risk. Understanding fall risk includes not only knowing which risk factors and intervention strategies might be important, but how fall risk affects the psycho-social lives of older adults, and how to sensitively and effectively engage older adults in fall prevention initiatives. The purpose of this research project was to explore the meaning of the experience of anticipating falling for older adults from a hermeneutic perspective (focusing on *interpretation*), providing insight into the psycho-social considerations that should be considered when delivering fall prevention services to older adults.

Methodological and Theoretical Approach

This research project follows the hermeneutic approach referred to by Max van Manen as the *phenomenology of practice*, indicating the implications that phenomenological inquiry can have for the professional practice of people working in health care. van Manen (1990) describes the goal of phenomenological inquiry as seeking to achieve *phenomenological tact*: "Hermeneutic phenomenological research edifies the personal insight (Rorty, 1979), contributing to one's thoughtfulness and one's ability to act toward others, children, or adults, with tact or tactfulness." (van Manen, 1990, p. 7). As such, this methodological approach focuses on the meaningful lived-experience of older adults in order to help service providers understand how fall prevention services may be delivered in ways that are subjectively meaningful and valuable to all those involved. This methodology reflects a humanistic approach to the study of gerontology.

Methods

To understand the meaning of anticipating falling for older adults, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with 9 older adults living independently in the community. Interviews focused on concrete lived-experiences of older adults, seeking detailed descriptions of the thoughts and feelings that characterised participants' experiences of falling and fall risk. As the interpretation of the meaning of the experience of anticipating falling emerged, participants were asked to comment on the researcher's interpretations in order to co-create a hermeneutic understanding of the experience in question. Participants' narratives were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by interpreting the meaning of key stories and phrases (van Manen's selective/highlighting approach) and interpreting the meaning of the experience as a whole (van Manen's holistic/sententious approach).

Findings

Findings suggest that for our participants the experience of anticipating falling meant confronting *lived-identity* in the context of ageing. Participants sought to continually enact their lived-identities despite the experience of a fall or near-fall, as it was through the enactment of their identities that they were enabled to achieve quality of life. The experience of anticipating falling made participants aware that their functional mobility was diminishing, constituting a potential threat to their ability to enact their identity and thus continue to achieve quality of life. One participant stated this clearly and succinctly by saying:

Shirley: I don't want to hinder my ability to walk and drive and live the way I do because I think I'd be devastated.

Thus older adult participants sought ways to continue to enact their identities despite their awareness of diminishing physical function or mobility. Participants were enabled to enact their identity in part through exerting control over the



ways in which they portrayed their self-image, which was of fundamental importance to their identities. One participant stated:

Paula: Well [my daughter] gets mad at me because I won't use a cane, but I feel so self-conscious with a cane that I just use it when I go shopping.

Participants felt that their ability to portray their identities in desired ways was essential to achieving their lived-identity, and found a balance between physical "safety" through efforts to prevent falls and portraying self-image in order to enable themselves to continually strive for quality of life. Participants came to understand the experience of anticipating falling through experiential learning, including both their own personal experiences of falls or near-falls as well as the experiences of others in their personal lives. One participant reflected on the experience of a childhood neighbour:

Nancy: Well, maybe from one experience I remember, not of me falling but just the neighbour and another neighbour had a big dog, a nice friendly dog, but the dog was too friendly, and I can remember my mother saying that dog is going to knock over [the neighbour].... This was when I was in high school and that happened and she broke her hip or something and she did not recover. So that was, [pause], gosh, break a hip and you die?

As participants learned about the consequences of falling experientially, they came to experience anxiety with respect to anticipating falling. This anxiety was focused on the potential inability to perform their lived-identities that could result from a fall, which would severely hinder their capacity to continually strive for quality of life. When confronted with the experience of anxiety in anticipating falling, participants sought ways to integrate caution into their everyday lives in order to continue to enable their ability to enact lived-identity. One participant stated:

Robert: I just try to be sensible and, you know, make sure that I am doing things that are safe and things like that as much as possible. I mean, if things happen beyond my control, then I'll deal with that at the time and I will try and keep the right frame of mind and handle things as they happen.

Participants sought to incorporate caution into their daily activities, but would not limit their activities in order to prevent falls. In this way, caution enabled participants to continue to enact their lived-identities and strive for quality of life.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study on the experience of anticipating falling suggest that maintaining a sense of personal identity is of the utmost importance for older persons. Health service providers can integrate this understanding into their approach to providing fall prevention services by asking their older adult clients about their feelings with respect to anticipating falling and strategies they may have already devised to integrate caution into their everyday activities. Furthermore, it is imperative that service providers understand that some risk-taking in the daily lives of older persons is likely essential to the continued enactment of their lived-identity, and thus to their quality of life. While service providers often have the best intentions to keep their clients safe, they may do harm to a person's sense of identity by neglecting to consider the full personal impact of their fall prevention recommendations and interventions. The findings of this study support the co-creation of fall prevention strategies *in relationship with* the older persons with whom service providers work as a means of ensuring more meaningful and supportive health care experiences.

The phenomenological study reported here shows the immense potential of qualitative research to address the meaningful experience of older persons and inform the delivery of health and social care to this population. Recognising that the findings of this study may or may not apply to older persons in new and different contexts, it nonetheless provides new ideas to inform the sensitivity with which we approach the delivery of health and social care to older persons.

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Creative Ageing: Exploring Social Capital and Arts Engagement in Later Life

Jackie Reynolds
Staffordshire University

Background

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in gaining a better understanding of the impact of group arts activities in contributing to social policy objectives. Matarasso (1997) led the first large-scale study that aimed to measure the social impact of arts participation, and was seen as having fuelled significant UK policy interest in arts activities as a vehicle for community development and other social objectives. However, whilst there has been some interest in developing arts work with older people (see Cutler 2009), there is no explicit national policy framework relating to arts and older people. In funding terms, greater priority tends to be given to developing work with children and young people, so older people's group arts participation tends to be in groups run by volunteers rather than professional artists.

In terms of academic research, existing literature on arts engagement and ageing is limited, especially in the UK context, and does little to reveal the complex factors that shape people's participation. Much existing research approaches the subject from an arts and health perspective, meaning that issues for older people who are actively engaged in their communities are largely unexplored, and their voices are absent. Whilst arts engagement has been seen as a potentially important and valuable way of generating social capital (Better Together 2000), reviewing the social capital literature reveals it to be a complex and poorly understood concept. Gaps in our understanding include how social capital might actually be *experienced*; how social capital that is generated by particular activities might be seen as distinctive, and also the nature of older people's social capital.

In response to these issues and gaps in our knowledge, this study explored the meanings that older people attach to their participation in group arts activities throughout their lives. The research questions that formed the basis of the empirical stage of the research focused upon: factors impacting on arts engagement (e.g. age, health, gender, cohort); the relationship between individual and group involvement and the links between arts participation and social capital.

Methodology

Reflecting a narrative approach, and the need to adopt a life-course perspective, the study involved qualitative interviews with 24 (8 male and 16 female) participants connected to a case-study town in the English Midlands. The youngest participant was aged 60, the oldest aged 87. Participants were recruited through a range of groups, including choirs, dancing, amateur dramatics, and arts and crafts groups. Attending group activities also provided opportunities for informal observation.

In interviews, participants were asked to reflect on their arts engagement throughout their lives.

Key Findings

The study's findings suggest that much of older people's arts engagement has been something of a 'taken for granted' aspect of their cohort experience. They highlight the key roles played by people's childhood experiences at home, school and church, in shaping arts engagement. In particular, there are some distinctive features of arts participation for people who are now aged 60 and over, due to gendered and class-based assumptions at school, especially linked to the tripartite school system. Furthermore, people's home and family life could also shape their long-term arts engagement, with cultural capital being accumulated within both working class and middle class households. Working class culture encouraged various forms of arts engagement, including music, singing and domestic crafts. Churches were shown to have played a central role within communities for many participants, and long-term choir participation was often an aspect of their shared cohort experience. Analysis of the ways in which people's employment was linked to their arts participation revealed further gendered differences, as well as cohort differences.

Findings also emphasise the crucial importance of issues of identity in helping to understand the nature of people's engagement in group arts activities throughout their lives. This in turn supports the usefulness of continuity theory (Havighurst 1968; Atchley 1989), in explaining the ways in which people's life-course participation can be seen as logical and coherent. It becomes particularly significant for those adapting to ill-health and it was found that people's arts engagement could be seen as a positive strategy in relation to both their use of time, and their sense of identity, in the face of health problems. A range of other factors were seen as significant by participants in relation to their arts participation in later life, such as motivation, time, and practical issues like access to transport and financial resources. Whilst for some people group arts activities had become more significant in later life (sometimes due to positive 'drivers' such as time and freedom and sometimes due to difficult life challenges such as the decline of other activities; bereavement and ill health), for others, later life was a time when they were finding it more difficult to maintain their enthusiasm for long-standing activities.

People's arts engagement was found to be strongly connected to their relationships with others. This included both their close personal relationships, such as those with family members or a spouse, and also their wider social relationships. In challenging a common 'deficit' approach to research with older people, the study used the concept of social capital as a basis for analysis. Findings offer qualitative understandings of the ways in which older people experience and invest social capital through their group arts engagement, and of the dynamics of mutual support and reciprocity that can thus be seen in the lives of older people. Not only do many group arts activities involve intrinsic mutual support, but there was

also evidence of a range of practical and emotional mutual support that could be seen to stem from the group arts activities. This was found to be due to a number of factors, such as shared identities; the links between individual and group participation; and also the strong culture of mutual learning that can be seen in amateur arts settings. Given existing literature suggesting the distinctive forms of community that can be seen to exist in singing groups (Clift et al. 2008; Bungay and Skingley 2008) and dancing groups (Cooper and Thomas 2002; Paulson 2010), the study adds further weight to existing research about the social benefits of particular types of arts activities, and extends such findings to a broader range of activities.

The study also found that people's arts engagement could be linked to their sense of approaching ageing in a positive way. This was partly in response to the recognition that people have of their arts-related skills that they can successfully practice for their own enjoyment, and can also share with others. In addition, the findings illustrated how people made links between their arts participation and wider notions of creativity. This included such issues as being a lifelong learner; being a volunteer; being a performer; and being a busy and practical person. This again links strongly to the sustaining of positive ageing identities.

By analysing the ways in which people explain the meanings that they attach to their participation in group arts activities throughout their lives, and by considering the factors that impact on such engagement, the study ultimately argued that 'resourceful ageing' is a valuable concept for gerontologists (see UN 1999). Considering the resources to which people have access in later life moves beyond problematic notions of 'successful' and 'active' ageing, by recognising that older people do not operate on a level playing field, all equally able to take decisions that enable them to age 'successfully'. Rather, they are affected by their life-course experiences and by a range of structural factors, which are influenced by a range of policy decisions. They are also affected by the environments in which they live and the opportunities for social engagement therein. It would be easy to adopt an uncritically upbeat and positive portrayal of ageing when addressing the topic of arts and creativity in relation to older people. However, examining the issue from the perspective of the resources that participants can be seen to have accumulated, allows us to take a more realistic approach that recognises the impact of inequalities and of other challenges that may be faced.

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Learning Zone

The Transition from Postdoctoral Researcher to Lecturer

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For those pursuing a career in academia, the usual career route nowadays is to achieve a PhD, gain further experience as a postdoctoral researcher, and then fill a lectureship post. This was the route I took. After full-time study under the ESRC's 1+3 scheme, where one completes an MSc and then a PhD in a total of 4 years, I then went on to work as a postdoctoral research fellow for two and a half years. I was fortunate enough to work with Professors Margot Gosney and Christina Victor that really helped me enter the gerontology arena. Since then I have been lecturing in psychology at Bournemouth University for the past two years. For most, the move to lectureship is a promotion but also a necessity: you become too expensive as a researcher and there comes a point when you want the stability of a permanent position.

Lectureships (and all the grades above) require the academic to be part-time researcher and part-time teacher. Only in rare circumstances do you meet someone who is either full-time one or the other: the norm is very much set now that one juggles these two roles. This is one of the main points to make for those entering academia in the same route as I have done: you are no longer a full-time researcher. This has two implications:

1) You cannot work at the pace in your research role as you have been used to for the last so-many years. There was a time you could revise a paper and re-submit it within a few weeks; this is not always possible e.g. when you're marking a huge pile of exam scripts. It also means that you have to reluctantly turn down offers.

2) The level of multi-tasking goes up a notch. The move to lectureship can easily mark the transition from juggling a project, some publications, and maybe a grant proposal, to teaching on various units, tutoring a number of students and attending various committee meetings. Lecturing is no doubt a rewarding job, and if you enjoy both teaching and research, it will be a job you will find satisfying for a long time.

Some pointers for those applying for a lectureship

Identify the kind of department that would best suit you. For me, this is being in a psychology department, but for other colleagues who are psychologists, for them it is working in a health and social care department.

Write up the papers from your PhD as soon as you can, and then get publishing your postdoctoral research papers: you need to have papers on your CV to get invited for a job interview.

When it comes to publications, think quality over quantity: better to have a few papers in top-ranking journals than lots in low-key ones, but do still publish in lower-ranking journals to get your work visible and show that you can publish.

Research the department you are applying to: find out (and sell this) if you are a good match with the existing team / aspirations of the department, and wider university.

Plan ahead for the Research Excellence Framework (REF): know what it is and how well you can contribute to it.

Strategically network: identify the key players in your research area and seek out among them who are willing and able to collaborate with you.

Some pointers for those starting a lectureship

Remember that the first year is always different: all your teaching is to be written from scratch and you'll be finding your way through something that is a new role and set of procedures to follow. It'll therefore be quite demanding in time and energy, but will afterwards get easier.

Think dual purpose: overlap your teaching with research as much as possible. You can save a lot of time by e.g. using an external conference paper for an internal university seminar series, which you then write-up for publication, and then use in a lecture. If you are to write a lecture from scratch and need to do a lot of reading around, can this be weaved with a lot of reading you also need to do for a paper? Be creative: this is a win-win.

Sign up to receive email alerts of new content from a lot of journals – the key ones you are interested in from different areas – this will help you keep up to date with your teaching and research; a new paper might be great for your next paper or your next lecture (or both!).

Try and protect some time every week where you can hide away somewhere and write for your research. I know a few professors who e.g. work from home on Fridays for this purpose. Keeping research active and productive e.g. in writing a paper that satisfies your curiosity helps keep the job alive when at other times you have a pile of marking to do that isn't always fun.

There will always be more that you can do but you have to set a limit. Keeping a healthy work and home life balance will help sustain you in the long-term and continue to enjoy your job as well as everything else in life.



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