Veiled in darkness
— The Ordinariness of Being Aged —

Wright-St Clair

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In completion of Doctor of Philosophy

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Aging exists in its everywhere-ness. Always moving towards its natural being. Yet it is unseen below the horizon of the gaze.
In the everyday aging just is
Overview of Presentation

- Purpose of the study
- Theoretical framework
- Methods
- Findings
- The meanings
The phenomenon of being aged
How do elders experience aging in their everyday lives?
Theoretical Framework

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

Potential participants identified from the North Shore electorate, New Zealand electoral roll

Maori aged 70+ & non-Maori aged 80+

Living in private residences

Purposive recruitment of 15 participants

Te Puna Hauora as a research partner
4 elder Maori
- Two women: 77 & 93 years
- Two men: 71 & 74 years
11 non-Maori
- Six women: 80, 89, 90, 91, 93 & 95 years
- Five men: 89, 91, 97, 97 & 97 years
Gathering the Text

Individual research conversations were conducted with participants to open up:

- Stories about everyday experiences, describing events; the here-and-now stories
- Understandings of being aged

Photographs of only the hands doing a precious occupation

Gathering & interpreting the text were integral
Working with the text

- Conversations were taped & transcribed
- Each transcript was recrafted into a set of anecdotes then affirmed by the participant
- Hermeneutic interpretation of anecdotes through dialectical conversation
- Poeticised the essence
- Phenomenological reflection to uncover the being of being aged
Engaging in Phenomenological Interpretation

- Being in the everyday
- Experiencing the uncomfortableness of the unaccustomed
- Being with others
- Aging just is
Being in the everyday
(Matelot, 74)
Being with others
(Tom, 91)
Experiencing the uncomfortableness of the unaccustomed (Ella, 93)
Aging Just Is

Merrill, 89
He is
the boy riding horse
the young man driving
the father providing a home
the craftsman laying bricks
the grandfather gardening
He is
the aged man sitting
working hard to dress
looking out the window
waiting for time to pass
feeling himself fade away
He is
all of these
His past, present and future come
together in his everyday
Meanings in Practice

- Find ways to open up understandings of aging rather than simply bring assumptions to the fore
- Being aged is qualitatively different than being old, so avoid the language of ‘oldness’
- Aging just is, it is just there, but some of the ‘is’ will always be veiled in darkness
Questions and Discussion