

# Generations Review

Volume 25 No 2

July 2015



- Older people's everyday mobility
- Media portrayal of older people
- Annual conference review
- Pension Income in Nigeria



**BRITISH SOCIETY OF GERONTOLOGY**

# EDITORIAL

July 2015

I have had the fortune of being present at some fantastic conferences and seminars since the last issue was published. Two of them are reviewed here in this issue. The first of these, must include a special mention to the excellent Annual BSG Conference co-organised by Northumbria and Newcastle Universities and expertly co-ordinated by Suzanne Moffatt and Mima Cattan. The conference created its usual buzz with established members mixing with a large number of people new to gerontology and the BSG. A full review of the conference by two new members, Amy and Jo, PhD Students from Swansea University, is included in this issue.

The conference had its fair share of surreal moments too. Weather more akin to a summer in the Mediterranean than in Newcastle, with unusually hot, humid and sticky days creating beautiful blue skies and sunshine one moment and thunder and lightning and downpours of torrential rain of biblical proportions the next. I also had a first in my career as I chaired a session involving live hens, who were very well behaved during the presentations and didn't heckle too much. The hens have a serious gerontology connection mind you and are far from gimmicky. There are around 700 older people in 20 care homes in the North East looking after hens. They provide a stimulus for older people to nurture and to look-after, to re-connect older people to nature, to each other and through demonstrations of the hens to schools and conferences, inter-generational connections too. Fund raising for the project involves hen-based art by the older people themselves who have decorated tea-towels, egg-cups, aprons and mugs and sold them. The eggcellent scheme (sorry!) has been so successful that the charity, EqualArts, has just won Lottery funding to roll out the HenPower (as it's known) scheme across the whole of the UK.



HenPower being introduced at the BSG conference, Newcastle, 2015.

In April, I was absolutely delighted to provide the keynote at Oxford Brookes University for BSG sponsored seminar introducing all seven of the Lifelong Health and Wellbeing (LLHW) cross research council funded projects. It was great to hear how the first few months of their projects had been going. A full run-down of the day is included in this issue too.

**Cont....**



I also attended the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics European Region Congress, in Dublin in April. This was a great conference and you knew it was going to be special from the first moment when it was introduced by a choir of retired transport workers, followed by e Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, who gave a rousing speech in support of getting the best from older people as well as providing for the best in later life. The conference continued in a similar positive vein, with research from all over the world being presented, from all manner of disciplines.

I also presented at an International Conference of Transport & Health, London, in July where we held special sessions on the improving mobility for older people, with speakers from across the world. I am truly excited about the future of gerontology and indeed our own futures of ageing if we can bring all this knowledge to bear. Having presented at the House of Lords in June to help launch ILC-UKs report on *The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society*, I realise the importance of having the ear of practitioners and policy makers in making this knowledge have real-life impact.



Dr Charles Musselwhite

Editor, Generations Review

Swansea University

[C.b.a.musselwhite@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:C.b.a.musselwhite@swansea.ac.uk)

**Happy Reading!**

**Charles Musselwhite**

### **The British Society of Gerontology (BSG) is currently recruiting an Office Administrator**

The BSG is the leading UK organisation aiming to enhance knowledge about ageing and later life. The Society provides a multidisciplinary forum for all those interested in the situations of older people, and in how knowledge about ageing and later life can be enhanced and improved. The BSG is a member of the Academy of Social Sciences.

**An Office Administrator is required to provide efficient and effective administrative support to the Society and its Executive Committee. Candidates must be self-employed and able to work from home.**

**For information or informal enquires contact: Dr Mary Pat Sullivan, 01895 268846 or [mary.sullivan@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:mary.sullivan@brunel.ac.uk)**

**A job description is available from [Rachel Hazelwood](#)**

**Deadline for applications: Friday 21st August**

**To apply please send a covering letter and CV addressed to Dr Mary Pat Sullivan to [Rachel Hazelwood](#)**



# Media Portrayal of older people: the good, the bad, and the absent

Natasha Ginnivan

Centre for Research on Ageing Health and Well being

Australian National University

[Natasha.Ginnivan@anu.edu.au](mailto:Natasha.Ginnivan@anu.edu.au)

Media in all its forms has become an influential part of most people's lives, particularly the urban-dwelling individuals who have access to the internet, television and devices such as smart-phones, tablets, PC and laptops. The following article is intended as a discussion piece to reactivate the dormant and explicitly bypassed subject of age-gender entwinement. First, a brief review of recent empirical studies are discussed with an emphasis on the absence of older individuals in the media. Secondly, the double standard of ageing in the context of gender differences will be addressed in the media and the psychological impact on women. Thirdly, how this absence creates the impression of 'insignificance' of the older demographic not just in media, but in life. Finally, how this ongoing perceptual chasm will have short term consequences for the way in which children relate to older adults, and long term implications of how these children will grow to relate to their future older selves.

A review of several empirical studies, based on the work of Pasupathi and Lockenhoff (2002), on the representation of older people in mass media shows a rather notable underrepresentation of older people in both electronic and print media (Pasupathi and Lockenhoff, 2002). For example, an analysis of new seasons characters on major television networks in the United States from 1966 to 1992 showed that only 2 percent of the characters were 65 years and older (Greenberg and Collette, 1997). In a sample of daytime drama out of forty-five hours of television viewing there was a representative of 3 percent of characters who were 60 years old (Hiemstra et al., 1983). In children's programming, a sample of 106 cartoon characters, showed

that only 7 percent were categorically 'old' (Bishop and Krause, 1984). In a re-examination in more contemporary television, Robison and Anderson (2010) sought to undertake a similar structured study of the current television programming for children, however this time included more the of the current commercial and cable television shows looking at the specifics of gender, race and in particular age. The results of the study showed that while there was a slight increase in positive representation of older characters (by 10 percent) since Bishop and Krause's (1984) seminal study on analysing children's television programs there was still up to 38% of older characters who were portrayed as feeble-minded, ugly, useless or villainous (Robinson and Anderson, 2006).

The concern for this level of negative portrayal of older people in children's television is that studies have found that by the time children have entered school they have already formed impressions of negative stereotypes of older people, and during the years at school



Photo from <http://all-free-download.com/>



## Media Portrayal of older people: the good, the bad, and the absent cont...

continue to be exposed to even more negative stereotypes (Seefeldt and Ahn, 1990, Isaacs and Bearison, 1986). Many researchers have asserted that low level contact with real life older role models coupled with high exposure to negative stereotypes can form and individual's impression of older people which emphasises only negative aspects of what it means to reach old age. Given that we are all living longer lives, is it not worth contemplating the long term impact of the internalization of these negative views of older people? Becca Levy (2009) asserts that the internalization of the surrounding culture's impressions can result in the embodiment of these negative stereotypes which can have lasting effects into older adulthood (Kocarnik and Ponzetti Jr, 1991, Kupetz, 1993, Blunk and Williams, 1997, Falchikov, 1990, Isaacs and Bearison, 1986, Middlecamp and Gross, 2002, Seefeldt and Ahn, 1990, Robinson and Anderson, 2006, Levy, 2009).

Although celebrity status is not necessarily representative of the average person, it is a window through which we often see aspects of our own reflection and occupies the imagination of many.

To this extent it is worthwhile discussing how older role models in the media are viewed in the public eye. In a celebrity studies paper; author Deborah Jermyn (2012) discusses how the "twin prejudices" of ageism and sexism works against many individuals seeking to work with any longevity in the public eye such as actors, entertainers and news readers. To this extent, it also speaks to representation in the media such that females, in comparison to their male counterparts struggle to stay on television or the big screen past 35 years of age and therefore how this noted absence of an entire demographic impacts women older than 35-40 years of age (Jermyn, 2012, Lincoln and Allen, 2004, Biggs, 2004). Jermyn notes that the boundaries of what appears to be old is somewhat shifting with notions of 40 is the new 30, and 50 is the new 40 being bandied about. This denial of ageing is capitalized on in cosmetics promotions where celebrities such as Jane Fonda, now in her 70s promotes L'Oreal make up products entitled 'Age re-perfect Foundation' (Jermyn, 2012). The discourse and the manoeuvres around ageing in the media speak volumes about who we are as a society. Essentially the absence of



Photo from <http://all-free-download.com/>



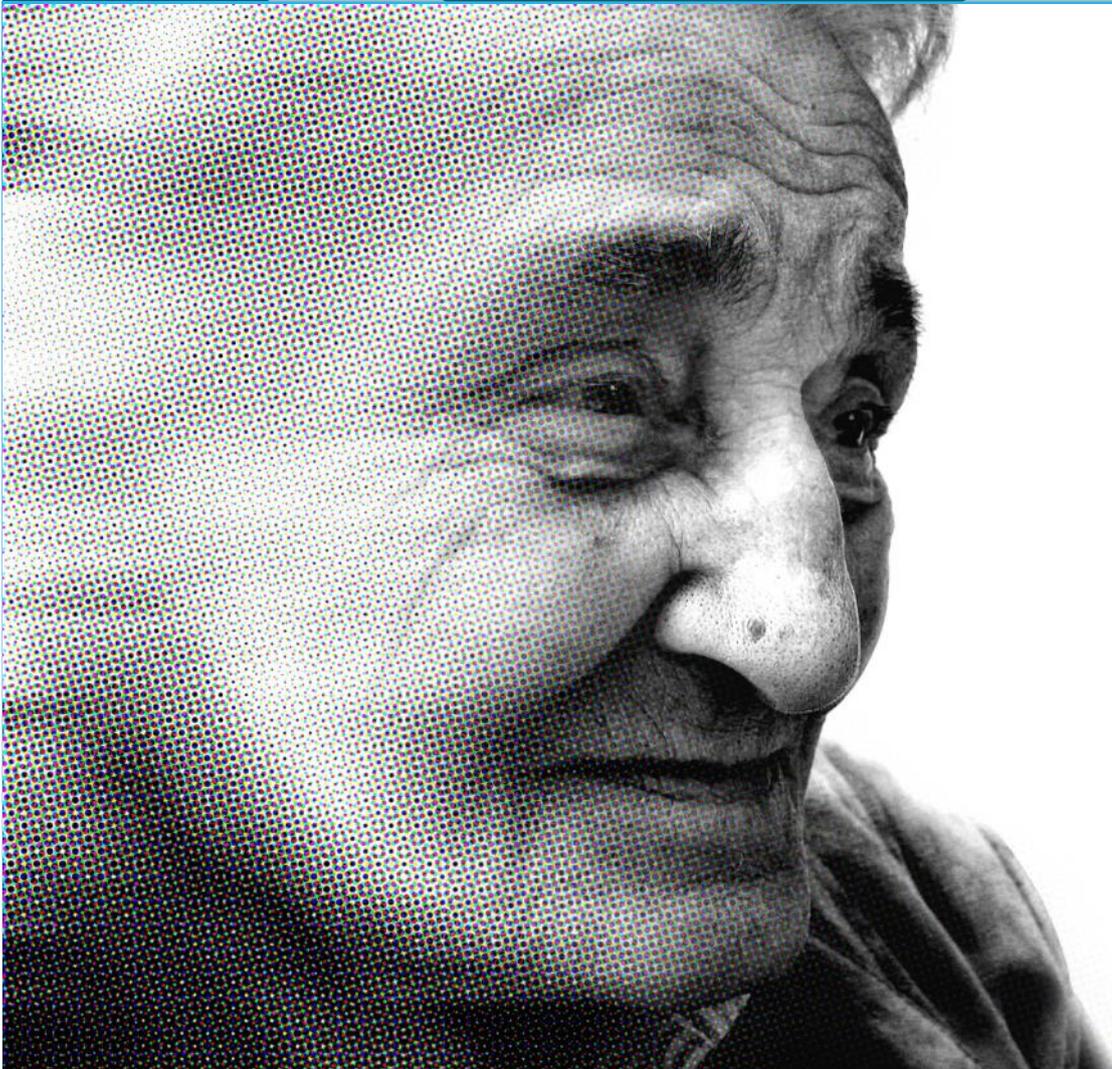


Photo from <http://all-free-download.com/>

females between the ages of 45 – 80 suggests that at this age your presence and your image are unwelcome.

The denial of a woman's image, her contribution and experience in the media leaves much to be desired given that women and girls in reality make up more than half the entire population. Many magazines and also academic papers cite the likes of Meryl Streep, Dame Judy Dench, Helen Mirren and Julianne Moore as exemplars of a successful older female celebrity, and their work would appear to be merit based without the need for the backhanded compliment of 'she's doing well for her age' (Jermyn, 2012).

However, the fact that these few examples are

named to argue *against* any twin prejudice of ageism and sexism is appealing to a fallacy of hasty generalisation where the exception is made the rule when the rule is actually that older ladies are not what audiences want to see (Walton, 1999, Winner, 2008). According to Michael Winner, an ageing television and movie director himself (who passed away in 2010), audiences do not want to see 'old females' on television. Winner wrote a piece in *The Evening Standard*, September 2008, in response to news of a female news presenter Selina Scott's law suit against UK's Channel 5 which cited ageism, entitled 'Sorry but I don't want old dears reading the news' (Winner, 2008). The article serves an example of

## Media Portrayal of older people: the good, the bad, and the absent cont...

how ageism a form of prejudice, unlike other forms of prejudice, is still socially acceptable. This article written by Winner displays the 'twin prejudice' which Biggs (2004) and Jermyn (2012) speak of.

A view from a well-known award-winning Hollywood actress Francis McDormand is that "we are on red alert when it comes to how we are perceiving ourselves as a species. There's no desire to be an adult. Adulthood is not a goal. It's not seen as a gift. Something happened culturally: No one is supposed to age past 45 – sartorially, cosmetically or [sic] attitudinally. Everybody is concerned about a smooth face." (McDormand in Bruni, 2014). McDormand, an apparently self-described nonsense actor who has no time for vanity, apparently does not have the desire to *negotiate* with the process of ageing as many of her contemporaries attempt to do (Bruni, 2014). Journalist Sarah Macdonald (2013) asks 'Where are all the middle-aged women?' in an article for Daily Life acknowledging the problem of Hollywood only recognising younger actresses as worth any visibility on the big screen. For example a Screen Actors Guild report showed recently that 70% of roles go to women under the age of 40. Macdonald also laments the apparent lack of middle-aged women in Australian television, after comparing this to the United States where there are a least some representation of females of this demographic, such as Whoopi Goldberg, Barbara Walters, Christine Amapour of CNN, and Katie Couric to name a few (Macdonald, 2013).

Ageism is a problem for everyone, and it is compounded by the media which promotes youth as the only paradigm with which to experience the world. As noted in some of the discussed articles, older males seem to escape some level of degradation in terms of media attention however are likely to come up against ageism in the work place and other aspects of society. However, the absence of one gender in the media after the age of 40 not only shows mass scale denial of the human rights of women but validates and reinforces that this attitude is appropriate which creates further issues for women who are already grappling with many psychological barriers which are the combined product of sexism plus ageism. In turn, this becomes a problem for the males in ageing women's lives because the messages about youth being the only acceptable state to be if you are female alienates women from their male partners, and other male-female

relationships. It also has implications for women who are transitioning into their latest of stages of life, often alone given that the ratio of women to men between the ages 60 – 80 shows that for every 85 men in their 60s, are 100 women in their 60s, and for every 61 men in their 80s, there are 100 women in their 80s which has led to the UN Human Rights Commission declaring this ratio the 'feminization' of ageing. In a call for gender equality to all governments, human rights expert, Rosa Kornfeld-Matte (United Nations Human Rights Commissioner, 2015) warned against the neglect of older women stating that "old women must not remain invisible" (Kornfeld-Matte 2015).

Taken together, the presence of negative attributes assigned to characters who are old in children's television, the explicit negative attitudes about older people in the mainstream media (in particular females) and the absence of both older media identities and explicit positive attitudes towards older people in mostly western societies can lead to what Becca Levy calls stereotype embodiment (Levy, 2009, Levy, 1994). Enough evidence has been gathered to show that negative attitudes about age have a negative and enduring effect on older adults; it is time that the media is regulated and more sensitive to discriminatory speech when referring to age as an attribute, and ensuring that there is equal representation of all ages and both genders in the media. Age after all is not *really* an attribute, but rather a *process* of which we are all a part of.

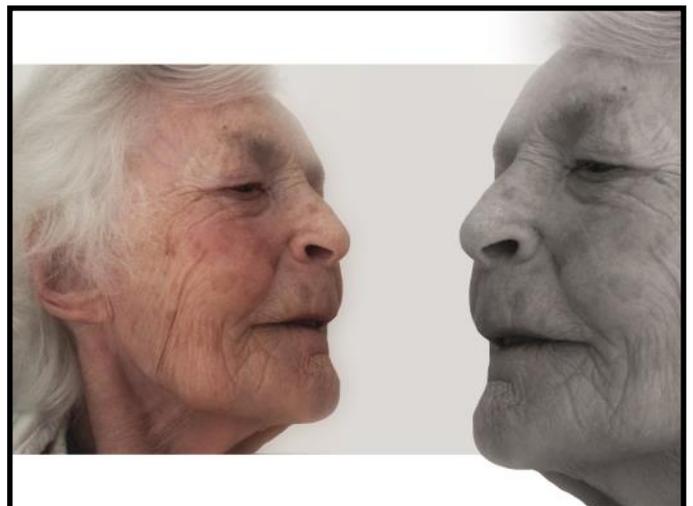


Photo from <http://all-free-download.com/>

### References

- BIGGS, S. 2004. Age, gender, narratives, and masquerades. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 18, 45-58.
- BISHOP, J. M. & KRAUSE, D. R. 1984. Depictions of aging and old age on Saturday morning television. *The gerontologist*, 24, 91-94.
- BLUNK, E. M. & WILLIAMS, S. W. 1997. The effects of curriculum on preschool children's perceptions of the elderly. *Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly*, 23, 233-341.
- BRUNI, F. 2014. A star who has no time for vanity. *The New York Times*.
- FALCHIKOV, N. 1990. Youthful ideas about old age: An analysis of children's drawings. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 31, 79-99.
- GREENBERG, B. S. & COLLETTE, L. 1997. The changing faces on TV: A demographic analysis of network television's new seasons, 1966–1992. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 41, 1-13.
- HIEMSTRA, R., GOODMAN, M., MIDDLEMISS, M. A., VOSCO, R. & ZIEGLER, N. 1983. How older persons are portrayed in television advertising: Implications for educators. *Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly*, 9, 111-122.
- ISAACS, L. W. & BEARISON, D. J. 1986. The development of children's prejudice against the aged. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 23, 175-194.
- JERMYN, D. 2012. 'Get a life, ladies. Your old one is not coming back': ageing, ageism and the lifespan of female celebrity. *Celebrity Studies*, 3, 1-12.
- KOCARNIK, R. A. & PONZETTI JR, J. J. 1991. The advantages and challenges of intergenerational programs in long term care facilities. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 16, 97-107. 7
- KORNFELD-MATTE, R. 2015. Beijing+20 review: "Older women must not remain invisible" *UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 20 years after its adoption (Beijing+20)*
- KUPETZ, B. N. 1993. Bridging the Gap between Young and Old. *Children Today*, 22, 10-13.
- LEVY, B. 2009. Stereotype Embodiment: A Psychosocial Approach to Aging. *Curr Dir Psychol Sci*, 18, 332-336.
- LEVY, B. R. L., E.J. 1994. Aging free from negative stereotypes: Successful memory in China and among the American deaf. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66, 989-997.
- LINCOLN, A. E. & ALLEN, M. P. Double jeopardy in Hollywood: Age and gender in the careers of film actors, 1926–1999. *Sociological Forum*, 2004. Springer, 611-631.
- MACDONALD, S. 2013. Where are all the middle aged women? . *Daily Life*.
- MIDDLECAMP, M. & GROSS, D. 2002. INTERGENERATIONAL DAYCARE AND PRESCHOOLERS' ATTITUDES ABOUT AGING. *Educational Gerontology*, 28, 271-288.
- PASUPATHI, M. & LOCKENHOFF, C. E. 2002. Ageist behavior. *Ageism: Stereotyping and prejudice against older persons*, 201-246.
- ROBINSON, T. & ANDERSON, C. 2006. Older characters in children's animated television programs: A content analysis of their portrayal. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 50, 287-304.
- SEEFELDT, C. & AHN, U. R. 1990. Children's attitudes toward the elderly in Korea and the United States. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 31, 248-256.
- WALTON, D. 1999. Rethinking the fallacy of hasty generalization. *Argumentation*, 13, 161-182.
- WINNER, M. 2008. Sorry, but I don't want old dears reading the news. *London Evening Standard*. in television advertising: Implications for educators. *Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly*, 9, 111-122.

# 45th Annual BSG Conference 2016

## University of Stirling

### Wednesday 6th - Friday 8th July 2016

Booking for members for the Future of Ageing Research, November 11th 2015 is now open.

## The Future of Ageing Research – Post REF 2014

Lessons and Issues for Social Gerontology  
Research Funding, Research Advances, Research Impact

The Wellcome Collection, Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> 2015

Who will be supporting the new research programmes of the future and what have we learnt from the past? Hear from the funders and directors and discuss the key themes. As academic researchers, how did ageing research feature in the recent HEFCE Research Excellence Framework (REF) and make an impact? Findings will be presented from the REF Impact Case study data base alongside the inside views of Panel Chair and Sub-panel members and assessors. Finally, how can impact and influence be improved from the perspective of major NGOs and how can the BSG help members in making this knowledge transfer.

A draft programme is available from [Rachel Hazelwood](#)

90 tickets have been set aside for BSG members at a discounted price of £85. Please use this link to register: [BOOK TICKETS](#)

Please do not share this link with non-members, booking will open up beyond the membership on 1st September. Thank you. To join the society, please click here: [JOIN](#)

*Please contact [Rachel Hazelwood](#) if you have any questions.*



# PhD Abstract: Adequacy of Pension Income in Nigeria: The Case of Retired Women Civil Servants

Ezi Beedie

[ezi.beedie@btinternet.com](mailto:ezi.beedie@btinternet.com)

Birkbeck College, University of London

Pensions are fundamentally methods of addressing and managing the risks of aging. However, in terms of coverage, the acknowledged difference between the formal and informal sector workers in developing countries has led to the assumption that people

in the formal sector do not have to worry about pension. Against this background, this thesis investigates the extent to which pension ensures adequate income for retired women civil servants in Nigeria.



Photo from <http://all-free-download.com/>

Understanding these women's retirement experiences necessitated an approach that incorporated gendered life course and gendered political economy. Central to a life course approach is the notion that it is difficult to divorce pension and retirement outcomes from the life course experiences that precede them. A gendered political economy approach allows for the de-bunking of the unitary household model and enables the adaptation of Razavi's "care diamond" with a focus on retirees' financial support for dependants. By using interviews and questionnaires, this thesis analyses the links between and comparisons across pension schemes, educational levels, retirement age, pen-

sion entitlements, adequacy and supplements.

Cross tabulation is used as a lead to identifying and pursuing potential patterns in dataset and digging deep into the factors that impact women's pension adequacy.

Despite the limitations of the study, it is apparent that in the context of normative expectations of extended family structure, linked lives, high rate of un/under employment of dependants and limited (and high cost of) access to social provisioning, pen-

sion is and will always be inadequate. This then forces formal sector women retirees into the informal sector to supplement their pension income. Findings of the study clearly demonstrate that the sustainable provision of formal sector pensions should not be the end of policy concerns about wellbeing in later life; but the start of a much wider focus on social provision and social relations in later life. This study's findings have implications for the pension, ageing and social protection policies in Nigeria, which are applicable to the wider sub-Saharan African. The implications of this study for assessing pension adequacy extend beyond Nigeria.



# Seminar Report: Understanding older people's everyday mobility

Dr Ben Spencer and Dr Tim Jones

Oxford Brookes University

[bspencer@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:bspencer@brookes.ac.uk)

There is recognition that the design of the urban environment can contribute to promoting independent mobility, healthy activity and social engagement among an increasingly older population (MRC, 2010, A strategy for collaborative ageing research in the UK). An increasing corpus of research is focusing on how design influences older people's mobility and how this directly and indirectly impacts wellbeing. A BSG-supported one-day seminar *Design for wellbeing: Innovative research methods for understanding older people's everyday mobility* brought together the seven projects funded under the Lifelong Health and Wellbeing (LLHW) cross-council ageing research programme ([www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/calls/designforwellbeing/](http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/calls/designforwellbeing/)).

The aim was to discuss innovative methods (and challenges) for understanding older people's mobility and wellbeing and the implications for design.

The seminar was hosted by one of the LLHW projects, cycle BOOM, at Oxford Brookes University on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015. In addition to representatives from all the LLHW projects we were delighted to welcome a wide range of practitioners, researchers, funders and students to this over-subscribed event. A brief overview of the event, with links to videos of the presentations by each LLHW project, is available on the cycle BOOM website here: <http://www.cycleboom.org/seminar-report-design-for-wellbeing-innovative-research-methods-for-understanding-older-peoples-everyday-mobility-oxford-brookes-university-21-april-2015/>.

The context for the day was provided by Charles Musselwhite, Associate Professor, Centre for Innova-

tive Ageing, Swansea University with a keynote presentation of his perspective on *Understanding mobility and wellbeing in older age*. Based on his background in transport studies and gerontology he



Dr Ben Spencer from Oxford Brookes University



explained how the dominance of engineering and economics had led to a positivist and neo-liberal approach to understanding and developing policy and practice. He argued that people tended to be forgotten in this technologically orientated approach – a trend that had been counteracted to an extent in the last 15 years by growing contributions from the social sciences and health. In terms of gerontology Charles explained how Disengagement Theory (Cumming & Henry 1961) had been superseded by Activity Theory (Havinghurst 1963) moving on to a current emphasis on critical gerontology. He then went on to question some assumptions about current research, such as, the actual purposes and importance of literal mobility, whether there are other types of useful mobility and what they might offer?

Charles finished by emphasising the multi-faceted nature of mobility; how it needed multi-disciplinary approaches to understand it; the heterogeneity of older people and the variety of their histories and ways of ageing; the need to understand their affective experience, health and wellbeing and to involve older people in research. This was a well-judged introduction to the rest of the day, when the LLHW projects could describe how their projects related to the requirements as set out by Charles.

Dr Tim Jones, Dr Ben Spencer (Brookes) and Dr Heather Jones (University of the West of England) introduced the **cycle BOOM** project, with its mixed methods approach to understanding older cycling mobility. They focussed on the innovative micro-ethnographic approach to capturing the experience of people over 50 cycling in Oxford and Bristol. The practicalities and challenges of riding with, videoing and interviewing older cycle users were explored and how this snapshot of their cycling was contextualised by understanding their broader cycling life histories.

Dr Helen Jarvis (Newcastle) explained how the **MyPlace** project is combining expertise from a wide range of disciplines to understand the process of developing a participatory platform and methodology to support citizen-led engagement in the design of age-friendly urban environments. This includes work at a range of scales, from the body to the city, and locations from the CBD to the peri-urban and explores how digital technologies such as mobile apps and electronic voting systems can facilitate and enable dialogue and co-research.



Dr Tim Jones from Oxford Brookes University introduces CycleBoom

The **BESIDE** project aims to understand how the built environment can facilitate physical activity, social interaction and wellbeing in care homes. Professor Vicki Hanson (Dundee) explained how they were investigating and improving the usefulness of current building guidelines and regulations. Methods for mapping and understanding social interactions and movement inside buildings, using sensors, observations and interviews were outlined, including challenges such as the acceptability to participants of the sensors used.

The **Co-Motion** project is exploring the impact of major life changes on older people's mobility through questionnaires followed by a series of face-to-face and

telephone interviews. Professor Rose Gilroy (Newcastle) reflected on one particular area of the project which was currently taxing the multi-disciplinary team. This was the “ethical and methodological challenges of doing qualitative longitudinal



Professor Vicki Hanson from Dundee University introduces the BESIDE project

research with older people”. Acknowledging the profound influence of the Timescapes research project ([www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/](http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/)) on Co-Motion, Rose discussed the need to develop ongoing processes of consent using a ‘refresh and remind’ approach. She also questioned the possibility of research ‘doing no harm’ when involved with longitudinal, qualitative work on sensitive issues and how long-term relations between participants and researchers could be best maintained – balancing appropriate support with potential dependency and the need for successful closure.

Dr Jenny Mindell (UCL) Principal Investigator of the **Street Mobility and Network Accessibility** project outlined how her team are working in four case study areas to develop a community severance index. They are using questionnaire surveys of residents’ perceptions and definitions of their neighbourhood; video analysis of street activity; quantification

of the pedestrian environment and perception mapping. By combining these measures with stated preference and wellbeing surveys they are estimating the impact that community severance has on wellbeing at a neighbourhood level.

The **Mobility, Mood and Place** project is extending knowledge of how experience of different environments influences our mood and how this in turn affects willingness to be active. Dr Katherine Brookfield (Edinburgh) introduced the project and it’s first strand of work which is bringing together designers in training and older people to analyse a range of existing environments and to co-design living environments that are enjoyable to be in and easy to move around. Means of exploring the interaction between minds, bodies, socio-cultural factors and the built environment when walking were explained by Dr Sara Tilley (Edinburgh). These included the use of mobile EEG capture during short walks in varied urban settings and walking interviews exploring participants’ everyday environments. Dr Catherine Tisch (Edinburgh) described how the team were researching the historical evolution of urban neighbourhood environments in Edinburgh and their relationship to inequalities in health and wellbeing. She explained how a wide variety of archival data including maps, surveys and directories were being examined and linked to residential history of the Lothian Birth Cohort.

Finally, Professor Sarah Wigglesworth (Sheffield) explained how the **dwell** project is aiming to improve the wellbeing of older people through providing better, and more varied, designs for housing and neighbourhoods. Her team, including architects and public health practitioners, are using participatory co-design approaches with older people in diverse areas of Sheffield. These are exploring preferences for

living environments at a range of scales, moving beyond participant's existing experiences to develop innovative, tested, prototypes of exemplary designs and codes. These focus on design solutions that are appropriate to context, resilient and uplifting – with recognition of the importance of mobility, comfort and beauty.

In the afternoon small groups had animated, facilitated discussions on the topics of measuring wellbeing and participatory approaches to mobility and design. Discussion on participation included examining the distinctions between recruitment, consultation and participation and the challenges of involving participants who were representative of the wider community. Problems related to the self-selection of participants and the possibility of involving 'hard-to-reach' groups who might have more pressing concerns and not want to participate. Both the requirements of the research ethics process and common research terminology (interview vs conversation) were also seen as potentially hindering participation. Lack of time, resources and opportunities to provide creative and convivial spaces for participation could also be problematic along with the tension between co-creation of



research, which potentially led to 'tangential outcomes', and expected research impacts.

The issues for participatory design in the built environment were discussed with reference to a wider context of local authority paralysis, their lack of skills, knowledge and experience of effective participation, standardised designs which were not related to context and top down policy making. High impact examples of helping change this mindset included using Space Syntax models with communities to provide greater 'on-the-ground' detail about streets and the film by the Kilburn Older Voices Exchange: *Older Voices – getting around Kilburn High Road*.

Afternoon discussions



Design education, support and training was also seen as having the potential to provide more training on the importance of, and techniques for, user participation - with useful resources including the RIBA's Consultation Matters (<http://www.architecture.com/RIBA/CP%20newsletter%20content/October2014/Needhelpwithcommunityconsultation.aspx>), AHRC's Connecting Communities (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Research-funding/Connected-Communities/Pages/Connected-Communities.aspx>) and the Design Council work on inclusive design (<http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/projects/inclusive-environments>).

The Measuring Wellbeing group first grappled with the definition of wellbeing and explored its many dimensions in terms of the short and long term, internal and external contributory factors and objective and subjective understandings. Given this conceptual complexity and slipperiness the subsequent discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of measuring wellbeing addressed questions including the appropriate timescales for reflecting on wellbeing, whether quantitative measures were more effective than narrative approaches and whether different approaches were needed for varying age cohorts and life phases. The group concluded that a 'horses-for-courses' approach was needed depending on why wellbeing was being assessed.

Concluding the day, Charles reflected on how having the opportunity to better understand the seven LLHW projects had confirmed how novel, creative and exploratory the methodologies being used were. For example, testing EEG measurement out-

doors and triangulating its output with interviews. He also confirmed the emphasis on the interdisciplinary study of the needs and motivations of people – trying to understand their dynamic, changing requirements from a psycho-social rather than an economic perspective. He emphasised the challenges of effective communication of such findings to policy makers and practitioners – needing to gradually change their perceptions.

***We would like to thank the British Society of Gerontology and the Research Councils UK for supporting this event.***

***cycle BOOM (formerly PRICELESS Design) Grant Number: EP/K037242/1***



# 44th Annual BSG Conference Review

## ‘Ageing in changing times: challenges and future prospects’

Amy Murray and Joanna Wolton

PhD Students, Swansea University

[554084@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:554084@swansea.ac.uk) and [836106@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:836106@swansea.ac.uk)



Beautiful weather (for most of the time) in Newcastle

### Introduction

From 30<sup>th</sup> June - 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015 we attended the 44<sup>th</sup> annual BSG conference ‘Ageing in changing times: challenges and future prospects’ in Newcastle Upon Tyne, hosted by Newcastle and Northumbria University.

Prior to the main conference, we attended the ‘Early Researchers in Ageing’ day event, which provided opportunities to meet other PhD students, whom are at different levels in their academic careers, from new researchers like ourselves, to those who are nearing the end of the PhD journey. The talks we found to be the most interesting were delivered by Professor Sara Arber and fellow PhD student, Elsie Richardson.

Professor Arber spoke about previous work she has conducted around researching informal caregiving. In

the second part of her talk, Professor Arber spoke about her experience of working in academia and about the importance of embracing the unexpected and making use of every opportunity you can as an early career researcher.

Following professor Arber’s speech, delegates then attended parallel sessions where PhD students had the opportunity to present their work. Both of us attended the same parallel session in which Elsie Richardson spoke about her work researching how older people can be more involved in the policy making process. Her presentation was a very informal session in which she gave an overview of her research and her experiences of the PhD journey. One aspect we both found really interesting was her use of an innovative method of data collection that she termed Café style information groups, in which she would conduct a focus group and ask people to write their answers on a white table cloth. Participants were then given



Suzaane Moffatt and Mima Cattan open the conference



## 44th Annual BSG Conference Review

stickers in and asked to go around the table and indicate using the stickers which answers meant the most to them. Being 89 years of age we both want to wish her good luck as she approaches the end of her PhD course and look forward to reading her work.

As first time delegates, it was a privilege to attend such a well-established conference over the course of three days, which brought together an international community of academics, policy makers and practitioners currently working in the field of gerontology. Attendees were from vast geographical locations, ranging from across Europe, to Australia and America. Current and on-going research and knowledge was presented, shared and debated which gave us an insight into the international issues that can arise within different ageing contexts, while also highlighting and exploring key issues and themes within the discipline of gerontology.

### Key messages

#### **Keynote presentations**

Over the main two day event, three keynote speakers drew upon unique gerontological areas, sharing their expertise with the audience. Professor Tom Kirkwood addressed the question of *'Why and how are we living longer?'* and introduced the Newcastle 85+ longitudinal study, in which he had a leading role. The speech focused upon understanding the biological nature of human ageing, and demonstrated how certain socio-economic factors contribute towards the maintenance of health and independence amongst those aged 85+. Also, Professor Bren Neale talked about *'The Flow of Lives through Time: Time and the Life course in Qualitative Longitudinal Research'* and drew upon the advantages of employing longitudinal designs in research with older people, highlighting the importance of the life course.

From a more international perspective the final key-

note speaker discussed ageing within the Swedish context. Professor Yngve Gustafson presented *'The discrimination of old people causes unnecessary suffering and increased costs for society'*. Drawing upon the treatment and care of older people in Accident and Emergency hospital settings, and across care homes, Professor Gustafson contrasted the treatment of older people to that of horses to demonstrate the maltreatment experienced by many older people throughout Sweden. Horses are treated particularly well, they engage in hours of play each day with other horses, and go no more than nine hours per day without food (essentially while they are asleep).

On the other hand, research has shown that older people in Swedish care homes often go fourteen hours without food between 'bed-time' and 'wake-time', exceeding the national target of 11 hours. Additionally, previous research has highlighted that half of the care home residents involved in one particular study had not been outside in the last month. This keynote presentation was particularly pertinent as there is often a widely held belief that Sweden has one of the best and most advanced healthcare systems in the world. However, in terms of the treatment and standard of care of older people, there is a strong need for improvement. A drastic change and implementation of policy and practices need to be adopted as we prepare ourselves for higher levels of older people in the population than ever before. Not only did Professor Gustafson's talk provide the ability to compare healthcare policies across European contexts, but it also encouraged early, and established researchers in gerontology and beyond to adopt a more critical perspective in terms of research and practice related to older people.

Although we are both PhD students within the field of Gerontology our research projects and interests differ slightly. Therefore, we will each give our views on the parallel sessions and presentations that we found to



## 44th Annual BSG Conference Review

be the most interested and relevant to our own research.

### **Parallel Sessions- Amy Murray**

Aside from the keynote sessions, there were oral presentations running across the course of the conference, which were organised into different categories, from 'Health and Social Care, to 'Age friendly communities'. Relating to my current PhD research, I mainly attended the presentations on 'age friendly communities' which covered a range of issues, including transport and the built-environment.

Dr Russell Hitchings presented on 'Post retirement travel and the circulation of expectation' where it was questioned: 'Is society making or meeting the needs of older people' in terms of how social policies respond to an ageing population. For example, travel companies and the media often advertise cruises for over 50s, in the sense that this is something which people should aspire to do once they are over a certain age. However, Dr Hitchings argues that such advertisements are potentially 'making' needs for over 50s, rather than 'meeting' some of the needs which they perhaps already have. Although the presentation was honed in on the travel expectations of older people, it was also centred around 'post retirement' practices. Therefore, the key message taken from this talk was that in the field of gerontology, regardless of what specific research area maybe being presented, there are often many cross-cutting themes and facts of relevance which filter into the personal interests and research areas of other researchers, like myself.

Relating directly to my own PhD research, which aims to explore the driving cessation process amongst current and retired older drivers and social network members, determining how the transition can be made successfully, the presentation by Dr Charles Musselwhite also portrayed a key message in terms of transport and ageing as he spoke about how older

peoples social and recreational needs are neglected in later life, particularly once the car has been given up. Dr Musselwhite noted that the use of travel time needs to be re-addressed as a key issue in research, as the many health and wellbeing benefits of visiting nature or appreciating scenery in later life are well documented. Furthermore, Dr Ben Spencer presented his innovative 'Cycle Boom' project and illustrated how policy and interventions should be encouraging older people to shift between transport mode if travel needs are to be met in later life, through cycling, as the health and wellbeing benefits of this transport choice are also too profound to be ignored.

Overall, the key message which was emphasized by each speaker in this particular category, is that what is needed in future research is more of a bottom up approach to meet the diverse transport needs of an ageing population who are far from a homogenous group, and transport planners need to focus upon the real issues amongst older people, and respond accordingly.

### **Parallel Sessions- Joanna Wolton**

As mentioned previously there were a number of symposia sessions and oral presentations that covered a wide array of topics. My PhD project will look to explore the role of the third sector in facilitating independence for older people and enabling older people



## 44th Annual BSG Conference Review

to live in the community context for as long as possible.

However, despite the variety of themes and papers being presented, there were papers and presentations that related to aspects of my project but I could not find a session that completely encompassed what I am looking to research. For instance, presenters spoke about the importance of third sector involvement in empowering older people and facilitating independence, and there was also discussion about housing options for older people, but, I could not identify any presentations that directly examined the role of third sector organisations in detail and how this can help older people to retain their independence. Therefore I tried to attend a diverse mix of talks. The two I am going to mention in a bit more detail fell in the Age Friendly Communities and Health and Wellbeing strands.

The first presentation that I found particularly pertinent was given by Dr Anthea Tinker, who presented on *'Housing for older people at home: some different perspectives'*. In her presentation Dr Tinker stated how we need to broaden our knowledge and understandings of different housing options for older people who want to remain living in their own homes. Using a number of long term care schemes in the Netherlands as a basis of comparison and as case studies, Dr Tinker highlighted the importance of changing the dialogue around housing options for older people and the need to consider the other alternatives to institutional care and the family home. These alternatives can include co-housing or home sharing initiatives which have proven to be successful in the Netherlands.

Another noticeable talk that I attended was part of the symposium *'Entitlement and access to resources for older people in relation to health and wellbeing'*. The talk was presented by Dr Suzanne Moffatt had

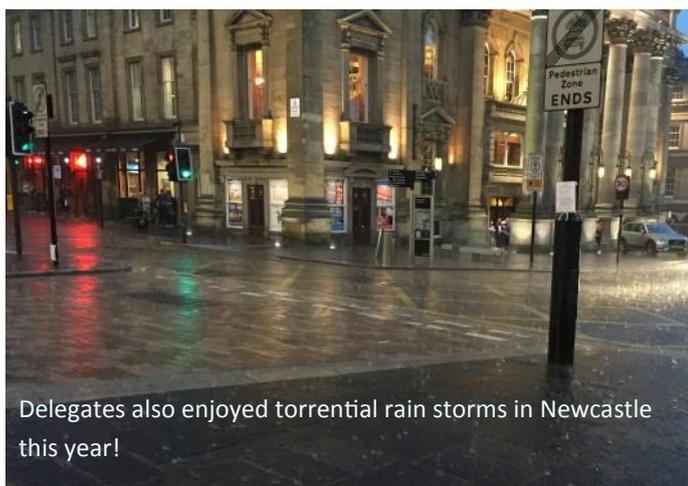
the title *"I've worked all my life" Narratives on the impact of claiming welfare entitlements in later life'*. In her presentation Dr. Moffatt highlighted that *'many older people in the UK do not claim their full welfare entitlement, yet are likely to require additional income and support'*. Using results derived from a qualitative study from North East England, Dr Moffatt was able to demonstrate that receiving welfare rights and the correct level of benefits have a positive impact especially on health and wellbeing. On the ground this translated to greater levels of 'mental wellbeing, social connectedness and peace of mind. The conclusion of the presentation noted the barriers that prevent an older person from claiming what they are entitled to, which can include lack of knowledge, stigma, pride, the complexity of the application process and digital exclusion.



The key messages that I took away from the presentations was the importance of having welfare rights services in place to not only tackle the some of the stigmas around claiming welfare entitlements but to



## 44th Annual BSG Conference Review



Delegates also enjoyed torrential rain storms in Newcastle this year!

inform older individuals of their right to claim for extra financial support and assistance. However, this importance of such services needs to be promoted given the current climate of austerity because it is likely that given the budget cuts to public spending services of this nature may be more difficult to access. Finally, from the conference I was able to take away a renewed vigour for my research project. I have come to discover that my research is innovative, aspects of my project have been done before but the focus on a third sector organisation along with my chosen methodology is a new area of research.

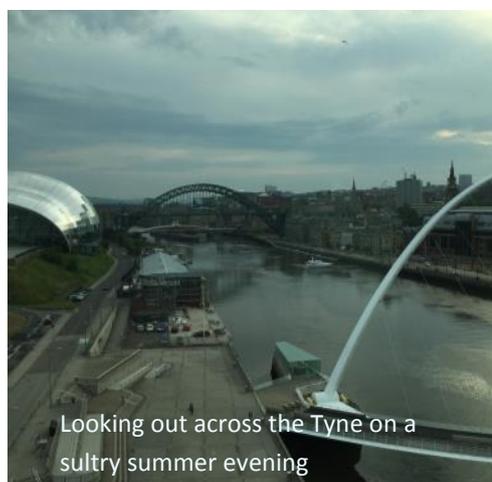
### **Conclusion**

From not knowing what to expect out of such a large and well established conference, our first BSG conference experience was a successful one!

The main two day event was well considered and organised, with carefully planned parallel sessions running to meet the research and interest needs of each delegate. The social events were particularly enjoyable, especially considering the venues in which they were hosted. This included the gala dinner, which was held at Newcastle's civic centre and a wine reception and book launch at Newcastle's impressive Baltic centre, with views of Newcastle city and Gateshead quayside.

The staff at Northumbria University's halls of residence was also welcoming and very friendly, and were more than happy to help with any queries throughout our stay. Also, aside from engaging with other academics and policy makers from a range of universities and organisations, the conference also provided the opportunity to get to know members of our own department at Swansea University better. The conference provided the setting, both socially and academically, where we could talk about our research projects and interests to fellow colleagues, and in turn ask questions about their own backgrounds and research. With both of us being first year PhD students, upon reflection it is this aspect of the conference experience which we find to be the most valuable.

We would like to thank the Centre for Innovative Ageing at Swansea University for the funding to attend, and the organising committee at Newcastle and Northumbria University for planning the whole experience. We look forward to next year's 45<sup>th</sup> BSG annual conference at Stirling University. It will be interesting to see how far research has progressed throughout the coming year, and how new challenges and key issues are being addressed in a context where the population of older people are expanding both locally and globally.



Looking out across the Tyne on a sultry summer evening



## Who's Who—Paul Nash, Centre for Innovative Ageing, Swansea University

### Dr Paul Nash

Postgraduate Programme Director, Gerontology & Ageing Studies  
Centre for Innovative Ageing, Swansea University

<http://www.swansea.ac.uk/staff/human-and-health-sciences/allstaff/p.nash/>

#### Describe yourself in three words.

Ambitious, Innovative, Proud-Gerontologist (does hyphenated count?!)

#### How did you get here today (i.e. career/research)?

As with most people working in Gerontology, there wasn't necessarily a straight forward pathway for me. I started teaching undergraduate psychological research methods whilst doing my PhD and moved to become a statistician for the Office for National Statistics before applying for a research position at Swansea in 2008. Since then I have been guided and supported through research projects to develop myself as an academic, finally moving to my current role in 2012. The dynamic nature of the Centre for Innovative Ageing has enabled me to develop in a multidisciplinary environment at the cutting edge of ageing research and carve my own niche in both teaching and research.

#### What's the best piece of advice you've received?

*When introducing yourself, make sure you have a rehearsed 30 second 'elevator pitch' to highlight your skills and interests.* – Prof Norah Keating

This advice was given in an elevator in San Diego when I was a bumbling mess when asked what I did!

#### Who is or has been the most influential person in your career?

Prof Vanessa Burholt. Although this may appear shameless 'sucking-up' as she is still my boss, it is true. Ness has been, and continues to be, a mentor and friend, helping support me carve the path I want to take and sharing her experiences to help me from making some of the larger mistakes



#### What's the best book you've ever read?

A book that I find myself going back to again and again is "To Kill A Mockingbird" by Harper Lee. My dog eared copy is much loved and is pretty much a permanent fixture on my bedside table. More recently, however, Mark Haddon and Jasper Fforde have found their way to my bookshelf.

#### Best or most influential paper you have read, you'd recommend to others to read?

For me, a seminal paper was in the development of the Implicit Association Test which has really shaped what we understand about implicit social cognition and the measurement of implicit prejudice:

Greenwald, A. G., McGhee, D. E., & Schwartz, J. K. L. (1998). Measuring individual differences in implicit cognition: The Implicit Association Test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **74**, 1464-1480



There are scoring revisions but this paper still remains at the cornerstone of understanding even after 17 years.

### **What do you do when you are not doing ageing research?**

There is a world outside the office?!

I embrace the ethos (where possible) of an active social life to balance an active work life. I like to go rock climbing, ballroom dancing and swimming as well as being an athletics official, being lucky enough to officiate at World Championships, Commonwealth, Olympic and Paralympic Games. I am also known to have a bit of a flair in the kitchen too!

### **Best research project you have been involved with and why?**

I was lucky enough to be part of the CFAS Wales team when it started in 2010. This is a ground breaking study collecting longitudinal data on older adults across Wales, assessing cognitive functioning and measuring social networks amongst a battery of other fine tuned tests. This study exemplifies why I

moved from psychology to applied study in gerontology. There is real scope to make huge change, to impact the lives of older adults and improve the quality of life experienced by generations to come. There are policy implications and real practical changes that will result from this study. Really it has been amazing to be even a small part of it.

### **What's the future for ageing research?**

In my humble opinion, the future of ageing research lies in the dynamic and heterogeneous nature of older adults. As each generation ages, they have different expectations, needs and desires. Our greatest challenges are to engage with older adults and understand these changes and how best to support them in fulfilled lives. I don't think that there has been a better time to be in the field of gerontology because as a society (government and social) we are waking up to the fact we need to address the issues being faced by older adults. The time for impactful change is really dawning.

**The British Society of Gerontology's (BSG) Emerging Researchers in Ageing (ERA)** provides students, early career academics, researchers, and practitioners with opportunities for learning, networking, and mentor support. We also welcome academics, researchers, and practitioners who are making a mid-career change to ageing studies. ERA co-chairs develop programmes and events informed by the suggestions and stated needs of our members.

For more details visit

<http://www.britishgerontology.org/era.html>



# JOIN THE BSG TODAY!

Ageing research is increasingly high profile, nationally and internationally.



Consequently, those in universities and in organisations working with older people, will benefit from joining the British Society of Gerontology. The Society gives members access to a multidisciplinary forum and network of like minded people dedicated to applying the knowledge gained through research and practice to improving quality of life in old age.

Membership of the BSG brings you into a community of academics and practitioners interested in a wide range of issues related to ageing. In particular, membership:

- Facilitates access to dynamic and up-to date debates about ageing and ageing studies - our members are involved in cutting edge research, policy and practice and are very willing to share their perspectives with you
- Members have access to a number of social media platforms – blog **Ageing Issues**; twitter account; YouTube channel **Ageing Bites**; LinkedIn Group; and soon a photo-sharing page on Flickr
- Entitles you to significantly reduced rates at the Annual Conferences of the British Society of Gerontology
- Gives students access to our vibrant group of Emerging Researchers in Ageing (ERA), which includes students, postdoctoral researchers and people new to careers in ageing, meet regularly to discuss research, policy and practice and support one another in their careers
- Access to our mailing list (BSGmail) to enable you to keep up-to-date about conferences, seminars, teaching courses, and research about ageing and ageing studies
- If you are a student, postdoctoral or unwaged member, you are entitled to apply for a conference bursary, for example, to cover costs to attend our annual conference
- Entitles you to substantially reduced subscription rates to the following peer reviewed journals: *Ageing and Society* and *Journal of Population Ageing*
- Provides you with access to all areas of the BSG website, including the Membership Directory and Members Only pages

## How can I join?

Visit the website and fill in the registration form online and we will do the rest!

[www.britishgerontology.org/join](http://www.britishgerontology.org/join)

