

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Living at home after 95 years.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Philosophy

in

Nursing

at Massey University, Albany,
New Zealand.

Julia May Russell

2013

ABSTRACT

Globally the number of older people is increasing with the largest increases occurring in those aged over 85 years. Historically little has been written about this group and because of increasing numbers more information is needed to inform the development of future services. The question was how people live in their own home independently after 95 years? This work was informed by narrative gerontology overlaid with a critical gerontological lens to give voice to this group. Through a purposive sampling strategy ten narrators were identified and were interviewed using a semi-structured format.

Data analysis was undertaken using thematic analysis with three themes; staying socially connected, managing the physical environment and keeping and ageing well emerging. Further to this, there were associated subthemes, which support and further illuminate the detail of the theme itself. These findings also unsettled the ageist, biomedical view of the oldest-old and what we think we know about them. In this study the narrators gave voice to their lives and what contributed to them living at home independently. Not everyone will live to 95⁺ years and how this was achieved by this group was the result of their entire lives and showed itself in the resilient characters of these narrators. All of whom considered the benefits of social connectedness, hard work and keeping well as reasons for living independently at home. As well as this, the need to stay mobile and the current contribution of help and support from both family were contributing factors. This research provides considerations for changes in not only the way we view those over 95 years but also the way we consult and provide services to them. There is an urgent need to promote achieving resilience, eliminate ageism and promote a more balanced view of the oldest-old.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Few human endeavours, including this one, occur in isolation with most requiring the help and support of many people that contribute to their completion. Contributions to this thesis have both been on personal and professional levels. No doubt, the greatest acknowledgement is to my mother, Jean who has always unconditionally, quietly and lovingly supported everything I have done. My interest and passion for older people comes from her and her encouragement to support the older people in our family and to work hard in my employment. I anticipate she will become one of the oldest of the old as she demonstrates the attributes of the narrators. A sincere and loving thank you to my wonderful family who allowed me the personal time and gave their support to complete this. In particular, my sister Jacque who provided love and practical skill. The next most important acknowledgment is to my supervisor Dr Stephen Neville, he has the singular ability to make everything seem interesting and has truly made this journey full of learning and interest.

The other most significant acknowledgments are to the narrators. I felt truly honoured as people took the time to be interested in this work and thank you to those who were so welcoming as I visited heard your stories, I have enjoyed meeting you all. I have appreciated the time this has given me to reflect on the work that we do with people and hope that this new knowledge makes me a better person and advocate for these people.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	viii
Chapter 1. Introduction to thesis	2
1.0 Introduction	2
1.1 My position	2
1.2 Reflexivity	4
1.3 Research question	6
1.4 Overview of thesis chapters.	6
1.5 Conclusion	7
Chapter 2. Key definitions and concepts	9
2.0 Introduction	9
2.1 Key concepts	9
2.1.1 Ageing	9
2.1.1.2 The third and fourth age	11
2.1.2 The study of ageing	12
2.1.3 Independence or interdependence?	13
2.2 Socio-demographic characteristics	16
2.2.1 International trends	16
2.2.2 New Zealand	17
2.2.2 Māori and other ethnic groups	19
2.2.3 The Southern District Health Board (SDHB) and older people	19
2.3 Theories of Ageing	21
2.3.1 Life course perspective	22
2.3.2 Disengagement Theory	23
2.3.3 Activity theory	24
2.3.4 Continuity Theory	24
2.3.5 Successful ageing	25
2.3.6 The Free Radical Theory	25

2.4	New Zealand Policy for Older People	26
2.4.1	New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy	27
2.4.2	Health of Older Person Strategy (HOPS)	28
2.4.3	Effectiveness of the Strategies on the lives of older New Zealanders	28
2.4.4	Ageing in Place	29
2.5	Conclusion	30
Chapter 3. Literature Review		32
3.0	Introduction	32
3.1	Search Strategy	32
3.2	What does the literature say?	33
3.2.1.	How society views older people	36
3.2.2	Older People as family and community members	37
3.2.3	Marriage	39
3.2.4	Environment	41
3.2.4.1	Housing for older people in New Zealand	41
3.2.4.2	Home	43
3.2.4.3	Who do the oldest-old live with?	44
3.2.5	Finances	46
3.2.6	Well-being and quality of life	47
3.2.7	Resilience	50
3.2.8	Functional impairment and transportation for oldest-old	53
3.2.9	Spirituality	54
3.2.10	Nutrition and the oldest-old	55
3.2.11	Multimorbidity, Geriatric syndromes and the oldest-old	57
3.2.11.2	Incontinence	59
3.2.11.3	Visual Impairment	59
3.2.11.4	Dual Sensory impairment (DSI)	60
3.2.11.5	Mental Health and Depression	62
3.2.12	Mobility and falls	66
3.3	Conclusion	67
Chapter 4. Research Design		68
4.0	Introduction	68

4.1	Methodology	68
4.1.1	Qualitative research	68
4.1.2	Narrative	69
4.1.3	Critical Gerontology	71
4.2	Methods	73
4.2.1	Sampling	73
4.2.2	Informed consent	74
4.3	Recruiting	75
4.4	Interviews	75
4.5	Confidentiality and information storage	78
4.6	Ethical Issues	78
4.7	Ethical approval	81
4.8	Thematic Analysis	82
4.9	Maintaining rigor and trustworthiness	85
	i) Credibility	85
	ii) Fittingness	86
	iii) Auditability	86
4.10	Conclusion	86
	Chapter 5. Narratives	88
5.0	Introduction	88
5.1	Alice (99)	88
5.2	Esther (96)	89
5.3	Heather (98)	90
5.4	Lily (100)	91
5.5	Beatrice (100)	92
5.6	Madge (96)	93
5.7	Lena (99)	95
5.8	Sarah (100)	96
5.9	Bob (98)	98
5.10	Tim (97)	99
5.11	Conclusion	100

Chapter 6 Findings	101
6.0 Introduction	101
6.1 Summary of themes	102
6.1.2 Socially connected	102
Subtheme i) Family and friends	103
Subtheme ii) Help - paid/unpaid help	114
Subtheme iii) Keeping busy	118
6.1.3 Managing the physical environment	123
Subtheme i) Use of aids - hearing aids, walkers, glasses	124
Subtheme ii) Appliances and technology	125
Subtheme iii) Changing how and where I live	126
6.1.4 Keeping well/ageing well	130
Subtheme i) Health and eating well	130
Subtheme ii) Medications	132
Subtheme iii) Keeping mobile	133
Subtheme iv) There's nothing I've done	136
Subtheme v) Not worrying	139
6.5 Conclusion	140
Chapter 7. Discussion	141
7.0 Introduction	141
7.1 Summary of findings	142
7.2 Being the oldest-old	150
7.2.1 Successful Ageing	150
7.2.2 Ageism	152
7.3 Resilience	153
7.4 Implications and opportunities	154
7.4.1 Health professionals and the community	154
7.4.2 Nursing education	155
7.4.3 Research	156
7.5 Strengths of the current study	157
7.6 Limitations of the current study	158
7.7 Conclusion	158

References	161
Appendix A. Participant information sheet	198
Appendix B. Advertisement for participants	201
Appendix C. Participant Consent Form	202
Appendix D. Transcript release authority	203
Appendix E. Interview Schedule	204
LIST OF TABLES	
Table 1 <i>Spread of oldest-old across the SDHB</i>	20
Table 2 <i>Increase in number of 95-99 year olds and 100⁺</i>	20
Table 3 <i>Increase in number of 95-99 year olds and the 100+ year olds 1995 – 1999</i>	21
Table 4 <i>Phases of Thematic Analysis</i>	83
Table 5 <i>Profile of narrators</i>	100
Table 6 <i>Themes and subthemes</i>	101
LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 1 <i>Global population aged 80+ years 1950-2050</i>	16
Figure 2 <i>Population aged over 80+ years in New Zealand</i>	17
Figure 3 <i>Ageing of the aged in New Zealand</i>	18