



NZiRA News No.36 AUGUST 2008

Visitors to NZiRA

I am pleased to advise that NZiRA is hosting an international PhD student as a visitor, from August 29 - Dec 5, 2008. He is **Sebastian Glende**, from the Berlin Institute of Technology, with a background in engineering and product design. During his visit to NZiRA, he is interested to find out how older people are integrated in the development of services, and products as well as in social life generally. He will be able to share information about how his work in Berlin with the Senior Research Group might compare with NZ experience in design. He hopes to talk with representatives of older people's organisations, product developers, and others interested in inclusive design.

In his letter of application, Sebastian wrote:

I work as scientific assistant (PhD Student) at the Department for Human Factors Engineering and Product Ergonomics under the direction of Prof. Wolfgang Friesdorf at the Berlin Institute of Technology, Germany. My special research interests are product ergonomics for older people and methods of user integration during product development. Beside my activities in research and education I manage the Senior Research Group (SRG). This group consists of about 20 senior citizens, who are actively involved in qualitative research like testing and optimizing technical products usability with the special aim of helping industry to design well-adapted products for all generations.

Sebastian will have a workspace in a Graduate Room in Railway West Wing, 5th Floor, and can be contacted directly on sebastian.glende@tu-berlin.de; or sebastian.glende@vuw.ac.nz or else via the NZiRA office phone 04 463 6746.

Sally Keeling, Director



In the last newsletter, details of a 2007 Visitor to NZiRA: (November 17-21, 2008) were given: Dr Hilary Arksey, Senior Research Fellow from the Social Policy Research Unit, University of York, UK will be with us in the week of November 17-21, 2008. Her strong research interest is in policy and practice in the linked fields of informal care and employment opportunities for carers.

Plans are underway for a research-policy seminar to be held on the morning of Wednesday Nov 19, with an early evening talk in conjunction with Wellington Branch NZAG on Thursday Nov 20; topics and venues will be confirmed later.

Publication of NZiRA Report under Families Commission Blue Skies (No 24/08), July 2008.

This report is accessible via the websites for NZiRA and Families Commission: hard copies are also available on request.

<http://www.nzfamilies.org.nz/publications/blue-skies.php>

Grandparents in rural families: young people's perspectives

Sally Keeling, Kathy Glasgow and Carolyn Morris.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (extracts)

Introduction

This project is based on significant background literature review work in rural ageing, both in New Zealand and comparatively, and begins to explore relationships between grandchildren and their grandparents. Grandparenting merits critical research exploration, as roles and practices are likely to vary in different social settings and across the life course of each generation and cohort. The rationale for the study is based on the paucity of research data addressing the particular linked dynamics of ageing in rural families through the lens of young people's experiences. This study is designed to map the perspectives of a sample of young people who have spent a good part of their formative years living in rural communities in the South Island.

Methods

The process of contacting all area (rural) schools in the South Island of New Zealand is outlined, along with the developmental approach taken to design methods which were practically and ethically appropriate to research with young people in an educational setting. Schools were invited to take part in a monitored research activity in the classroom of Year 7 and 8 students. Five schools participated in a classroom research activity using a survey designed, developed and administered by the researchers, working with a classroom teacher. The survey included basic demographic items, before the young people were asked to describe their relationships and current/past contacts with people they refer to as grandparents.

Research findings

The 98 young people in five schools who completed the survey provided information on 380 grandparents, of whom 73 were no longer alive. Young people in rural South Island schools report a variety of relationships with their grandparents, describing the nature of their relationships, frequency and type of contacts, and range of shared activities. Half of the students' grandparents live close or reasonably close (within 90 minutes travel time) to their grandchildren. Most of the young people provided information on three or four grandparents, with no apparently significant differences between their maternal and paternal grandparental relationships. Relationships with one or more *great*-grandparents also feature in this study.

An analysis of the patterns of naming and terms of address for grandparents is made, showing that the most commonly used names for grandfather is Grandad (used by 25 percent). For grandmother, Nana and Grandma are almost equally common (used by 15 percent and 11 percent respectively). Personal names are used in a small number of cases (8 percent), and in combination with a grandparent title in 13 percent of cases.

Around 40 percent of the students have contact daily or weekly with a grandparent. One-third 'regularly do things together' with a grandparent, and one-fifth say they have a 'special relationship' with a grandparent. Fewer than 10 percent mention a grandparent whom they 'don't really know'. In terms of the content and quality of their relationships with grandparents, the majority provided descriptive detail of the typical activities they share on an 'everyday' basis. A small group (18 percent of responses) mentioned aspects of relationships which are interpreted as 'marginal-limited', while a smaller group (12 percent of responses) gave examples of relationships interpreted as 'special-positive'.

Many grandchildren valued their relationships with their grandparents, including grandparents who had died. There is positive commentary on the fun and enjoyment grandparents and grandchildren share, but there is also sadness in acknowledging that these opportunities for mutual sharing can be limited. Declining health and death of a grandparent, or distance in both time and place, are acknowledged as limiting the opportunities for relationships and contacts to grow over time, as young people also develop.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study shows that it is possible to obtain interesting descriptive data from young people in classroom settings using the methods involved in this study. Further comparative work would provide more extended coverage of the field of young people's experience of their links and relationships with their grandparents. One major contribution is the focus on younger people's perspectives to complement the growing interest in understanding the roles and contributions made by grandparents to New Zealand families. In the process, further potential lines of enquiry are developed to extend aspects of variation in grandparental relationships. By controlling the age group of grandchild and place of residence, this study provides insights into some aspects of this variation. These include further exploration of geographic proximity, gendered experiences, the significance of blended and emerging family forms, and ethnic and cultural diversity.

Branch Meeting and National Annual General Meeting

Thinking creatively to improve the lives of older people

Wednesday 3 September 2008

**Speaker
Dr George Salmond**

Society is ageing, we all know that, and also facing rapid social and economic change. Negative attitudes about ageing do not help to confront the challenges which this will bring. We need some creative and innovative thinking to ensure that older people can lead more satisfying lives and that they can contribute positively to life in their communities.

We will explore, with examples, what may be needed for this to happen.

George Salmond is a public health physician – a health services researcher, teacher and health administrator. He is a previous Director-General of Health. Currently his interests are mainly in the third sector in mental health and primary health care with particular emphasis on efforts to encourage greater creativity and social innovation within and beyond the traditional health sector.

Where: Turnbull House, Bowen St, Wellington

When: 6.00 – 7.00 pm Wednesday 3 September, 2008.
Light refreshments available from 5.40pm.

Recent NZ papers relevant to ageing in *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, Vol. 33.

***“What influences Retirement Decisions?”* (J.Davey).**

***“Quality of life is...: The Views of Older recipients of Low Level Home Support”*
(P.Hambleton, S.Keeling and M.McKenzie)**

***“Should Physical Activity be on the Healthy Ageing Agenda?”* (B Grant)**

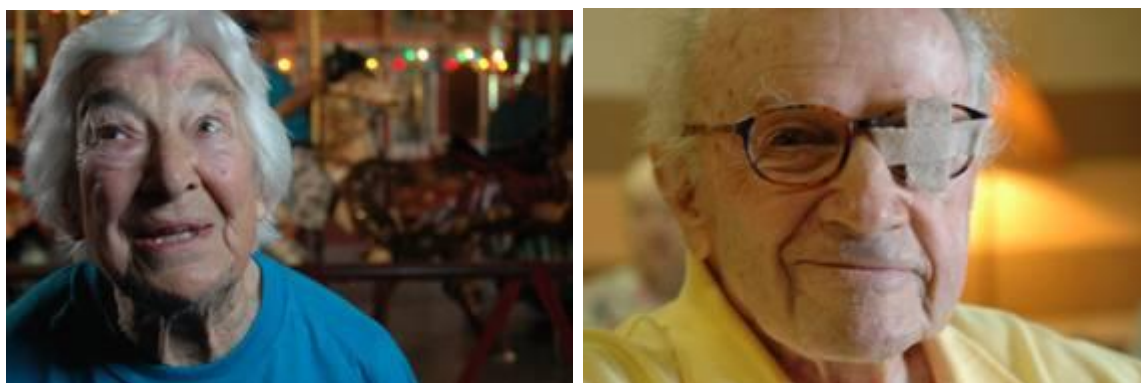
***“Stroke: A Picture of Health Disparities in New Zealand”* (L.Dyall, V.Feigin and P.Brown).**

<http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj33/index.html>

Preview screenings of YOUNG @ HEART: word is coming through from around the country that this movie is being well-received by New Zealand audiences. It is coming soon (from October 23 in cinemas nationwide) with some local preview opportunities.

A film about the inspiring individuals of YOUNG @ HEART a senior citizens chorus that has delighted audiences worldwide with their upbeat versions of modern songs.

YOUNG @ HEART PREVIEW SCREENING



WHEN – Monday 22 September, 6.30pm

WHERE – Penthouse Cinema. 205 Ohiro Road, Wellington

This screening is free of charge, but seats are strictly limited. Information on the film is below, for additional information visit www.foxsearchlight.com/youngatheart/

YOUNG @ HEART IN CINEMAS NATIONWIDE OCTOBER 23

From The Social Report 2008, Released 28.8.08.

<http://www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/people/age-sex-structure-population.html>

The New Zealand population is ageing: the median age of the total population was 36 years in 2006, and is expected to rise to 38 years by 2016, and to 40 years in 2026. The proportion of the population under 15 years of age has declined from 25 percent in 1985 to 22 percent in 2006. The population aged 65 years and over has increased from 10 percent of the total population in 1985 to 12 percent in 2006.

Age structure varies by ethnic group. In 2006, the European or Other population was the oldest, with a median age of 38 years, followed by the Asian population (28 years), the Māori population (23 years) and Pacific peoples (22 years). By 2026, half of all Māori will be older than 25 years and half of all Pacific peoples will be older than 23 years. Over the same period, the median age of Asian New Zealanders is expected to rise to 36 years, while for European or Other New Zealanders it will rise to 43 years.

While on annual leave* (see below....) in July, I found some good reading of interest which shed fresh light and energy on less academic aspects of age-related research and study - hopefully some newsletter readers will share some of their recent favourites.

The Oldie is a London-based magazine with a unique blend of satire and humour, overlaying comment and writing across travel, literary features and features on public issues. They also offer an email newsletter: check out www.theoldie.co.uk The Editor, RICHARD INGRAMS writes: 'After editing *Private Eye* for over twenty years, I decided in 1992, along with a group of friends (Auberon Waugh, Alexander Chancellor and Stephen Glover), to launch *The Oldie*. The aim was to produce an antidote to youth culture but, more importantly, a magazine with emphasis on good writing, humour and quality illustration. Sixteen years later, *The Oldie* can well claim to be a success story, attracting some of our best writers, illustrators and cartoonists.'

Intelligent life is a quarterly supplement associated with the publishers of *The Economist*. The Summer 2008 editorial begins: "How old is old, these days?" and in the later pages, the journal talks to four 90 year olds, "to capture its changing face... Old age is changing faster than our attitudes to it. If your own pension is still some way off, prepare to adjust your preconceptions now. You could find yourself turning 70 with a parent or two still alive. You may be retired for 30 years – or outlive the idea of retirement." The reporter on this feature, Maureen Cleave, is described as a pensioner herself. The journal also celebrates Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday.

Older and Bolder: When age is no limit to outdoor adventure, by Judith Doyle, was published in 2004 by New Holland Publishers, Auckland. Doyle's energetic encouragement and guidance covering twelve varied and challenging journeys in New Zealand's landscapes is inspirational and enjoyable at a vicarious level, but likely to be even more so if carried in a day pack, among a group of peers, fellow-travellers and friends and not accompanied by a cellphone.

* (FOOTNOTE: Thanks to Judith Davey for referring me to George Bernard Shaw's "A perpetual holiday is a good working definition of hell".... which I hasten to assure readers bears no relationship to my own experience of this recent holiday, which was filled with fun, family and festivities of the lifechanging type – but that's another story.) Judith was referring to Shaw, along with some others below, in her recent consideration of an interesting question: asking if **Retirement** fits with the idea of "The Twilight Years" or is a concept past its "use by" date?

"Retirement kills more people than hard work ever did "
Malcolm Forbes

"Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save." *Will Rogers*

