

Lived experiences of older people in New Zealand rest homes

Liz Kiata

General Practice & Primary Health Care
School of Population Health
Tamaki Campus
University of Auckland

liz.kiata@auckland.ac.nz

Introduction

- Ageing
- Social context
- Aim of the study
- Methods and methodology
 - ‘Life worlds’ approach
- Participants
 - Lived experience in a rest home context
- Summary

Why study ageing?

- Ageing populations globally
- By 2025, one person in four in New Zealand will be aged 65 years and older
- Projected population aged 65+ in 2020, 1,079,600

Why study ageing in a rest home context?

- Rest home population (5%) will double over next two decades
- Little is known about the lived experiences of older people in rest homes

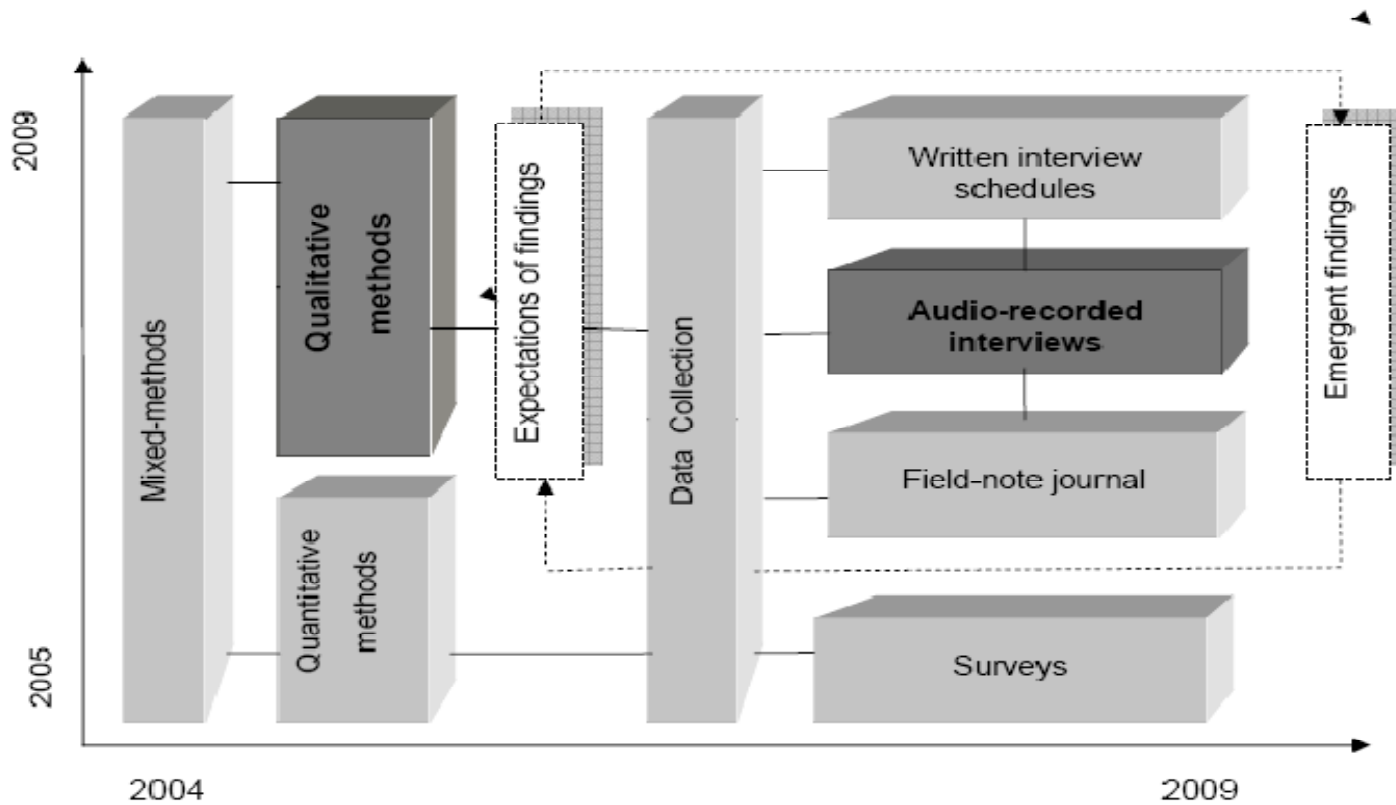
What is known about the experiences of older people living in rest homes

- Internationally
 - United States
 - Savishinsky, 2003; Stafford, 2003, Foner, 1995; Diamond, 1992; Shield, 1988; Kaufman, 1986;
 - United Kingdom
 - Townsend, 1962
 - Australia
 - Nay, 1993
- In a local context
 - Bland, 2004; Fitzgerald & Robertson, 2006

Aim of the study

- Explore and understand the lived experiences of older people living in rest homes in two New Zealand cities
 - Day-to-day activities in which the older people take part
 - The older people's experiences of activities and pastimes in daily life

Mixed-methods research design



Study participants

- Control arm of a RCT
- 21 rest homes
- Two New Zealand cities
- Participants (N=352)
 - 352 surveys
 - 314 written interview schedules
 - **27 audio-recorded interviews**
- 98% European descent
- 74% female
- 84 ½ years of age
- 67% widowed
- 64% lived in rest home longer than one year

Rest home life

Some pre-understandings



Approach to the study Phenomenology

- Alfred Schütz and Max van Manen
 - ‘Life Worlds’
 - Lived space
 - Lived time
 - Lived body
 - Lived others

Spatial aspects of daily life (1)



As a middle-aged NZ European/Pakeha woman, I blend well as a visitor and do not appear to be 'out of place'.

This belief is tested and found lacking when over the period of a few days, as I arrive and leave one rest home, I observe four women sitting in a glass-encased alcove close to the office.

The women have an uninterrupted view of the entrance. They sit in armchairs with their walkers in front of them, which hold various items including magazines, knitting and fruit.

Spatial aspects of daily life (2)



After a couple of days, I become acutely aware that the women watch me come and go so I wave and call out a greeting. One woman raises her hand in reply; two of the women turn to each other and begin to talk (about me?). The fourth member of the group lowers her eyes to a magazine that lays open on her lap. I continue on my way.

(From research notes 12/03/05)

Daphne, aged 85



I like to get my walk every day because people are so friendly when you are walking in a place like this, people are walking in carts and get to know you and so forth.

Alice, aged 89



I just go; I think 'well, I've been here so long, I'm taking liberties' [because] you get so used to the place...Mind you, I suppose I've got nerve...but nobody sees me, I just go quietly down [to the laundry], hm. I don't tell anyone.



Vera, aged 95

I don't go to that
[activity] now,
because to get there
[the corridor] is
sloped, and it's like
climbing Mt Everest .

Summary

- Lived space is difficult to define because it is not often reflected on.
- The space in which people are located is understood in socio-cultural ways.
- The meaning of lived experience will be impacted on by the space in which it takes place.
- As the space(s) of the rest homes are full of ambiguity, applying a lived space perspective as part of a phenomenological model is one way to understand how rest home life is experienced.

Policy and practice implications

- Challenges existing policy viewpoint that posits ‘ageing in place’ strategies such as ‘active ageing’, ‘positive ageing’ and ‘successful ageing’ are possible only in a ‘community’ context
- Better understanding of spatial requirements from older peoples’ perspectives
- Points to ‘user friendly’ ways of utilising available space in a rest home context
 - Existing long term care facilities
 - Establishing new facilities

Thank you.