



Being Aged is not the Same as Being Old

— A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study —

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- In completion of Doctor of Philosophy through the Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care within the School of Population Health University of Auckland



Overview of Presentation

- The demographic context
- Research question & aims
- Methodology
- Methods & design
- Agedness is not oldness
- Questions & discussion





The Demographic Context

- People aged 85 years and older make up the fastest growing sector of the population
- By 2051 there will be a six-fold increase in those aged 85 and older
- (Davey, de Joux, Nana & Arcus, 2004)





The Research Question & Aims

The Question

- How do elders experience aging in the context of their everyday community lives?

The Study Aims to:

- get closer to understanding the phenomenon of aging through elder's stories of their everyday lives
- explore elder's understandings of aging

Methodology

- Hermeneutic phenomenology
- Guided by the philosophies of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Martin Heidegger





Methods and Design

Recruitment of 15 participants living in private residence on Auckland's North Shore

- 11 non-Maori men and women aged 80 and older
 - Six women: 80, 89, 90, 91, 93 & 95 years
 - Five men: 89, 91 & 3 x 97 year olds
- 4 Maori men and women aged 70 and older
 - Two women: 77 & 93 years
 - Two men: 71 & 74 years

Methods and Design

In-depth, semi-structured, individual interviews were conducted in the participants' homes as conversations about the person's:

- **Everyday experiences, describing things in the moment; the here-and-now stories**
- **Understandings of aging and how it shows through everyday living**



Working with the data

- The conversation is audio-taped
- For the photograph, the participant shows doing an occupation of choice
- Verbatim transcript is produced
- Read & re-read for the stories that lie within the transcript



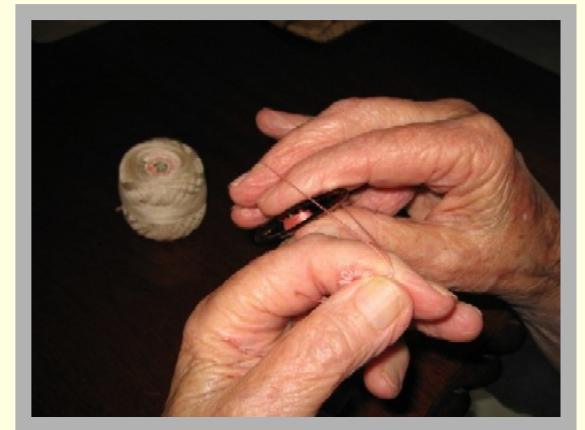
Working with the data

- Re-craft the stories to bring the meaning to light and for readability
- 6 second interviews conducted
- Return the stories to the participant
- Interpret each story, finishing up with 'what stays with me and a poem capturing the essence



Findings

- One compelling understanding shows through:
 - Agedness is not Oldness
- The meaning of aging is embedded in the doing of the everyday

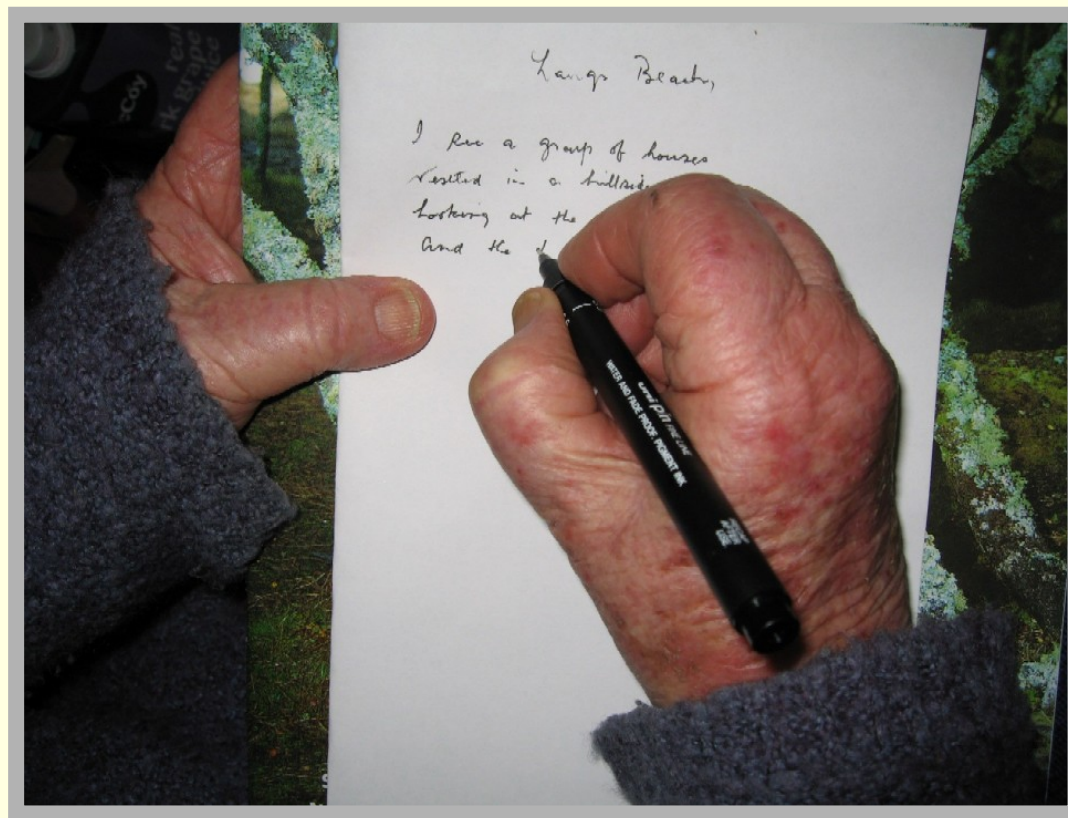




Frank's story



Merrill's story





Matelot's story





**The enigma of aging as
ubiquitous, ever-present
always there, seen yet not seen
like a shadow going with.**

**Understood by all yet not understood
the same for all but different.**

**Measured by the chronographer
aging is concrete, orderly, predictable.**

**Experienced by the person
aging is abstract, messy, uncertain.**

**As lived, oldness is not
a natural consequence of aging.**

Age is just a number.



References

Davey, J., de Joux, V., Nana, G., & Arcus, M. (2004). *Accommodation options for older people in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Wellington: New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing.

Gadamer, H. (2004). *Truth and method* (2nd ed. Revised). London: Continuum.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time*. Oxford: Blackwell.

The stories of Frank, Merrill & Matelot.

Questions and Discussion

