

Third Age and Leisure Research: Principles and Practice

Edited by Barbara Humberstone

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Third Age and Leisure Research: Principles and Practice — Introduction

Barbara Humberstone

Buckinghamshire New University

It [the increasing proportion of older people] is such a fundamental change in the nature and structure of society that it should lead to a fundamental shift in the way that society is understood and the way that society deals with itself. (Walker, n.d.)

Introduction

The 21st century has become known as the ‘Silver Century’, the century of the older person (Magnus, 2008). In the vanguard of this significant restructuring of the generations, never before seen globally, with increasingly fewer young people and a greater proportion of older people, is Japanese society. The UK and other advanced and developed countries are not demographically far behind. The ‘Baby Boomer’ generation born around the end of World War II (1945–1962) is retired or about to retire¹ and is set to make up a significant proportion of Western civilisation. Yet society is still very much attuned to the younger generations, whose members may regard the older generation as without cultural, social, economic or political significance. This ‘structural lag’, in which ideas about older people and society are “locked 20 or 30 years in the past”, Walker (n.d.) argues, is unprecedented and provides for current age discrimination: “Ageism”, he says, “is deeply embedded in society yet the structures of society are changing in a radical way”. Popular discourse on ageing is largely out of kilter with the experiences of many of the over-60s population who have wealth, whilst there is a significantly contrasting negative position for those without such economic means².

One aspect of ageism is the assumption that all ‘older people’ are the same, that they are a homogenous group in society. However, like all age cohorts, older individuals’ experiences and lifestyles can be very different, being shaped by a variety of socio-economic factors and lifestyle choices (Gilleard and Higgs, 2000). As a consequence of socio-cultural factors and a shift from modernity to late modernity, the relatively wealthy of the older generations have become targets for a variety of services and products (Blaikie, 1999), much of these from the health promotion and leisure lifestyle industries. Wheaton (2009: p. 137), referring to adverts exemplified in *Saga*, a UK magazine targeted at the older consumer, argues that “neo-liberal ideologies of health are being promoted in which good consumer-citizens take personal responsibility for their health and well being, both by taking exercise and being active, and through purchasing products from the health industry”.

As a consequence of greater lifestyle choices, the consumer society and the increasing longevity of the older population, old age may be conceptualised as constituting first a ‘third age’ or early old age, taken as the period of life beginning around ‘retirement’ when many older people are relatively healthy and active, having time for leisure and the pursuit of personal satisfaction which could last for a further 30 years. Then follows a ‘fourth age’ or deep old age, characterised by dependency, illness and impending death: this usually represents the last two or three of years of life (Laslett, 1996; Gilleard and Higgs, 2002). Currently the Baby Boomer generation tends to make up the third age. This generation’s lives and consciousness shaped, and were shaped during, the ‘sixties’ youth culture. These experiences are unprecedented and largely ignored by social scientists (Marwick, 1998).

Health of and physical activity in older people ranges considerably from third age to fourth age. There is a significant difference between a 65 year old Masters athlete (see Dionigi, this volume) and a frail 98 year old experiencing ‘deep old age’. Harper (1997: p.

192), who is concerned with postmodern interpretations of 'subjectivities' of older persons, argues that:

[c]hronological, biologically based age deterioration has been transformed by contemporary social structures into social and cultural signs, which are manifested in complex social relations. These relations, however, are located in particular temporal and spatial contexts, and are constantly contested and re-created in struggles over identity politics.

She points not only to the power of discourses in societies' and individuals' knowledge and understanding of being and becoming old, but also to the significance of contextual locations such as time and place. Whilst the contributions in this volume do not focus overtly on spatial or locational contexts, with the exception of Sparkes' and Boyes' chapters, they do explore a variety of social and cultural situations.

Much research around ageing and health has emerged from medical perspectives, which have largely pathologised what it is to age. Thus the socio-cultural dimensions of ageing have frequently been ignored, as have the perspectives of the older person. At the same time, research into ageing, leisure and sport has for the most part been positivistic with little concern to understand and make sense of the experiences of older people themselves or their diverse positions in society. The significance of active leisure to older people and society is now becoming more greatly appreciated, yet associated research and analysis has tended to remain functionalist in approach. Research evidencing and advocating active leisure as a way towards a healthy old age is a positive strategy for individuals and society, but without locating this research in the broader socio-cultural contexts of ageing and taking seriously the voices of a diversity of older people, we can not fully understand what it really means to age to different people, nor can we hope to create good practices for healthy ageing (see Walker and Hagan Hennessy, 2004; Walker, 2006).

It was for these reasons that we decided to put together this collection of papers that examines various aspects of ageing and leisure from a broad spectrum of perspectives.

Background to this volume

The antecedents of this book are broad. In June 2009, the conference "Third Age and Leisure Research, Principles and Practice" ('Purple conference'³) was held at Buckinghamshire New University in partnership with the Leisure Studies Association. There were a number of reasons for holding this conference that focused specifically on leisure/sport research and practice and the 'third age'. We wanted to draw attention to this significant social phenomenon, unique to our 'Silver Century', for matters associated with ageing appear some what neglected in sport and leisure discourse, particularly in the UK. To support this initiative, we invited Professor Carol Cutler-Riddick from Gallaudet University, USA to Buckinghamshire New University's School of Sport and Leisure to contribute to this development and present one of the keynote papers at the conference.

We also wanted to draw attention to the diversity of methodological approaches in research that can bring greater insight into and knowledge of the third age and its constituents and which may 'trouble' popular notions of what it is to age. As such the chapters herein emerge from diverse epistemological positions ranging through post-positivist meta-analysis to action research to narrative constructionist inquiry (Sparkes and Smith 2008).

Many of the chapters in this book were first presented at the conference. In addition, this collection includes a number of invited contributions which we felt would add further depth and diversity to understandings of leisure, sport and ageing. The interdisciplinary nature of research into leisure and ageing is evident in the backgrounds of the authors of the following chapters. These include leisure and gerontology, cultural studies, disability sport, sport sociology, adventure studies, social policy and community work.

Later life, leisure and sport research

The first chapter in this collection provides a meta-analysis of gerontology-leisure research by **Carol Cutler Riddick**. The chapter identifies shortcomings in this body of knowledge and suggests ways to create and monitor evidence-based interventions that may enhance the well-being of elders. Cutler-Riddick examines the growing body of largely post-positivistic research that evidences leisure activities as being positively related to the various components of older people's health and successful aging. She critiques much of this work for the insufficient attention which it gives to diverse groups, for inadequate emphases on conducting applied research, and for its theoretical and methodology-related shortcomings. She argues that there can be numerous opportunities to conduct research directed at providing insights surrounding how recreation activities, as well as participation in formal programmes, can contribute to the health and well-being of older persons and suggestions how best to set up and monitor evidence-based recreation programmes for older people.

Writing from an alternative, or complementary, epistemological position **Andrew Sparkes** speaks to the ageing process through an auto-ethnographic exploration of selected moments of his lived experience. Through the telling of stories of his visits to a 'corporate fitness centre', he draws attention to the ways in which age and embodiment are inexorably interlinked and accomplished within specific social, cultural and personal contexts. All the senses are evoked in a powerful narrative of what it is to be and become a male body no longer accomplishing and performing as a fit 20-something within a place that, for the most part, only venerates youth and the body beautiful. Sparkes journeys through various times and spaces that exist within the fitness centre, exploring as he travels his evoked physical, emotional and sensuous perceptions. His reflexive account points to the significance of telling and making visible the changing relationships over time of self, body and social context and the implications this has for meaning making, practices and expectations for later lives. "Telling stories about ourselves to others is one way in which our ageing identities may be accomplished or performed" (Sparkes, this volume). In the following chapter the identities of older theatre-goers unfold through the sharing of their past experiences.

Jonathan Lewis's chapter also takes the reader into an interpretive research paradigm through an exploration of the use of 'reminiscence workshops' for exploring and understanding older people's experiences, arguing that this form of qualitative research can be beneficial for both the researcher and participants. Lewis facilitated reminiscence workshops to understand the leisure lives of older, long-term, regular theatre-goers and shows how these workshops enable a dynamic cross-fertilisation of memories to emerge in the friendly, creative environment which was fostered. Lewis highlights the ways in which, through engagement in the workshops, dormant memories of theatre-going are stimulated by the stories of other participants, whilst a deep understanding of participants' lifestyle choices emerged from co-questioning amongst researcher and participants. Participants in this study were keen to share their memories, and further investigated their own stories by talking to relatives or friends and reading diaries or programmes.

Lewis provides for the celebration of an aspect of a sector of older people's lifestyles and memories. However, much understanding of ageing is developed from a variety of constructed models of old age, which have emerged not only from personal experiences but also from public notions of what it is to be old. Such public notions include ideas about frailty, dependency, and bodily and mental capabilities. This 'knowledge' is frequently disseminated through various professions, and eventually becomes reflected in policies providing for those who reach 'later life'. Rarely is the source of such knowledge questioned (Harper, 1997). However, **Ian Brittain's** chapter draws attention to the ways in which the body as an ageing object tends to be viewed largely from medical perspectives, popularly seen as losing its abilities and faculties and signified as 'disabled'. Brittain looks at notions of ageing from the perspective of disability studies and discusses the life paths of people with disabilities, comparing these with those of the non-disabled population in terms of the way they are viewed by society. Three models of disability (medical, social and bio-social) are drawn upon to examine various understandings of the ageing process. Brittain argues that people with disabilities and non-disabled individuals begin their lives on pathways that are far apart, particularly in

terms of societal perceptions and expectations of what they might achieve in their lives. As the non-disabled age they become subject to an increase in negative perceptions of their capabilities by many from younger generations. This is largely based on a perceived lessening of functional ability among a few older people. At this point, he suggests, both the disabled and the non-disabled older person are subject to negative perceptions about their abilities. As the non-disabled person begins to suffer from age-related illnesses and impairments, the line between disability- and age-related impairment becomes blurred. So that in later life, Brittain argues, individuals in both groups are subject to similar negative perceptions and experience.

Rylee Dionigi presents research in the following chapter that provides challenges to medical and popular discourses around the ageing body and mind, whilst also suggesting that older athletes are not ignoring the onset of later life but rather are managing their identities through the pursuit of their sport. Findings from her research into the multiple meanings that a group of older Australian adults aged 55 to 94 years attached to their experiences as Veteran or Senior athletic competitors are discussed. This research takes an interpretative approach, drawing upon traditional and post-modern concepts of identity construction and importantly draws attention to the nexus between social-cultural contexts and older athletes' meanings. The chapter considers how the actions and perceptions of these older athletes intersect with broader social discourses of sport, leisure and ageing.

In the next chapter, a mixed method research approach, creating quantitative and qualitative data, is used by **Carol Cutler Riddick** and **Barbara Humberstone** to explore older women's experience of yoga. The chapter represents a coming-together of the differing epistemological positions held by the two authors, together with their diverse professional and physical experiences. The study examines how practising yoga later in life may impact on older women's well-being and health. Interviews between the researchers and six participants were conducted in order to explore the experiences of women, providing qualitative data. Questionnaires completed by a group of the yoga participants provide data concerned with competence, self-determination, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations associated with older women practising yoga.

Later life, leisure, social policy and practice

The participants of Dionigi's and Cutler-Riddick and Humberstone's research largely maintain their athletic activities and well-being through their own initiatives and personal training in their sport or through their involvement in yoga. By contrast, in **Mike Boyes'** pilot study of New Zealand elders, offered in the next chapter, the participants engage in outdoor adventure programmes made available specifically for them. Whilst the importance of the natural environment to well-being has been well documented⁴ (Humberstone and Stan, 2009; O'Neill *et al.*, 2008), its significance to older people has generally only been noted in relation to gardens or local parks, rather than more adventurous or 'lifestyle' activities. Here, Boyes highlights a case study approach to exploring seniors' engagement in adventure activities in natural outdoor environments, examining the perspectives of older people participating in and committing to particular aspects of adventure in nature, in particular the elements of risk and uncertainty.

The final two chapters in this collection consider, from social policy perspectives, the lives of elders of minority groups. In the penultimate chapter, **Margaret Greenfield** with **Andrew Ryder** discuss the leisure engagement of Gypsy-Travellers. They draw upon a recent research project into Gypsies and Travellers Accommodation and other Needs Assessment (GTANA) to explore structural barriers to inclusion in mainstream leisure activities for elders of these communities. The chapter highlights a preference for social and leisure activities that enables the elders to participate in community networks such as those available through horse fairs — highlighting, however, how support of family members is necessary for their participation. This chapter raises important issues around imposed lifestyles and leisure exclusion for minority elder Gypsy and Travellers and makes suggestions for policy actions by leisure and sport providers and local communities.

The final chapter reflects on a pilot action research project 'Movers and Shakers',

initiated for Caribbean elders in the local community by **Olga McBarnett** and a team of volunteer retirees including **Michael Bowker**, **Graham Storer**, and yoga teacher **Amanda Green**. The project, through its regular events, aims to encourage older people in the local community into a programme of physical, mental and creative activity to reverse the inactivity which may have developed as they became older. The pilot project discussed here focuses on the provision of the programme with Caribbean elders. The chapter highlights how government policy, in this case in relation to mental health and well-being in older people, can successfully be realised in practice with the vision and commitment of organisers and volunteers⁵. Some of the views of the participants involved in the regular meetings — in which participants may choose to take part in activities such as a form of adapted yoga, a Caribbean style lunch, and engage in mental activities and learn about photography — are recorded and examined. This chapter evidences the potential and possibilities of making available and accessible holistic programmes in which there is collaboration amongst all those involved. It provides an understanding of how best to enhance the well-being and health of elders from diverse communities in Buckinghamshire.

Concluding remarks

The interdisciplinary nature of leisure and ageing studies is emphasised through the differing methodological underpinnings of each of the chapters presented herein. The diversity of research approaches represented enriches our understandings of later life and highlights many of the ways in which leisure and sport are significant for healthy ageing.

Whilst large-scale statistical surveys on global and national age profiles, such as those commissioned by government bodies, are vital, the importance of small-scale interpretative studies, narrative inquiries, mixed method and action research projects such as those collected here should not be underestimated. They can inform the practical frameworks through which policies on healthy ageing can be realised, and so enrich the experiences of those in later life. Moreover, we would argue for a greater acceptance and valuing by policy makers of both the methodological processes and the ‘products’ of forms of interpretative research which are exemplified in the contributions to this book.

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Notes

- 1 Formal retirement age at which older people are compelled to retire varies across developed nations. In the USA, New Zealand and Australia academics are not required to retire when reaching a specified age. The current fixed general retirement age of 65 years in UK is a matter for policy debate with challenges to it being made in the European Court of Human Rights (Syedain, 2010).
- 2 A report commissioned in UK by the Labour government identifies an increasing gap between the rich and poor over the last 40 years which has only slightly been ameliorated during the last 10 years. In respect of later life the report draws attention to major difference in wealth: “[I]nequalities affecting different groups in the labour market are magnified in the resources people reaching retirement have through pensions, housing and savings. The end result is huge differences in the resources, including pension rights, with which people enter retirement” (National Equity Panel, January 2010: p. 34).
- 3 The conference was informally known as ‘the Purple conference’ in reference to the popular poem by Jenny Joseph: ‘Warning — When I Am an Old Woman I Shall Wear

- Purple’.
- 4 New Visions Conference, 25 June, 2009 Royal Horticultural Hall, UK, ‘New Horizons, a shared vision for mental health’. The message of this conference referred to the need for “better mental health and well-being for all” and “the health benefits of connecting people to nature: creating meaning and purpose”, outlined in a presentation by William Bird, Strategic Health Advisor for Natural England.
 - 5 New Horizons is a government framework for developing wellbeing through flourishing people and connected communities (Department of Health, 2009).

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Practising Yoga Later in Life: A Mixed-Methods Study of English Women

Carol Cutler Riddick* and Barbara Humberstone**

* Professor and Graduate Coordinator, Gallaudet University, USA; Visiting Professor,
Buckinghamshire New University, UK

** Buckinghamshire New University, UK

How this study came about

The study developed through the interest and expertise of Carol Cutler Riddick in gerontology and leisure, and through Barbara Humberstone's research background focusing on women and physical activity. The inquiry evolved when Carol came to Buckinghamshire New University as a visiting professor in gerontology and leisure in January 2009; and, we decided to explore together the topic of older women's experiences taking part in yoga.

Barbara's research is largely interpretative in orientation, with a tendency to work within ethnographic paradigms. Barbara has been participating in yoga regularly for the past 8 years — both formally, once or twice a week in classes and informally through usually daily practice of about 20–30 minutes. Yoga might be viewed as very different from most of Barbara's other physical activities which are outdoor 'adventure' style (such as windsurfing). But for several years, Barbara has been interested in exploring yoga in its broadest sense.

Carol's background includes conducting both quantitative and mixed-methods research studies. In particular, one of her recurring research themes has been examining how recreation activity affects the mental health of older women, especially members of minority groups. Most of Carol's own hobbies involve out-of-doors settings (sailing, kayaking, hiking, and outdoor photography). In an effort to become introduced to yoga, Carol began formal instruction in yoga in early 2009. She participated in organized classes about twice per week and informally practised yoga daily for about 10 minutes. Carol's initial plan was to engage in formal yoga instruction for a month or two. She entered the classes with an understanding and appreciation that yoga could change some people's lives. Nevertheless, Carol was a less than robust participant (recovering from a partial big-toe amputation) and was sceptical that her personality characteristics would enable her to experience yoga as either enjoyable or beneficial. To Carol's surprise and delight, within the first few weeks of instruction, she found yoga relaxing and restorative (she noticed improvements in her balance, coordination, and flexibility). Consequently, Carol maintained formal yoga instruction for the duration of her 7-month stay in England (and is on a quest to find a new yoga instructor now that she has returned to the States).

Yoga and literature review

Yoga is a mind-body exercise popular around the world. We do not intend to present a historical-philosophical background to yoga. Suffice it to suggest that yoga has antecedents in ancient, Eastern religion and is still practised in many forms. Yoga has been taken up in the West largely as a 'gentle' physical activity. An estimated 8% of United Kingdom adults participate in yoga (Mintel Reports, 2009).

A number of commonly practised yoga styles exist (Chen *et al.*, 2007). Briefly described, *Hatha/Ivenga* yoga emphasizes physical postures and breathing. In particular, this kind of yoga focuses on increasing strength, flexibility and balance by adopting stationary positions that contract and relax different muscle groups, and pays attention to diaphragm breathing and deep relaxation. *Raja* yoga, also known as 'Classical Yoga', was introduced in the 15th century. This style is concerned principally with cultivation of the mind using meditation. Hence, with Raja yoga, the focus is primarily on mental and

spiritual mastery. *Dru* yoga emphasizes dance-like graceful flowing movements, direct breathing, and visualization focusing on body, mind and spirit; thus, the aim is to improve flexibility and strength, create core stability, build a heightened feeling of positivity, and deeply relax and rejuvenate the participant. There is also 'power' yoga, a strand of aerobic yoga that is based on the Ashtanga style. Unlike Ashtanga, however, power yoga does not follow a series of poses. Power yoga classes can vary widely, though all share common emphases on increasing strength and flexibility. Finally, there is 'Bikram' or hot yoga, practised in a room heated to 105°F/40.5°C. This style uses a series of 26 postures and two breathing exercises to promote general wellness.

A review of literature reveals that few studies have heretofore examined non-institutionalized, older person's experiences with yoga. Only seven tangentially-related studies (most adopting quantitative methodology) were identified. A brief synopsis of these studies now follows.

Morris (2008) randomly assigned American women to either an 8-week yoga class, balance-training class, or awareness class. Yoga class participants, relative to the other two groups, experienced improvements in mobility and steadiness. Bonura (2007) also randomly assigned American seniors (both males and females) to a chair yoga program, a chair exercise program, or a 'waitlist'. The first two groups underwent a 6-week intervention and those taking part in yoga, relative to the other two groups, experienced improved scores for general self-efficacy as well as on various psychological dimensions. Semi-structured interviews, surrounding perceived benefits of yoga, uncovered three groupings of benefits or those related to physical benefits, mental benefits, and emotional/spiritual benefits. In Taiwan, Chen *et al.* (2007) pilot-tested a 'Silver Yoga' programme for older adults. After one month, a subset of 14 women participants responded to a series of open-ended questions. Among the findings were that the individuals felt more energetic, had more strength, slept better, and experienced greater flexibility and improved physical health.

Oken *et al.* (2006) monitored 118 healthy elders (females and males) who had volunteered to be randomly assigned to either a 6-month yoga or exercise class, or a 'wait list'. Individuals in the yoga class, relative to the other two groups, experienced significant improvements in physical measures as well as quality of life measures. Leininger (2006) investigated how yoga exercise affected healthy, community-dwelling, older, American women. Using a single-blind, randomized controlled pretest-posttest design, women were assigned either to a 10-week Hatha yoga exercise program or an education group. The yoga group members, compared to the education group, experienced a significant improvement in mobility, but did not experience significant changes in balance, balance confidence, or perceived vitality. In India, Nagala (2006) conducted interviews with 150 women who attended a yoga camp. Close to 85% of the women expected the yoga camp to help them with their physical and mental fitness as well as better prepare them to deal with tensions and worries. It was concluded these expectations were met since 78% believed they had benefited physically and mentally from attending the yoga camp. Manjunath and Telles (2005) examined how yoga training affected the sleep of older males and females. Individuals felt yoga training resulted in decreased time needed to fall asleep as well as increased total number of hours slept.

More recently, McBarnett *et al.* (this volume) have written about the 'Movers and Shakers' project that has been set up as an holistic community approach to promoting well-being for elders living in their own homes in England. The significance of the 'chair-based' yoga classes to the Caribbean elders is highlighted.

Study purposes and significance

The purposes of this study were two-fold. One aim of the investigation was to uncover some of the meanings/perspectives/lived experiences women derived from or associated with taking up and practising yoga later in life. A second objective was to measure, retrospectively and quantifiably, older women's beliefs regarding yoga-induced feeling states.

This study is significant for a couple of reasons. First, there is a paucity of research on *active* older women. For example, a five-year review of eight leisure-oriented journals

reported that less than one-third of the published articles examined some aspect of adult women's lives (Henderson and Hickerson (2007). In particular (as evident from the review of literature reported above), the voices of women, who practise yoga later in their life cycle, have rarely been recorded. Second, few mixed-method studies exist that chronicle either why women get involved in yoga and/or how yoga participation affects their lives. A mixed-methods design allows for complementary results to be generated that will provide independent and additive information to our knowledge base (Morgan, 1998).

Adopted theoretical perspectives

Researcher's perspectives have implications for the choice of methods or techniques, as well as for the ways in which the research is assessed as legitimate and the findings taken to be acceptable knowledge (Humberstone, 2004). To reiterate, this study adopted a mixed-methods approach. Admittedly, there is debate surrounding the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, particularly in respect of differing epistemological and ontological worldviews (Bryman, 2006). We, therefore, acknowledge each co-author's differing ontological and epistemological backgrounds and perspectives on the nature of knowledge and its legitimization (see Humberstone, 1997)¹.

Adoption of a standpoint perspective requires discarding reliance on conventional epistemological assumptions surrounding the nature of knowledge and the relation of the researcher to knowledge. As Smith (1992: p. 91) notes, the rejection of "...standard good social scientific methodologies" is imperative because these methodologies "... produce people as objects", for, if sociologists "... work with standard methods of thinking and inquiry, they import the relations of ruling into the texts they produce".

Critical and/or feminist perspectives (by contrast) acknowledge that researchers bring their own values, presumptions, and histories to their research. A feminist perspective rejects the notion of neutral social science research. Instead, the perspective recognizes that knowledge and its production are both complex and contestable (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Humberstone, 1997, 2004; Richardson, 1991).

Additionally, a postpositivist perspective was employed to provide a framework by which to begin to examine the feeling states older women attribute to engaging in yoga. In particular, the self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) was used to guide this aspect of the study. Self-determination theory essentially posits the notion that one's perceptions regarding activity competence and autonomy (or knowing what is wanted from the activity), coupled with intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, will temper emotive feelings associated with activity engagement.

Furthermore, it was anticipated that interpersonal interactions with one's yoga instructor would also have some bearing on the affective states derived from yoga (Bonura, 2007). The network of anticipated ex post facto relationships (Riddick and Russell, 2008) that were deduced a priori are identified in **Figure 1**.

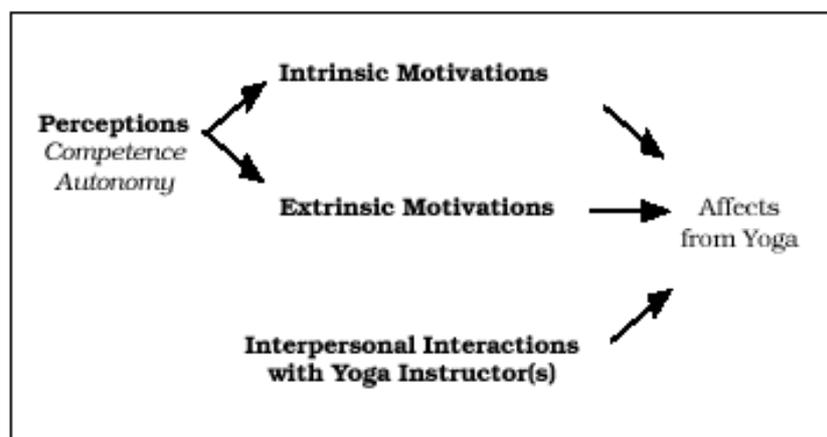


Figure 1 A model, based on self-determination theory, for explaining affects older women will derive from yoga

Research questions

Using constructivist as well as postpositivist frames of reference, the nine research questions presented below were examined. Questions 1 through 4 are grounded in the feminist perspective; research questions 5 through 9 emanated from the application of self-determination theory to structured inquiry:

1. Why did women begin yoga?
2. Why do older women practise yoga?
3. How has yoga impacted on their lives?
4. What benefits do older women attribute to yoga?
5. How competent and self-determined do the older women feel about yoga?
6. Are females intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to continue yoga later in life?
7. How do the older women judge the teaching style of their yoga instructor?
8. Do intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as well as interpersonal interactions with instructor influence emotive feelings about yoga?
9. Do feelings of competency and self-determination influence intrinsic motivations? Extrinsic motivations?

Design methodologies and instrumentation

Qualitative methods, in the form of open-ended interviews, were embraced in order to gain insights into the meanings yoga experiences have for the older women. Participants were recruited for the study with the assistance of Carol and Barbara's yoga instructors. Both taught yoga classes, in a variety of settings, over a week's period of time. Both made a brief announcement of the study in their respective classes. Female class members aged 50 years or older, who had been taking formal yoga classes for one or more years, and who were interested in participating as a key informant in the study, were asked to let the instructor know of their willingness to participate in the study.

In total, 21 women volunteered and completed a questionnaire (see paragraph below) for the study. An important caveat is that the findings reported herein are a 'work-in-progress'. Because of time constraints, only 6 of the 21 women were interviewed, during spring and summer 2009, for the qualitative part of the study reported here. Three of these women were linked to Carol's yoga instructor; and, the other three were taught by Barbara's yoga instructor.

The two authors collaborated and unilaterally agreed on the face validity of questions posed during the interview. The six women engaged in 40–50 minute interviews, and all agreed to audio recording of their interview. The interviews were free flowing; nevertheless, we asked similar questions. The transcribed conversations provided the opportunity to uncover the lived experiences of older women in terms of the stories each had to tell around yoga.

Additionally, quantitative methods, in the form of a questionnaire, were adopted to enable comparison of our findings with previous research conducted from positivistic perspectives. The key informants were asked a series of demographic and yoga background questions, and were queried using instruments that had been designed to measure affect (namely positive affect and tranquility affect) associated with participating in yoga, motivations for practising yoga, interactions with yoga instructor and, finally, self-perceived competency and autonomy experienced with yoga involvement (see **Table 1**).

Table 1 Instrumentation used to conduct the quantitative part of the study

Concept	How Measured	No. of Items used	Previous Documented Validity	Previous Documented Reliability	Cronbach Alpha Previous/ This Study
Positive Affect Experienced from Yoga	Modified Physical Activity Affect Scale (Lox <i>et al.</i> , 2000)	3	Factor Analyses	Not reported	.94/.66
Tranquility Affect Experienced from Yoga	Modified Physical Activity Affect Scale (Lox <i>et al.</i> , 2000)	3	Factor Analyses	Not reported	.84/.87
Intrinsic Motivations for Yoga Participation	Modified Sport Motivation Scale (Pelletier <i>et al.</i> , 1995)	3	Construct & Predictive	Test-retest = .70	.69–.85/.63
Extrinsic Motivation for Yoga Participation	Modified Sport Motivation Scale (Pelletier <i>et al.</i> , 1995)	1	Construct & Predictive	Test-retest = .70	.69–.85/
Interactions with Yoga Instructor	Adapted from Academic Motivation Scale (Pelletier <i>et al.</i> , 1995)	2	Face	Not reported	.80/.70
Feelings of Competency & Self-Determination Experienced with Yoga	Modified Intrinsic Motivation in Leisure Scale (Weissinger & Bandalos, 1995)	2	Factor analyses & construct	Test-retest = .59–.61	.69–.80/.47

Qualitative inquiry findings

To reiterate, in-depth interviews were conducted with 6 women. Their ages ranged from 56 to 72 years; the numbers of years of involvement in yoga ranged from 1 to 30 years (see **Table 2**). Pseudonyms were used to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

Table 2 Characteristics of 6 women who participated in in-depth interviews

Participant	Age	Years Involved with Yoga
‘Rhona’	72	1
‘Paula’	60	6–7
‘Anna’	56	9
‘Jenny’	59	20
‘Janet’	64	26 (intermittent)
‘Bella’	71	30

Research question 1. Initially, participants were asked to recall reasons why they started yoga. A couple of women reported beginning yoga because a friend or neighbor had recommended it. As illustrated below, many of the women had a health-related reason for taking up yoga:

- Jenny started yoga because of an injury experienced with childbirth.
- Anna began yoga because of the extreme stress she had experienced as a primary school head teacher.
- Rhona’s reason for taking up yoga was the onset of Parkinson’s disease and her determination to slow down the disease’s progression.

Research question 2. When asked about why they practised yoga, two individuals shared the following thoughts:

- Paula said yoga “Helps to organize my life more”.
- And for Bella, after being quiet for a few seconds stated, “... it has calmed me down ... I love the peace it can bring” and then, after a moment of hesitation, proudly added, “My body is quite young for my age!”

Research question 3. Another line of inquiry was to ask the interviewed women how yoga had impacted on their personal and work/home lives. There was a variety of responses to this question. For example:

- Jenny said that, “I’ve become a better person ... more thoughtful, can’t imagine life without it”.
- Anna indicated that yoga “Helps with the stress of teaching ... now able to manage class and school with more energy”.
- Rhona, who is in her 70s and still works part-time says, yoga “... probably keeps me more agile ... going up and down stairs carrying the vacuum cleaner and things like that”.
- Bella highlighted the importance of yoga in her early life when she had to continually move because of her husband’s military reassignments, “Everywhere I’ve lived I first had to find schools for my children, a doctor, a church and a yoga class, then I was settled”.

Research question 4. The women were also asked to comment on the benefits they felt for taking part in yoga. Responses fell between two themes or physical and mental/emotional benefits.

Some physical benefits cited included:

- “You feel as though every muscle is being massaged” (Janet).
- “I feel more mobile” (Paula).
- It has “ ... meant I’ve stayed very flexible ... and improved my balance and posture” (Bella).

When asked about mental benefits reaped from yoga, the women shared the following insights:

- “My husband says I come home looking much happier”, and “I sleep better” (Anna).
- “Chills you out ... taking away other pressures” (Janet).
- “Relaxation” (Paula).

Finally, one of the six interviewed women alluded to an ‘energetic’ benefit that she derived from yoga. Specifically, Anna’s commented, “I couldn’t believe how powerful yoga is”.

Quantitative inquiry findings

As previously mentioned, 21 women participated in the quantitative aspect of the study (**Table 3**).

Table 3 Background characteristics of women involved in quantitative aspect of the study (*N* = 21)

Characteristic	Range (Median) or Frequency (%)
Age	50–81 years (60)
Education	9–20 years (15)
Employment Status	Career Homemaker = 3 (14%) Retired = 8 (38%) Employed Part-Time = 8 (38%) Employed Full Time = 1 (10%)
Perceived Importance of Physical Activity	Extremely Important = 14 (67%) Somewhat Important = 7 (33%)

The median age of this group was 60 years, with most having continued their education beyond secondary school. Surveyed participants had varied employment

status. Almost one-half (48%) of the women were employed part-time or full-time. When asked to rank the importance of physical activity in their life, the group norm was to view exercise as “Extremely Important”.

There was diversity regarding the age at which yoga was first learned (the median was 46 years of age) and number of years the women had practised yoga (median = 17 years). The number of times per week yoga was practised also varied (the median was 2 days). Relatedly, about 80% of the queried women rated themselves as having “Intermediate” yoga ability (see **Table 4**).

Table 5 presents some of the descriptive findings. The majority of queried women felt competent practising yoga. Additionally, most of the women said they knew what they wanted from yoga (a proxy measure of autonomy).

Table 4 Yoga background of women involved in quantitative aspect of the study ($N = 21$)

Characteristic	Range (Median) or Frequency (%)
Age First Learned Yoga	22–71 years (46)
# Years Practised Yoga	2–43 years (17)
# Times/Week Practise Yoga	1–7 days (2)
Self-Rating Yoga Ability	Beginner = 3 (14%) Intermediate = 17 (81%) Intermediate/Advanced = 1 (5%)

Table 5 Self perceptions, motivations, and interactions with yoga instructor ($N = 21$)

Research Question	Very/Strongly Agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Neutral N (%)
5A. Feel competent practising yoga	12 (57%)	9 (43%)	
5B. Know what want from yoga	11 (52%)	6 (29%)	4 (19%)
6A. Experience pleasure from learning yoga	8 (38%)	9 (43%)	4 (19%)
6B. Feel satisfaction from trying master yoga	4 (19%)	14 (67%)	3 (14%)
6C. Yoga helps me get in shape emotionally and physically	16 (76%)	5 (24%)	
6D. Feel pleasure practising yoga	15 (71%)	6 (29%)	
7A. Instructor provides constructive feedback to help me improve	12 (57%)	9 (43%)	
7B. Instructor provides rationale for asking me to do something	14 (67%)	7 (33%)	

Turning to three questions that gauged intrinsic motivation (Table 5):

- about 80% of the queried group said they experienced pleasure from learning yoga;
- approximately 85% felt satisfaction from trying to master yoga; and
- all (100%) felt yoga helped them get in shape emotionally and physically.

Furthermore, close to three-fourths (71%) felt the extrinsic motivation of “pleasure” from practicing yoga. Finally, a majority of the women reported that their instructors provided: (a) Constructive criticism that enabled the individual to improve in yoga; as well as, (b) a rationale for what was being asked during yoga instruction (**Table 5**).

Testing the proposed model (see Figure 1 and Research Questions 8 and 9) related to: (a) identifying if different kinds of motivations for engaging in yoga, as well as interpersonal interactions with one’s yoga instructor that impinged on emotional affects, derived from that activity; and (b) understanding if perceptions surrounding yoga competence and autonomy temper motivations.

Results, highlighted in **Table 6**, supported some of the speculated relationships. Namely:

- intrinsic and extrinsic motivations emerged as positively influencing both positive

- affect (measured by self-report emotions of being “Upbeat”, “Energetic”, and “Enthusiastic”) and tranquility (as gauged by feeling “Calm”, “Peaceful” and “Relaxed”) from yoga;
- experiencing positive interpersonal interactions with yoga instructor(s) was associated with the likelihood of experiencing greater tranquility when practising yoga;
 - the more competent the older women felt regarding their yoga competency, the more likely they were to experience pleasure (an extrinsic motivation) from practising yoga.

Table 6 Bivariate correlations examining hypothesized relationships in the sample ($N = 21$)

Findings	Statistics
Intrinsic motivations influence positive affect and tranquility derived from yoga	$r(21) = .75, p < .01$ $r(21) = .80, p < .01$
Extrinsic motivation shapes positive affect and tranquility experienced from yoga	$r(21) = .61, p < .01$ $r(21) = .84, p < .01$
Interpersonal skills of yoga teacher has an effect on tranquility experienced from yoga practice	$r(21) = .48, p < .05$
Perceived competency affects pleasure derived from practicing (extrinsic motivation) yoga	$r(21) = .43, p < .03$
Hypothesized relationships between: interpersonal skills teacher and positive affect; perceived competency and intrinsic motivations; and, between autonomy and intrinsic or extrinsic motivations	Not statistically significant

Contrastingly, no empirical support emerged to support four hypothesized relationships outlined in Figure 1. That is, no significant relationships emerged between: interpersonal skills of the teacher and positive affect, perceived competency and intrinsic motivations, or between autonomy and intrinsic or extrinsic motivations.

Based on these findings, modifications to the original model (presented in Figure 1) appear to be warranted. **Figure 2** presents a revised model supported by the empirical data from our study.

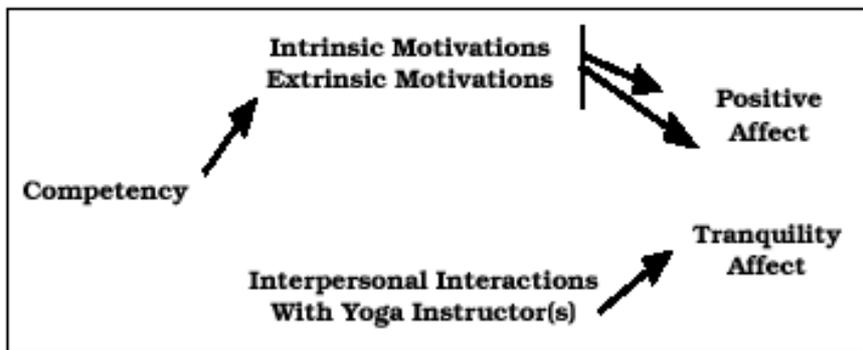


Figure 2 Revised model to explain affects derived from yoga

Concluding remarks

Although this research is ‘work in progress’, we have added to the preliminary knowledge base by undertaking a mixed-methods study of English women who practised yoga later in their life. Qualitative methods unveiled insights regarding why the interviewed women began yoga, how yoga has influenced their lives, as well as some of the physical and mental benefits experienced from yoga. Further in-depth interpretative/narrative

research that takes account of the social-cultural contexts of older yoga participants, and which also considers the ways in which 'ageing bodies' are theorized, is imperative. Such research might highlight the ways in which older people resist contemporary discourses on ageing through physical activity; and, hence, would add considerably to our knowledge and praxis around ageing (Tulle, 2008).

Quantitative inquiry found partial support for the posited model. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations appear to regulate positive emotional benefits older women derive from yoga. Additionally, the yoga instructor's style of teaching is reflected in whether or not older women experience tranquility (or a sense of calmness, peacefulness and relaxation). Furthermore, it appears that self-perceived yoga competency plays a pivotal role in how much pleasure (an extrinsic motivation) older women experience from practising yoga.

In summary, this is a small-scale study and consequently further research is warranted. For example, investigations are needed that focus on older women who are 'serious' (in terms of weekly frequency, length of practice time, and/or number of years of involvement) yoga participants. Related, longitudinal and time-span studies would uncover how transitions and period or cohort membership affects the meanings and benefits experienced or ascribed to yoga. Cross-cultural studies would also be of interest. What, for example, are the lived yoga experiences of older North American women? Of women living in less developed countries? Will future inquiries find support for the revised model presented to explain yoga-induced feeling states? Finally, an essentially unexplored topic is the spirituality that older women may affix to yoga.

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Notes

- ¹ The representation of the written text for mixed-method approach also has particular dilemmas. Quantitative and mixed-methodologists typically avoid use of the first person. Contrastingly, whilst working from within an interpretative paradigm, the researcher is not 'removed' from the text, and first person is used.

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