

Competing for Life

Older People and Competitive Sport

Rylee Ann Dionigi, BSocSci (Hons)

A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Social Sciences,
The University of Newcastle

June 2004

Certification

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

(signed) _____

RYLEE DIONIGI

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work towards this thesis was financially supported by an Australian Postgraduate Award. My appreciation is extended to those involved in providing this necessary assistance. This thesis has only been possible through the friendship, guidance, love and support of many people.

I am extremely grateful to the men and women who gave their time and energy to participate in this research. Meeting and talking with them was one of the major highlights of this project. Their insight and experiences were invaluable and uplifting. Without their eagerness, openness, kindness and cooperation this thesis would have no substance.

I would like to thank the academic and administrative staff, as well as my fellow postgraduate friends within the School of Social Sciences (Leisure and Tourism Studies) at the University of Newcastle for their committed support, friendship and encouragement during my candidature. Furthermore, my relocation to Bathurst in 2003 could have been a major disruption to my PhD research if it were not for the generosity, openness and unreserved support demonstrated by my colleagues and friends, especially Associate Professor Frank Marino, of the School of Human Movement Studies at Charles Sturt University.

I am deeply thankful to my supervisors, Dr. Kevin Lyons and Dr. Deborah Stevenson. The guidance and support you have both given me for the past three and a half years has been exceptional. Whether in person, on the phone, or via the email, you were always there for me. I can only hope that when I am supervising postgraduate students that I am as inspirational as you have been for me. Your insight, encouraging feedback and constructive criticism on my work was invaluable. If you had not expressed such sincere confidence in me from the beginning I may not have completed my candidature.

My sincere thanks is also extended to Patricia Marino and Ken Leslight for assisting with the final editing process of the thesis. Your efficiency and thoroughness were

greatly appreciated.

I owe special thanks to my family and friends for their acceptance and understanding while I isolated myself (physically and mentally) in order to complete this project. In particular, thank you to my wonderful parents, Jan and Ken, and my brother and sister, Ian and Mardi, for your encouragement, empathy, tolerance and love, not only throughout my years as a postgraduate student, but my whole life. I love you all so very much! To my husband, Claudio, words cannot do justice to the unconditional love you have always shown me, especially during the highs and lows of my journey as a PhD student. Without your emotional (and nutritional) support it would have been impossible for me to finish this thesis. I love you forever! I would also like to thank my Grandma, Julie, whose love, resilience and determination is the inspiration behind this thesis. It is to her that I dedicate this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Certification	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	viii
Synopsis	ix

CHAPTER 1 OLDER ATHLETES: AN EMERGING LEISURE PHENOMENON

Pushing the Boundaries?	1
A Rising Leisure Trend	4
Growth in Masters and Veterans Sport	11
Contradictory Discourses Embedded in Competitive Sport	16
Aims and Approach of the Thesis	23
Structure of the Thesis	26

CHAPTER 2 ‘HEALTHY AGEING’?: OPPOSING DISCOURSES OF AGEING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Introduction	30
Dominant Negative Understandings of Ageing	31
Traditional Theories of Ageing	34
Media Images	38
Gerontological Discourse	39
A ‘Positive’ Side to Ageing?	43
Cultural Context and the Third Age	44
‘Never too late’ to Benefit from Physical Activity	48
Health and Fitness Promotion to Older People	51
‘Healthy Ageing’: Is it all ‘Positive’?	55
Conclusion	58

CHAPTER 3 NEGOTIATING THE TENSIONS: CONCEPTUALISING RESISTANCE, EMPOWERMENT AND IDENTITY MANAGEMENT THROUGH SPORT AND LEISURE

Introduction	60
--------------	----

Why Compete in Sport?	61
Quantifying the Motives and Experiences of Older Athletes	62
Giving ‘Voice’ to Older Athletes	68
Traditional Understandings of Identity	74
Identity Management from a Postmodern Standpoint	76
Resistance and Empowerment through Sport and Leisure	79
A Foucaultian Perspective	81
Competitive Sport and Marginalised Groups	87
Conclusion	91
 CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY: EXPLORING THE PHENOMENON	
Introduction	93
Paradigmatic Framework	93
The Power of Qualifying the Ageing and Sport Experience	97
Research Design	100
Collection of Data	104
Analysis of Data	107
Conclusion	109
 CHAPTER 5 “FRIENDLY COMPETITION”?	
Introduction	110
“Fun, friendship and fitness”	111
“[Competing in sport] keeps me fit”	121
Participation <i>as</i> Winning	125
“Competing to win”	128
“A competitive spirit”	139
“I hope I get a medal”	142
“What was my time?”	144
Conclusion	146
 CHAPTER 6 “A FEELING OF POWER” OR DENIAL?	
Introduction	149
“I’m out here and I can do this!”	151
An Exception to the Rule?	151
“It keeps me young”	156

“[I know] that I’m not losing it”	162
“I can do everything I want to”	172
“Use it or lose it”	177
“I’ll get old if I stop”	181
“[I’d rather] just go ‘plop’ one day”	189
“[Turning] a blind eye”	191
“It’s life!”	193
Conclusion	196
 CHAPTER 7 COMPETING FOR LIFE: A TREND EXPANDING INTO THE FUTURE?	 199
 APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Methods	210
Introduction	210
Stage 1: Data Collection at the 8 th Australian Masters Games	210
Field Observations	212
Participant-observation	216
Short Semi-structured Interviews	218
Stage 2: Data Collection via In-depth Interviews	223
In-depth Interviews	226
Stage 3: Follow-up Strategies	231
Data Analysis	232
Researcher’s Influence	238
Appendix B: Information Statement for Short Semi-structured Interviews	243
Appendix C: Information Statement for In-depth Interviews	244
Appendix D: Consent Form	245
Appendix E: In-depth Interview Guide	246
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 247

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Australia's Ageing Population	5
Table 1.2 Past Australian Masters Games: Number of Sports and Participants	15
Table A.1 Summary of Stage 1 Fieldwork	213
Table A.2 Profile of In-depth Interviewees	224

SYNOPSIS

In Western society competing in physically demanding sport is not considered the domain of older people. For the majority of the twentieth century older people were stereotyped as frail, socially withdrawn and dependent on health and social welfare systems. Competitive athletes on the other hand are commonly viewed as being young, strong, aggressive, physically competent and independent. Although today's older generation are encouraged to be physically active, society does not recognise serious competition or physically intense sports as age-appropriate activities for them. If older people choose to participate in sport they are expected to be doing it to have fun, make friends and keep fit. The growing leisure phenomenon of older athletes who compete to win, achieve a personal best, break world records or push their bodies to the limit presents a challenge to these orthodoxies.

The purpose of this thesis is to explain why competing in physically demanding sport is significant to some older people given the accepted view that it is not their domain. In particular, the thesis explores the multiple ways in which a group of older people negotiate conflicting discourses of both sport and ageing, as well as the contradiction between their identity as an athlete and their ageing bodies, as they talk about and experience competing in physically strenuous individual and team sports. The key themes through which this negotiation process is played out relate to friendship and fun, competition, youthfulness, and the ageing body. It is revealed that the process of competing in sport can be simultaneously empowering and problematic at both the individual and social levels. The thesis draws on insights from post-structural theories of resistance and empowerment, traditional and postmodern understandings of identity management in later life, and life-stage theories to interpret the phenomenon of older people competing in physically demanding sport.

To achieve the above aims, a qualitative study exploring the experiences of a group of Masters athletes aged over 55 years who regularly compete in physically strenuous individual or team sports was undertaken. It was found that despite age-

appropriate norms, competition is significant to many of the participants. Study participants embrace the ideologies and practices of competitive sport and use them to define ageing in terms of youthfulness, physical ability and personal empowerment. Simultaneously however, a denial of, or desperate resistance to, the physical ageing process accompanies this feeling of empowerment. The participants in this study were not only competing in sport, but also ‘competing for life’. It is argued that a multi-faceted and conflicting interplay of resistance and conformity, empowerment and denial, identity and the ageing body is embedded in the phenomenon of older people competing in physically demanding sport. These contradictory findings expose alternative ways of understanding sport, competition, ageing and older people in the West and raise many questions requiring further investigation. The study also points to potential applications of these findings to policy-making and provision of leisure services for older people.

CHAPTER 1

OLDER ATHLETES: AN EMERGING LEISURE PHENOMENON

Pushing the Boundaries?

Competition, especially the act of competing in physically demanding sport, is not considered the realm of older people in the West. The association of older people with decline, frailty, social and psychological disengagement and dependence on health and welfare systems is embedded in dominant thinking. Alternatively, orthodoxies about competitive sport mesh with discourses¹ of youth, ability, aggression, strength, and independence. Society does not expect older people to be concerned with, or capable of, running marathons, scoring goals in field hockey, winning medals on the track or in the pool, or outwitting opponents in tennis. Such aspirations are for the young, not the ‘old’. If older people compete in sport they are supposedly doing so to make friends, keep fit and have fun, not to win or push the body to its extreme. However, the emerging leisure phenomenon of competitive sport participation among older people poses significant challenges to these assumptions and depicts new ways of understanding sport, competition, ageing and older people in the West.

Thousands of people aged in their late 50s and over compete in and train for physically strenuous individual or team sports, such as track and field athletics, cycling, swimming, long distance running, triathlons, tennis, squash, field hockey, ice hockey, soccer, netball, and basketball (McPherson, 1984; O'Brien Cousins & Burgess, 1992; Olson, 2001; Spirduso, 1995). By being competitive in such sports these individuals are displaying a behaviour that is extreme or at odds with what is regarded as ‘normal’ for older people. The media plays a role in exposing this

¹ Discourse is used here in a Foucaultian sense and refers to language, spoken or written, about ‘truth’ and knowledge that reflect sets of rules and ways of understanding (see Wearing, 1995). An embedded discourse can become accepted as ‘fact’ by society, and individual subjectivities that develop parallel with dominant discourses can result in docile bodies or normalised identities (Foucault, 1983).

anomaly. For example, leading up to and during the 2001 Australian Masters Games (AMG) in Newcastle, New South Wales, several feature articles about older athletes appeared in local newspapers (see Gadd, 2001; Sharpe, 2001; Valentine, 2001). The individual stories presented in these articles hint at the complexities that make older adults' participation in competitive sport a fascinating and contradictory issue requiring investigation. For instance, Gadd (2001, p. 82) tells the story of Margaret, an 87-year-old Northern Queensland woman who competed "in a colossal 24 events" including track and field athletics, long distance road running, swimming and indoor rowing at the 2001 AMG. Margaret comments that winning "medals were a nice bonus" but they do not compare "to the fun she is having and the friends she has made at the Games" (Gadd, 2001, p. 82). Having begun competing in sport at the age of 80, Margaret "said she will keep going until her body tells her to stop" (Gadd, 2001, p. 82). Similarly, Valentine (2001, p. 31) reports that Roy, a 74-year-old field hockey player, "does not know the meaning of 'lay down'". Roy has played competitively since the age of 11 and says that "he will continue to play until his legs collapse from under him" (Valentine, 2001, p. 31).

The abovementioned articles raise many questions that are addressed in this thesis. For instance, both Margaret's and Roy's stories point to questions about older people resisting the societal expectation to sit back and relax in later life. But is competing in sport simply an act of resistance to the negative stereotypes of ageing? The articles also raise issues about why these people feel the need to push the ageing body so hard, which leads to questions about whether older athletes are attempting to defy the biological ageing process. Additionally, the story of Margaret exposes questions about why she chooses a leisure activity within a competitive context when she says she is primarily motivated by having fun and making friends. This contradiction points to additional questions about the relationship between the discourses of fun and friendship as motives for competition and the reality of actually competing in sport.

Furthermore, in an article about Val, a 76-year-old Veteran tennis player, her behaviour is described in terms of metaphors usually associated with youth, such as

“energetic” and “vitality” (*The Newcastle Herald*, 8 October, 2001, p. 31). Val has enjoyed competing in tennis since the age of 10 and she particularly values winning. The story is focused on her recent victories, such as her gold medal performance at the 2001 AMG. The use of such descriptors and her focus on winning raises questions about the extent to which discourses of youth and competitive sport intersect to frame older athletes’ experiences. In particular, to what extent are older people embracing competitiveness as a symbol of youthfulness and personal empowerment? Likewise, in a feature article, 89-year-old runner, Keith, is defined as being “old in years” but “young at heart” (Sharpe, 2001, p. 70). This commentary raises questions about how older athletes negotiate an ageing identity. For instance, how do older people deal with the conflict of feeling ‘youthful’ and having a physically ageing body? Are older athletes acting out a denial or fear of the ageing process and actually fighting for their lives?

While a number of interpretations might be drawn from the individual stories discussed above, the purpose of this thesis is to explain why competing in physically demanding sport is so important to some older people given that the dominant discourses associated with sport and ageing claim that it is not for them. The thesis examines the multiple ways in which a group of older people negotiate the contradictions between friendship and fun, competition, youthfulness, and the ageing body, as they talk about and experience competing in physically strenuous individual and team sports. It is revealed that this behaviour is concurrently empowering and problematic at both the individual and social levels. In particular, the thesis elucidates the complex and contradictory interplay of resistance and conformity, empowerment and denial, identity and the body that is at the heart of the phenomenon of older people competing in sport. If this emerging trend continues to be trivialised, patronised or ignored the potential to open up further important questions and fields of investigation which challenge the way society thinks about sport and ageing will be sacrificed.

To achieve these aims, the dominant discourses of sport and ageing are established in both this chapter and the next, and it is shown that the accepted view in the West is that competing in physically demanding sport is not the domain of older people.

A review of previous research into the motives of older athletes provides a foundation for this study because there has been minimal research into why older people compete in sport within the context of the above orthodoxy. Theories of resistance, empowerment and identity management are examined in this context to provide explanations of how people negotiate a behaviour that goes against the norm. The methods and findings from a qualitative study into the multiple meanings a group of older Masters athletes attach to their competitive sport experiences are then discussed. Firstly, however, the ageing population and the growing leisure phenomenon of older people competing in sport needs to be examined to provide a background to this study. In this discussion particular attention is given to the growth of Masters and Veterans sport in Australia and the Senior Olympics in North America which are examples of institutionalised forms of competitive sport for older people. In doing so, the thesis is contextualised and its significance becomes more explicit.

A Rising Leisure Trend

The phenomenon of vigorously active, competitive athletes aged in their late 50s and over is a relatively recent one in Western society. One hundred years ago it was only a privileged minority, even in the West, who reached later life (Coleman, Bond, & Peace, 1993). Now, not only are more people living longer, but they are also healthier aged in their 70s, 80s and 90s (Davis, 1994; Onyx, Leonard, & Reed, 1999; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Thompson, Itzin, & Abendstern, 1990). It is common knowledge that the developed world's population is ageing. The major contributors to this dramatic population shift are low fertility rates, an increased life expectancy, a decline in death rates and the ageing of the 'baby-boom' generation (see Godbey, 1997; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Veal & Lynch, 2001). In Australia, the proportion of the population aged 65 years and over rose gradually during the twentieth century and it is anticipated to grow further during the twenty-first century (refer to Table 1.1 below).

Older adults represent a heterogeneous group, not only in terms of age, gender, race, interests and physical abilities, but also on the basis of socio-demographic and

socio-psychological factors. Consequently, the term ‘older’ is relative, arbitrary and value laden. Chronologically, the category of older people may include people who are 55-59 years of age (early retirees), 60-69 years (the young-old), 70-79 years (the old-old), and those aged in their 80s, 90s or 100s (the oldest-old) (Dionigi, 2003; McPherson, 1999). Therefore, throughout this thesis the use of the term ‘older’ is broad and refers to people over the age of 55 years; however, it is distinguished from the words ‘old’ or ‘deep old age’. The latter terms are used to refer to the final stage of life just before death that can happen at any age and is generally characterised by illness, disability and dependency on others. Interestingly, the fastest growing segment of Australia’s population is aged over 85 years, with estimates being that this age group will almost quadruple from 1.4 percent of the total population in 2002 to 6-9 percent in 2051 (ABS, 2003, *Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories*, 3201.0). Australia’s changes in age structure follow a similar pattern to that found in Canada, New Zealand and the United States. Australia demonstrates a slightly lower level of ageing when compared to European countries (such as Sweden, Italy, United Kingdom and Greece) and a higher proportion of older people when compared with many countries in the Asia/Pacific region (ABS, 2003, 3201.0).

Table 1.1 Australia’s Ageing Population

Year	Approximate number of people 65 years and over	Percentage of the population
1901	151,000	4%
1998	2.3 million	12%
2051	6 million	24-26%

Table compiled using statistics from: ABS, 2002a, *Population: Special article – Australia’s older population: Past, present and future*, 3101.0.

These changing demographics have resulted in international organisations, governments, commercial agencies, practitioners and community groups focusing more attention on the needs of the ageing population (Grant, 2002; McCormack,

2000). In fact, the United Nations designated 1999 the ‘International Year of Older Persons’, as a way of highlighting the achievements of older people and emphasising the many challenges arising from the ageing of the population (Chodzko-Zajko, 2000; McCormack, 2000). In brief, the concerns common to most Western countries experiencing an ageing population develop from circumstances normally associated with older age, such as decline in health causing a burden on the health and social welfare systems, loss of productivity resulting in a decreased workforce, and loss of independence leading to a dependency on long-term health care (van Norman, 1995). Considering the economic benefits that a physically, socially and mentally active ageing population has for the national health budget, it comes as no surprise that political and business interests across Australia (among other countries) have willingly supported a shift toward promoting and supporting opportunities for a physically active later life (Adair & Vamplew, 1997; McCormack, 2000). As Hargreaves (1994, p. 265) states:

Keeping the ageing body moving and functioning has become one way of dealing with what has been characterized as the ‘problem of ageing populations’. Neglect of the physical body can be expensive in terms of medical care and welfare support, and exercise and sports can reduce health costs.

The health promotion movement and its underlying discourses are discussed in more detail in the following chapter where it is argued that this shift has been used in part to legitimise the participation of older people in sport.

Generally speaking, today’s older population is considered to be more active, affluent, better educated, assertive and healthier than its predecessors (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, 2002; Godbey, 1997; MacNeil, 2001; McPherson, 1984, 1994, 1998). Additionally, variations to the age structure coupled with early retirement means that an increasing number of people could possibly spend twenty to thirty years in what is known as the “retirement phase” (Grant & Stothart, 1999, p. 29) or the “Third Age” (Laslett, 1989, 1996). The time available for leisure pursuits among retired older people is relatively high, for example an average of forty-five hours

per week for Australians in 1999 (ABS, 2002a, 3101.0). Due to various social changes the older generation generally now feels “less moral prohibition against leisure” (Godbey, 1994, p. 194) and it is more likely that individuals have acquired a greater number of leisure skills throughout their life. They live in a cultural period that provides opportunities for physical activity and places greater value on sport, exercise and leisure in later life than was previously the case (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; MacNeil, 2001; McPherson, 1994, 1998). With increased longevity, improved health among the ageing population, and more opportunities for leisure many older people are pushing the boundaries of conventional ideas about what are ‘age-appropriate’ leisure activities for an older person. According to Grant (2002, p. 777):

Rather than being ‘over the hill’, more and more older people are ‘taking the hill by storm’ and seeking opportunities to be involved in a multitude of activities, some new and others rekindled from earlier years.

O’Brien Cousins (1998, p. xiv) claims that physically active older adults “have become a remarkable social phenomenon mainly because the general public has so underestimated [their] physical capabilities and interests ...”. Furthermore, MacNeil (2001, p. 54) argues, “As the number of older adults increases, a proportionate rise in their participation in health-related physical activities is a certain result”.

In particular, the participation of older adults in organised sport, multi-sports competitions, and physically active leisure pursuits in general, is growing in the West (Boag & Cuskelly, 1996; Grant, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994; McIntyre, Coleman, Boag, & Cuskelly, 1992; Olson, 2001; Vamplew, Moore, O’Hara, Cashman, & Jobling, 1994; Vertinsky, 1995). For instance, a 2001 survey on participation² in physical activity associated with exercise, recreation and sport by Australian adults found that 70.2 percent of adults aged 55-64 years and 60.1 percent of adults aged over 65 years had participated in at least one physical activity over the twelve

² Participation is defined as ‘playing’ participation, which does not include ‘non-playing’ participation such as coaching, refereeing and spectating, or activities that are related to work or household chores (Dale & Ford, 2002).

months prior to the survey interview (Dale & Ford, 2002)³. Furthermore, it was determined that 27.9 percent of people aged 55-64 years and 27.2 percent of people aged 65 years and older participated in at least one organised sport (with a club or association) within the twelve months before the survey (Dale & Ford, 2002)⁴. Despite these figures, it is acknowledged that regular participation in sport and strenuous physical activity generally decreases with age and the majority of older adults tend to avoid vigorous competitive sports that require intense physical exertion (Adair & Vamplew, 1997; Armstrong, Bauman, & Davies, 1999; Grant, 2001, 2002; Hargreaves, 1994; McPherson, 1984). Currently, older people who do compete in sport are generally perceived as ‘unique’ or ‘exceptional’. Nevertheless, McPherson (1994, p. 337) argues:

... persons 60 and over are reporting more frequent involvement in physical activity, involvement in more varied types of activity, and a greater range in the intensity of involvement, from passive flexibility exercises to marathon races.

Thus, physical activity involvement among older adults can be situated along a continuum from those who maintain some moderate levels of habitual, non-competitive physical activity, such as walking, at one end, to Masters, Veterans or Senior athletes⁵ who exercise or train regularly and compete in a range of age-related sports competitions, at the other (see Olson, 2001; Smith & Storandt, 1997; Spirduso, 1995). Describing and interpreting the explanations and experiences of individuals at the latter end of this continuum is the core of this thesis as my aim is to understand how they negotiate this physically demanding competitive behaviour that continues to go against ‘age-appropriate’ norms.

The terms ‘physically demanding’, ‘physically extreme’, or ‘strenuous’ that are being used to describe the sports of interest in this study are arbitrary. Thus, for the

³ Individuals who participated in at least one physical activity undertook an average of 2.9 sessions of that activity per week (Dale & Ford, 2002).

⁴ Individuals who participated in organised sport undertook an average of 1.4 sessions of organised activity per week (Dale & Ford, 2002).

⁵ Older people who regularly compete in team or individual sports are interchangeably referred to in the literature and throughout this thesis as Masters, Veterans or Senior athletes.

purpose of this thesis the terms are used objectively to describe team or individual competitive sports, such as marathon running, swimming, cycling, triathlons, basketball, netball and field hockey, that require vigorous physical exertion, and varying degrees of physical skill, fitness, prowess, training and sport-related knowledge (see Coakley, 2001). The terms are also used to describe sports that are not typically associated with older adults in the West. For instance, "... certain sports such as bowls and golf have always been associated with older people" (Vamplew et al., 1994, p. 441). These quantifiably more passive, 'age-appropriate' sports were deliberately avoided in this research in order to find older people who appear to be pushing the boundaries both physically and socially. Therefore, an assumption was that by restricting the focus to more 'vigorous' sports it was more likely (but not necessarily the case) that issues associated with resistance, empowerment, pushing the body to extremes and competitiveness would emerge (whereas these unique insights would not be accessible if studying more passive, stereotypical sports).

Older athletes have become an identifiable group in contemporary Western society requiring attention. Although exact figures are difficult to determine, it is apparent that older competitive sportspeople represent a small (but rising) percentage of the total ageing population. Olson (2001) estimates there to be more than 50,000 Masters Track and Field athletes over the age of 40 worldwide, with a quarter of them women. According to Spirduso (1995, p. 391), the people performing in Masters sporting competitions "are doing so willingly and are extremely motivated". Fontane and Hurd (1992) argued that older athletes are unique in many ways: they have the time and money to travel to the sites of competition; they are likely to be in better health than others of their age; they are physically active and able bodied people who are proud of their recent achievements; and, importantly, they are competitive. Regardless of these findings, Fontane and Hurd (1992, p. 108) concluded that, "we know very little about the healthy, vigorous, physically competitive, older person". Six years after Fontane and Hurd's observations, Denenberg Segal, Crespo and Smit (1998, p. 139) claimed that, "considerable research remains to be done on both active seniors and senior athletes". In 2003, Roper, Molnar and Wrisberg (p. 371) stated that "few studies have specifically

explored the experience and meaning of sport involvement for seniors”. While these three claims were made in a North American context, Australian scholars agree that there has been limited research into the experiences of older sportspeople, even though there has been a significant growth in participation in Masters and Veterans sports (Adair & Vamplew, 1997; Boag & Cuskelly, 1996; Boyle & McKay, 1995; McIntyre et al., 1992).

Telling the story of older competitive athletes is important not only because it allows the voices of older people to be heard, but also because the actions of a minority group have the potential to influence dominant discourses in society. For instance, the majority of ageing research is on people at the disabled end of the continuum, with a significant amount being focused on dementia patients even though they only represent a small percentage of the older population (McCormack, 2000). Such information about a minority of frail older people approaching the end of their lives is used to generalise about the whole ageing population (Coleman et al., 1993; Minichiello, Browning, & Aroni, 1992b). In this sense, research into older competitive athletes has the potential to challenge the ways ageing and competition are commonly thought about in Western society. For example, Spirduso (1995, p. 392) states that, “The training and performance of thousands of older adults in [sporting] tournaments remind observers that disability is not inevitable ... Masters athletes raise both physical and psychological ceilings and shatter the barriers of expectations that society has for the aged”. Likewise, Coakley (2001, p. 495) claims that, “... the achievements of older athletes support the notion that getting old doesn’t automatically mean becoming weak and incapacitated”. He also argues that sports participation is a potential site “... for the challenging of dominant ideas about aging” (2001, p. 495). On the other hand, in arguing that the actions of older athletes resist the ageing body and challenge stereotypes associated with ageing, these authors ignore the underlying contradiction that the same behaviour can reinforce Western values of competition, athleticism and youthfulness and a denial of physical ageing. Therefore, by exploring the phenomenon of older people competing in physically demanding sport in light of orthodoxies about both sport and ageing, this thesis demonstrates the complex and contradictory interplay of resistance, empowerment, conformity

and denial that appears to constitute the nature of their actions. To further contextualise the thesis, however, a more detailed review of Masters sport is warranted.

Growth in Masters and Veterans Sport

The recent boom in Masters and Veterans sport in Australia at the club level, as well as the popularity across the Western world of multi-sports events, such as the Masters Games and Senior Olympics, provide the most pertinent examples of the growing phenomenon of older people competing in sport (Cuskelly & Boag, 1996). This is not to imply that sports participation among older people did not occur in the past (see Olson, 2001; Vamplew, et al., 1994, p. 441). Rather, it pinpoints the expansion of organised physically demanding individual and teams sports that were not traditionally available to older people in Australia. Masters sport was established in the 1970s as an alternative form to mainstream sport (which is commonly associated with younger and/or elite athletes, competitive team sports and major events like the Olympic Games) (McIntyre et al., 1992). It developed as an institutionalised form of competitive sport for individuals who desired to continue competing at an older age. Competition is organised in five to ten year age bands (Boag & Cuskelly, 1996). Typically, individual events are conducted in five year increments, while team sports are competed in increments of ten years. In Australia, Masters and Veterans sport is generally for people over the age of 30 or 35 years, depending on the event.

In the early 1990s many sporting bodies across Australia reported that in terms of the number of participants the Masters level was the fastest growing area in their sport (Burns, 1992). Today, Masters sport remains one of the fastest expanding sectors of Australian sport (9th Australian Masters Games, 2003; Boag & Cuskelly, 1996). Veterans athletics, Masters swimming, Veterans tennis, 'Golden Oldies' rugby, cricket and netball, and Veterans field hockey associations all emerged in Australia in the 1970s. Often, it was those older people who had the means, desire and ability to continue competing in their chosen sport as they aged who formed these organisations. According to Adair and Vamplew (1997, p. 63), many groups

that have traditionally been on the margins of Australian sport “... have organised sport to suit their own special needs”.

Sports such as swimming, tennis and track and field athletics were among the first Masters/Veterans sports to gain peoples’ interest (Vamplew, et al., 1994). For example, in 1975 an Australian-wide, non-profit organisation called AUSSI Masters Swimming was established for adult swimmers. At the end of 2002, AUSSI Masters Swimming had 7,309 members which included 2,216 participants over the age of 55 years. There are eight branches, one in each state or territory across Australia, and a total of 206 clubs within these branches (AUSSI Masters Swimming Australia, 2003). The first World Masters Swimming Championships were hosted in Tokyo in 1986; two years later they were held in Australia (Flatten, 1991). Tennis ‘Vets’ Australia was established in 1970 for people over the age of 35 years and it boasted 900 players competing in state teams at the 2002 Australian Tennis Championships (Tennis Veterans Australia, 2002).

Veterans Athletics Australia has clubs in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia, which were all formed in the early 1970s to enable athletes 30 years and over to compete in track and field, cross-country running and race walking (Vicvets Australia, 2003). Now there are over 3,500 members across all Veteran Athletics Australia State clubs (Vicvets Australia, 2003; Victorian Masters Athletics, 2004). The Australian Veterans Athletics movement was influenced by the United States Masters Track and Field team which toured throughout Australia and Europe in the early 1970s to promote Masters sport (see Olson, 2001). The first World Veterans Athletic (or World Masters Track and Field) Championships were held in Toronto, Canada in 1975 and they attracted 1,408 participants from 29 countries (Olson, 2001). Various countries, including Sweden, Germany, New Zealand, Italy, United States, Japan, South Africa and England have since hosted this major event. From the first to the thirteenth World Veterans Athletic Championships “... over a 24 year period, participation on a worldwide basis has tripled” from just under two thousand to six thousand, and the number of countries being represented has risen from twenty-nine to seventy-nine (Olson, 2001, p. 199). The seventh World Veterans Athletic Championships were held in Melbourne in

1987, with 4,817 athletes from 52 countries (Olson, 2001) and the 14th were held in Brisbane in 2001. According to Olson (2001, p. 197), “... there has been significant growth in MTF [Masters Track and Field] throughout the world. European countries, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States have led the way”.

In addition to individual sports, team sports such as rugby, cricket, netball and field hockey are also booming at the Veterans level. The ‘Golden Oldies’ are grass roots organisations that provide an opportunity for older adults to play rugby union, cricket and netball at local and international levels with the rules being modified to allow for age (Vamplew et al., 1994). Golden Oldies World Festivals have been held in South Africa, France, Canada and New Zealand. The 14th Golden Oldies World Rugby Festival was hosted by Brisbane in May, 2003. The event attracted 4,000 competitors over the age of 35. The Australian Veterans Hockey Association was established in 1979 with the first Australia-wide competition taking place in 1980 for teams comprising players aged over 40 and over 45 years (Yeates, 1999). Over the years the competition has expanded to include teams of players aged over 50 years in 1985, then over 55 years in 1991, and over 60 years in 1996 (Yeates, 1999). Players are either continuing with their sport as they age or new players are starting to play the game at an older age.

Not only have single sports expanded through highly developed club systems, there has also been a corresponding increase over the past twenty years in multi-sports events held for older athletes, such as the Senior Olympics and the Masters Games (Adair & Vamplew, 1997; Burns, 1992; Vamplew et al., 1994). According to Boag and Cuskelly (1996, p. 16), “By far the most successful vehicle for participation in Masters sport, at least in terms of growth in numbers of participants, has been the Masters Games”. These multi-sports festivals are held for ‘mature’ athletes usually over a week to ten days, with age being the only qualifier for participation. In an article on Seniors’ softball in the United States, Thomas (1999) draws attention to the rising trend of active and healthy older people in Western nations who are in search of novel and diverse ways to enjoy later life. In particular, Thomas (1999, p. 47) claims that, “Highly competitive Masters and Seniors Games are growing in every sport ... ” across many Western countries.

The inaugural World Masters Games were held in Toronto, Canada in 1985. “The event adopted a Sport-for-All philosophy as well as the Sport-for-Life theme” (Flatten, 1991, p. 66; see also O'Bryan, 1985). In 1986, the First International Sport-for-All Conference was held in West Germany where sixty-three nations indicated their desire to offer sport to the masses, regardless of age, gender, ability or socio-economic status (Flatten, 1991; Palm, 1985). Since then, competitive multi-sports events for older athletes have been conducted in various countries around the world (Flatten, 1991; Olson, 2001; Vamplew et al., 1994). For instance, in 1986 the Alice Springs Masters Games were the first Games of this kind to be held in Australia and they have been conducted approximately every two years since (Australian Masters Games, 2001). At each successive event the number of participants increases. For example, in 1986 the Games attracted 992 participants, in 1988 there were 1,902 participants, and in 1991 the number of participants had risen to 3,089 (Vamplew et al., 1994). The World Masters Games were hosted in Brisbane in 1994 and there were 24,000 competitors (Olson, 2001, p. 234). The most recent World Masters Games attracted over 25,000 competitors and were hosted in Melbourne in 2002 (Martin, 2002).

In 1987 the first Senior Olympics were conducted in St. Louis, United States. This event attracted 2,500 participants aged from 55 to 92 who were registered to compete in over 400 sporting events (Flatten, 1991, p. 66; Olson, 2001, p. 221). In that same year, the first Australian Masters Games was conducted in Tasmania. The number of participants in the Australian Masters Games has increased from 3,695 participants (35 percent women and 65 percent men) in 1987, to 11,225 competitors (43 percent women and 57 percent men) at the 2001 Australian Masters Games held in Newcastle, New South Wales (see Table 1.2 below). The average age of participants at these Games has remained fairly constant (between 43-50 years), indicating an increase in participants across all ages, including those over the age of 55 years (ABS, 2002b, *Special Article - Sporting Australians*, 1301.0). Furthermore, the number of sports has almost doubled since the Games' inception. Sports range from passive activities such as lawn bowls, golf and bridge to more physically strenuous events like long distance running, basketball, gymnastics and field hockey. According to Sports Industry Australia, the event has evolved into

Australia's largest regularly occurring multi-sports festival (9th Australian Masters Games, 2003).

Table 1.2 Past Australian Masters Games: Number of Sports and Participants

Number	Year	Host	Sports	Athletes	Males	Females
1 st	1987	Hobart	35	3,695	65%	35%
2 nd	1989	Adelaide	42	7,415	58%	42%
3 rd	1991	Brisbane	40	5,957	62%	38%
4 th	1993	Perth	40	5,759	70%	30%
5 th	1995	Melbourne	51	10,479	unavailable	
6 th	1997	Canberra	31	8,811	58%	42%
7 th	1999	Adelaide	46	10,144	57%	43%
8 th	2001	Newcastle	61	11,225	57%	43%

Sources: 9th Australian Masters Games (2003) and Newcastle & Hunter Events Corporation (2001).

The rising numbers of older adults who use their time and disposable income to compete in sport is clearly an emerging leisure trend. Predictions have been made that the current phenomenon of older people being physically active and competing in sport will only increase with the ageing of the 'baby-boom' generation (Olson, 2001; McNeil, 2001; Thomas, 1999; van Norman, 1995). According to van Norman (1995, p. 4), the 'baby-boomers' (who she claims appear to be more concerned with retaining their youth and playing sport than previous generations) "are unwilling to accept the image of advanced age coupled with a sedentary life-style, declining physical health, and senility". Therefore, the 'baby-boomer' generation look set to follow in the footsteps of today's physically active older people. Thomas (1999, p. 51) predicts that in many Western nations the twenty-first century "will witness an explosion in the 50-plus crowd's involvement in health and fitness programs and senior sports". Interestingly, a recent feature article in *The Sun-Herald* (an Australian weekend newspaper) reports on statistics that indicate "... more baby-boomers [in New South Wales] are participating in organised sports to boost their longevity" (Wood, 2003, p. 46).

There is no better time than now to explore the early stages of what may lead to a “surging population of physically active [older people]” (MacNeil, 2001, p. 52). This is not to say that all older adults will seek out physically demanding competitive leisure pursuits, nor does it imply that sickness and disability will not affect a large proportion of the older population. Rather, it means that physically strenuous competitive activities, which are commonly considered pursuits of the young and ‘inappropriate’ for older adults, may increasingly be undertaken by emerging generations of older people (Coakley, 2001; MacNeil, 2001). Therefore, there is a need to examine this trend because older people engaged in competitive sport have the potential to be the leaders in establishing new sets of legitimising orthodoxies and behaviours.

Despite the growing participation rates of older people in competitive sport, there is currently no discourse available which legitimises older people as serious competitive athletes engaged in physically strenuous sports. The key ideologies associated with mainstream competitive sport in the West are in stark contrast with the discourses that have emerged about ‘appropriate’ sporting practices for older athletes. Orthodoxies about mainstream sport are associated with symbols of youth, competitiveness and athleticism. Whereas the philosophies underlying Masters sport are about making friends, having fun and keeping fit through sport. These latter messages contradict dominant ideas about mainstream sport, but are acceptable notions for older people (and for all marginalised groups) involved in sport. Therefore, the accepted view is that ‘serious’ competitive sport participation among older people is inappropriate, almost deviant, and if older people do ‘participate’ in sport society expects it to be about friendship, fun and fitness. These embedded tensions that characterise the phenomenon of older people competing in sport, discussed below, raise a number of research questions which underpin this thesis.

Contradictory Discourses Embedded in Competitive Sport

Until recently older people, along with other marginalised groups in society, such as people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, women and homosexuals, were excluded

from mainstream Australian sport and its framing discourses (Adair & Vamplew, 1997). Older people were actively excluded because competitions involving strenuous sports were not available to them prior to the 1970s in Australia (Vamplew et al., 1994). Traditionally, organised competitive sport was believed to be a ‘character building’ activity that was important for the development of young people (Coakley, 2001). Its establishment can also be linked to the Industrial Revolution and the push for physical health and fitness among young male workers in order to improve productivity. Consequently, competitive sport has a history of being organised for, and promoted to, young people, especially males (Adair & Vamplew, 1997; Cashman, 1995; Coakley, 1994, 2001). Also, older people were excluded through social norms, such as being discouraged from participating in strenuous activities for fear that it was dangerous and may place too many demands on their ageing bodies (Coakley, 2001; Grant, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994; Kluge, 2002; Vertinsky, 1995). According to Spirduso (1995, p. 412) in the first two thirds of the twentieth century, “Only those few older athletes who were willing to face societal disapproval entered competitions”.

Given that, historically, competitive sport was not available or considered relevant to older people, it is perhaps not surprising that the fields of sport sociology within Australia have virtually ignored age or issues pertaining to older people in competitive sport. Even given Australia’s ingrained sporting culture and the high value placed upon sports participation, the critical sociological study of any sport in this country is a somewhat recent phenomenon (Cashman, 1995; Lawrence & Rowe, 1986; McKay, Hughson, Lawrence, & Rowe, 2000; Rowe & Lawrence, 1990; Rowe, McKay, & Lawrence, 1997; Stoddart, 1986). The field tends to be concerned with understanding the high-profile, elite and performance-oriented sports at the macro-level. That is, the relationship of sport to politics, ideology, the media and big business. Consequently, research into alternative forms of sport, such as, minority/non-elite sports for women, disabled, gay and lesbian athletes, and older people has only emerged over the past twenty to twenty-five years. There is also inadequate sociological literature that examines sport as a leisure pursuit in contemporary Australia rather than as a profession (Adair & Vamplew, 1997; Cashman, 1995; Lawrence & Rowe, 1986; Rowe & Lawrence, 1998). For example,

edited books about sport and leisure in Australian society and culture, such as Rowe & Lawrence (1990, 1998), do not address issues relating to older people in sport.

Furthermore, dominant discourses associated with competitive sport in the West are youthful and masculine. For instance, the mainstream forms of sport in Australia are framed in terms of notions of competitiveness, achievement, masculinity, independence, strength, aggressiveness and 'winning-at-all-costs' (Cashman, 1995; Lawrence & Rowe, 1986; McKay, 1991; McKay et al., 2000; Vamplew et al., 1994). Evidently, the orthodoxies of mainstream competitive sport mesh with discourses of youthfulness, ability and aspiration. Additionally, the way the terms 'sport' and 'competition' are defined in the West reinforces the argument that these activities are the realm of youth. Coakley (2001, p. 20) defines sport as a type of organised physical activity or exercise that involves the use of relatively complex physical skills, competence or intense effort (see also McPherson, 1986). Due to the certainty of physical decline in old age, the older body is not deemed to be capable of such extreme activity. The practice and physicality of competitive sport is considered most suitable for the young and able-bodied.

In addition, sport involves some type of competition happening under formal and organised conditions, and participants are motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Coakley, 2001). Competition is commonly understood as a social process that centres on outperforming or defeating others who are doing the same task or playing the same game, as well as a personal orientation towards challenging oneself (Coakley, 2001). Therefore, competition can refer to competing against others or an objective standard (such as a distance or time), competing against oneself (such as past performances, future goals, or the body), and competing against the elements or environment. Its definition depends on how it is interpreted and qualitatively experienced by the individual. As Grant (2001, p. 790) puts it, "... each person responds to [competition] in different ways depending on their previous experience, skill level and the context in which the game is being played".

In a competitive context, external rewards (such as medals, money, status) are given on the basis of objective comparisons, regardless of the subjective goals an

individual may bring to a competitive event (Coakley, 2001). A competitive orientation is characterised by evaluating oneself in comparison to others, while an achievement orientation refers to monitoring performance based on personal bests or future goals (Coakley, 2001). The latter orientation can also be defined as competing against oneself. Extreme competitiveness can involve a win-at-all-costs approach to sports participation that may lead to verbal and physical violence towards opponents and team members, injury, cheating, the use of performance enhancement drugs and the like, in order to win. Thus, the competitive ideology that is embedded in mainstream sport in Western society is not inherently positive or negative; it depends upon how it is interpreted and practiced by individuals.

In contrast to discourses associated with mainstream competitive sport, key values underpinning Veterans and Masters sport are ‘friendly participation’ and ‘playing for the love of the game’ (Vamplew et al., 1994). According to the founder of the Masters Games, Canadian Maureen O’Bryan, the goal of the Games “is health, fitness and pleasure through the joy of participation and competition” (1985, p. 12). The spirit of the Games “... is sport for the wonderful fun of it” (O’Bryan, 1985, p. 12). Similarly, the organisers of the 2001 Australian Masters Games used the slogan “Serious Fun” to describe the Games, and the 2002 New South Wales Masters Games were called the “The Fun Games”. The motto for the 2002 Asia Pacific Masters Games was “Play it. Live it. Love it” and the 2002 Alice Springs Games was titled “The Friendly Games”. The underlying philosophy of the Golden Oldies movement is also based on the spirit of fun, friendship and fraternity (Burns, 1992). In other words, the dominant discourses about sport for older people emphasise ‘fun, friendship and fitness’ or ‘friendly competition’ over ‘serious competition’. These messages position those older people who participate in sport as being not really competitive. Furthermore, it is not considered appropriate for them to train or be serious athletes. These accepted views appear to limit older people to friendly, inclusive, non-serious sports participation rather than winning and exclusivity. ‘Serious competition’ on the other hand is associated with mainstream sport and younger more elite athletes. Notions of ‘friendships and fun’ are clearly at odds with mainstream models of competitive sport which promote aggression, intense physical effort and winning (Cashman, 1995; Lawrence &

Rowe, 1986; McKay, 1991; McKay et al., 2000; Vamplew et al., 1994). Therefore, the goal of ‘friendly competition’ that is encouraged through the discourses associated with Masters sport prompts questions about the incompatibility of promoting inclusiveness and fitness within the context of competition and individual achievement. In fact, one antonym for the word ‘competition’ is ‘friendliness’ (see Kipfer, 2004, an online thesaurus).

Organisers and promoters of sporting competitions for older people deal with this incongruity by intentionally structuring events in a way that minimises fierce rivalry or competition and fosters friendship and social interaction. There are no qualifying standards other than age, and according to event organisers, winning is not the most important feature of sports involvement by older people (see Hurley, 2001). For example, at multi-sports events like the Masters Games there are several social events intentionally organised to promote socialising among participants over the duration of the Games. Similarly, the principle idea behind the Senior Olympic movement in the United States “is simply to encourage people to participate and share camaraderie” (Pepe & Gandee, 1992, p. 192). The authors also argue that it is the enjoyment, personal development and friendship of participation, more than winning, which motivates participants to continually strive to improve their performances in sport (Pepe & Gandee, 1992). This latter statement implies that competing against oneself is perhaps acceptable in Senior sport, but focusing on outperforming others is not.

These underlying philosophies about sport for older people are similar to the nature of sport participation promoted and practiced among other marginalised groups, such as people with an intellectual disability (see Coakley, 1994) or participants of the Gay Games (see Krane & Romont, 1997; Krane & Waldron, 2000). For example, ‘Gay Sports’ focus discursively on social and recreational aspects, physical fitness and enjoyment through shared participation, rather than fierce competition (Adair & Vamplew, 1997). Like the Masters Games, the Gay Games are supposedly “grounded in the principles of inclusion, participation, and personal best” (Krane & Romont, 1997, p. 124) rather than the desire to win or dominate an opponent (Krane & Waldron, 2000). Coakley (1994, p. 87) refers to this as

“carefully controlled competition” meaning that, “Competition exists, but it is controlled to the point that participants focus on fellowship and pride in their own physical skills in addition to outcomes”. Coakley (2001) discusses the potential for groups, such as women, people with disabilities, homosexuals and older people to embrace the friendly and fun side of sport and resist the dominant competitive ideology underlying mainstream sport in Western society. However, herein lies a question about the two contradictory sides of sport for marginalised groups in general, and Masters sport more specifically. What if older people are serious about competition and they compete to win as well as achieve their personal best? This type of behaviour implies they are embracing the competitive discourses that frame mainstream sport, not resisting them.

Adair and Vamplew (1997) argue that although Masters sport is commonly depicted as friendly among many older competitors their determination to win should not be underestimated. After all, events like the Masters Games provide “opportunities for older adults to challenge themselves and to experience the exhilaration of actual participation” in competitive sports (Gandee et al., 1989, p. 72). In a report by the Australian Sports Commission, concern was raised about the potential problem of ‘serious competition’ versus ‘friendly participation’ in Masters sport (Burns, 1992). The original intention of Masters/Veterans sporting competitions “... was to encourage mature-age people to be physically active and make friends through sport” (Adair & Vamplew, 1997, p. 87). However, Burns (1992) argues that some teams and athletes have taken these events seriously and value winning over friendly participation. Additionally, previous quantitative research into the experiences of Masters athletes have found that there are two types of competitors, one half made up of those who are motivated primarily by the challenge of high level competition, and the other by those for whom social interaction with like-minded people and friendly competition are important (Cuskelly & Boag, 1996; Ryan & Lockyer, 2000). Indeed, one of the very few qualitative studies that has examined Masters competitors’ beliefs and perceptions about playing sport found that ‘serious play’ emerged as significant (Grant, 2001). The theme ‘serious play’ describes how the participants valued an appropriate level of competition, fairness, success and winning, although they did not display a “having-to-win attitude”

(Grant, 2001, p. 790). The participants in this study by Grant defined competitiveness and success in a number of ways: the personal satisfaction of achieving goals; testing oneself against others; and trying to win. Moreover, in his historical account of the development of the United States Masters Track and Field program, Olson (2001) demonstrates the competitive nature of athletes and the strict regulations associated with competitions. Olson discusses older athletes' stories about training regimes and the thrill of winning, being awarded trophies, breaking a world record and of achieving a personal best. These findings indicate that some older athletes are serious about physically strenuous competition – even though it is played down by both participants and organisers and despite there being no legitimising discourse available for this behaviour.

This tension between 'friendly participation', which implies playing for fun, fitness and a sense of camaraderie, and 'serious competition', which is an individualistic and youthful concept that suggests competing to win and pushing the body to extremes, is an issue that goes to the heart of Masters sport. It is clear that the participation of older people in competitive sport is potentially a highly complex and contradictory phenomenon that requires further and more rigorous exploration.

The above discussion has highlighted two major competing discourses about sport. A view exists that sees older people's participation in physically demanding competitive sport as going against 'age-appropriate' norms, because 'serious' competition is for the young. However, the emergence of events like the Masters Games has opened the door to sports participation for older people. But, the emphasis is on having fun, making friends and keeping fit; not on being competitive, trying to win or pushing the body to its limit. This notion raises questions about older people who take competition seriously, train for peak performance and try extremely hard to win or achieve a personal best. For instance, if older people are competing to win, does this work against the inclusive "Fun, friendship and fitness" philosophy (Hurley, 2001, p. 9) that is used to frame and rationalise their participation? Furthermore, what if older people compete not only to have fun and make friends, but also to beat others and defy the physical ageing process? It appears that older athletes have to negotiate a number of conflicting

ideas about sport and ageing to justify their behaviour and to experience the ‘here and now’ of competing. In order to investigate these issues, a qualitative study was conducted on older Masters athletes within an Australian context.

Aims and Approach of the Thesis

Given that competition and intense physical activity are not considered age-appropriate for older people in Western society, this thesis aims to understand why older people compete in physically demanding sports. Specifically, the thesis seeks to explore the ways in which older adults negotiate the conflicting discourses of sport and ageing, as well as the contradiction between their identity as an athlete and their ageing body. To address these aims, the thesis draws on both primary and secondary sources of data. In particular, because understandings of why older people compete in sport within the context of dominant discourses are relatively unexplored in the academic literature, the thesis relies heavily on primary empirical data collected through a variety of qualitative research strategies within an interpretive phenomenological paradigm. This approach was chosen as the most effective way to meet the aims of the research as it illuminates the multiple perspectives of participants within a socio-cultural context (Schwandt, 1994, 2000; Weber, 1949). Specifically, my study comprised three stages of data collection. I conducted initial field observations, participant-observation and short semi-structured interviews on-site with athletes aged 55-94 years at a large-scale national multi-sports Masters competition – the 2001 Australian Masters Games. In Stage 2, approximately five months after the initial fieldwork phase, I undertook in-depth interviews with fifteen female and thirteen male sport competitors, aged 60-89 years. Finally, I carried out observation and participant-observation at a small-scale local multi-sports Masters event – the 2002 Lake Macquarie Masters Games, and held follow-up telephone interviews with five participants from Stage 2. The data were analysed primarily inductively through the use of constant comparative and thematic analyses (see Appendix A for a thorough discussion of the methods employed).

In addition to primary empirical data, I utilised a variety of secondary sources of

information throughout the research process. I collected and reviewed related programs, reports, letters, brochures, and newspaper articles, downloaded Internet websites and monitored the local television news reports during the aforementioned multi-sports events. I also consulted Australian Bureau of Statistics data, and relevant promotional material and Internet websites relating to sport and physically active leisure participation in later life.

Academic literature was extensively reviewed to help explain the phenomenon under study. Specifically, I examined traditional and contemporary life-stage theories, theories of resistance and empowerment that have been used to interpret sport and leisure behaviour, traditional and postmodern understandings of identity management in later life, and the small amount of empirical research that exists on older athletes from a variety of perspectives. The thesis examines contributions from a range of disciplines, such as sport sociology, sports science, leisure studies, psychology and gerontology. This approach is postmodern in that it is concerned with diversity, difference and complexity rather than relying on a single grand theoretical interpretation of what is multi-faceted and dynamic human behaviour (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b; Richardson, 1998; Wearing, 1998). In particular, the thesis seeks to understand interactions between broader social discourses and individual subjectivities. It also draws heavily on post-structural understandings of the negotiation of discourses within the context of sport, leisure and ageing (Wearing, 1995).

The central argument of this thesis is that older people who compete intensely in physically demanding sports are ‘competing for life’. This phrase has two interrelated meanings within the thesis. First, ‘competing for life’ is used to explain the study participants’ belief that competitiveness is a characteristic that has been within them ‘for life’. That is, they identify themselves as competitive (directly or indirectly) and seek to express themselves through individual or team sport, regardless of their age, gender or when they commenced participating. Competition or the desire to compete is not necessarily something that is unimportant or lost just because they have reached an older age. In other words, the thesis shows that people are ‘never too old’ to be serious about competing in sport. Despite age-

appropriate norms, older people can be very competitive. These individuals embrace the ideologies of competitive sport and use them to define ageing in terms of youthfulness, physical ability and personal empowerment. The significance of this argument is that it challenges dominant understandings of both competition and what it stereotypically means to be an older person in contemporary Western society. Therefore, the behaviour of such people has the potential to establish new sets of stereotypes and discourses that view older people as serious competitive athletes. However, older people identifying themselves as ‘youthful’ or ‘athletic’ can be problematic at the individual level due to the naturally ageing body. It is asserted that the feelings of youthfulness and empowerment expressed by older athletes ultimately are driven by a fear, a desperate resistance to, or perhaps a denial of, the physical ageing process and the onset of deep old age.

Hence, the second interpretation of ‘competing for life’ is that older athletes are competing for the continuation of an empowered, enjoyable, active and healthy life. They are competing to save the best part of their lives (that is, their ability and independence) and to ward off deep old age for as long as possible. In other words, to many study participants competing in sport was about adding ‘life’ to years, not years to their life. These assertions pose new challenges and open up alternative ways of thinking about ageing and competition. The process of competition is not generally thought of as significant to older people, but this thesis reveals that for some of them competition in the context of sport is almost their ‘life blood’. Therefore, the stories of older athletes discussed in the thesis have the potential to perpetuate the fear of ageing and the value of youthfulness at both the individual and social levels. In particular, the thesis elucidates the intersection of four contradictory themes – friendship and fun, competition, youthfulness, and the ageing body – that emerged from observations of, and interviews with, older people competing in physically demanding sports. These findings contribute to theories of ageing by drawing attention to the complex interactions between resistance, empowerment, conformity, identity and denial that are being played out and developed among older athletes. Rather than attempt to resolve or ignore the contradictions that have emerged from studying this phenomenon, the thesis acknowledges their existence, brings them to the fore and seeks to understand them.

Structure of the Thesis

This introductory chapter highlights the emergence of Masters sport as an expanding institutionalised form of competitive sport tailored for older athletes. It contrasts the ideologies associated with mainstream sport to those about sport that is deemed age-appropriate for older people. Despite the participation of thousands of older adults in competitive sport, it was argued that there is no discourse available which encourages older people to be extremely active, competitive athletes. A tension between ‘serious competition’ and ‘friendly participation’ was identified at the centre of Masters sport and encapsulated in the phrase ‘friendly competition’. By investigating this contradiction and exploring the role competitive sport plays for a group of older people new understandings of competition and ageing will emerge.

Chapter 2 examines the literature on ageing that underlies the accepted view that older people are not, or should not, be serious competitive athletes involved in physically demanding sports. Taking a historical approach the chapter sets up two key contradictory yet equally important discourses of ageing that shape the social practices of older people in the West. First, it establishes the negative stereotypes of ageing and later life that dominated thinking for the majority of the twentieth century and remain embedded in society. Second, the ‘positive’ or ‘healthy’ ageing approaches that emerged in the 1970s to challenge the above stereotypes are examined. It is argued in the chapter that this discursive shift influenced the health and fitness promotion movement, provided space for older people initially to become physically active, and indeed legitimised the establishment of Masters sport and the like. However, it is also asserted that the healthy ageing messages that are being mobilised to encourage later life participation in sport remain silent on competitiveness, do not advocate extreme physical activity and may in fact reinforce a denial or repression of the inevitably ageing body. Therefore, it is argued that older people who compete in physically demanding sport are not only involved in using, resisting and negotiating conflicting discourses associated with sport, but also the dominant beliefs about ageing and the physicality of the body.

Chapter 3 examines contributions from the fields of sports science, leisure studies, exercise psychology, and social gerontology in order to determine the major reasons why older people compete in sport. Through a critical review of a range of research from these varying fields it is argued that the concepts of resistance, empowerment and identity management are important in understanding why older people participate in an activity that goes against the norm and in explaining how they negotiate the contradictions that are at the centre of their behaviour. Consequently, post-structural theories of sport and leisure behaviour, as well as traditional and postmodern understandings of identity management in later life are discussed. In particular, the chapter argues that post-structural theories of resistance and empowerment which have been effective in explaining the behaviour of marginalised groups in sport, when complemented by identity and life-stage theories, provide a theoretical framework that can be applied to understanding the experiences of older athletes. Therefore, in this chapter the theoretical framework for the thesis is established, and the strengths and limitations of past studies are determined.

The study's methodology is detailed in Chapter 4. The chapter begins by arguing that qualitative research into the nature of older athletes' experiences is necessary in order to address the research aims of the thesis. The interpretive phenomenological paradigm that guided this research is then explained and justified as appropriate given the theoretical framework of the thesis. A brief discussion of the qualitative methods of data collection and analysis is included in the chapter. An in-depth discussion of the data collection and sampling methods, data analysis, the researcher's influence, ethical considerations, the strengths and limitations of the research design, and a profile of the in-depth interviewees is provided in Appendix A.

The research findings and discussion are presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Four major themes emerged from the data analysis that best explain why older people compete in sport, how they negotiate contradictory discourses about sport and ageing, and how they manage the tension between their athletic identity and ageing bodies. The four key contradictory themes relate to notions of friendship and fun, competition,

youthfulness, and the ageing body. The first two themes are explored in Chapter 5. In this chapter it is argued that resistance, conformity and empowerment are being played out on various levels through the negotiation of the two opposing sides to Masters sport, ‘friendly participation’ and ‘serious competition’. The participants’ management of these conflicting viewpoints can be situated along a continuum. Many of them emphasise ‘friendship, fun and fitness’ while remaining silent on the competitive nature of their behaviour, some recognise that it is not age-appropriate for them to be extremely competitive, while many others overtly embrace the competitive ideology framing their experience. This latter group define themselves as competitive and compete in sport to win. Therefore, Chapter 5 is primarily a descriptive foil which establishes that serious competition is significant to many participants, while Chapter 6 explores the empowering and problematic nature of this behaviour at both the individual and social levels.

Chapter 6 is framed around two contrasting themes concerning youthfulness and the ageing body. It is argued initially in this chapter that participants embrace the practice and discourses associated with mainstream competitive sport and mobilise them to define ageing in terms of youthfulness, independence and resilience. By participating in a “young person’s game”⁶, they are proving to themselves and society that they are not yet ‘old’. Through an appropriation of symbols of youth and good health it is asserted that the participants express a positive identity and a sense of personal empowerment. The discussion of the final theme reveals that in order to maintain this sense of control over their lives, participants felt that they had to use their bodies as much as possible. In other words, the feelings of youthfulness and empowerment expressed by participants were primarily driven by a fear of the eventual physical decline and loss of independence associated with deep old age. In this sense, their actions go beyond the negotiation of discourses and demonstrate a desperate resistance to (or denial of) the physically ageing body. The chapter highlights the potential losses and problems associated with the ageing process, as well as the ways in which older athletes debate the tension between acceptance and denial of old age.

⁶ This quote was given by a participant in my study (Josef, aged 65, beach volleyball player).

Therefore, the phenomenon of older people competing in physically demanding sport is perhaps not as empowering as it initially seems because it is riddled with tensions, uncertainties and fears. The actions of older athletes have the potential to perpetuate the value of youthfulness and the repression of deep old age at both the social and individual levels. Furthermore, their behaviour can simultaneously reinforce age-appropriate discourses and establish new sets of orthodoxies that legitimise older people as competitive. These contradictory findings expose new challenges, as well as present alternative ways of understanding sport, competition, ageing and older people in the West. Chapter 7 summarises these major findings from the research, points to potential applications, and outlines possible areas for further investigation.

CHAPTER 2

‘HEALTHY AGEING’?: OPPOSING DISCOURSES OF AGEING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Introduction

This chapter explores the multiple understandings of ageing that have dominated thinking in Western cultures throughout the twentieth century and remain influential today. This aim requires an engagement with a number of different theoretical perspectives and disciplines, such as gerontology, physiology, psychology and sociology. It is argued that the discourses associated with ageing presented in this chapter underlie the orthodoxy that serious competition in physically demanding sports is not intended or appropriate for older people. So while the previous chapter set up two contradictory viewpoints about sport, this chapter establishes two conflicting yet equally important discourses of ageing that also shape the social practices and understandings of older people in Western society.

The purpose of the initial discussion on the dominant negative stereotypes of ageing is twofold. First, to indicate that in the West youthfulness is valued and ageing is not, and second, to provide the basis for the argument that negative understandings of ageing have influenced the accepted belief that older people are not serious competitive athletes. It will be shown that today's older people grew up in a cultural period where images and understandings of ageing were associated with frailty, disengagement and dependency on the health care system (Blaikie, 1999); and rest or minimal activity were the norm in later life (Grant, 2001).

Next, the emergence of a counter-discourse of ‘healthy’ or ‘positive’ ageing in the 1970s is discussed. Healthy ageing focuses on the potential of ageing rather than its limitations, as well as the value of individual choice and personal empowerment in

later life. This contemporary discourse has been used by governments and businesses to justify the promotion of physical activity and health among older people, which has (perhaps unintentionally) also made it possible for them to compete seriously in physically demanding sports. In addition, it provides space for older people to resist the negative stereotypes of older age that are embedded in the West (Wearing, 1995) as well as the physical and mental state of deep old age (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002; Laslett, 1989, 1996). However, these positive ageing messages do not advocate intense physical activity or serious competition. They have also been criticised for speaking only of ‘privileged’ older people and for reinforcing a fear or denial of deep old age.

Dominant Negative Understandings of Ageing

Ageing is a physiological, psychological, sociological and universal process (Coleman et al., 1993; Minichiello, Alexander & Jones, 1992a; Spirduso, 1995). As Spirduso (1995, p. 3) states, “The first truth about aging is that everybody does it. The second truth is that everybody does it differently”. Despite these facts, ageing, getting older or becoming old are commonly viewed as negative processes. In particular, older people have been stereotyped as a homogenous group in the West. The majority of knowledge about older people and ageing is based on denigrating stereotypes or unchallenged myths ingrained in society (McGuire, Boyd, & Tedrick, 1996; Thompson et al, 1990). Older age and ageing have a historical association with ill-health, disability, passivity, retirement, despair, loneliness, dependency on the health and welfare systems, loss of quality of life and the preparation for death (Blaikie, 1999; Butler, 1969; Bytheway, 1995; Friedan, 1993; Onyx & Benton, 1995; Rowe & Kahn, 1998). In other words, the underlying assumption for most of the twentieth century was that, “ageing means deficiency and a necessary curtailment of physical activities and social involvement” (Wearing, 1995, p. 263).

These negative stereotypes, in varying degrees, are built-in and disseminated through everyday language, humour, literature, the media, public attitudes, social policy and research, and they constitute the dominant negative discourses about

older age at the social, interpersonal and individual levels (Onyx & Benton, 1995; Wearing, 1995). They are also entrenched in sport and leisure discourses. Generally speaking, Western society idolises youthfulness, competitiveness, achievement, health, autonomy and independence and is anxious about factors commonly associated with ageing (Blaikie, 1999; Hurd, 1999; Kaufman, 1993; Laura & Johnston, 1997; Minichiello et al., 1992b; Neumayer & Goddard, 1998; Secker, Hill, Villeneuve & Parkman, 2003). In short, Western culture devalues both men and women as they age.

So pervasive were the disparaging stereotypes of older people for the majority of the twentieth century that the word ‘ageism’ was introduced by Robert Butler (1969). Ageism is a complex form of social oppression based on age, similar to prejudice based on race or gender (Bytheway, 1995). Ageism is defined as, “... a set of social relations that discriminate against older people and set them apart as being different by defining and understanding them in an oversimplified, generalised way” (Minichiello, Brown, & Kendig, 2000, p. 253). Therefore, ageism refers in part to making assumptions about how an older person behaves and what issues they are likely to encounter. As Minichiello et al. (1992b, p. 1) state, “One aspect of being old which is culturally constant is the symbolic loading of old age in this society with undesirable traits or stigma”. Such negative typecasting affects what is expected of older people, contributes to the establishment of age-appropriate norms, and highlights the value of youthfulness over older age. Therefore, stereotyping can contribute to the social oppression or marginalisation of older individuals (Biggs, 1993).

It is this aspect of ageism – stereotyping – that is relevant in addressing the research aims of this thesis because the actions of older athletes seemingly pose a challenge to such labelling. To make a connection between the negative understandings of ageing that dominated thinking prior to the 1970s and the orthodoxy that older people are not serious competitive athletes, it is valuable to explore four interrelated discursive frames that underpin it: first, the structure of capitalist society and the accepted view that older age is a period of rest and retirement are briefly discussed;

second, different theories of ageing that were prominent in the 1950s and 1960s are canvassed; third, the importance of media images which promulgate derogatory stereotypes of older people is described; and finally, the field of gerontology is considered because it has influenced the belief that physical ageing is primarily a disease or disability.

For most of the twentieth century rest and disengagement from the productive sphere of society was the virtue of older age (Grant, 2001). This accepted view contributed to the stereotype that older people are unproductive and withdrawn individuals who are most likely living in nursing homes or relying heavily on the healthcare and welfare systems. From a British perspective, Blaikie (1999), Coleman et al. (1993) and Gilleard and Higgs (2002) argue that the rise of capitalism and the importance placed on productivity in Western society contributed to the structured dependency of the retired older population on the rest of society. Wearing (1995, p. 265) argues that the common belief is “that in industrial society most aged persons can be considered to have little purpose”. Additionally, the advent of the old age pension in the early 1900s, the emergence of the Welfare State and the establishment of institutions (such as nursing homes in the 1950s to segregate older people) were all factors leading indirectly to older people being perceived as a ‘social problem’ or a ‘burden’ on society (see Blaikie, 1999). According to Blaikie, the fact that older people are excluded from the productive spheres of society, along with a number of other socio-cultural factors, “helps to explain the stereotyping of old age for much of the twentieth century” (1999, p. 58). This typecasting positions older people as unproductive citizens who lack the physical and mental capacity to work. Older people were not expected to be in the workforce, let alone to compete in physically demanding sports. These domains were reserved for the young. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 1, the emergence of organised sport in the West has been linked to the Industrial Revolution when there was a push for physical health and fitness among young male workers in order to improve productivity (Coakley, 1994). It is not the intention of this thesis, however, to examine the social structures contributing to the stereotyping of older people and physical activity. Nevertheless, the above discussion touches on the

broader socio-cultural context underpinning dominant negative discourses of ageing.

Traditional Theories of Ageing

While there are numerous theories on ageing, one prominent theory of the twentieth century that has contributed most to the negative view of later life, as well as the belief that passivity not physical activity was a necessity in older age, is the disengagement theory by Cumming and Henry (1961). The disengagement theory takes a structural functionalist perspective. It emphasises the ‘natural’ withdrawal of older adults from productive social roles in preparation for their final disengagement (death) and society’s withdrawal from them in order to maintain social equilibrium (Cumming & Henry, 1961). While the voluntary (and in some cases involuntary) relinquishment of certain roles (such as retirement or raising children) and the devotion of more attention to a limited number of roles can be liberating for some individuals, generally speaking an acceptance of this theory has been heavily criticised “because it was perceived as legitimising a pattern of neglect of older people” (Kleiber, 1999, p. 162). Consequently, despite recent initiatives to encourage older people to remain in the workforce; for example, the Treasurer of Australia, Peter Costello, launched a discussion paper on flexible retirement in February 2004 which highlights the economic need to move away from early retirement (see Marriner, 2004); a widespread belief that older people should retire from employment, ‘slow down’ and take a ‘well-earned rest’ is entrenched in the West (Grant, 2001; Shephard, 1994; Spirduso, 1995).

In contrast to the disengagement theory, the activity theory (Havighurst, 1963) asserts that older people will be most fulfilled if they are more active and preserve as many roles and responsibilities as possible. Although there is some evidence to support this claim, the activity theory has been criticised because it assumes that for a person to age successfully they should continue to do activities they have done in middle adulthood or replace activities that must be renounced (Biggs, 1993). However, for the majority of older adults, the maintenance of previous levels of

functioning is not always possible. Also, if older adults participate in activities that are unfulfilling, lack meaning and are not self-expressive or self-directed then this behaviour will provide little value other than as a coping mechanism (Biggs, 1993). In other words, older people may use leisure to stay busy and keep their minds off losses or concerns (see Kleiber, 1999). Aged care organisations have often been criticised for planning repetitive activities for older adults with the purpose of filling in time (Godbey, 1994). The potential problems associated with people attempting to maintain activity levels of middle age into later life will be returned to when discussing the counter-discourse of positive ageing.

These theories and beliefs that dominated understandings of ageing in the 1950s and 1960s are reproduced in discourses associated with leisure whereby relatively passive activities such as lawn bowls, gardening, bingo and bridge are deemed the appropriate pursuits for older people (Grant, 2001, 2002; O'Brien Cousins, 2000; Vertinsky, 1995). Even in the twenty-first century, the Masters athletes in the study by Grant (2001) talked about how most older people were not as physically active as they should be. Due to pervasive messages that later life is a time for rest, passivity and social disengagement, the participants in Grant's study could understand why many older people did not participate in sport. However, the participants believed that this high level of inactivity among older people also reinforces a stereotypical view of ageing.

From a psychosocial perspective, lifespan development theories, although valuable in understanding ageing, have been criticised for focusing overtly on age-appropriate behaviours at each life stage and contributing to socio-cultural values and expectations being placed on older adults (Biggs, 1993; Hurd, 1999; Wearing, 1995). In traditional life-stage theories old age or later adulthood is typically labelled chronologically as 65 years and over and it is argued that individuals in this category have to cope with certain issues. For example, Havighurst (1972) states that older adults have to adapt to a decline in strength and health, adjust to retirement and reduced income, adjust to the death of spouse, establish an affiliation with their age group, adapt social roles and establish satisfactory living conditions.

Erik Erikson (1962) has been perhaps the most influential writer on the study of ageing from a psychosocial standpoint. According to Kleiber (1999, p. 164), “There are few ideas about growth and adjustment in later life more compelling than Erikson’s notion of establishing *ego integrity*” (emphasis in original).

Erikson’s lifecycle model recognises reciprocal influences between a person, their life history and the environment. Erikson (1962, 1980, 1997) argues that at each life stage there are a set of opposite developmental ‘tasks’, ‘issues’ or ‘tensions’ that require balance before an individual can successfully move on to the next stage of life. However, this is not to say that at each stage the ‘issue’ is either resolved or remains unresolved, thus allowing individuals to move through each psychosocial issue in succession. Rather, a resolution may be only partly successful and such unresolved issues will have a significant impact on all succeeding stages. In other words, each phase in the lifecycle involves a reintegration of the psychosocial themes of earlier periods through “... the process of bringing into balance the tension that is now focal” (Erikson, Erikson & Kivnick, 1986, p. 54). There were originally eight stages in Erikson’s lifecycle model, however, just before he died aged in his 90s, he and his wife (conveniently) revised it to include the ninth stage of life, which is described below (see Erikson, 1997). Considering longer life expectancy and the ageing of populations (especially those aged over 85), this recent extension of the lifecycle model is appropriate.

The psychosocial issue of ego integrity versus despair is the focus in old age – the eighth stage in Erikson’s lifecycle. Here, older adults confront the challenge of integrating their life’s successes and failures in the hope of finding meaning, balance and acceptance in their life. Ego integrity is a state of mind and it refers to accepting one’s life as is and not wanting to replace it with any other. It is also about having established a sense of connectedness and wholeness between oneself and the rest of the world. Therefore, to Erikson, achieving ego-integrity is about acceptance, contemplation, adaptation and reflection. Kleiber (1999) argues that the actions undertaken by older people in the context of leisure have an impact on ego integration. For example, participation in familiar leisure activities “... that

reinforce enduring aspects of the self” and involve interaction with others are beneficial to establishing a sense of ego and social integration. The lack or loss of ego integrity “... is signified by despair and an often unconscious fear of death” (Erikson, 1980, p. 104). Despair is expressed in regret, displeasure, hopelessness, uncertainty and disgust with one’s life and a feeling that life is too short to change one’s path. The ninth stage of life involves reflecting on each of the previous eight stages through the experienced eyes of an 80 or 90-year-old (see Erikson, 1997). In particular, in discussing this final stage of life Erikson highlights all of the previous tensions with which an individual must cope. The issues of accepting and adapting to older age, rather than fighting or ignoring it, are central to the lifespan development theories of Havighurst and Erikson. Arguably, from this perspective, the idea of older people competing against their ageing body and possibly attempting to deny old age would be considered more detrimental to an ageing identity than helpful.

Clearly, ‘competitive’ or ‘athletic’ tendencies are not considered relevant to the later stages of life and older adults are not expected to compete in sport. According to Olson (2001, p. 3) prior the 1970s “... mainstream thinking was still not into fitness and running for people 40 and above ... [they’re] too old ... And forget the over-60 crowd. They were expected to start looking for a comfortable rocking chair”. The orthodoxy that people in later life are ‘too old’ to worry about competing seriously in sport continues. For instance, Grant found that the Masters athletes in his study were confronted with ageist attitudes when they returned to sport aged in their 50s and 60s, such as not being envisaged “to play with any degree of seriousness let alone train and try to improve” (2001, p. 788). Moreover, lifespan development theories at the turn of the twentieth century suggested that development had stopped during middle adulthood, and the identity of older people could no longer be shaped (Coakley, 2001). Consequently, competitive sport was traditionally organised for young people and promoted as a means of building their ‘character’ (Coakley, 2001).

Media Images

The media have also been influential in establishing and reinforcing age-appropriate behaviours and negative stereotypes of older people. The media tend to disregard older people or, alternatively, highlight the frailties of older age, the social and economic ‘problems’ of the ageing population, and more recently the almost unattainable images of ‘youthful’ older people (Biggs, 1993; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Wearing, 1995). For example, Wearing (1995) observes that in Australia older people have been virtually ignored in literature and television. When they are represented in novels, movies and television, she claims they are depicted as frail, disabled, lonely, dependent, withdrawn, widowed, forgetful, senile or cranky individuals. Nowadays, an unrealistic and perpetual middle-aged image of older adults is often disseminated in the media, such as the grandparent without wrinkles or grey hair and with infinite vitality (Biggs, 1993). Furthermore, fears about old age are reinforced through the media. The media often flag the impending economic ‘crisis’ of an ageing population (for example, see Marriner (2004) for a report on Peter Costello’s recent campaign to boost the number of people in the workforce and delay retirement in Australia). There are also various commercials and ‘popular’ press that promote anti-ageing remedies (Coleman et al., 1993; Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Minichiello et al., 1992b). Consequently, the media have been reproached for propagating myths about older adults or doing little to dispel them (Biggs, 1993). Wearing (1995) also discusses the incorporation of derogatory stereotypes in humour, such as birthday cards that joke about physical losses and age concealment. She claims that such “cultural representations of old persons in our society each contribute in an informal way to the dominant [negative] discourse on ageing” (Wearing, 1995, p. 267). They also influence public attitudes towards both older people and age-appropriate expectations. In more formal discourses of ageing, such as those of the field of gerontology, negative stereotypes of ageing and older people have also become ingrained.

Gerontological Discourse

While gerontology and geriatrics have shaped understandings of ageing and perceptions of older people in Western countries, gerontological discourse has been criticised for contributing to negative stereotypes of older adults (Johnson, 1995; Minichiello et al., 1992a; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Wearing, 1995). In particular, the persistent medicalisation and pathologic view of the ageing body within the field of gerontology has been influential in shaping negative social and individual evaluations of the older body. For example, signs of ageing such as greying hair, wrinkly skin and physical decline are viewed as unattractive and indicate bodily betrayal (Biggs, 1993; Blaikie, 1999). The medicalisation of ageing refers to the establishment of gerontology and the growth of geriatrics as a unique branch of medicine which emphasises the physical ‘problems’ of ageing (Blaikie, 1999). Gerontology is a multi-disciplinary field that draws on research from clinical medicine, and the biological, behavioural and social sciences to study ageing, and geriatrics refers to the study of health care and the medical treatment of frail older people (McPherson, 1998; Minichiello et al., 1992a). The traditional approach of gerontologists involves examining ageing from a pathological perspective, which presents images of diseases, aches and pains, biological deterioration and loss. In particular, the medicalisation of the ageing body means that the whole process of “senescence bec[o]me[s] a perilous state of existence requiring constant medical care” (Vertinsky, 1995, p. 229). In other words, to gerontologists older age is assumed to be a homogenous, negative phase of life and ageing is viewed as biological decline (Hurd, 1999).

The field of gerontology has extensive literature on people who are ill, close to death, or suffering from dementia, cancers, heart disease and incontinence. Until recently, there was minimal information on health, physical activity, diet, preventative medicine or social and cultural factors that can positively affect ageing (Lamdin & Fugate, 1997; McCormack, 2000). These dominant views of older age are based on a model of biological decline. In biological terms ageing is seen as decline and deterioration in bodily structure and function. According to Bond,

Briggs & Coleman (1993) it is a process whereby cells in the body die or replicate with reduced function due to either a genetic program or random chemical reactions. Biological understandings of ageing have the potential to influence popular perceptions that older people are naturally inferior to the young (Wearing, 1995). More specifically, placing emphasis on the deteriorating ageing body has the potential for older adults' participation in exercise or competitive sport to be viewed as either unattainable or exceptional (or deviant). In other words, noting the athletic achievements of older people (such as in the media articles discussed at the beginning of this thesis) "may unwittingly contribute to ageism [if] the reader perceives such feats as disassociated from the normal aging process ... rather than as evidence of the potential held by the majority of older adults" (Flatten, 1991, p. 67).

The negative attitudes towards older people and stereotypes about their inability or ill health were reflected in the types of exercise prescribed and promoted for older people in the past. Rest and gentle exercise for therapeutic reasons were the norm, overexertion was thought to be life threatening, and sports were perceived as inappropriate or unenjoyable for older people (Hargreaves, 1994; Vertinsky, 1995). Even though competitive sport is now available for older people, the pervasiveness of these stereotypes means that the orthodoxy is that older adults are not and 'should not' be serious competitive athletes (Adair & Vamplew, 1997; Burns, 1992; Grant, 2001; Vertinsky, 1995). Thus, the dominant gerontological discourse seems to position older people as frail, dependent and incapable of vigorous, athletic, competitive activity (Johnson, 1995; Onyx & Benton, 1995; Vertinsky, 1995; Wearing, 1995) and many older people internalise these stereotypes. In this sense, those who are competing in physically demanding sports appear to be a deviant group whose behaviour cannot be completely explained by traditional negative understandings of ageing.

The above discussion helps explain why prior to the 1970s organised physically demanding competitive sports were not available to older people within Australia or many other Western countries. Today's older generation have lived through a

period where disability, loss, rest and disengagement from the workforce and other social roles were considered the norm in later life (Grant, 2001; Shephard, 1994; Spirduso, 1995). Arguably, the stereotypes embedded into the dominant discourses of ageing that portray older people as frail, dependent and passive members of society, have effectively isolated and disempowered many older people, normalising them into believing that they cannot, or should not, do certain things (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Wearing, 1995). In Foucaultian⁷ terms, this process is understood as the production of docile bodies. That is, many older people internalise the norms that are placed upon them by society (such as, that they are, or should be, passive and dependent) and consider athletic endeavours to be foolish or unsuitable in old age (see O'Brien Cousins, 2000; Roper et al. 2003). Grant (2002) asserts that many older people accept socio-culturally constructed norms that physical activity is inappropriate and consider it legitimate to be sedentary. For example, there is evidence to suggest that many older women believe exerting and physically fatiguing activities are too risky for them and consequently they do not become physically active (O'Brien Cousins, 1995, 2000; Vertinsky, 1995). Clearly, the negative stereotypes about ageing along with other factors such as ability, resources and motives can and have constrained many older people from competing in sport (Grant, 2001; McPherson, 1999; Vertinsky, 1995).

The dominant negative view of ageing in Western society has not changed much in recent years (Johnson, 1995). The general public continue to stereotype older people as frail, passive, incapacitated and a burden on the welfare system (Gandee et al., 1989). According to Gandee et al. (1989, p. 72), “Myths concerning aging can be put to rest if opportunities are provided for [older people] to demonstrate the benefits of their independent lifestyle”. For example, Flatten (1991, p. 67) argues that research into the achievements of older athletes “is a much needed change from Western society’s continued portrayal of the elderly as being sick, frail, invalid, demented, and unproductive”. Similarly, in reference to the Senior Olympic Games in the United States, Gandee et al. (1989, p. 72) argue that, “The enthusiasm with

⁷ Foucaultian refers collectively to Michel Foucault’s work on subjectivity, power, knowledge, discourse, history, sexuality, madness, the penal system and so on.

which the Games are received by older adults is evidence that athletic achievement has no age barrier and contrasts sharply with societal expectations regarding aging, such as inactivity, weight gain, and loss of previous skills". Hargreaves (1994, p. 267) states that a growing number of older women are resisting traditional assumptions about the physical capabilities of the female body through their involvement in "untypical activities" such as Masters and Veterans competitions. She provides several examples of women who are "actively redefining" the conservative view that only passive exercise and gentle movements are appropriate for older women (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 266). Hargreaves goes on to argue that the accomplishments of older women in Masters events have transformed the belief that sport for the elderly is fundamentally therapeutic "to an image of positive health and autonomy" (1994, p. 268). Recently, Roper et al. (2003, p. 373) examined the sporting experiences of an 88-year-old male runner in part to "give others a sense of what is possible for older adults". It is implied in the above literature, and will be further discussed in Chapter 3, that older people who compete in sport are automatically seen to be resisting the dominant negative stereotypes associated with ageing and feeling empowered to live a fulfilled and healthy life. However this interpretation may represent only part of the story.

In the 1970s there was a discursive shift and the dominant negative stereotypes of older people and physical activity were challenged by an emerging positive ageing approach. With the surfacing of this discourse and the health and fitness movement it underpinned, opportunities for sports participation in later life increased. In addition, the changing viewpoints and images associated with ageing not only challenge traditional negative understandings of older age at a societal level, but they provide space for older individuals to reject ageist attitudes and feel empowered (Wearing, 1995). The shift also provides opportunities for them to resist the ageing process and the Fourth Age (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002; Laslett, 1989, 1996). These latter points will be further discussed in the next chapter. The following is an examination of the positive ageing discourse and its relationship to the promotion of physical activity and sport for older people.

A ‘Positive’ Side to Ageing?

Positive ageing or healthy ageing discourses refer collectively to research, theories, images or attitudes about ageing which argue that later life should be celebrated as a period for enjoyment, good health, independence, vitality, exploration, challenge, productivity, creativity, growth and development, rather than be solely focused upon decline and hopelessness (Chodzko-Zajko, 2000; Davis, 1994; Friedan, 1993; Grant, 2002; Johnson, 1995; Kelly & Freysinger, 2000; McPherson, 1998; Perls & Silver, 1999; Schulz & Salthouse, 1999). Adherents claim that because of the negative images and stories about ageing prevalent in Western society there is a need to examine the positive and healthy side of ageing. Therefore, notions of positive ageing set out to challenge the persistent and popularly held belief that older age is solely a period of physical and mental decline, disengagement from society, passivity and dependence (Thompson et al., 1990; Vertinsky, 1995; Wearing, 1995). The phrases ‘positive ageing’, ‘healthy ageing’, ‘successful ageing’, or ‘ageing well’ are used interchangeably to define research into the process of “growing old with good health, strength, and vitality” (Rowe & Kahn, 1998, p. 23). According to McPherson (1998, p. 301), “Good health in later life means a general feeling of well-being, the absence of major disease or illness symptoms, and the ability to engage in preferred activities”. Such research highlights the potential for health, fulfilment and personal empowerment in later life, as well as provides an understanding of the lives of those who are enjoying an independent and active later life (Davis, 1994; Friedan, 1993; Johnson, 1995; Kelly & Freysinger, 2000; McPherson, 1998; Perls & Silver, 1999; Schulz & Salthouse, 1999).

To explore this change in the understanding of ageing and its relationship to the now accepted view that older people should be physically active, it is important to consider four key ideas: socio-cultural factors; theories of the Third and Fourth Ages; the benefits of physical activity; and, the health and fitness promotion movement. It is argued that positive ageing discourses underpin the age-appropriate “fun, friendship and fitness” philosophy (Hurley, 2001, p. 9) of Masters

sport that was discussed in Chapter 1. Furthermore, although the promotion of healthy ageing sounds promising, it is also problematic. Therefore, the last section of this chapter is devoted to analysing key debates about healthy ageing and its positive and negative implications.

Cultural Context and the Third Age

Blaikie (1999, p. 9) argues that with the shift from modernity to postmodernity “... consumerist values [have] come to outweigh production-based ideals”, which in turn positively affect popular views of later life (see also Gilleard and Higgs, 2000, 2002). Postmodernity is characterised by plurality, fragmentation and a rejection of ‘universal truth’. It presents individuals with a variety of choices and opportunities that may not have existed in the past. As discussed, above, the emphasis on production in capitalist societies deemed older retired people as worthless and dependent. An emerging focus on consumption, leisure and pleasure during retirement on the other hand has contributed to older people being the valued targets of products and services, such as those which promote youthfulness and active living (Gilleard and Higgs, 2000, 2002; Grant, 2002). Blaikie (1999) goes so far as to postulate that, because of the emergence of a consumer culture, popular perceptions of older age have altered from dark images of sickness and decline in health to ones of liberation and exploration. Arguably, a shift has begun, but negative discourses of ageing continue to underlie contemporary Western society. Another socio-cultural factor contributing to the emergence of alternative understandings of ageing and older people is the substantial demographic shift that started to be noticed around this time. As discussed in Chapter 1, the economic concerns of an inactive and unhealthy ageing population have also prompted the promotion of a physically active later life. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the numerous socio-cultural factors contributing to the shift in discourses associated with ageing. However, the two abovementioned examples provide some insight into the broader context of this occurrence.

The ageing population (coupled with various socio-cultural changes) has allowed

for the emergence of an early old age called the Third Age “... as a social phenomenon of the later twentieth century” (Blaikie, 1999, p. 22, Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, 2002). In recognising that people are living longer and healthier lives there has been a rethinking of later life into two sequential stages: The Third Age and the Fourth (Laslett, 1989, 1996; Sheehy, 1996; Young & Schuller, 1991). This distinction challenges the lifespan theories discussed above where old age was understood as the final stage of life, usually commencing after retirement or at age 65. As asserted by Gilleard & Higgs (2000, p. 8) “It is increasingly meaningless to consider ‘age’ as conferring some common social identity or to treat ‘older people’ as a distinct social group acting out of shared concerns and common interests”. According to Laslett (1989), the Third Age is a period of later life characterised by ‘relative’ freedom, health, leisure, personal achievement and independence that generally begins at retirement from work or family obligations and is expected to last about thirty years. While Laslett recognises that a community of the Third Age is only possible “in the company of a nationwide society of those with the disposition, freedom, and means to act in the appropriate manner” (1989, p. 77), he argues that this period of life should be devoted to self-fulfilment through activities that provide pleasure and self-worth. Additionally, the Third Age is full of uncertainties and possibilities (Laslett, 1989). Therefore, key dimensions of the Third Age are reflexivity and choice which are also characteristic of the management of an ageing identity in a period of postmodernity (as will be discussed in Chapter 3).

The major guideline of the theory of the Third Age is for individuals to continue physical and mental activity so “that the Fourth Age will come as late and be as brief as possible” (Laslett, 1989, p. 61). Similarly, a more recent theory of adult development, the continuity theory, posits that older people will be most fulfilled if they are able to “preserve and maintain existing psychological [internal continuity] and social patterns [external continuity] by applying familiar knowledge, skills and strategies” (Atchley, 1993, p. 5). In this theory, it is the maintenance of meaning that the activity and its social context hold for the individual that is most important, not the activity *per se* (see Atchley, 1989, 1993, 1997; Kleiber, 1999). According

to Kleiber (1999, p. 113) “Continuity becomes more important with age and is a source of security and integrity in later life”. However, the ability to maintain existing physical and mental patterns becomes difficult in the face of an ageing body and the loss of significant others (see Kleiber, 1999). As a result, the Third Age can be accompanied by repression and denial of the Fourth Age (Blaikie, 1999). In other words, while dominant lifespan theories of the twentieth century argued that ‘acceptance’ was the key to successful ageing (or reaching ego-integrity) (Erikson, 1962; Havighurst, 1972), contemporary understandings of ageing treat this acceptance of old age as moral or personal failure and instead argue that it is a state to be resisted (see Gillard & Higgs, 2002). Therefore, understandings of the Third and Fourth Ages, as well as the continuity theory, may provide insight into why older people want to remain active and how older athletes negotiate the tension between the ageing of their bodies and their continued participation in physically demanding sports.

The Fourth Age or ‘deep old age’, can come at any time and it refers to the so called ‘disability zone’ which is characterised by sickness, dependency, decrepitude, frailty and the imminence of death (Blaikie, 1999; Laslett, 1989). Due to the inevitability of biological decline this period of life will come to everyone if they live long enough. As Erikson (1997, p. 105) states, “Even the best cared-for bodies begin to weaken and do not function as they once did”. Although the percentage of older people who are fully independent and disease-free decreases with advancing age, approximately only five percent of people over the age of 60 in countries like Australia, United Kingdom, Canada and the United States are frail, debilitated and living in retirement villages, hospitals, psychiatric wards, or nursing homes (Blaikie, 1999; McCormack, 2000). The remaining ninety-five percent of older people are living independently, mostly outside the public health and welfare systems (Blaikie, 1999; Davis, 1994; Lamdin & Fugate, 1997; McPherson, 1998). In fact, research has shown that the Fourth Age is more often compressed into the last couple of years before death (Blaikie, 1999; Laslett, 1989; McPherson, 1998; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Thompson et al., 1990).

Nevertheless, major criticisms of Laslett's theory of the Third Age include its idealism and its suppression of the darker and irrevocable side of the ageing process (see Blaikie, 1999; Gilleard & Higgs, 2002). By stating that the onset of the Fourth Age "... and hence its duration, should be put off for as long as possible" (Laslett, 1989, p. 154) the theory contributes to the fear of deep old age in the West and in part the desire to resist it. Physical activity associated with sport may be one way older people are attempting to defy or deny the Fourth Age. The theory of the Third Age also ignores socio-cultural inequalities, speaking only of older people who have the resources, ability and desire to take responsibility for their own health. Such discourses have the potential to further marginalise individuals inhabiting the Fourth Age (Blaikie, 1999). The theory also constitutes and reinforces notions of positive ageing. Therefore, the abovementioned criticisms can be applied generally to positive ageing approaches and they will be discussed in more detail towards the end of this chapter.

A positive ageing literature is emerging in the related fields of gerontology and health care (Bevan & Jeeawody, 1998; Davis, 1994; Rowe & Kahn, 1998), exercise promotion (Laura & Johnston, 1997; O'Brien Cousins, 1998; van Norman, 1995), and leisure (Dupuis, 2002; Fontane & Hurd, 1992). The literature includes multiple messages about autonomy for older people, alternative ways of viewing ageing, advice on leisure and lifestyle, the health benefits of physical activity, and exercise program development (Grant & Stothart, 1999). Traditionally, the sole focus of gerontology was on addressing age-related problems and diseases, in particular physical and mental decline, not preventing them (Friedan, 1993; Johnson, 1995; Thompson et al., 1990). Physically active leisure was deemed inappropriate or irrelevant to older people. However, the contemporary shift in discourse challenges these dominant views and provides space for older people to become physically active (as well as opportunities for them to resist the ageing process) (Bevan & Jeeawody, 1998; Davis, 1994; Dupuis, 2002; Fontane & Hurd, 1992; Johnson, 1995; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Sheehy, 1996). According to Grant (2002, p. 285), "Older adults can live vital, independent, and active lives, and a leisure renaissance is seen as playing a positive part in this process".

Leisure pursuits are a significant source of pleasure which offer physical, psychological and social health benefits. It is also recognised that they can assist older people to adjust to retirement and/or the loss of a companion (see Godbey, 1994; Grant & Stothart, 1999; Kelly, 1993; Kleiber, 1999; Lopata, 1993; MacNeil & Teague, 1987; McGuire et al., 1996; McPherson, 1991). In particular, physically active leisure pursuits have been identified as key ingredients to healthy ageing (Dupuis, 2002; Fontane, 1996; Grant, 2002; Neumayer & Goddard, 1998; Rowe & Kahn, 1998). For example, a range of ‘popular’ and academic texts have been published on exercise programming for older people, encouraging them to ‘take responsibility’ for their own health through exercise (see Clark, 1992; Fiatarone Singh, 2000; Laura & Johnston, 1997; O'Brien Cousins, 1998; van Norman, 1995). These books provide suggestions on how individuals can incorporate physical activity into their lives. Many of the texts are also written as guides for exercise professionals who work with the elderly (for example, Cotton, Ekeroth, & Yancy, 1998). A discussion of the physical and psychological benefits of physical activity is provided below, as it is these positive aspects of exercise that are being mobilised in discourse to rationalise sports participation among older people.

‘Never too late’ to Benefit from Physical Activity

Over the past thirty years the sport, exercise, and physical activity sciences have emerged as scholarly disciplines and contributed to the promotion of physically active lifestyles as a desired aim for older people (McPherson, 1994). As supported by Chodzko-Zajko (2000, p. 340):

The past quarter century has seen a tremendous expansion of interest into the physical activity needs of older persons. This interest is reflected in an increase in scientific journals, scholarly publications, and academic meetings focusing on physical activity and aging.

Due to this expansion of knowledge, van Norman (1995) argues that the general

public is more aware of the role physical activity can play in maintaining a healthy lifestyle well into older age. Extensive evidence now exists on the physical, social and psychological health benefits of regular exercise, particularly as people grow older (for an overview see O'Brien Cousins & Horne, 1999; and also Cotton et al., 1998; O'Brien Cousins, 1998; Rowe & Kahn, 1998). The physical activity and ageing literature are predominantly written from exercise psychology or sports science perspectives, which look more broadly at physical activity rather than the role competitive sport plays in the lives of older people. Although sport-related literature has generally concentrated on younger adult populations, over the past couple of decades there has been a growth in studies attempting to understand the relationship between older people and sport (such as, Gill et al., 1996; Smith & Storandt, 1997). Many studies have explored older peoples' motives for participation in physical activity, the physiological and psychological benefits gained from exercising, and the perceived barriers to leading a physically active lifestyle (see Deforche & De Bourdeaudhuij, 2000; Grant, 2001; O'Brien Cousins, 1998, 2000; Resnick & Spellbring, 2000; van Norman, 1998). According to Deforche and De Bourdeaudhuij (2000) the reasons why older people engage in physical activity commonly identified in the literature include enjoyment, social interactions, feeling younger, improving body image and general health benefits.

The physiological benefits of regular exercise for older people are well established in the literature (see Chodzko-Zajko, 2000; Fontane, 1996; Shephard, 1997; Spirduso, 1995; Sutton & Brock, 1986). Studies within the sports sciences field have shown that older adults who partake in physical activities involving muscular strength, weight-bearing or endurance (aerobic capacity) experience improved strength or prevented muscle wastage, increased joint mobility and flexibility, have less risk of falling, less chance of developing a disability or age-related diseases (such as diabetes mellitus, arthritis, coronary heart disease, osteoporosis) and tend to have a greater span of independent living (Evans, 1999; Fiatarone, 1996; Hurley & Roth, 2000; Kavanagh & Shephard, 1990; Shephard, 2001; Tseng, Marsh, Hamilton, & Booth, 1995; Washburn, 2000; Work, 1989). Undoubtedly, however, physical function does decrease in older age, especially with regard to peak physical

performance and athletic ability (Ericsson, 1990; Olson, 2001; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Spirduso, 1995). For instance, Rowe and Kahn (1998) argue that the best performances of elderly marathon runners and Masters swimmers do not match those of similarly trained young athletes, or of themselves when they were younger.

It has also been shown through studies within the area of exercise psychology that physical activity is positively related to social and psychological well-being and overall perceived quality of life, especially among older people (Chodzko-Zajko, 2000; Ellingson & Conn, 2000; Fisher, Pickering, & Li, 2002; Harahousou, Lailoglou & Kabitsis, 2003; McAuley & Rudolph, 1995; O'Brien Cousins & Horne, 1999; Resnick, 2000; Shephard, 1996; Stathi, Fox, & McKenna, 2002; van Norman, 1995). The physical well-being and mental vigour associated with physical activity are undoubtedly interrelated. For example, the maintenance of an independent lifestyle, which can occur in part through regular physical activity associated with sport, is essential to retaining feelings of autonomy and control over life (Rowe & Kahn, 1998). These feelings arising from physical activity are strongly linked to a sense of life satisfaction, improved self-concept and self-confidence, positive self-esteem, and decreased levels of stress, anxiety and depression in later life (McAuley & Rudolph, 1995; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Stathi et al., 2002). The psychological and physiological evidence described above also suggests that it is never too late to gain benefits from regular physical activity (Jones, Sloane, & Alexander, 1992; Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

Many researchers within the fields of exercise psychology and sports science take an applied approach to understanding the relationship between physical activity and older people. They provide recommendations for exercise personnel who work with older people on how to structure physical activity in order to foster physical, social and psychological benefits, as well as attend to policy implications for promoting an active later life. Therefore, the exercise psychology and sports science investigations cited above are linked to a concern for the consequences of an ageing population, in particular the perceived negative social and personal effects of a sedentary older population. As a result, research within these fields

rarely critically addresses broader socio-cultural issues or discourses underpinning older peoples' participation in sport and exercise nor do they draw on social theory or qualitative data. Although research from these fields offer valuable insights into the phenomenon of active older adults, any attempt to comprehend the meanings older people attach to their participation in physically active pursuits that ignores the influence of accepted views within the broader socio-cultural context is limited. Furthermore, the physical activity and ageing literature includes competitive sport participation as part of its discourse. However, I argue that competing in physically demanding sport cannot be put under the same umbrella as health, physical activity or non-competitive exercise because it represents a unique and extreme behaviour that is not completely explained by the positive ageing literature.

Nevertheless, governments and businesses have used the knowledge base gained from academic and scientific evidence on the benefits of physical activity for older people to justify the health and fitness promotion movement (McPherson, 1994). Positive ageing also underlies the notion of Masters sport as a means for older people to remain physically, socially and mentally active and healthy, rather than be serious competitors. Consequently, the message now is that older bodies are meant to be active in order to remain healthy (Grant, 2001), but not necessarily extremely physically active or competitive. The health and fitness promotion movement makes this message clear.

Health and Fitness Promotion to Older People

While Australia, like North America and the United Kingdom, has an established history in leisure, recreation and sports provision at all government levels, the promotion and provision of physical activity as a positive health outcome for older people became prominent in the 1970s and remains so today. As discussed in Chapter 1, due to the changing demographics, international organisations, governments, commercial agencies, practitioners and community groups are more focused on the 'needs' of the ageing population (Grant, 2002; McCormack, 2000). In Australia, the promotion of physical activity and sport has been recognised as

part of the strategy to improve overall health outcomes. For example, the Australian Sports Commission and Department of Veteran Affairs (2001) have combined efforts under the *Active Australia* initiative to promote sport and physical activity participation among the Veteran community in Australia through the *Never too late!* program and the *Older, Smarter, Fitter* document. The latter document is a guide for providers of sport and physical activity programs for older Australians. The *Active Australia* campaign is also partly responsible for promoting sport and physical recreation activities to all older Australians (see Australian Sports Commission, 1999). These fitness and health-oriented campaigns continue to direct public attention to the virtues of an active lifestyle in older age. More specifically, the popularity of the Masters Games has led to an eagerness on the part of federal, state and local governments, as well as commercial stakeholders, to provide financial support for many of the national, state and regional Masters Games that are held regularly around Australia (Vamplew et al., 1994). In fact, the Australian Masters Games are now held in trust on behalf of Australian sport by Sports Industry Australia (formally the Confederation of Australian Sport) which is an organisation that recognises the importance of the Masters Games in: encouraging mature aged people to begin or continue active participation in sport; promoting sporting organisations to develop their own mature age events, and; keeping the ageing population fit and active (Australian Masters Games, 2001). Here, it can be seen that while sports participation is being promoted to the older population its focus is not serious competition or strenuous physical activity, but keeping fit and socially active through exercise.

In terms of international organisations, a document that supports exercise for older people is *The Heidelberg Guidelines for Promoting Physical Activity among Older Persons*, produced by the World Health Organization (1997). In this document targeting people over the age of 50 it is claimed that participation in physical activity in later life can provide individuals with the following benefits: psychological (including enhanced positive outlook on life, improved sense of well-being and self-esteem); physiological (such as increased muscle strength, balance, power and aerobic capacity) and; social (for example, companionship, friendship,

interaction with others, challenging the stereotypes and personal empowerment) (World Health Organization, 1997). It is also argued that physical activity in later life will reduce health and social welfare costs, enhance the productivity of older adults and promote an active image of older people. Indeed, the participation of older people in sport and exercise is considered to benefit the health of individuals, as well as society in general. Similar national documents include *The National Strategy for an Ageing Australia* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999), the Canadian *Blueprint for Action for Active Living and Older Adults* (Active Living Coalition for Older Adults, 1999) and the USA's *National Blueprint for Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults Age 50 and Older* (American Association of Retired Persons et al., 2001). Such strategies not only outline the perceived benefits of physical activity to older individuals and encourage self-responsibility and personal empowerment, they also highlight the underlying social and economic concerns of an ageing population across the developed world (Grant, 2002). Furthermore, the claims made in these documents are justified by the positive ageing discourses that have been outlined above.

Therefore, the emergence of organised sport for older people can be linked to the health and fitness promotion movement and its underlying ideas of positive ageing, as well as the 'benefits' of physical activity for older people and society in general. A brief article by Flatten (1991) and an extensive literature review by McPherson (1994) trace the roots of the contemporary social phenomenon of older athletes from a North American standpoint. According to Flatten (1991, p. 66), "The world's senior athletes are a product of the fitness boom", with the public and private sectors throughout the Western world offering "fitness- and sport-related leisure activities for older adults", such as fun runs, 'come and try' days, walking programs and mass aerobics. The fitness boom of the 1970s expanded when the private sector recognised the emergence of a new market and viewed sport and leisure participation in later life as a source of potential profit (McPherson, 1994). Physical activity, leisure and sport programs and facilities appeared in many European countries, as well as Australia, New Zealand, North America, and the United Kingdom (Flatten, 1991). This process provided space for older people to

compete in sport. For instance, Grant (2001) found that fifteen New Zealand Masters athletes (aged 71-78) returned to competing in sport when aged in their mid-50s and early 60s, which coincides with the 1970s fitness boom. Furthermore, the increase in knowledge of the physiological aspects of ageing that has occurred since the 1970s also led to greater attention being given to the performance criteria of the older population. This interest presents another reason why this group was singled out for competitive purposes in sports such as swimming and athletics, where performances can be objectively measured (Vamplew et al., 1994, p. 441, see also Olson, 2001). Nevertheless, the philosophy underlying the emergence of Masters and Veterans sport was about playing sport for the ‘wonderful fun of it’, establishing friendships and keeping fit, not competing to win or monitor performance levels!

While the promotion of a physically active lifestyle sounds promising it puts the onus on individuals in terms of being responsible for their own health. It ignores social constraints, and assumes that individuals have the ability and resources to lead such a lifestyle (Wearing & Wearing, 1990). Furthermore, it provides a strong message that a healthy population is more about reducing government costs than addressing the needs of the older population (McCormack, 2000). The opposite approach to health promotion is health protection whereby the government performs a whole range of tasks to protect people and their health and ensure equal opportunity. Indeed, over the past twenty years health policy in Australia has moved away from the principal focus of providing health care services (or health protection) towards better population health outcomes (or health promotion) (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999; McCormack, 2000). Gilleard and Higgs (2000, p. 197) observe that “Throughout the world, governments see later life as a matter of individual responsibility”. In other words, among politicians and health planners there has been “a shift from a medical approach to health care to a personal lifestyle approach” (McPherson, 1994, p. 339).

The contemporary literature on positive ageing advocates the prevention or delaying of poor health through self-responsibility, and these discourses underlie

health and fitness promotion. For example, Rowe and Kahn (1998) define successful ageing as an individual's ability to avoid disease and disease-related disability, maintain cognitive and physical function (for example, through exercise and leisure), as well as an active engagement in life (by maintaining close relationships and involvement in personally meaningful activities) for as long as possible. Evidently, this notion is consistent with the key message underlying the theory of the Third Age and the continuity theory (outlined above). Considerable debates have emerged in regard to the effectiveness of these health promotion and positive ageing approaches as strategies to empower older people given the many individual and socio-cultural determinants of health, and inequalities of opportunities (see Bury, 1998; Minkler, 1999).

‘Healthy Ageing’: Is it all ‘Positive’?

Advocates of positive ageing argue that the message is not that growing older is devoid of loss, decline and pain (Davis, 1994; Feldman, Kamler, & Snyder, 1996; Johnson, 1995; Sheehy, 1996). Rather, it is about arguing that later life can be a satisfying period and that ageing is not only or always negative. From this perspective, ageing is interpreted as a personal journey that can take many different paths, have many different images and which should be examined “on its own terms” (Friedan, 1993, p. 450). Rowe and Kahn (1998, p. 23) argue that rather than attempting to glorify ageing, or promote “a fantastical fountain of youth” or agelessness, the successful ageing literature aims to highlight its possibilities and potentials. Rowe and Kahn also believe that taking on some of the responsibility for the way in which we age is a potentially empowering experience. Also, positive ageing discourses provide space for older people to challenge the negative understandings of ageing that are rooted in Western society (Wearing, 1995) as well as promote a resistance to the physical and psychological state of deep old age (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002; Laslett, 1989, 1996). Therefore, from this standpoint it is argued that positive ageing research is beneficial to older people because it indicates that later life is not necessarily a negative experience, that they have some control over the way in which they age, and it opens the door to an array of leisure

pursuits that were unavailable or deemed inappropriate in the past (see Feldman et al., 1996; Hurd, 1999).

Alternatively, there are three major criticisms of the healthy ageing approach. First, it fails to recognise that unless older people ‘drop dead’ suddenly the feeling of personal empowerment is tenuous due to the irrevocability of time and the inescapability of deep old age. Despite Rowe and Kahn’s (1998) claim that positive ageing approaches do not promote eternal youth, some ‘popular’ positive ageing and self-help texts have taken the extreme view of ‘agelessness’ and implied that old age can be avoided forever (for example, Blackman, 1997; Chopra, 1993; Kaufman, 1986; Laura & Johnston, 1997). These types of messages reflect an emerging emphasis on physical activity and sport (among other activities) for challenging the ageing body and postponing ageing (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1990; Featherstone & Wernick, 1995). Therefore, while these discourses celebrate later life, they remain silent on the reality of the Fourth Age and the inevitability of the biological ageing process. As Coleman et al. (1993, p. 15) argue, the ageing well philosophies are an understandable reaction in the midst of an ageist society, but they are rather “escapist” in that they ignore the eventuality of deep old age. Nevertheless, the desire to retain youthfulness, health and fitness at all ages has become an increasingly common theme in contemporary culture (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000).

Positive ageing has the potential to (perhaps unintentionally) establish a heightened denial or fear of deep old age in the West (Blaikie, 1999; Gilleard & Higgs, 2000). On a social level, the health and positive ageing movement may, in part, perpetuate ageism by promoting values of youthfulness, fitness and ability; and also a resistance to old age. As argued by Gilleard & Higgs (2000, p. 81) “... age-resisting fitness regimes promote a positive self image of non-agedness that further reinforces the undesirability and fear of old age”. If older people internalise these discourses and practices, they too have the potential to express a fear or denial of deep old age. For instance, although not specifically referring to positive ageing, Biggs (1997) claims that a fascination with an extended active and engaged midlife

(or continuity) can be harmful to identity in later life as it represents a denial of existential issues that have to be faced, such as the reality of a declining body, reflecting on the meaning of one's life and mortality. Furthermore, Kleiber (1999), in citing Harvey and Bahr's (1980) research on widowhood and leisure, discusses how widowed women were using leisure to keep busy. Kleiber (1999, p. 162) argues that when such leisure behaviour "... represent[s] a degree of denial and interfere[s] with coming to terms with loss or even ... death ... [it] may be maladaptive in the long run". According to Gibson (2000), in order to adapt to the ageing process older adults must come to terms with accepting themselves as being old, which parallels with the message underpinning the lifespan theories of Erikson and Havighurst discussed earlier. In summary, this debate about the positive ageing approach appears to rest on the tension between empowerment and denial in later life.

A second criticism of the rising variety of texts on positive ageing and active living is their tendency to be prescriptive and suggest a quick-fix solution to the ageing process (see Grant & Stothart, 1999). It has been argued that they seem to imply that there is an appropriate way for people to age 'successfully', which suggests a misunderstanding of the heterogeneity of the ageing population and a failure to recognise that truly satisfying leisure participation derives from self-directedness and self-expressiveness (Biggs, 1993; Grant & Stothart, 1999; Kleiber, 1999; McPherson, 1999). As Vertinsky (1995, p. 233) warns, "Freeing individuals from stereotypical preconceptions should not, at the same time, require them to make the professionally prescribed choices in regard to healthy exercise". In this sense, the participation of older people in physically demanding competitive sports, a self-directed behaviour that is not endorsed by positive ageing, may not only suggest a resistance to the negative stereotypes of older people, but also to the positive ageing discourses.

Finally, while healthy ageing promotes the view that older adults are active agents who want to be involved in decision-making about their welfare, it ignores inequalities in society, such as lack of access or physical ability to lead a healthy

lifestyle (Johnson, 1995). Accordingly, the subjects of the health promotion and successful ageing messages are assumed to be Third Agers. That is, healthy older people who have the resources to gain the benefits of a physically active leisured lifestyle. Therefore, encouraging older people to take responsibility for their own health can be problematic for those individuals who may be physically and mentally ill, disabled, poor or indigenous, and ultimately will rely on the health care system. In addition, Blaikie (1999, p. 82) argues that, “a cultural emphasis on health and lifestyle issues, [is] empowering to Third Agers, but often disabling to the image and experience of those inhabiting the Fourth”. Thus, discourses associated with healthy and positive ageing describe the lives of the typically healthy, white and middle-class Third Age population. Feldman et al. (1996) and Blaikie (1999) argue that images and messages associated with healthy ageing have the potential to create new stereotypes and unattainable images of older people. As Grant (2002, p. 290) states, “The reality is that not all older people have the freedom or resources to opt for a healthier lifestyle ...”. Despite the above criticisms, however, positive ageing and health promotion approaches (including interpretations of the Third Age) “are important reflections of the social and cultural realities that are ‘re-constructing’ later life in the 21st century” (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002, p. 371).

Conclusion

In this chapter the dominant negative understandings of ageing that are entrenched in Western culture were contrasted with the emerging health, active leisure and positive ageing discourses. Evidently, youthfulness and physical activity is valued in the West, while ageing and deep old age is feared or denied. It was argued that these conflicting yet co-existing ideas about ageing help explain the exclusion of older people from competitive sport prior to the 1970s and have set the parameters for appropriate sport practices for older people today (that is, non-serious, fun, fitness and friendship). Combining the ageing discourses discussed in this chapter with the opposing ideas underpinning mainstream and Masters sport that were established in Chapter 1, the current orthodoxy is that older people should be physically active, but not serious competitive athletes in physically demanding

sports because competitive sport is for the young. If older people choose to compete in sport then society expects them to be doing it to remain socially and physically active and have fun, not to take competition seriously. If they compete in sport to win, break world records or beat their personal best, then this behaviour cannot completely be explained in terms of the ageing theories discussed in this chapter. The theory of the Third Age, however, does provide knowledge on how older people can use the intense physical activity associated with competitive sport as a strategy to ward off the Fourth Age.

Therefore, the theories and discourses presented in this chapter provide some insight into why older people are physical active, but they fall short in explaining competitive behaviour or how these contradictory beliefs about ageing, physical activity and sport are negotiated by older athletes. In order to further understand the motives of older people who compete in sport in spite of the abovementioned orthodoxies, and the ways in which they negotiate the conflicting discourses of both sport and ageing that frame their involvement, the next chapter explores common reasons older people have given for participating in sport, as well as introduces and examines the explanatory potential of conceptual understandings of resistance, empowerment and identity management.

CHAPTER 3

NEGOTIATING THE TENSIONS: CONCEPTUALISING RESISTANCE, EMPOWERMENT AND IDENTITY MANAGEMENT THROUGH SPORT AND LEISURE

Introduction

This chapter explores theories that help explain why older people participate in a leisure activity that goes against age-appropriate norms and how they negotiate the contradictions that underpin their behaviour. The chapter begins by reviewing literature from the fields of sports science, exercise psychology, and leisure studies that are specific to exploring the experiences and motives of older athletes. Although the results from these studies provide insights into why older people compete in sport, they do not reveal anything about how their motivations and experiences interact with the contradictory discourses of both sport and ageing that were set up in the previous two chapters. It is argued that theories of resistance, empowerment and identity management are useful in providing a framework for understanding how older people negotiate these conflicting viewpoints. Specifically, interpretations of identity management in later life can be applied to understand how older people make sense of the relationships between themselves, their body and society. Post-structural interpretations of the behaviour of marginalised groups in leisure and competitive sport are useful in explaining how resistance and empowerment are played out in the context of sport. This chapter also demonstrates that few studies have used qualitative methods to examine the meanings that older athletes attach to their competitive sport experiences, or located their experiences within the context of dominant discourses associated with sport and ageing.

Why Compete in Sport?

There are many personal, behavioural and situational factors interacting and affecting older people's participation in sport, physical activity and leisure (see Carron & Leith, 1986; Chogahara, O'Brien Cousins, & Wankel, 1998; Iso-Ahola & St. Clair, 2000; Shephard, 1994). They may compete in sport for a variety of personal reasons and their motives for involvement in sport may change over time. Involvement in sport and exercise is also closely linked to personal values placed on the benefits of the activity, as well as perceived barriers (Boag & Cuskelly, 1996; Cuskelly & Boag, 1996). Some people might say they do it for fun, some for fitness and health, or the social interaction, while others may emphasise the challenge of competition and winning. It is possible that many older people were athletic in their youth and have a desire to rekindle the flame or prove their ability to themselves or others. Some may have enjoyed a lifelong involvement in their sport and see no reason to stop, while others may be latecomers to sport.

Regardless of how individuals begin participating in sport, the literature suggests that they only continue if the activity resonates with them personally, provides relatively consistent positive experiences, and if they have the ability, desire and resources to negotiate any perceived individual, interpersonal and structural constraints on their involvement (see Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991; van Norman, 1998). It has been argued that an individual will initiate behaviour such as competing in sport if they can overcome constraints, such as family responsibilities, norms and stereotypes, fear of injury or embarrassment, perceived lack of ability, access, financial resources, or if they believe that their behaviour will contribute to valued outcomes, such as physical and psychological health, enjoyment, competition, and/or social interaction (Biddle & Smith, 1991; Cuskelly & Boag, 1996; Shephard, 1994). Furthermore, according to sport sociologists (for example, Coakley, 2001) and sport historians (for example, Adair & Vamplew, 1997; Vamplew et al., 1994) the major reasons why older people participate in sport are for health and fitness benefits, social interaction, fun, a sense of accomplishment, pleasure in movement, and the love of the sport. Clearly, competition is not

considered significant to older people from these perspectives.

Understanding the multiple reasons older people give for competing in sport addresses one part of the aims driving this thesis. What is also significant to this thesis is an understanding of how they negotiate the conflicting discourses of sport and ageing in justifying their motives and experiences. Therefore, the following review of previous research into the motives of older athletes provides a foundation for this study because there has been minimal research into why older people compete in sport within the context of dominant beliefs about sport and ageing.

Quantifying the Motives and Experiences of Older Athletes

The majority of studies conducted specifically on Masters athletes have used quantitative methodologies and have focused on the motivations and/or participation patterns of athletes within an average age range of 40-50 years (see Burns, 1992; Cuskelly & Boag, 1996; Cuskelly, Boag, McIntyre, & Coleman, 1993; Harada, 1994; Jackson, Ford, Kimiecik, & Marsh, 1998; Kavanagh & Shephard, 1990; McIntyre et al., 1992; Ryan & Lockyer, 2000; Smith & Storandt, 1997; Stevenson, 2002; Tantrum & Hodge, 1993). These studies have consistently identified fitness, enjoyment, friendship, social interaction, and personal challenge as reasons for participation in Masters sport. For example, survey research by McIntyre et al. (1992) on 504 competitors of the 1991 Australian Masters Games found that the majority of participants were motivated to compete in Masters sport because of their desire to keep physically fit, be with friends who enjoy the same thing they do, expand their social networks by meeting new people with similar interests, and because of the enjoyment and relaxation of participation. Such claims conform and contribute to the view that sport for older people is centred on having fun, keeping fit and making friends. Thus, it could be argued that the participants of these studies identify with, or internalise, the age-appropriate discourses that partially frame Masters sport. The participants in the study by McIntyre et al. (1992) also viewed sport as a means of self-expression, a way of developing and sharing knowledge of and skills about sport, a personal challenge, and a strategy for

maintaining their independence and sense of control. These findings indicate that issues of identity management and personal empowerment also seem important to the participants of Masters sport.

While the above studies appear to remain silent on the competitive side of Masters sport, a more recent study by Cuskelly and Boag (1996) does not. They explored the experiences of 366 participants of the 1994 World Masters Games in Brisbane. Through the use of a self-report questionnaire they discerned two groups from the sample: ‘serious competitors’ (48 percent) who valued intense competition and; ‘casual competitors’ (52 percent) who competed to socialise, make friends and experience ‘friendly competition’. The authors statistically compared the perceived benefits experienced by both groups and found that serious competitors rated the importance of fitness, competition, recognition, personal challenge and risk-taking benefits significantly higher than the casual participants. Both groups rated socialising and relaxation benefits as being of equal importance, although females perceived both these benefits to be more valuable than did males. Accordingly, the study acknowledges that some Masters athletes can be serious competitive athletes who enjoy recognition and are not afraid to take risks or challenge themselves. The competitive identity seemingly expressed by some Masters athletes, and the extent to which competition as a valued process in the West influences older people’s participation in sport present areas requiring further investigation.

The findings discussed above were not specific to participants over the age of 55 years, with participant ages in these studies averaging under 50 years. As a result of this focus on younger or middle-aged Masters athletes the ability to generalise from existing research on Masters athletes to older cohorts is limited. Thus, a review of studies that specifically focus on athletes over the age of 55 is presented below.

A survey by Pepe and Gandee (1992, p. 195) on 466 competitors (aged between 55 and 90) from the 1984 Ohio Senior Olympics found that fifty percent participated to keep themselves physically fit, 36 percent because of the enjoyment of the activity and 34 percent for social interaction. Similarly, Gill et al. (1996) found the

competitive orientations and motives of 87 Senior athletes aged 55-99 years were multiple and diverse. They, too, conducted a survey on athletes' motives for participation and found that the Seniors rated competition, mastery, affiliation, fitness, flexibility and health motives highly. The authors claim that, "although seniors are competitive, they are not particularly focused on winning" (Gill et al., 1996, p. 317). They found that most respondents were participating in several events rather than dedicating all of their efforts to one event or sport. Additionally, the study by Pepe and Gandee revealed that the majority of the participants "felt they were persons of worth who were in control of their lives and who perceived themselves to be in good to excellent health without need for medication" (1992, p. 197). Feelings of personal empowerment and a positive identity seem central in this statement. Nevertheless, the study conducted by Pepe and Gandee has many methodological limitations. A survey instrument was used and the meanings attached to the variables were unclear, while many of the arguments made by the authors seem to be speculative rather than supported by the empirical data that were collected.

Through surveying the self-perceptions of 1,375 Senior Olympians, Fontane and Hurd (1992) identified several reasons why men and women maintain regular involvement in sports competitions and physical training. For example, the satisfaction of meeting a personal fitness challenge was ranked second by males and fifth by females, and social motives were rated as being more important by females than males. Recreation, competition, and public recognition motives were also important to many of the athletes. 'Health' was listed as the first or second most significant reason for competing by 71 percent of both men and women. These participants indicated a desire to maintain a self-perceived positive level of health and prevent the onset of debilitating health problems associated with ageing (Fontane and Hurd, 1992).

The latter findings raise the issue of the extent to which sport is used as a way of resisting an inevitably ageing body and the onset of the Fourth Age. According to Fontane (1996) older adults who exercise habitually express a belief in the health

promotion discourses grounded in research that claim physical activity will improve their quality of life and delay physical deterioration. Fontane (1996) and Grant (2001) have found that older adults commonly express this belief in the statement ‘use it or lose it’. That is, many older people believe that if they do not use their body (and stimulate the mind) regularly through exercise, their body (and mind) will deteriorate and their overall quality of life will decrease. Jones et al. (1992) argue that up to fifty percent of disability in older age is due to a sedentary lifestyle or disuse, thus ‘use it or lose it’ has direct applicability to perceived life satisfaction in the later years. However, the ‘use it or lose it’ mantra, which underpins healthy ageing, implies that prolonged physical and mental engagement is the healthiest alternative in later life (see Kleiber, 1999), and neglects to acknowledge that this continuity is not always possible (as debated in Chapter 2). Furthermore, there is a need to distinguish between physical activity, and strenuous competitive sports. This distinction is rarely made in the literature with there being a merging of the two. In particular, physical activity is frequently being used not just as a synonym for the other, but as a legitimator.

Fontane and Hurd (1992) claim that older athletes are extremely health-conscious and they express this value in the context of sport. They also claim that prior athletic experience among older athletes underscores the significance of competition as a key motivator. “Here, health factors are joined with competitive goals as motivators for physical fitness and are expressed as recreational activities” (Fontane & Hurd, 1992, p. 107). This link raises questions about the possibility for competitive and health motives to be satisfied within a sporting context. Older people appear to place great emphasis on competing in sport for health reasons, which is not generally associated with the performance ethos of mainstream sport participation. Further examination of the extent to which the desire to be fit and healthy encourages participation in competitive sport is required. Also, there is a need to explore the role competitiveness plays in motivating older athletes to keep their body moving in order to delay the onset of functional dependence and/or ill health, a motive that appears to be unique to older populations in sport.

While it has been found that some older athletes place importance on receiving rewards and recognition for their athletic successes, Rotella & Bunker (1978) argue that many older athletes are intrinsically motivated to improve their performance based on their own previous standards. In this sense, an external reward only confirms their internal achievement and older people are not considered to be concerned about winning medals or outperforming others (Fontane & Hurd, 1992). A contradictory finding to emerge from Fontane and Hurd's (1992) study (discussed above) was that both men and women rated public recognition for their accomplishments quite low among their reasons for competing in sport. However, the qualitative data appended to many of the survey questions in their study revealed that public recognition was more valued by participants than they had admitted in the survey. This outcome highlights a tension between public recognition and internal satisfaction as sport motives for older athletes. It could be that older people do not like to admit that they value rewards and recognition because the accepted view is that older people are not supposed to be competing to win. This supposition raises an issue requiring further investigation with the authors concluding that more research is needed to determine the role of competition for older sportspeople (Fontane & Hurd, 1992).

Kayser (1992) believes older athletes do not compete in sport purely for health reasons even though it is the reason they most often cite during interviews. Rather, he claims that "They engage in such sports activities because they want to enjoy and prove their existing health and performance capacity" (Kayser, 1992, p. 65). This desire to prove oneself could be linked to the personal satisfaction and public acclamation that comes from achieving in sport. Kayser also argues that the attitude and behaviour of older competitive athletes can be likened to an "experimental approach", whereby the athletes "themselves are curious about how far the process of aging can be checked" (1992, p. 68). From this viewpoint it could be argued that older people compete in sport to prove to themselves and others that they are coping with the ageing process and in control of their life. That is, they have not yet entered the 'disability zone' or the Fourth Age (Laslett, 1989). Again, it appears that public recognition is important to older athletes. However, the article

by Kayser is rather haphazard in its presentation of data (most likely due to its translation from German into English) and more empirical evidence is needed to support the aforementioned assertions.

Finally, Smith and Storandt (1997) compared the past sporting experiences, health beliefs, motives and personalities of 246 healthy American adults aged over 55 years who varied in their degree of physical activity from competitors (n=100), noncompetitors (n=83) to nonexercisers (n=63)⁸. The authors developed a scale of eleven reasons for exercising that was based on a review of the exercise psychology literature. The participants were asked to rate the importance of each. The three groups were significantly different in their motives for exercising. Competitors rated “to gain weight or muscle mass, to prepare for competition, to be with friends, to meet a goal, to reduce stress, and to improve mood” as significantly more important reasons for exercising than did the noncompetitors and nonexercisers (Smith & Storandt, 1997, p. 106). For example, to prepare for competition and to meet a goal were rated on average 7.49 and 7.77, respectively, on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all important) to 10 (very important). These findings imply that some older athletes take competition quite seriously. Furthermore, both competitors and noncompetitors rated “to improve appearance and feel better physically” (8.26 and 9.19, respectively) as significantly more important than did the nonexercisers (Smith & Storandt, 1997, p. 106). These outcomes suggest that the physical ability and outer appearance of the ageing body are important to some older competitive athletes. The authors argue that the reasons older sports competitors give for exercising are more varied than those of the noncompetitors. The competitors not only cited health benefits and competency in competition, but also socialising (6.47) as a motive, while the noncompetitors focused mainly on the health benefits of exercise. These findings support those of Fontane and Hurd (1992) relating to both health and competitive motives being satisfied in a sporting context.

⁸ The competitors were those who had competed in a local, regional or national sporting competition within the past 5 years. Noncompetitors were those who do not compete but had participated in aerobic exercise. Nonexercisers were those who do little more than is required for activities of daily living such as cleaning, gardening and shopping.

The studies reviewed, above, provide some insight into the experiences and motives of older athletes. However, they rely heavily on quantitative methodologies, are primarily written from a sport psychology perspective and they do not consider the socio-cultural factors or orthodoxies which underlie why people compete in sport at an older age. They do, on the other hand, highlight the dominant reasons for competing in sport given by older people. These motives can be summarised into four broad groups: physical and psychological health benefits; social networks; enjoyment; and competition. Issues of ‘serious competition’ versus ‘friendly participation’, resisting the ageing process, feeling empowered and establishing a positive identity also emerged as important from the abovementioned research. What these studies do not show, however, is how these varying motives or issues interact, the ways in which older athletes negotiate the complexities and contradictions which underlie them, or what meanings they ascribe to them. To achieve these aims, qualitative methodologies need to be employed.

Giving ‘Voice’ to Older Athletes

There have been several recent studies using in-depth interviews and/or observations to gain qualitative insights into the meaning of older adults’ experiences in physical activity and exercise (such as walking, aerobics, going to the gym) (see Hardcastle & Taylor, 2001; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2001; Kluge, 2002; O'Brien Cousins, 2000; O'Brien Cousins & Keating, 1995; O'Brien Cousins & Vertinsky, 1995; Poole, 2001). Many of these studies demonstrate that people who have been physically active throughout their earlier life are more likely to remain active in later life, a finding consistent with Fontane and Hurd (1992) discussed above. However, none of these studies were overtly concerned with physically intense sports or issues of competition *per se*. In the context of organised sport, Boyle and McKay (1995) explored how older women were exploited in the competitive game of lawn bowls. However, due to the relatively passive nature and ‘age-appropriateness’ of this sport, the study provides little insight into the meanings older people attach to their participation in ‘atypical’ physically demanding competitive sports within the context of conflicting

discourses associated with both sport and ageing. Langley and Knight (1999, p. 32) examined how lifelong involvement in competitive sport served as “a primary adaptive strategy for coping with the aging process” for one 68-year-old male tennis player. Using Atchley’s (1989, 1993, 1997) continuity theory (discussed in Chapter 2), Langley and Knight demonstrate how past and present successful competitive sport involvement was a key dimension in continuity and identity management in later life. Although many older competitive athletes tend to have a history of sports participation (Harada, 1994; Smith & Storandt 1997) some of them do not. Further research is needed to explore the role competitive sport plays in managing the identity of those who did not begin competing in sport until later in life.

In a similar vein to Langley and Knight (1999), a recent study by Roper et al. (2003) examines the sporting experiences of an 88-year-old competitive runner from the United States (named Max). Some key themes emerging from two in-depth interviews with Max related to: the continuation of a physically active lifestyle; being perceived as ‘special’ or ‘unique’; the significance of social support; and the importance of competition, performance and training. The latter theme points to Max’s extremely competitive nature. He considers himself competitive and he competes to win: “... for Max, being able to compete successfully and being taken seriously were extremely important” (Roper et al. 2003, p. 385). This finding indicates that serious involvement in competitive sport can be significant to older people. Even so, Max argues that his running was predominately linked to living a healthy lifestyle. This finding is consistent with the issue about competitive and health motives that emerged in the research by Fontane and Hurd (1992) outlined above. Although the study by Roper et al. (2003) points to stereotypical images and expectations society has for the aged and for the practice of mainstream sport, it does not explain how these conflicting discourses and actions interact with Max’s sport behaviour. However, one author in particular who has begun to fill the gap in understanding older adults’ experiences in competitive sport in light of dominant ideas about physical activity and ageing is Bevan Grant.

Grant (2001) carried out a small-scale qualitative study of Masters Games

competitors' beliefs and perceptions about playing sport which highlights the 'mixed messages' about physical activity and ageing in Western society. He conducted in-depth interviews with eight female and seven male New Zealand Masters competitors aged in their 70s who were involved in individual sports, such as swimming, croquet, badminton, tennis, bowls, athletics, cycling, golf, or running. The majority of the participants in Grant's study had returned to play their chosen sport after the age of 60. All of the participants reported having a health ailment, but described their current health status as "very good" (Grant, 2001, p. 782). During participant interviews the focus was on "asking 'what' rather than 'why' about the beliefs participants had about the role of physical activity in the later years, about their own life and in particular about their recent sporting experiences" (Grant, 2001, p. 783). The three main themes emerging from an inductive analysis of the data were: the aforementioned mixed messages about ageing and physical activity; getting into sport; and serious play. It is worth exploring these themes in more detail here.

The first theme – 'mixed messages about ageing and physical activity' – highlights the influence contradictory discourses about physical activity (not competitive sport) and ageing can have on an older person's reasons for participating in sport in later life. According to the participants in Grant's study age should not be an excuse to be inactive. Like the Senior Olympians in the study by Fontane and Hurd (1992) Grant's respondents strongly believed in the adage, "if we don't use it, we lose it" (Grant, 2001, p. 785). They felt that using their body (and mind) through the regular physical activity associated with sport was helping to stop or delay the onset of the physical and mental ailments they associated with ageing. Again, this finding reflects messages of health and positive ageing that were analysed in Chapter 2, but it does not explain the link between health and competitive motives. Additionally, consistent with the leisure and ageing literature in general, Grant does not clearly distinguish between physical activity and competitive sport.

In spite of their reported physical or psychological ailment, none of the participants in Grant's study considered themselves 'old', but he failed to discuss how they

defined the word 'old' or why they did not perceive themselves as old. Interestingly, it has been found in previous studies that many active older people do not perceive themselves to be 'old' while they are still active and productive (see Hurd, 1999; Kaufman, 1986; Rowe & Kahn, 1998). For example, Thompson et al., (1990) examined the experiences of later life among fifty-five British adults aged in their 60s and found that the majority of them felt that unless they were physically incapable of doing what they wanted, ill or unhappy, they did not feel 'old'. Thompson et al. argue that older people have the tendency to internalise the negative stereotypes about ageing and later life, and therefore are surprised to find that their own experiences of ageing are generally positive and engaging. The participants in the study by Thompson et al. also expressed awareness of what was typically 'expected' of a person in their 60s. Similarly, the majority of Grant's participants recognised that they were categorised as 'old' and said that they often had to overcome ageist attitudes, such as "at your age you shouldn't be doing this", in order to maintain their involvement in sport (Grant, 2001, p. 785). These findings raise questions about how older people negotiate age-appropriate beliefs when justifying why they compete in sport and what they gain from it.

The second theme in Grant's (2001) research, 'getting into sport', relates to personal reasons participants gave for resuming sport in later life. All of them had played sport when they were younger, but most had stopped participating in organised competitions shortly after leaving school. Grant found that reasons why they participated in sport were to maintain a good state of health and well-being, give life purpose, provide an emotional high, distract from body pain, escape from negative life events, experience social interaction and have fun. Grant's study reveals that older people not only have to negotiate discourses that claim they should not be athletes at their age, but they also have to manage an ageing body. For example, several participants experienced frustration with their body's functioning. This feeling was heightened by the fact that playing sport meant that the physical competence and shape of the body was on display. Consequently, succeeding in gaining control of the use of their body in a sporting context was very important to the participants. Nevertheless, all of the participants agreed that

playing sport was more than just a physical experience. “There was a chance to socialise, meet new people and, most importantly, to do something that provided a great deal of personal satisfaction” (Grant, 2001, p. 789). These findings provide qualitative support for the outcomes of the quantitative studies discussed above.

The final theme, ‘serious play’ describes the participants’ views on competition. The participants valued an appropriate level of competition, fairness, success and winning. However, according to Grant they did not display a “having-to-win” attitude (Grant, 2001, p. 790). The notion of competitiveness was spoken about by participants in broad terms and success was defined in a variety of ways, such as achieving personal goals, trying to win, and testing their abilities. In order to have the ability to be ‘competitive’ and continue to ‘compete’ (or participate) in events like the Masters Games the participants had to make adjustments to their style of play to accommodate for their physical limitations. Grant contends that having the aspiration and knowledge to manage their ageing bodies helped provide participants with “... a sense of self-worth, identity and empowerment” (2001, p. 795). However, he does not elaborate on what is meant by ‘empowerment’ and ‘identity’ in the context of his study. The participants in Grant’s study also expressed some concerns about how they would cope if they lost control of their body’s function and overall health. He briefly explains that even though they were presently enjoying what they perceived as a ‘good’ quality of life, there was a sense of uncertainty concerning the future. Their comments reflect an impending problem for all older people regardless of whether or not they compete in sport (Grant, 2001). That is, the concern of the unavoidable ageing process and the onset of the Fourth Age. The participants believed, and in three instances prayed, “that playing sport would help them to remain independent and maintain control over their health and wellbeing” (Grant, 2001, p. 791). Grant argues that although the participants expressed interest in a variety of different leisure activities, “all participants took playing sport seriously” (2001, p. 792). So, older people can be serious competitive athletes, despite the common association of ‘competitiveness’ with youth.

By giving ‘voice’ to older people, Grant claims to show “how the role and meaning

of physical activity in later life is expansive, dynamic and completely imbued with multiple interpretations” (2001, p. 795). Making older people the authority figures in his study has allowed for the emergence of different realities from the commonly held beliefs that older age is solely a period of physical disability and social disengagement. Grant posits that the older men and women in his study “located themselves in the discourse of good health and resisted the notion that ageing could be described solely as a biomedical problem highlighted by an encroaching decline in their physical ability” (2001, p. 792). Taken together, their views reflect and contribute to notions of positive ageing and health promotion that claim that being physically active in older age contributes significantly to one’s quality of life and overall well-being. The participants in Grant’s study also demonstrate the “resilience of the ageing body” (Grant, 2001, p. 796). He claims that the stories shared by these older Masters competitors show “how ageing is constantly being negotiated at an individual and societal level” (Grant, 2001, p. 796). Implied in these findings is that by competing in sport older athletes are internalising the discourses of health and positive ageing and resisting the dominant view that older age is only about physical inability, as well as resisting the reality of their ageing body. What is not explored, however, is how older people negotiate the tension between ‘serious competition’ and ‘friendly participation’ that is embedded in Masters sport, or the ways in which they are using the competitive ideologies that underpin mainstream sport in describing their experiences and when competing.

Grant’s study provides an excellent foundation for further research into the experiences of older sportspeople. He points to issues about age-appropriate attitudes towards sport for older people and the influence of dominant ideas about physical activity and ageing on older people’s behaviour. The above discussion raises questions about the ways in which older athletes use competitive sport and its framing discourses to resist the physically ageing body and age-appropriate norms in Western society. Central here are identity management and feelings of personal empowerment that may interact with these forms of resistance. However, as this is one of the only published studies of its kind and because Grant’s focus was on “what” were older people’s beliefs about sport, he fails to explain *how* or *why* they

resist their body, *how* they negotiate the dominant understandings of ageing and sport or *how* he conceptualises ‘resistance’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘identity’ in the context of sport and ageing. There is a need to explore understandings of identity management in later life and to discuss what resistance and empowerment might mean in the context of sport, leisure and ageing in order to further explain why older people compete in sport despite there being no legitimising discourse available for this behaviour. Therefore, the subsequent discussion initially focuses on traditional and postmodern understandings of identity, and then shifts to a conceptualisation of resistance and empowerment theories.

Traditional Understandings of Identity

The majority of research on identity and leisure, particularly in the context of competitive sport, focuses on young people because development is recognised as significant during childhood and adolescence (for example, Shaw, Kleiber & Caldwell, 1995). Lifespan development theories that were prominent at the turn of the twentieth century suggested that development stopped during middle adulthood, and the identity of older people could no longer be shaped (Coakley, 2001). Consequently, competitive sport was organised and promoted as a ‘character building’ pursuit for younger people not for older people (Coakley, 2001). However, it is important now to acknowledge that later life is a significant period for identity management and personal change (Biggs, 1997, 1999; George, 1998; Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Godbey, 1994; Kleiber, 1999). Sport is one context in which issues associated with identity management can be played out. It is argued in this thesis that the management of identity among older athletes pivots on the tensions between expressing one’s competitive nature, negotiating the ‘norms’ of older age, fighting the ageing process and conforming to Western ideals of youthfulness and competitiveness.

Identity is commonly understood as “a personal theory of self” (Kleiber, 1999, p. 94). Basically, identity is about how individuals interpret and express themselves

(personal identity), as well as how they are perceived by others, identify with others and the roles that are available to them through the social world (social identity). In other words, identity management in later life is the process by which older adults negotiate and construct a personal and social sense of self. From a traditional psychological perspective, identity is interpreted as something that is evolving across the lifespan to eventually become fixed or stable. Erikson (1968, p. 208) defines identity, in part, as “a conscious sense of individual uniqueness, ... [and] an unconscious striving for a continuity of experience, ...”. From this standpoint, individuals have an ‘essence’ or core identity, which is understood by Erikson (1968, p. 19) as “the real me!” Core identity is, to Erikson, associated with feelings of authenticity, “an *invigorating ... continuity*” and being “most deeply and intensively active and alive” (1968, p. 19, original emphasis). Erikson (1980) also indicated that *favoured capacities*, which are likely to be explored and expressed in the context of leisure, play an important role in identity formation (cited in Kleiber, 1999, p. 107, original emphasis).

Many leisure researchers reinforce Erikson’s notion of identity and argue that individuals either partake in leisure activities that contribute to their existing identity in a developmental way, and/or their established identity directs their involvement in a specific leisure activity (see Kelly, 1983; Kleiber, 1999; Kuentzel, 2000; Weiss, 2001). Ageing generally involves an orientation and precedent toward certain leisure domains that help to characterise one’s identity, as suggested by the continuity theory (see Atchley, 1993; Langley & Knight, 1999). The participation of older people in competitive sport within the context of its conflicting framing viewpoints raises questions about which discourses they identify with in discussing their experiences. Do older people define themselves as competitive or do they identify with the fun and friendship side of their participation? Are older people attempting to define ‘old’ as ‘young’ through their involvement in sport? How do older athletes manage an ageing identity? From a traditional perspective, leisure activities are perceived as assisting older adults define who they are, while identity is interpreted as something that is evolving across the lifespan. However, having a fixed sense of oneself as an able and energetic athlete may prove problematic

in later life due to the eventual decline of the body as an outcome of increased longevity. Therefore, traditional understandings of identity alone do not adequately explain how older people manage the relationship between their identity, their ageing body, their sports participation and society.

Identity Management from a Postmodern Standpoint

Postmodern understandings of identity management have challenged traditional interpretations of identity. From a postmodern perspective it is asserted that identity is something which is shifting not fixed, chosen not given, and multiple not singular (see Murphy & Longino, 1997; Sarup, 1996). Postmodernity is characterised by plurality, which presents individuals with a variety of identity choices that pose difficulty to the maintenance of a coherent sense of self (see Giddens, 1991). In other words, in a period that is based more on consumption than production, "... individuals must increasingly construct themselves and their relationships with the world from a variety of discourses, none of which is capable of providing a totally coherent understanding" (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, p. 7). For example, an individual may have multiple identities, or "floating signifiers", (such as a parent, an athlete, a school teacher) and choose to emphasise different identities in different contexts as a means of holding onto a consistent sense of self and personal biography (Biggs, 1997, p. 556; Giddens, 1991). From this standpoint, "any number of 'floating signifiers' can be used to build an identity, any one of which may be valid under certain conditions" (Biggs, 1997, p. 556). This assumption that people are 'free' to define their identity is central to notions of the Third Age that were outlined in Chapter 2.

The diversity of options available to individuals in postmodern society make leisure, consumption and lifestyle choices increasingly significant in the construction of identity and daily activity (Blaikie, 1999; Featherstone & Hepworth, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Phillipson & Biggs, 1998). Gilleard & Higgs (2000, p. 25) argue that due to this "cultural abundance ... Everyone is involved in negotiating an identity within a changing environment that is

overloaded with information and unintended consequences [and, in particular] ... Ageing has become a much more reflexive project”. Therefore, older people have the option to take on new roles or activities and create alternative identities in later life. For example, someone who may never have been involved in sport as a child may begin competing in sport in later life and take on an identity as an athlete. As Bauman (1995, p. 81) neatly puts it, to traditionalists, identity management “was about how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, [whereas] the postmodern ‘problem of identity’ is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open”.

Three prominent theories about the challenge to identity management in later life emerging from postmodernity are the mask of ageing theory (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1990), which suggests that the physical signs of ageing are for many older people an inflexible mask that traps an inner youthful self; the masquerade/persona model (Biggs, 1993; Woodward, 1991), which posits that people have a ‘matured inner self’ and construct a social façade or masquerade to conform to social ideals; and the social masking theory (Biggs, 1997, 1999), which is an extension of the persona theory that argues that older people contrive a deceptive social mask (or none at all) to protect themselves against an ageist society. These theories make use of mask motifs to explore how older people negotiate the realities of an ageing body and their identity, such as managing the relationship between the inner and outer body and the body and society. Biggs (1997) makes the observation that although mask motifs have been well developed theoretically, empirical research is less advanced. In particular, he recommends the use of qualitative methodologies to deepen understandings of identity management in later life. Combined with insights from traditional identity theories (presented above), these ‘masking’ theories contribute to the conceptual framework for understanding how older people negotiate the stereotypes of ageing, as well as Western ideals of youthfulness and competitiveness in managing their identity and justifying their competitive behaviour.

Additionally, an individual’s personal and social identities are inextricably linked

and blurred. For instance, the social meanings that are attached to particular external presentations (such as the ageing body, the sport one plays, or the clothes one wears) can become internalised and influence a person's sense of identity, self-esteem, and self-worth (see Goffman, 1969). This can be problematic for older adults living in a society that values youthfulness, fitness and health and devalues ageing. In Western society physical signs of ageing, such as grey hair and wrinkly skin are viewed as unattractive or unacceptable, and negative stereotypes, such as frailty, passivity and dependency are often attached to older people (Minichiello et al., 2000; Wearing, 1995). This perception may lower an older individual's feeling of esteem and worth, or alternatively encourage them to differentiate themselves from the negative stereotypes and attempt to hide their ageing in order to feel valued. Moreover, an older person may look 'old' and be categorised by society as 'old', but feel 'youthful' and mentally alert on the inside (see Featherstone & Hepworth, 1989, 1990). Indeed, the process of ageing within contemporary Western society is likely to affect identity management and the maintenance of a coherent personal biography. Under these conditions, many older adults believe that something has to be done about the ageing body because it hides their 'authentic self' and is not socially accepted (Biggs, 1997). Strategies, such as extended midlife (continuity) or cosmetic surgery may be an adaptive response to the physical changes associated with the ageing process, as well as a protection against the negative social construction of ageing (Biggs, 1997, 1999; Giddens, 1991). Therefore, participating in sport in later life has the potential to be an adaptive strategy for dealing with the ageing process (Langley & Knight, 1999; Roper et al. 2003) and a method for creating alternative identities in later life (Biggs, 1997; Minichiello, et al. 2000). It also presents a context for expressing the ideals of youthfulness and challenging the stereotypes of older age (Poole, 2001; Wearing, 1995).

Combining these theories of identity management in later life with theories of resistance and empowerment will further explain the sense of personal empowerment and affirmation that older people may feel from achieving at sport, using their body in ways not thought possible, resisting stereotypes or appropriating

the markers and symbols of youth. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, several authors have claimed that older athletes automatically are seen to be challenging dominant negative stereotypes of ageing and/or feeling empowered through their participation in sport (for example, Coakley, 2001; Gandee et al., 1989; Hargreaves, 1994; Spirduso, 1995), but this may not necessarily be the case. Hence, a discussion on resistance and empowerment theories is warranted.

Resistance and Empowerment through Sport and Leisure

The notion that sport and leisure can be a type of, or context for, resistance that has the potential to empower individuals is rooted in the supposition that sport and leisure are social constructions, and their everyday practice is “linked to power and power relations in society” (Shaw, 2001, p. 186; Tomlinson, 1998). Shaw (2001) argues that structuralism, post-structuralism and interactionism are three different theoretical perspectives that have contributed to the conceptualisation of leisure as resistance. In this sense, the subjectivities and multiple experiences of older people in sport are interwoven with the complex, shifting and contradictory patterns of Western culture. Many studies of resistance and empowerment take a post-structural perspective in that they illustrate the ways in which power, ideology and discourse can be challenged, altered, used or reinforced in everyday leisure settings (Samdahl, 2000; Wearing, 1991, 1995, 1998). Sport and leisure participation as resistance is based on two key ideas: the notion of agency (that is, individuals are social actors who can interpret and determine social situations); and the idea of sport and leisure as spaces of ‘relative’ freedom, personal choice and self-determination (albeit within the constraints of socio-cultural factors, resources and physical ability) (Green, 1998; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1989, 1996; Shaw, 1994; Tomlinson, 1998; Wimbush & Talbot, 1988). From this standpoint, an assumption is that although older people are influenced by social norms, they are also active agents who participate in the construction and reconstruction of their own social worlds. As Wearing (1995, p. 273) says, “Resistance involves the use of a variety of tactics, solitary or cooperative, to carve out a space for oneself within the constraints of the powerful”. Therefore, a post-

structural position is different to positive ageing and health promotion approaches in that it recognises that power, domination and inequality exist in society.

When sport and leisure are seen from a post-structural viewpoint constraints and empowerment co-exist. In such contexts individuals have the opportunity to deconstruct, negotiate, reflect, conform to and resist accepted beliefs at the individual and social levels (Ashton-Shaeffer, Gibson, Holt & Willming, 2001b; Coakley, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994; Tomlinson, 1998; Wearing, 1991, 1998). Discourse, language and socio-cultural values can simultaneously shape and control individuals, and be shaped and resisted by them (Foucault, 1978, 1980). Because they are social constructions, discourses of sport, leisure and what it means to be 'old' are continuously being used, negotiated, internalised and reconstructed. For example, although sport is sometimes used as a vehicle for social and economic control, exploitation, and the perpetuation of age, racial, class and gender inequalities, it is also recognised that sport has the potential to be a site of resistance to personal and socio-cultural constraints (Coakley, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994). "In fact, sport participation can be a personally creative and liberating experience" (Coakley, 1994, p. 34). Therefore, applying post-structural theories will provide a way of explaining how older people use and negotiate discourses associated with sport and ageing both through their participation in competitive sport and the ways in which they talk about it. It will also help explain how and why they embrace some dominant views and reject others associated with sport, competition and ageing.

Post-structural approaches to understanding leisure as a potential site of resistance for marginal groups in society, in particular, women, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, indigenous people, the poor, and older people, emphasise the diversity of situations faced by these groups and the existence of multiple subjectivities and individual experiences within them (Aitchison, 2000; Henderson et al., 1989, 1996; Shaw, 2001; Wearing, 1998; Weedon, 1987; Wimbush & Talbot, 1988). Furthermore, if there are factors of oppression that are shared among such groups then acts of resistance can have collective implications beyond the individual, such

as the development of new discourses (see Shaw, 2001). Many studies concerned with interpreting leisure as resistance have focused on how women use leisure to challenge their feelings of oppression or the limiting stereotypes on female roles and behaviours (Shaw, 2001).

Betsy Wearing was perhaps among the first to interpret leisure as a site of resistance to ageism⁹ for older people. Wearing (1995) argues that the contradiction between the dominant negative discourse on ageing and the liberating aspect of the emerging leisure discourse provides a space for older people to resist the stereotypical and degenerative view of ageing and raises the potential for them to experience liberating outcomes. Following Wearing, it could be argued that in the intersection of contradictory understandings of ageing (that were presented in Chapter 2) resistance and empowerment can be played out. The opposing discourses of ‘friendly participation’ and ‘serious competition’ associated with Masters sport provide another space for resistance and empowerment. Thus, Wearing’s argument is helpful in explaining how older people’s leisure can be interpreted as resistance to the stereotypes of older age and provides a good basis for explaining older people’s relationship with competitive sport. Her work on leisure and resistance takes a postmodern interactionist approach and draws on the insights of post-structural feminist theory (see Wearing, 1990, 1991, 1995, 1998; Wearing & Wearing, 1990). Of primary concern to postmodern feminists is the rejection of the notion that grand theory is capable of explaining individuals’ behaviour, arguing instead for the adoption of an approach characterised by diversity, contradiction and multiple interpretations (Aitchison, 2000). In particular, Wearing makes use of Michel Foucault’s (1978, 1980, 1983, 1988) ideas on power, discourse and resistance to make her case regarding leisure as resistance to ageism.

A Foucaultian Perspective

Foucault (1978, p. 93) argues that, “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere”. Therefore, power is seen to be

⁹ Wearing (1995) uses the term ageism to refer to the dominant negative discourse on ageing.

available to everybody in their everyday lives, including the contexts of sport and leisure (see Shaw, 2001). Power is not interpreted as solely top down and oppressive, but as multiple with individuals having the potential to change, at least at the micro-level, dominant discourses or power relations in society (Foucault, 1978, 1983). According to Foucault (1978) power is constituted and conveyed through discourse. Discourse refers to language, spoken or written, about ‘truth’ and knowledge that reflect sets of rules and ways of understanding. An embedded discourse can become accepted as ‘fact’ by society, and individual subjectivities that develop parallel with dominant discourses can result in docile bodies or normalised identities (Foucault, 1983). Indeed this process is evident among many older people who internalise the accepted view that it is not appropriate for them to be serious competitive athletes and consider it foolish or unnecessary behaviour.

On the other hand, if power is a dynamic and multi-dimensional process conveyed through discourse, there is always a possibility of multiple resistances because opposing discourses can be developed that have the potential to establish new ‘truths’ and ways of understanding (Wearing, 1998). As Foucault (1978, p. 95) says, “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power”. Foucault (1978, p. 96) states that “there is a plurality of resistances,” each of them unique. Resistances can be necessary, spontaneous, concerted, violent, solitary, and so on. According to Shaw (2001) resistance can be individual and/or collective, intentional or unintentional, and has the potential for personal empowerment and/or collective social change. For example, older people who compete seriously in physically demanding sport could be seen as resisting dominant orthodoxies that claim it is not for them and expressing an identity as a competitive athlete. Here, resistance means the fight against discourse as a form of power which permeates everyday life and makes individuals subject to others by domination or dependence and subject to their own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge (Foucault, 1983). Wearing (1995, p. 272) claims that, “Foucault urges us, as a form of resistance, not to be confined by discourses”. In Foucaultian terms the fundamental nature of the power relationship is about individuals refusing what the dominant discourses tell them

they are or should be and striving for what they want or could be (Foucault, 1983; Wearing, 1995, 1998). As Weedon (1987, p. 106) puts it:

The individual who has a memory and an already discursively constituted sense of identity may resist particular interpellations¹⁰ or produce new versions of meaning from the conflicts and contradictions between existing discourses.

In other words, “the individual is not merely the passive site of discursive struggle” (Wearing, 1991, p. 578). For example, if there is disparity between the position offered by the negative stereotypes of ageing, age-appropriate norms associated with sport, and the interest and behaviour of the older athlete, from a post-structural perspective it is argued that a resistance to these dominant positions is produced, whether intentional or not. According to Shaw (2001, p. 187) resistance may be “an unintended consequence of certain types of behaviour”. Therefore, intentionality is not a defining characteristic of resistance, as resistance varies in the degree of consciousness and can often be unintentional on the part of the participant (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Shaw, 2001; Wearing, 1995; Weedon, 1987).

A post-structural perspective helps explain how contradictory beliefs about ageing and sport make way for resistances to such discourses and provide for the establishment of counter discourses or the development of individual identities. Following Wearing (1995) it can be argued that at the intersection of the dominant negative discourse on ageing and the emerging positive ageing approach, resistance, empowerment, and identity management are played out. It has been shown through a review of the literature that older people who compete in sport are seen to be rejecting the negative stereotypes of ageing and feeling empowered. This argument suggests that older people who compete in sport have the potential to resist traditional notions of ageing, experience a sense of control of their body and life opportunities, expand the self, and develop alternative meanings of ‘older age’ for themselves (Biggs, 1997; Hurd, 1999; Wearing, 1998). These older people are

¹⁰ Interpellation is an Althusserian term which refers to the way in which ideology functions to constitute an individual’s subjectivity through language (Weedon, 1987).

conceptualised as social subjects who have the ability to speak and act against domination (Wearing, 1998). The focus, then, is on individual rather than collective resistance and the outcome often is "... individual empowerment rather than broader social change" (Shaw, 2001, p. 190; see also Wearing, 1996). Therefore, resistance can be seen as a form of power, that is, feelings of personal empowerment, satisfaction and enjoyment that are experienced as a response to domination.

However, in resisting one set of discourses, older people are involved in reinforcing, internalising or conforming to other dominant values and ideologies, such as those associated with individualism, ability, youthfulness and competition. Herein lies a contradiction that Wearing's argument does not take into account. For example, Poole (2001) found that for a group of women aged over 50 years aerobics was an expression of personal empowerment as well as conformity to health and beauty discourses. Poole argued that although the women tended to focus on improving their body image it would be an overstatement of the circumstances to interpret the women's commitment to exercise exclusively as conforming to dominant beliefs about health, beauty, and delaying the ageing process. Instead, she claimed that it was more about "lives well lived" and personal empowerment (Poole, 2001, p. 311). This sense of liberation was experienced by the women through support, friendship, fun, strength, mobility, satisfaction and independence in later life. Poole's study indicates how resistance and conformity to conflicting discourses about ageing, the body and physical activity can happen simultaneously.

Wearing (1995) discusses several qualitative case studies about older people and leisure, including her own previous work involving interviews with thirty-nine men and women over the age of 55 years from Sydney, Australia. Collectively, she argues from the results of this review that older people "can resist and make their own space for activities and social interaction which they find enjoyable and satisfying and which maintain an aliveness of mental and physical abilities" (Wearing, 1995, p. 276). Notably, though, the leisure pursuits undertaken by the older people in the case studies discussed by Wearing, like most studies about

leisure in later life, are passive recreational or mental activities, such as gardening, crafts, walking, reading, and watching television (for example, Erikson et al., 1986; Godbey, 1994; Grant, 2002; McGuire et al., 1996; Mobily, 1987; Thompson et al., 1990). Without undermining the potentially empowering nature of these activities and the positive feelings older adults may experience when undertaking them, these leisure pursuits comply with the view of age-appropriate or stereotypical activities for older people. Such activities are promoted under the umbrella of healthy ageing, whereas competing in physical demanding sports is not. Wearing's review of the literature indicates "that resistance to ageism through leisure is possible" (1995, p. 276). However, her focus on passive leisure pursuits and discourses does not completely explain the phenomenon of older people competing in physically demanding sports.

If resistance and empowerment can explain older people's behaviour in 'traditional' or 'stereotypical' leisure pursuits, what does examining extreme competitive activities contribute to this debate? Why are these older people competing and why in such a physically strenuous way? Exploring the specific leisure activity of competing in physically demanding sport takes the debate beyond the positive ageing literature. Positive ageing and health promotion show that being active and healthy is no longer age-specific. But competition and competing in a physically intense way are central to discourses associated with youth. It is here that older people are able to resist both the negative stereotypes of ageing, as well as the positive ageing approach. Hence, research into the experiences of older athletes in the context of conflicting discourses will add to Wearing's argument on resistance to ageism through leisure.

Furthermore, ageing is not merely a set of discourses; it is a real physical and psychological experience. The Fourth Age or 'disability zone' is an inevitable outcome of long life. To what extent are older athletes resisting their ageing bodies as well as age-appropriate norms? What insights might emerge from examining the intersections between these different forms of resistance and the discourses that frame them? While Wearing (1995, p. 273) acknowledges that "Some form of

adaptation to the reality of ageing is often also necessary alongside the possibility of resisting the degenerative discourse on ageing” she does not interpret this adaptation as resistance to an ageing body. In other words, she focuses on how older people resist discourses through leisure and ignores resistances to the physical realities of the biological ageing process. In fact, most criticisms of post-structural theories have centred on their overemphasis on discourse (Gard, 2001). While Wearing helps explain how older people’s leisure behaviour can be interpreted as resistance to dominant negative understandings of ageing, her argument does not explain why older people are resisting (both discourses and the body) in such a physically extreme and competitive way. Shaw (2001) and Hartsock (1990) draw a general criticism that the post-structural view of power as multiple and diffused makes the object of resistance abstract and difficult to locate. Consequently, it becomes hard to determine the nature and type of oppression or power that older people may be aiming to resist through their involvement in sport. Additionally, Shaw argues that a post-structural view of resistance “begs the question of whether the forms of power being resisted are in any way structured, common, or shared beyond the individual experience” (2001, p. 191).

Wearing provides insights into interpreting older people’s leisure behaviour as a form of resistance and empowerment, but like the previous studies that have been reviewed so far, her line of argument is limited. Combining Wearing’s argument with positive ageing approaches and understandings of the Third and Fourth Ages may be useful in explaining the resistance of older athletes to their ageing bodies. Nevertheless, rigorous theoretical and empirical research into competitive sport as a context for resistance and empowerment for older people is necessary. Recently, several researchers have adopted post-structural approaches to explain the *competitive sport* experiences and behaviour of both women and people with physical disabilities. Some of these studies provide evidence of resistance beyond discourses to resistances to the female or disabled body. In particular, such research examines the notion that sport is an effective context for women and people with disabilities to: resist stereotypes and their bodies; feel personally empowered; manage their identity and; simultaneously reject and accept aspects of the

competitive ideology underlying mainstream sport. It is worth considering some of these studies here as their findings will complement the framework for explaining the phenomenon of older people competing in physically demanding sports.

Competitive Sport and Marginalised Groups

Understanding the competitive sport experiences of marginalised and oppressed groups is a developing area of academic inquiry. While there are a number of groups in Western society that have been considered marginalised in the context of mainstream competitive sport, the following discussion focuses on the experiences of women and people with physical disabilities. The studies reviewed have relevance to an examination of older people and competitive sport because women and people with disabilities have been stereotyped and marginalised in a similar way to older people, especially within the context of sport (Adair & Vamplew, 1997; Coakley, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994). For example, women and people with physical disabilities have been stereotyped as weak and passive (Adair & Vamplew, 1997). In the past, sport was only considered appropriate for women and people with physical disabilities if it was passive in nature or used for therapy. Additionally, as outlined in Chapter 1, sport for marginalised groups tends to be promoted and understood as non-serious or “carefully controlled competition” (Coakley, 1994, p. 87).

Sports competitions involving only women have been interpreted as sites of resistance and empowerment because of the opportunities they provide for women to experience their bodies in strong and powerful ways and to create a sense of community within a context free from male domination (Blinde, Taub, & Han, 1994; Castelnovo & Guthrie, 1998; Theberge, 1986). As Henderson et al. (1989, p. 105) argue, “Sport and fitness activities can be liberating for women because they defy the cultural stereotype of women as passive and weak”. A comparable rationale can be applied to the participation of older people in sport. For instance, it could be argued that by competing in sport older people are proving that the ageing body is not frail or inactive. They may be attempting to define ageing in terms of

youthful and athletic qualities. Interestingly, some women-only sporting cultures share a similar philosophy to that which is underpinning sport for older people. That is, women-only (in particular, feminist) sports have been found to emphasise social support, care, safety, a sense of belonging, friendships, enjoyment and celebration and the rejection of the overemphasis on competition, winning-at-all-costs, elitism, and domination (Birrell & Richter, 1987, 1994; Blinde et al., 1994; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1994; Krane, 2001; Lenskyj, 1994; Theberge, 1987, 1991, 1997). However, there is still the contradictory discourse of competition that partly frames their experiences. If women compete to win and push their bodies to the limit then this goes against the inclusive philosophy that is promoted. The same could be said for older people who compete to win in physically demanding sports.

Shaw (1994, 1996, 2001), Wiley, Shaw and Havitz (2000) and Krane (2001) argue that the concepts of resistance and empowerment can help explain the participation of women in male-dominated sports or other activities that are considered ‘non-traditional’ or ‘non-conforming’ because they challenge traditional images and ideologies of femininity. For example, these concepts have been used to explain women’s participation in outdoor adventure recreation (Little, 2002), martial arts (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; Lawler, 2002; Noad & James, 2003), windsurfing (Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998), soccer (Harris, 2001), bodybuilding (Guthrie & Castelnuovo, 1992) and ice hockey (Theberge, 1995, 1997, 2000). In general, it has been argued that when leisure is interpreted “... as a situation of choice, control, and self-determination ... women’s participation in activities, especially non-traditional activities, can be seen to challenge restrictive social roles” (Shaw, 1994, p. 9) and “... also provide opportunities for [them] to exercise personal power” (Shaw, 1994, p. 15, also see Green, 1998, p. 172). For example, an ethnography by Lawler (2002, p. 53) on the experiences of women who participate in contact sports, such as tackle football, rugby, ice hockey and martial arts found that women maintain involvement in these sports because of “camaraderie, feelings of worth, of power and strength, the sense of liberation and autonomy that comes with participating in a non-traditional sport”. One would assume that because older people who compete in sport are partaking in a youth-associated pursuit, which they

have traditionally been excluded from, they also have the potential to experience similar liberating outcomes.

Notably, women's involvement in pursuits that challenge traditional images of femininity or gender-appropriate roles does not necessarily indicate intentional resistance on the part of the participant (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Shaw, 2001). For example, Theberge (1997, 2000) explored women's participation in elite ice hockey and revealed that while the players had an extremely positive experience there was little recognition of the politics of gender amongst the women and their involvement did not seem to be a conscious attempt to bring about change. From this perspective, older people who compete in physically demanding sports would automatically be seen as exemplifying resistance, whether they realise it or not, because their behaviour challenges dominant negative perspectives on ageing, as well as the accepted view that sport for older people is about having fun, making friends and keeping fit. Here, resistance and empowerment rest on being competitive in physically demanding sports because competition is deemed appropriate only for the young.

Some of the aforementioned studies interpret women's sport behaviour as simultaneously conforming to and resisting the values embedded in mainstream sport (Guthrie & Castelnovo, 1992; Harris, 2001; Noad & James, 2003; Theberge, 2000; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998). For instance, the female ice hockey players in the study by Theberge (2000) embraced the mainstream ideologies of the men's game of ice hockey through their expressions of strength, power, domination, speed and physical aggression. However, they also demonstrated grace, finesse and emotion which works against the 'masculine' model of competitive sport. Similarly, a study by Guthrie & Castelnovo (1992) of elite female bodybuilders explored how this context encouraged both resistance and compliance to dominant gender ideologies. These findings reveal how it is possible for individuals to reject one set of discourses and embrace another due to the tensions inherent in the competitive sport context. Resistance, empowerment and conformity are being played out through the negotiation of contradictory beliefs about femininity,

masculinity and sport. In doing so, there exists a potential to simultaneously challenge and reproduce dominant orthodoxies (see Shaw, 1996, 2001). Moreover, a common argument emerging from the study of women in non-traditional competitive sports is that women's very participation in these activities means "... that they are asserting their own identity [by] showing themselves to be strong and independent" (Harris, 2001, p. 28). In this sense, women are using the discourses and practices associated with competitive sport as expressions of identity. Their actions also have the potential to establish new understandings of what it means to be a woman.

Similarly, studies of disability sport have interpreted competitive sport as a site of resistance, empowerment and identity management (see Ashton-Shaeffer, Gibson, Autry & Hanson, 2001a; Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001b; Blinde & McClung, 1997; Guthrie & Castelnovo, 2001; Taub, Blinde, & Greer, 1999). Research has found that people with physical disabilities use the practice and discourses of sport to define themselves in positive ways. These studies have relevance to research of older people in competitive sport because of the similar stereotypes attached to an ageing body and a disabled body. For example, competitive sport provided a way in which a group of male college athletes (aged 20-51) could minimise the negative stereotypes associated with their disability and exceed socio-cultural expectations by proving their physical skill and demonstrating a strong, fit, healthy and liberated body (Taub et al., 1999). In this sense, athletes with physical disabilities have the potential to establish alternative understandings of the capabilities of a disabled body. Guthrie and Castelnovo (2001) found that within a group of thirty-four female athletes with physical disabilities, approximately one third managed their disability by conforming to able-body ideals of health and beauty. This outcome shows that in resisting negative stereotypes about disability individuals are simultaneously constituting, internalising or conforming to socio-cultural values of ability, independence and attractiveness. According to Ashton-Shaeffer et al. (2001a) and Ashton-Shaeffer et al. (2001b) by resisting stereotypes associated with the disabled body, as well as challenging the body itself, disabled athletes can experience a sense of empowerment through enjoyment, independence, increased

self-confidence, skill development, motivation, perceptions of accomplishment, friendship and social contact and travel. Clearly, conceptualisations of resistance, empowerment and identity are central to interpreting the ways in which older people also negotiate the contradictory beliefs about both ageing and sport when talking about and partaking in competitive sport.

Conclusion

This chapter began by considering key literature on the most common reasons why older people compete in sport. Four groups of motives were identified: physical and psychological health benefits; social networks; enjoyment; and competition. The previous two chapters have set up the conflicting discourses about sport (serious competition versus friendly participation) and about ageing (negative stereotypes versus positive ageing). Combined, the accepted view is that fun and friendship are not commonly associated with mainstream sport in Western society, however, they are acceptable discourses and experiences for older people's sport. The stereotypes of ageing and the dominant ideas about physical activity and older people underlie the orthodoxy that older people should be active, but not serious about competition. It is in the interaction of these tensions that resistance, empowerment and identity management can be played out and developed through competitive sports participation.

Thus, it was argued in this chapter that concepts of identity management, resistance and empowerment are important in explaining why people participate in an activity that challenges age-appropriate norms. They also provide a framework for interpreting the multiple ways in which older athletes negotiate contradictory discourses of sport and ageing when they discuss and experience competing in sport. Additionally, understandings of identity negotiation and life-stage theories provide insight into the way older people manage the relationship between socio-cultural values, their leisure behaviour, their personal and social selves, and their ageing body. However, such theories are yet to be applied to the context of older people and competitive sport. Wearing's thesis on resistance to ageism through

leisure is valuable in explaining how resistance to discourse is possible, but it falls short in answering key questions about resisting the ageing body, competitive behaviour and intense physical activity. Also, Wearing (1995) does not acknowledge that in resisting one set of beliefs older people are often involved in embracing alternative values and norms. Insights from studies into other marginalised groups of sport revealed that individuals can resist stereotypes, challenge their bodies and feel empowered, while simultaneously embracing and rejecting competitive ideologies of mainstream sport. Therefore, it is possible that older competitive athletes who concurrently resist and embrace discourses associated with ageing and sport may also have the potential to challenge the negative stereotypes of older age, reinforce values of competitiveness and youthfulness, resist their ageing body, feel personally empowered, and negotiate alternative meanings of older age.

However, qualitative research into understanding the motives and experiences of older athletes, within the context of conflicting orthodoxies of sport and ageing, that applies the concepts of resistance, empowerment and identity management for interpretation is needed in order to explore these assertions. Such research will extend studies into marginalised sport by applying these theoretical concepts to interpret the behaviour of an older population. Therefore, this thesis brings together insights from traditional and postmodern understandings of identity management, post-structural theories of resistance and empowerment, as well as life-stage theories and positive ageing approaches to explain the phenomenon of older people competing in sport. The following chapter discusses the methodological approach to the thesis and briefly describes the data collection and analysis processes.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY: EXPLORING THE PHENOMENON

Introduction

Given the research aims underpinning this thesis it was decided that the most appropriate methodology would be qualitative research within an interpretive phenomenological paradigm. This chapter details the methodological approach taken. Because there is a scarcity of qualitative research into sport experiences in later life another goal of this chapter is to contribute to a discussion of how qualitative methodologies might be used to explore this phenomenon. The chapter begins with an examination of the paradigmatic framework and its consistency with the theoretical framework of the thesis. Next, the strength of qualitative inquiry (especially interpretive phenomenological research) in addressing the experiences of older people in sport is highlighted. The qualitative research design used for the study is then explained. Finally, the data collection and analysis procedures undertaken in this study are briefly described. Researchers are often criticised for glossing over the specifics of their methodology, with not enough information being provided about how the research was conducted to enable readers to assess the credibility of the study or to understand the circumstances in which the research was produced (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Therefore, a more detailed explanation of the methods and analysis is provided in Appendix A.

Paradigmatic Framework

The paradigmatic framework refers to a basic set of beliefs, assumptions or worldview that guides the actions of researchers, both methodologically and epistemologically (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). An interpretive paradigm that is rooted in phenomenology underpins my research. In a broad sense, an interpretive paradigm recognises the subjectivity of human lived experience and posits that it is

the meanings that individuals attach to their experiences that constitute their reality (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Hemingway, 1995; Prus, 1996). This approach to research has its origins in the foundational work of the classical sociologist Max Weber (1949) among others. From this standpoint, Prus (1996, p. 9) argues that, “the study of human behaviour is the study of human lived experiences and that human experience is rooted in people’s meanings, interpretations, activities, and interactions”.

Therefore, the underlying assumption of an interpretive phenomenological approach is that reality is socially constructed; human behaviour is seen as representing an intersubjective, interactive process; and individuals are self-reflexive actors (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Prus, 1996). With an increasingly postmodern sensibility it is argued that there exists no single interpretive truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a). At the essence of postmodern and post-structural perspectives is doubt that any discourse, method or theory has privileged authoritative knowledge over another (Richardson, 1998). Postmodernism argues that qualitative research and writing “is always partial, local, and situational, and that our Self [that is, the researcher/author] is always present” (Richardson, 1998, p. 354). In other words, it is recognised that multiple and contradictory views exist within the social world.

Interpretive researchers attempt to see the world from the perspectives of the participant, as opposed to positivist frameworks where researchers view the participant as an object to be studied from an outsider’s point of view (Schwandt, 1994, 2000; Weber, 1949). Silverman (1993, p. 92) argues that when researching human experience and attitudes, “no interpersonal cross-checking of statements is appropriate”. A reason for this claim is that the goal of the research is not to seek facts but rather, as O’Brien Cousins puts it, “respondents are viewed as experienced people who give authentic insight on their constructed world” (2000, p. 286). Therefore, “the important reality is what people perceive it to be” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 3). In this sense, it is argued that human life should be studied from an ‘emic’ viewpoint (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). That is, in its natural,

empirical setting “as it is experienced and accomplished by the very people involved in its production” (Prus, 1996, p. 9). The advantage of naturalistic inquiry as opposed to an ‘etic’ investigation which is directed to an abstraction from the natural world (for example, a laboratory experiment), “is that [naturalistic inquiry] respects and stays close to the empirical domain” (Blumer, 1969, p. 46) and provides firsthand knowledge of the subjectivity of human life (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The interpretive paradigm is embedded in phenomenology, which has a long history in philosophy and sociology (Kerry & Armour, 2000; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The use of the word ‘phenomenology’ is ambiguous and it is often used interchangeably with the word ‘interpretive’. However, it is possible in the study of social life to contrast traditional descriptive or philosophical phenomenology (as ‘pure’ description of lived experience) with interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology (as an interpretation of human experience via talk, action or text) (see Kerry & Armour, 2000; van Manen, 1990). Traditional philosophical phenomenology aims to provide ‘pure’ descriptions of human experience by suspending all biases and preconceived notions about the phenomenon under study and articulating what is given as given (see Giorgi, 1997; Hammond, Howarth, & Keat, 1991; Husserl, 1970; Moustakas, 1994). It is committed to describing the nature of human experiences (that is, the study of essences), not explaining or interpreting them. Of course, ‘pure’ description is impossible as interpretive bias is inevitable and indeed embraced in qualitative research and writing (Denzin, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

Derivatives of the phenomenological tradition, such as interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, show less concern with ‘pure’ description and more interest in what it *means* to be a person (see Blumer, 1969; Heidegger, 1962; Mead, 1934; Prus, 1996; van Manen, 1990). These approaches acknowledge that all description is ultimately interpretive because the researcher always adds another layer of interpretation (Heidegger, 1962; van Manen, 1990). Giddens (1974, 1976, 1984) calls this process the ‘double hermeneutic’ and argues

that researchers studying human behaviour must be sensitive to it at the outset. As reinforced by Denzin and Lincoln (2003a, p. 30), behind every stage of interpretive practice “stands the biographically situated researcher”. In interpretive studies the influence of the researcher on the findings is acknowledged and utilised, not ignored. “The postmodern sensibility encourages writers to put themselves into their texts, to engage writing as a creative act of discovery and inquiry” (Denzin, 1998, p. 321). Interpretive phenomenologists are still attentive to how things appear and let participants speak for themselves, however, they believe that there is no such thing as uninterpreted phenomena (Heidegger, 1962; van Manen, 1990). Hence, interpretive phenomenology moves beyond ‘pure’ description and includes interpretation and explanation as part of the research process. The outcomes of any study ultimately are influenced by the researcher’s interactions with participants and theoretically informed decisions regarding the research design, data collection tools and data analysis. Therefore, researchers using the interpretive approach are concerned with the analysis of meaning as constructed by the participants (Kerry & Armour, 2000). Interpreting and explaining these meanings requires a theoretical framework that is consistent with the methodology.

The theories analysed in Chapter 3 are compatible with the epistemological and methodological approach undertaken for this thesis. When drawing on post-structural understandings of sport behaviour, the focus is on language (including both written and spoken discourse) because the underlying assumption is that meaning, social life and subjectivities are constituted and socially constructed through language, signs and symbols (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934; Prus, 1996; Weedon, 1987). Therefore, from a post-structural perspective it is argued that social life is constantly being negotiated, challenged, reinforced, and altered through language and discourse (Aitchison, 2000; Wearing, 1998; Weedon, 1987). Research from this standpoint helps explain the meanings people attach to themselves, their interactions or their ‘lived experience’ (Hargreaves, 1994). Human subjectivity and choice are emphasised and the aim is to see the world through the eyes of the participant. People’s interpretation of their reality is best determined through the application of qualitative research methods. As Wearing

(1998, p. 188) concludes in her text on leisure and feminist theory:

Research which includes insights from [post-structural feminist and interactionist] perspectives ... focus on qualitative, interpretive methods able to explore the diversities of meanings attached to leisure experience for people ...

Furthermore, post-structuralism directs researchers to be self-reflexive and to nurture their own voice in qualitative writing (Richardson, 1998).

Consistently, the methodological paradigm of interpretive phenomenology that is underpinning my research recognises the voice of the researcher, as well as the subjectivity of human lived experience, and aims to illuminate the multiple meanings that individuals attach to their experiences in competitive sport. Hence, I utilised qualitative research methods, including interviews and observations. A primarily inductive approach was taken to data analysis, which involved a combination of coding, constant comparative analysis, the generation of common themes, and theory application. All of the studies of resistance and empowerment through sport and leisure that were reviewed in Chapter 3 used qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and observations, as well as an application of interpretive forms of analyses (for example, grounded theory strategies, thematic and discourse analyses, and the like). Qualitative research makes an important contribution not only to understanding the relationship between sport, physical activity and older people in general, but also to addressing the research aims of this thesis more specifically. The discussion below highlights the nature of this contribution and provides a context for understanding my research design.

The Power of Qualifying the Ageing and Sport Experience

Several authors have emphasised the contribution that phenomenological methods can make to the broad field of sport-related research (see Bain, 1995; Kerry & Armour, 2000; Whitson, 1976). For example, Whitson (1976) argued for the need

to use the interpretive phenomenological approach to explore aspects related to the experience of the ‘self’ in sport. More than twenty years later, Kerry and Armour (2000) demonstrated the substantial lack of phenomenological research in the sociology of sport field. After an extensive review of sport sociology literature they found a mere six published articles that made use of phenomenology. Interpretive phenomenology approaches in the area of sport-related research, a field where meaning, movement and experience are inextricably linked, offers valuable insights that go beyond objective scientific knowledge of sports involvement (Bain, 1995; Kerry & Armour, 2000; Whitson, 1976). Research into sport and physical activity in later life from a social-psychological perspective is also dominated by quantitative methods derived from the natural sciences (Markula, Grant, & Denison, 2001; O'Brien Cousins & Horne, 1999; Stathi et al., 2002). For example, O'Brien Cousins and Horne (1999) studied over 1,500 articles (from 1990-1994) related to the outcomes of structured physical activity and sport for people over the age of 50 (with particular emphasis on those aged over 70) and found that the vast majority of the literature was quantitative and within the positivist paradigm. Moreover, research in the field of gerontology “has been long dominated by the medical model and the positivist research methodology” (Jaffe & Miller, 1994, p. 63).

It comes as no surprise that calls have been made by those engaged in researching the relationship between physical activity and ageing (see Grant, 2001; McPherson, 1999; Sankar & Gubrium, 1994; Stathi et al., 2002) for the use of qualitative methodologies in order “to be more sensitive to the ways in which older people interpret their lives and the society in which they live” (Grant & O'Brien Cousins, 2001, p. 239). What is more, the *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity* published a special issue in 2001 titled “The Promise of Qualitative Research”. In the opening article of this edition, Grant and O'Brien Cousins (2001, p. 238) deliberately accentuate this “... imbalance in the body of knowledge about research on aging and physical activity”. Without aiming to devalue the role of quantitative research into ageing and/or physically activity, Grant and O'Brien Cousins believe that an increase in qualitative research is essential if we are to learn more about the older person. A major reason being that “no one paradigm can capture all the subtle

variations of any phenomenon” (Grant & O'Brien Cousins, 2001, p. 238). For example, “In the course of quantifying physical performance, functional capabilities, and psychological characteristics of the aged, the ineffable and less tangible are either suppressed or absent” (Grant & O'Brien Cousins, 2001, p. 238). Hence, the lack of qualitative approaches to understanding has resulted in, “the stories about aging and physical activity [being] incomplete, and the central character (i.e., the older person) is hidden from the text” (Grant & O'Brien Cousins, 2001, p. 238; Grant & Stothart, 1999).

Therefore, the use of qualitative inquiry can give ‘voice’ to a group that is rarely heard and “... makes the often invisible, unreflected aspects of life explicit. It gives voice to the ordinary” (Sankar & Gubrium, 1994, p. ix). In ignoring older people’s perspectives, opinions and lived experiences we sacrifice a potentially exciting context for learning more about the ageing experience. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2, ageing is a complex, dynamic, socio-cultural, psychological and biological process. Gillearn & Higgs (2000, p. 1) argue that, “Ageing has become more complex, differentiated and ill-defined, experienced from a variety of perspectives and expressed in a variety of ways at different moments in people’s lives”. These characteristics of growing old and their relationship to sport highlight the need for a research design that is sensitive to the ambiguity and subjectivity of the ageing experience. Furthermore, Grant (2001, p. 783) states:

[The] stories derived from this type of research respect and represent the voice of the participants, connect to the broader social and theoretical issues and ... have value and power in their own right to illuminate.

Therefore, given that this thesis sought to interpret the voices of the participants within the context of broader contradictory discourses of both sport and ageing, a qualitative research design was considered to be the most effective method for exposing the complexities and tensions that underlie this phenomenon.

Research Design

Owing to the dearth of qualitative research into understanding the experiences of older adults in competitive sport in Australia, this study adopted an exploratory, qualitative research design. Exploratory research is like an inverted pyramid in the sense that the focus is originally broad with no explicit theory or hypothesis set out in advance, but becomes progressively sharpened as the study proceeds (Blumer, 1969). Qualitative inquiry is the most effective type of research design when working from an interpretive phenomenological perspective because central to “qualitative research is understanding people from their own frames of reference and experiencing reality as they experience it” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 7). In other words, “Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter ...” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 3). According to Jaffe and Miller (1994, p. 52) the goal of qualitative research is not only “to understand social life by taking into account meaning, [and] the interpretive process of social actors”, but also “the cultural, social and situational contexts in which those processes occur” (see also Blumer, 1969).

Qualitative investigators “are flexible in how they go about conducting their studies ... There are guidelines to be followed, but ... never is the researcher a slave to procedure and technique” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 10). According to Blumer, (1969, p. 40) this flexible approach to the inquiry of human behaviour has two main objectives: first, to understand “a sphere of social life that is unfamiliar and hence unknown” to the researcher; and, second, to refine the inquiry through ongoing adjustment and analysis so that the research problem, the findings and interpretations “arise out of, and remain grounded, in the empirical life under study”. Furthermore, in exploratory qualitative research, data collection and data analysis are emerging, interacting processes that sometimes happen simultaneously. For instance, I conducted three stages of data collection. During and after the initial data collection process (Stage 1) I undertook preliminary analysis and identified tentative themes and understandings that were grounded in the data. This process led me to collect additional data (Stage 2) that would shed light on the tentative

themes and insights that I had already gained, while still remaining open to the emergence of other themes and applicable concepts. To ensure that I had reached theoretical saturation (albeit within the confines of a PhD candidature) I conducted final follow-up strategies (Stage 3). After all data were collected an overall analysis allowed me to refine, discard or elaborate on the themes and use theories to explain the data (see Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Therefore, the approach I used was primarily inductive, which is a flexible one that begins with the researcher having read widely to gain a sense of key theoretical issues in the field before proceeding to (somewhat simultaneously) carry out observation, provide description, analyse the data and finally apply theories for explanation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

The advantage of the ‘loose’ inductive approach to research is that the findings remain grounded in the data, rather than based on preconceived theories that may be irrelevant. Glaser and Strauss (1967) have coined this inductive theorising process involved in qualitative research as ‘grounded theory’. Conversely, deductive research is a ‘fixed’ approach whereby researchers begin with a hypothesis, gather observational and descriptive data and proceed to analyse the data to test the hypothesis (Huberman & Miles, 1998). Although an inductive research design was primarily used in this study, “Pure induction is impossible. We can never escape all of our assumptions about the world” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 8). There is always an element of deduction involved in any research when one is consulting previous studies and theories related to the area of research interest. As Silverman (2003, p. 70) says, “... no research can ever be ‘theory-free’”. The principle is to make sure the theory fits the data, as theories provide explanations of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Consequently, in order to understand what I was observing and identify what was significant, I needed to be aware of the key theoretical issues relevant to the phenomenon under investigation without letting them dominate the data collection process. Hence, while I was familiar with the concepts of resistance, empowerment and identity management prior to the study these theories acted as sensitising

concepts. That is, I did not go into this study specifically asking the participants questions about resistance, empowerment and identity negotiation, but because these concepts emerged as salient (from my interpretation and analysis of data and my theoretical reading) I examined how they were reflected and played out in the context of older people competing in sport. I also explored how this context allowed for the critique and development of these concepts. Therefore, Chapter 3 has set up initial conceptualisations of resistance, empowerment and identity management as they have been interpreted within the contexts of sport and leisure behaviour, while the following chapters will show how these concepts have been developed through the analysis of my data.

Finally, a research design stipulates how the researcher will address two key issues in qualitative inquiry: representation and legitimation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a). In interpretive research issues of representation are central. Representation relates to topics such as ‘voice’, the ‘Other’ and the place of the reflective researcher in texts produced from studies (Denzin, 1998; Geertz, 1988; Richardson, 1998; van Maanen, 1988). In my study, a multi-voiced approach to representation is utilised. For example, in the presentation of data (Chapters 5 and 6) as much as possible I let the participants (or ‘Others’) do their own talking. Consequently, their ‘voices’ are central. However, it is acknowledged that although I am allowing the ‘Others’ to speak for themselves, when I talk about or for the participants I am taking over their ‘voices’ through the process of interpretation (Denzin, 1998; Geertz, 1988; Richardson, 1998; van Maanen, 1988). Therefore, my ‘voice’, as researcher and author, is also incorporated throughout the entire thesis in order to provide a context and explanation of the phenomenon being studied.

There are difficulties and limitations when attempting to portray issues and events from the perspective of the participant. Huberman and Miles (1998) argue that a limitation of qualitative studies is that they cannot be completely verified. Legitimation speaks to issues of evaluating and interpreting qualitative material, including how a public text makes claim for its own authority (Denzin, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Geertz, 1988; Richardson, 1998; van Maanen, 1988).

However, it is no longer effective or useful to evaluate qualitative research using quantitative constructs, such as internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (see Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 1994; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Instead, qualitative research can be evaluated in terms of the trustworthiness and credibility of its methodology and findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is recognised, therefore, that there is always another way to interpret the story about the lives of the people being studied and that the processes of qualitative interpretation, representation and analysis “are always ongoing, emergent, unpredictable and unfinished” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, p. 420). To establish trustworthiness in the findings and to allow readers to judge the credibility of this research project, a detailed explanation of how the research was conducted is provided in Appendix A. Also included in Appendix A is a discussion of the strengths and limitations of each method used in the study and a reflection on my role as the researcher in the research process.

Many authors argue that the primary methodological procedures of qualitative studies within the interpretive phenomenological paradigm are participant-observation, observation and long open-ended in-depth interviews (Moustakas, 1994; Prus, 1996; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; van Manen, 1990, 1998). These were the methods employed in my study, with short semi-structured interviews being an additional one. The use of multiple methods to study a single phenomenon, called methodological triangulation (Patton, 1990) strengthened the study’s design by reducing the effect of each method’s limitations on the overall results and obtaining more comprehensive information on the same issue (Henderson, 1991; Sarantakos, 1998). This triangulation of data collection methods also affords cross checking, which enhances the scope, density, clarity, trustworthiness and credibility of the information gathered (Sarantakos, 1993). Additional verification procedures that were used to enhance credibility include a researcher’s reflective journal and the use of analytical memos (refer to Appendix A). My study comprised three stages of data collection. Each stage of data collection and analysis is described briefly below.

Collection of Data

Stage 1 involved carrying out field observations, participant-observation and short semi-structured interviews over eleven days at the 2001 8th Australian Masters Games (AMG) held in Newcastle, New South Wales. This national event offered sixty-one different sports and hosted a total of 11,225 athletes including 2,633 over the age of 55 years (Newcastle & Hunter Events Corporation, 2001). The Masters Games was chosen because it is an institutionalised multi-sports competition where older people compete in physically demanding individual and team sports. A theoretical sampling framework was used to consciously select groups, settings and individuals where and for whom the processes being studied had most relevance (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To gain access into the field setting, I participated as a volunteer worker for the event (see Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2003, for a discussion on the advantages of volunteering in observational research). This “peripheral membership role” allowed me to carry out unobtrusive covert observation and overt participant-observation in the same public setting (see Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 85).

The focus of observations and interviews was on athletes over the age of 55 years who were competing in physically demanding individual and team sports (see Table A.1 in Appendix A). When observing I allowed behaviours to unfold ‘naturally’ with the participants being uninterrupted and often unaware of my presence. I was a participant-observer when my actions involved verifying observations by asking participants questions about their behaviours. Participant-observation also included having informal conversations with competitors, volunteer workers and event organisers, and participating in organised social events, such as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, and the Mid-week Party. Informal short semi-structured interviews (see Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 1995) were conducted with a purposive sample of 110 competitors aged 55 – 94 years (55-59, $n=26$; 60-69, $n=55$; 70-79, $n=20$; 80-89, $n=8$; 90-99, $n=1$) (an even gender split) over the course of the AMG. Each participant was interviewed once on-site, with interviews lasting between five and thirty minutes and being guided by open-ended questions about

why they competed in sport and what it means to them (see Appendix B). This sample size is rather large and the interviews are quite short for a qualitative study. However, the purpose of Stage 1 was to get a surface scan of the common issues surrounding the behaviour of older athletes while there were thousands of them in the one location. Tentative themes were developed from this first stage of data collection and used as a foundation for subsequent in-depth interviews with a much smaller sample during Stage 2.

For Stage 2, in-depth interviews were undertaken with twenty-eight older athletes (fifteen females and thirteen males who were not part of the Stage 1 sample) over a period of three months and held approximately five months after the initial fieldwork (see Appendices C and D). These participants, whom I had met while at the AMG, ranged in age from 60-89 years (60-69, $n=14$; 70-79, $n=9$; 80-89, $n=5$). Stage 2 participants (only) were given a pseudonym (refer to Table A.2 in Appendix A). The breakdown of age cohorts is consistent with the participants from Stage 1 as well as the statistics from the current and previous Masters Games, which indicate that the majority of athletes aged over 60 are aged between 60 and 69, and as age increases, the numbers competing within each age group decrease.

Qualitative interviewing relies extensively on verbal accounts of participants' feelings, actions, attitudes, intentions and opinions (Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Therefore, the data collected from these interviews provided deeper insights into the lives of older competitive sportspeople, which allowed me to critique, elaborate and refine the tentative themes that had emerged from Stage 1. The general interview guide approach was the method chosen for in-depth interviews in this study (see Patton, 1990). The topics for discussion were listed in advance (see Appendix E), but formal questions were developed in the course of the interview, depending upon who the interviewee was and how the conversation was developing (Patton, 1990; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Each participant was interviewed once, however, follow-up phone conversations were held with five participants. This approach yielded extensive data but it only provided a 'snap shot' of each person's sporting life and a glimpse into their

experiences of competing in sport. Nevertheless, the findings provided intriguing insights into addressing the research aims and were exhaustive within the confines of a PhD candidature.

Stage 3 involved observation and participant-observation at the 2002 Lake Macquarie Masters Games (LMMG), and follow-up telephone conversations with five of the initial in-depth interviewees. This regional event was small-scale, held over a weekend and involved approximately 830 competitors across twenty-nine sports. The goal of this final stage of observations was to bring data collection to a close and to seek clarification or elaboration upon information given by respondents in their Stage 2 interview. Admittedly, very little new data were collected from Stage 3. Nevertheless, it was deemed necessary to ensure that no new ideas were emerging and theoretical saturation had been reached (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The total interviewee sample of 138 (Stage 1, $n=110$; Stage 2, $n=28$) was predominately white, middle class and considered themselves to be in good health. The participant sample highlights the race, class, physical ability and health bias underpinning this whole phenomenon. The majority of participants were from various states and territories across Australia, while seven participants were from New Zealand. They were also quite diverse in age, living arrangements and past and present sporting interests. Each participant competed in one or more of the following individual or team sports at the AMG or LMMG: long distance running, race walking, triathlon, cycling, track and field athletics, indoor rowing, canoeing, swimming, gymnastics, sport aerobics, beach volleyball, netball, tennis, baseball, ice hockey, squash, soccer, badminton, field hockey, softball, cricket (indoor and outdoor), basketball and touch football. Approximately fifty percent of the sample had had a continued involvement in their sport for most of their life (they are called the 'continuers'), while the remaining half were divided into 'rekindlers' (that is, those individuals who re-started involvement in their sport after an extended break, usually due to work or family obligations) and 'late starters' (including those people who did not begin competing in their sport until later in their life, usually over the age of 55 years).

Analysis of Data

Data analysis in interpretive qualitative research is ongoing, flexible and adjusted to emerging findings that remain grounded in the empirical data (Blumer, 1969; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). All of the interviews and field observations were transcribed verbatim. The analysis of data in this study was primarily inductive and it included a combination of coding, constant comparative analysis and the generation of common themes (see Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; van Manen, 1990, respectively). For example, the data was formally coded and compared by breaking it down into categories of ideas, behaviours and events (which were significant to participants), and labelling them through a process of examination, comparison and conceptualisation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After coding, the data were grouped into common topics, or raw data themes. Further inductive analysis involved linking similar raw data themes together to generate higher order themes (that is, into a more refined concept) (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). van Manen (1990) refers to this latter process as thematic analysis. According to Patton (1990), this inductive type of analysis is the most appropriate process when dealing with the convergence and divergence of data and when aiming to develop concepts that are grounded in the data. Interpretation involved an application of theories on resistance, empowerment and identity management. Data collection and analysis were carried out somewhat concurrently and continuously throughout the three stages of the research process. This whole back-and-forth process is consistent with the interpretive phenomenological approach because the findings emerge out of the data, and the emphasis is on revealing the multiple perspectives of participants and interpreting their experiences through the application of theory.

Four major themes emerged from the systematic analysis of data¹¹. The first theme relates to issues of “Fun, friendship and fitness” as both a justifying discourse and a ‘here and now’ experience of competing in sport. The second theme, “Competing to win”, is about the centrality of competition to older adults, in particular their

¹¹ The theme titles are direct quotes that were given by participants in my study.

desire to compete against others and themselves. It explores the various ways in which competition was experienced and spoken about by participants. The third theme, “I’m out here and I can do this!” relates to feelings of youthfulness and empowerment that participants associate with competing in sport. The final theme, “Use it or lose it”, concerns the ways in which older people use competitive sport as a strategy for desperately resisting, and perhaps denying, the ageing body and the associated onset of deep old age.

The rich data and varied stories of participants give insight into the most common motives, feelings, attitudes and behaviours associated with competing in sport in later life. In other words, to address the aims of this thesis commonalities were drawn from a diversity of participants who were either male or female, whose ages spanned across almost forty years, who competed in different types of sports (individual or team), and whose involvement in competitive sport had varied across their lifetime (continuers, rekindlers or late starters). In this type of analysis there is a tendency for the uniqueness of the individual to become overshadowed by the emergence of broader themes. Therefore, in answering the research questions underpinning this thesis, issues associated with gender differences, sporting history, type of sport or age did not emerge as significant. Nevertheless, subtle differences between these factors are noted during the discussion of findings (in Chapters 5 and 6) and it is recognised that each participant’s story is unique.

Collectively, the four contradictory themes outlined, above, point to the multiple reasons why older people compete in sport, given that it is not considered their domain, and the ways in which they negotiate the conflicting discourses associated with sport and ageing, as well as manage their ageing identity and body. Although each theme is unique and has been separated for explanation, the phenomenon under study is extremely complex, ambiguous and multi-faceted. Moreover, the meanings that the participants attach to their experiences in sport are multiple, dynamic and extremely contradictory. Hence, it is acknowledged that there is interaction and overlap between and within the four key themes.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided justification for the application of qualitative methods as the most appropriate and effective research design given the interpretive phenomenological paradigm, the theoretical underpinnings, and the research aims of the thesis. The flexible approach taken for data collection and analysis and the use of multiple qualitative methods afforded an in-depth understanding of the subjective nature of older people's behaviours, perspectives and experiences within the context of competitive sport and its framing discourses. The ensuing two chapters will draw on the data to address the research aims of this thesis.

CHAPTER 5

“FRIENDLY COMPETITION”¹²?

Introduction

The two major themes discussed in this chapter provide insight into the way older people negotiate the contradiction between ‘friendly participation’ and ‘serious competition’ that is at the core of Masters sport. It was shown in Chapters 1 and 2 that notions of friendships, fun, fitness and ‘participation’ that are used to justify older people’s involvement in sport are clearly at odds with mainstream models of competitive sport which are commonly based on younger, more elite or professional athletes and are about winning, aggression, determination and intense effort. The accepted view in the West is that ‘friendly participation’ or ‘friendly competition’ is for older people in sport, whereas ‘serious competition’ is for the young. This chapter is predominately a descriptive foil which sets up that serious competition was considered important to many of the study participants, whereas Chapter 6 examines the empowering and problematic nature of this behaviour at both the individual and social levels.

Central to this chapter is an understanding of how resistance, empowerment and conformity play out among the participants as they manage the aforementioned discursive tension through their words and actions. Initially, this chapter explores the extent to which participants use, or perhaps internalise, the message of “Fun, friendship and fitness” when they talk about and are observed competing in sport. Undoubtedly, competing in sport afforded them with opportunities to make new friends, reunite with established friends, and have fun while being physically active. These findings are interpreted as unintentional resistance to dominant negative stereotypes of ageing. However, in emphasising the “Fun, Friendship and fitness” aspect of their involvement these participants are simultaneously conforming to (and constituting) what is regarded as ‘appropriate’ behaviour for older people in

¹² This phrase was quoted by the AMG chairman (Hill, 2001, p.5) and study participants.

the context of sport as a result of positive ageing and health promotion discourses. Many participants ignore, play down or choose to hide the significance of competition, parallel to the way Masters sport is packaged and promoted. These participants argue that by participating in sport they are ‘winning’ because they are being socially and physically active and healthy in later life.

Conversely, the second theme discussed in this chapter, “Competing to win”, points to the centrality of competition to participants. It was found that many participants were indeed competitive, even though some of them found it hard to admit. They try to win, enjoy the physical challenge of competing, like the medals and recognition, monitor their performances and define themselves as competitive, despite the accepted view that competition is not for them. By taking competition seriously these participants are resisting both the negative stereotypes of ageing and the positive ageing discourses.

“Fun, friendship and fitness”

As discussed in Chapter 1 individual sport and multi-sports competitions for older people are now conducted locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Club sport competitions are usually held weekly for older athletes, while major events, like the Australian Masters Games, are conducted annually or bi-annually. For all the men and women in this study, competing in and training for physically demanding sports on a regular basis was an activity that they valued highly for a range of reasons. The participants are responsible for all costs in time and money to attend any club events, training or competitions associated with their chosen sport. For example, the entry fee to compete in the 2001 Australian Masters Games (AMG) was \$82.50¹³, plus an additional sports levy ranging from \$15-\$55, depending on the event or team sport.

The dominant ideas about the AMG, and the philosophies underlying sport for older people in general, accentuate the social, fun and fitness aspects of sports

¹³ This price includes free public transport and sports injury insurance over the duration of the Games, but it does not include meals or accommodation expenses.

participation and play down its competitiveness. There are no qualifying standards other than age (which is over 35 in most sports) in order to compete in Masters events and according to the organisers winning is not the most salient aspect of the Games. For example, on the opening day of the 2001 AMG *The Newcastle Herald*, a local daily newspaper and sponsor of the Games, published an article by one of the event organisers in which he emphasised that the “philosophy of the Masters Games comes in many messages, such as: ‘You don’t have to win, but you can’t lose’, ‘Just being here is a victory’, ‘Fun, friendship and fitness’, [and] ‘Sport for all’” (Hurley, 2001, p. 9). Or, consider this message from the AMG Chairman, Mr. Michael Hill, which was included in the Official Games Guide that was given to all of the competitors and volunteer workers:

The Games bring together people from all over the world and Australia to mix in friendly competition, achieve personal goals, make new friends, re-new past friendships and to share achievements. This will be done in a friendly, relaxed and supportive atmosphere designed to ensure that all participants enjoy their competitions ... (Hill, 2001, p. 5)

The above statement is shot through with contradictions. ‘Friendly’ and ‘competition’ have opposite meanings but are used together, individual goals are to be achieved within a social, communal context, and competing against someone is to be done in a relaxed and friendly way. Notions of positive or healthy ageing that have emerged over the past thirty years underlie the above philosophies associated with Masters sport. As shown in Chapter 2, these discourses endorse physical activity in later life but not serious competition, and especially not extremely strenuous sports. How do individuals deal with these tensions when they talk about and compete in sport?

All my study participants expressed enjoyment of their experiences in sport, using terms, descriptors and phrases, such as “friendship”, “conviviality”, “social interaction”, “company”, “meeting people”, “catching up with old friends”, “camaraderie”, “fun”, “a buzz”, “exciting”, “fantastic”, and “a good time”. For

instance, a lively and resilient 87-year-old woman¹⁴ won twenty-three gold medals and one silver after competing in numerous track and field events, swimming, long distance running and indoor rowing at the AMG, yet she explains:

I come to the Masters Games for the fun and the friendship. Oh that's extraordinary, and I wouldn't miss that for the world. As far as the winning of the medals, well, it's only a bonus. But I'm attracted because of the fun and the friendship.

Immediately after making this statement, she ran off to the starting line of the Masters Mile race, in which she finished first for her age group. Likewise, a 63-year-old female field hockey player who has been competing since the age of 15, said:

I just enjoy [competing in sport]. I like the companionship and the friendship, the 'mateship' that you make when you go travelling around and meeting all these different people ... It's great!

Participation in individual or team sports usually involves travelling to different places to compete. In particular, major competitions like the Masters, Veterans and Golden Oldies Games are held at various locations around Australia and the world, therefore, "travelling" and spending time with "like-minded people" in a new town or city were a part of the whole competitive sport experience and often cited as welcomed side benefits. For the majority of participants, competing at a major event is something they look forward to or plan for each year. Nevertheless, the emphasis that participants placed on "travel" or "a holiday" was inextricably linked to "friendships and fun". As a 61-year-old male touch footballer describes; "I'm on holidays. Coming away for a break is good ... nice people, nice friends ... it's something to look forward to every year we go". Or, consider the following comment made by Joanne, a 67-year-old field hockey player:

¹⁴ The twenty-eight in-depth interviewees from Stage 2 have been given a pseudonym which will be provided along with their quote(s). However, due to the large number of participants who were briefly interviewed during Stage 1 (n=110), pseudonyms will not be provided with their statements.

... I go away with the Golden Oldies for the hockey and we've been [to] New Zealand, Fiji, Dublin ... Hong Kong ... I wouldn't have done that [travelled], without the hockey, because it's company ... and you have great times – *absolutely fantastic* ... Just the friendships, yeah the camaraderie, yeah. Oh it's just fabulous.¹⁵

A badminton player from New Zealand, aged 66, explains why he travels so far to compete in sport:

I've made so many friendships and this is one of the reasons I come back each year or every two years and you meet the people again and you renew your friendships and you get together and have a bit of a good time.

An 82-year-old female runner and swimmer (also from New Zealand) emphasised the sense of social-connectedness associated with competing in sport, "You meet interesting people ... if you see somebody else that's competing ... anywhere in the world, they are like your brother and sister, so it's good". The statements presented above clearly reflect some of the claims made by the AMG chairman in the Official Games Guide, such as "The Games bring together people from all over the world and Australia ... make new friends, re-new past friendships ..." (Hill, 2001, p. 5).

Indeed, the atmosphere at the AMG initially appeared to be one of predominantly socialising, comradeship and excitement. For example, a 62-year-old Scotsman who migrated to Australia when he was aged 24 and has continued playing soccer competitively from the age of 13 said:

... we [his team] love it. We travel all the time ... and it's the people you're involved with, they're tip-top. The boys are tip-top! Have a good laugh. Enjoy yourself. Relax yourself ... we all play good football ... it's all about enjoying yourself and this is brilliant ... brilliant! It's just a good atmosphere.

¹⁵ The use of italics within participant quotes is to indicate the emphasis and enthusiasm they placed on certain words when discussing their experiences in sport.

While I was positioned in my capacity as a volunteer worker at the entrance to the AMG ‘Games Village’ (a local entertainment Leagues club) I witnessed many hugs between participants who were being reunited with their friends. Also, when ‘off the field’, several women’s hockey and netball teams were observed dressed up in colourful attire and fancy hats, laughing and generally enjoying themselves. At the Opening Ceremony I saw a lady in her 60s wearing a purple and green jester hat adorned with flashing colourful lights. At the men’s baseball, and men’s and women’s softball, touch football and field hockey venues many non-competing participants were seen drinking alcohol and wearing gaudy wigs and heard sharing stories or jokes with fellow competitors. Furthermore, when ‘on the field’, players were heard making jovial comments to opposing players or seen smiling and laughing at themselves when they made a mistake. During a long distance cross country running race some competitors were observed giving a ‘high five’ to their family and friends who were on the sidelines cheering them on. My first impression was that this event was not about serious competition. A 60-year-old male touch football player summarises the atmosphere of ‘friendly participation’ at the AMG:

I just enjoy their company [his team-mates]. I get a laugh out of their antics and it’s good to be a part of it ... we’ve had a lot of fun, on and off the field. We come away for an event like this and we don’t go crazy, but we do have a good time and it is a chance to get away and enjoy it.

These comments associated with camaraderie, belonging and feeling like a family, were common across participants of both individual and team sports, and men and women of all ages. They highlight the collective nature of the participants’ experiences and enjoyment.

It was also evident from my observations that the Masters Games environment was intentionally and overtly organised to encourage and emphasise socialising, making friends and having “a good time”, in addition to playing sport. For example, at least three formal social gatherings were conducted over the duration of the AMG and

advertised in the Official Games Guide: the Opening and Closing Ceremonies; and Mid-week Party. The Leagues club that was the Games Village was the central meeting place for all of the competitors and over the extent of the Games many participants were seen there in the morning, afternoon or evening socialising, laughing, dancing, drinking, and eating out. On the surface, the participants in my study appear to be "... mixing in friendly competition ..." (Hill, 2001, p. 5) and experiencing "... a friendly, relaxed and supportive atmosphere..." (Hill, 2001, p. 5), especially when 'off the field', as was intended by the Chairman of the Games, Mr. Hill.

Major multi-sports events like the AMG are sporadic and while they afford participants with memorable experiences, a holiday, and a sense of togetherness, the event is temporary. Although Masters Games are significant events for the participants, they are only one part of their whole competitive sport experience. It was found that a majority of study participants were members of Masters or Veterans sporting clubs which provided them with a supportive social environment, regular training, and local or club competitions throughout a year. Individuals who were not members of a Masters or Veteran club *per se* said that they competed on a weekly basis at their local sporting venue against people of varying ages. In this sense, participants were able to maintain friendships and social contacts, and have fun regularly not just at major competitions. A 60-year-old woman who is a member of her local AUSSI Masters swimming club provides an example:

Training is really, really good, because it also gives you like a bit of a social thing ... even though I am training with younger people it's still like we're just one big family ... so it's really good that way. I train with 18-year-olds, right up to my age. I'm probably the oldest one there, but ... it's really enjoyable.

Likewise, a 59-year-old woman, who began cycling at the age of 50 and met her second husband through competitive cycling, states:

Well our [cycling] club ... it's a Veterans Club, so Sunday morning ... is just like a social gathering, you know. We all have coffee afterwards or we have drinks afterwards ... at 10:30 in the morning the guys will have a beer and we'll all have a chat, and all that sort of thing ... I think it is something you do need when you are retired.

Indeed, the friendships made and fun experienced through training and competing surfaced as particularly important for participants who had retired from full-time work. Emily, a 71-year-old retired local politician, who has played badminton continuously throughout her adult life, expressed pleasure in the company of other women:

... I thoroughly look forward to playing [badminton each week]. It's a wonderful game and I look forward to seeing the girls! You know, and having a chat to them ... It's great ... we have a good time. It's a good social thing, but it's mostly the sport.

A 60-year-old male tennis player explains, "... most people work with other people, so, therefore, when you retire you miss that sort of thing and sport can give you that social contact, which is very, very good". Other common reasons why retirees said that they compete in sport was that they now have the "time and opportunity" to do so because they were no longer tied to work, parenting or spousal roles, because they "have always loved sport", or they wanted to "try something different".

Social contact, enjoyment and friendships were not only important for retired workers who are married, but also for participants who are living alone (due to having been widowed, divorced or never married). For example, the 82-year-old female runner and swimmer from New Zealand who was quoted above believes that meeting fellow sports competitors is, "Good for the soul, especially when you are on your own. Like we both [herself and a friend she has made] were on our own and it's good socially and for your welfare". Betty, a 73-year-old woman who lives independently in a retirement village and first competed in a triathlon when she was

aged 54, agrees that competing at major competitions is about:

... friendship as much as anything. Like, I came up here on my own, but of course I've met a whole lot of runners and swimmers and cyclists that I've met before, you see, at other Games, [pause] and it's like a big reunion really ... and then of course you make new friends as well. That's probably one of the biggest bonuses ... It makes a good holiday, if you travel alone.

Likewise, 89-year-old Kenneth, who began long distance walking and running at the age of 81 to cope with the death of his spouse, said: "I've made so many friends out of this walking that'll just come up and say, 'I see you running' ... [I've] created lots of friends ... that I'd have *never known*". Within the company of her teammates, a 60-year-old field hockey player summarises the significance of social-connectedness as one ages:

... as you start to get older unless you have that way of making new friends, your social group tends to shrink. So you get out and play hockey with all these different people and go away and have a good time with people who have a similar interest ...

The findings presented so far focus exclusively on the 'friendly participation' side of the Masters sport phenomenon. Although the experiences of enjoyment and friendship were significant to participants, for the majority of them competing in sport exclusively to make friends and have fun was *not* the case. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that for a minority of participants, predominantly women, it appeared that participating in sporting competitions may have been solely for the fun and social contact. Unlike the majority of participants I spoke to, these respondents did not seem to consider themselves to be serious athletes and did not express concerns about training or trying to beat their opposition or improving their performance levels. Consider Janet, an 80-year-old swimmer who began swimming at age 77, who had this to say about her next swimming meet:

... we are going down to the Nationals [AUSSI Masters Swimming Titles] on the weekend, in Sydney ... But I don't care what it means ... we just go down for fun ... I'm not serious ... I'm not a person that trains hard. I just swim. If I get to the other end, I get to the other end. I stop and have a rest and come back to the other end ... no, I don't worry about that [her times] I just go to the carnivals ... we have a little bus ... you know, just to go with the club. And we have fun when we go and we sing on the bus coming home and it's all *fun*!

When I watched her swim her race at the AMG her non-serious approach described above seemed apparent. I met up with Janet at the Lake Macquarie Masters Games (LMMG) (six months after her interview) where she informed me that she was still competing in swimming purely for the “fun” of it.

The above findings highlight the importance the interviewees place on making friends and having fun through sport during later life. These findings are consistent with previous studies of older athletes which found that many compete in Masters sport because of their desire to socially interact with others, make friends, and have fun (Cuskelly & Boag, 1996; Grant, 2001; McIntyre et al., 1992; Pepe & Gandee, 1992). A positive and uplifting image of older age is portrayed through the words of my participants and my observations of them. The level of social engagement, friendships and enjoyment demonstrated by the participants is interpreted as unintentional resistance to the stereotypes of older age as a negative phase of life that is primarily about disengagement, loneliness and ill-health. This interpretation is supported by Wearing (1995) who argues that when older people participate in leisure activities involving social interaction, enjoyment, satisfaction and the maintenance of vitality and abilities then a resistance to the negative stereotypes that have dominated understandings of older age is produced. Furthermore, as Shaw (2001) has pointed out, resistance can be an unintentional outcome of certain types of behaviour that goes against the expected norm. At a collective level, people engaged in this behaviour have the potential to establish positive images of

later life and possibly encourage other older people to compete in sport (see Shaw, 2001).

At an individual level, this resistance has the possibility of liberating outcomes for older people (Wearing, 1995). The participants in my study are expressing a degree of personal empowerment similar to the findings from other studies of marginalised groups in sport. For example, studies on people with physical disabilities in the context of competitive sport have found participants to express personal empowerment in the form of enjoyment, health, friendship, social contact and travel (Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001a; Ashton-Shaeffer et al., 2001b). According to Erikson (1962, 1980, 1997) social-connectedness is an important ingredient for reaching ego integrity. Kleiber (1999, p. 170) argues “the activity itself may be largely irrelevant” and that “shared involvement in *any* activity may contribute to feelings of connectedness and ego integrity” (emphasis in original).

Kleiber’s statement, above, raises an intriguing point – friendships can be made and fun can be had through almost any leisure pursuit, be it active, passive, or non-competitive, such as walking with a group, playing bingo at a club, or participating in an aerobics class. For example, a study by Poole (2001) of older women’s commitment to aerobic exercise classes found that social support, friendships and having fun were major factors in influencing their dedication to this non-competitive pursuit. These experiences were interpreted as a source of personal empowerment and psychological well-being for the women. Also, Wearing (1995) demonstrated that these factors are significant to older people engaged in passive leisure activities, such as arts and crafts. If the participants in my study undertook sport exclusively because of ‘friendly participation’ or shared involvement, why would they choose a competitive context and a strenuous sport? My assertion is that many participants accept discourses about ‘friendly participation’ (which are used to legitimise Masters sport) and use them to justify or ignore (subconsciously or deliberately) the competitive and physically intense side of their involvement, a key point to which I will later return. Another commonly cited reason participants gave for competing in physically demanding sport was to gain or maintain a

sufficient level of fitness. However, it will be shown below that this justification also relies on a mobilisation of positive ageing discourses that underpin the “Fun, friendship and fitness” philosophy of Masters sport.

“[Competing in sport] keeps me fit”

Some of the participants in this study were extremely active and habitually competed in physically demanding sports, others competed and trained less regularly and with lower intensity, nevertheless in every case the chosen sports were physically strenuous (both objectively and subjectively). All of the participants were health-conscious and believed that the physical activity associated with their involvement in competitive sport contributed to their physical and psychological health – a finding which is similar to that of Fontane and Hurd’s (1992) study on Senior Olympians. “It keeps me fit”, “it keeps me healthy”, “it keeps you socially, mentally and physically *alive*”, “it keeps your mind and body active”, “it’s good for me”, “the longer you keep playing, the fitter and healthier you can stay” and “the more active you are, the better your health is” were typical responses from both men and women of varying ages and sports. For instance, Alena, a 76-year-old swimmer and tennis player, says she has taken fitness for granted most of her life, but to her now, “... being fit as long as you can is the most important thing in life ... you can’t enjoy things unless you are feeling well”. Some participants commented that the fitness associated with competing in sport assisted in their recovery from major illnesses or surgery:

I think it [competing in swimming] keeps you fit ... Four years ago I had bowel cancer and I was out of the water for eighteen months and they said the reason I got over it so quickly was [because] I was so fit. And I think this is it ... we are all not as fit as we used to be, and I think if you keep yourself fit ... I mean, you have got to do something, you just can’t sit and do nothing. (66-year-old male)

I had two big operations in the last five years ... and I believe it [fitness] had

a lot to do with my recovery when I was ill and I keep fit for that reason ...
(60-year-old male squash player)

Victoria, a 76-year-old, explains that continued participation in competitive tennis is about, “making these latter years as enjoyable as I can by being fit”. She continued, “... it keeps you fit without having to work deliberately on your body by going to aerobics ... I can do that in addition”. Eldon, a 79-year-old man who joined his local AUSSI Masters Swimming Club at age 50 because he was not gaining the fitness levels he wanted from other activities said, “Well, when you get up to [almost] 80, it’s very important to be fit because I mean, well, the quality of life that you gain from that ... if you’re really fit ... you enjoy life a lot better, don’t you?”. A 65-year-old squash player, Lara, explained, “... I think [playing a sport is] good for ... not only your body, I think it’s good for your brain, your mind, you know, keeps you on the ball ... it keeps you active, definitely”. Likewise, a male 60-year-old squash player contends that competing in sport positively affects his attitude towards life, “... if you’re physically fit, you’re mentally fit and you have a brighter outlook on things”, he said. In other words, there was a common conviction among all of the participants that “sport ... keeps you physically active and mentally active ...” (female, 62-year-old, basketball player).

My study participants believe that by regularly physically exerting themselves through sport they are increasing their chances of a prolonged enjoyable and healthy life. Arguably, this positive ageing discourse is being used, in part, to justify what is (for many) physically extreme and highly competitive behaviour. The participants are mobilising contemporary health promotion beliefs about the benefits of physical activity and the importance of self-responsibility in maintaining health which underpin the development of Masters sport. They also spoke about (or assumed the truth of) the mind and body connection whereby it is believed that regular physical exercise not only contributes to physical fitness, but also to psychological well-being and overall perceived quality of life (see Fisher et al., 2002; Harahousou et al., 2003; Hurley & Roth, 2000; McAuley & Rudolph, 1995; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Shephard, 1995, 1997, 2001; Spirduso, 1995; Tseng et al.,

1995). In fact, a 63-year-old female badminton player from New Zealand said, “... you have just got to believe what the research says – that you are going to have a better lifestyle”. My findings support previous quantitative studies (reviewed in Chapter 3) which have argued that “fitness” and “health” are important and unique factors in facilitating and maintaining sports involvement among older populations (Cuskelly & Boag, 1996; Fontane, 1996; Fontane & Hurd, 1992; Gill et al., 1996; McIntyre et al., 1992; Pepe & Gandee, 1992; Smith & Storandt, 1997). However, there is also a contradiction between health motives and competitive motives that is being negotiated by my study participants.

The idea of using the fitness and health discourses to validate their participation in competition raises the important issue that if participants merely want to keep fit why do they have to compete? They could undertake non-competitive physical activity, home-based exercise programs, or recreational pursuits. Going for a daily walk, regularly doing the gardening or household tasks, lifting weights at the local gym or taking a weekly aerobics class are non-competitive ways older people can keep physically and mentally fit. These activities are consistent with the thrust of the health promotion and positive ageing approaches. Significantly, in attempting to use health motives to rationalise competing, several participants in my study expressed the view that the more intense and competitive the activity, the better it was for their fitness level:

I see people out walking and there's very little exercise ... in just strolling, you're not using, see I'm using *all my muscles*, my shoulders, arms [he demonstrates] and I think it's much more beneficial than just going for a walk every morning ... what I'm doing is I'm extending myself by walking fast, as fast as I can do it. (Kenneth, 89-year-old walker and runner)

... there's no benefit unless your heart rate gets up ... because it's all pulse and breathing, that's ... where the health benefit is. You see a hundred people strolling around the foreshore here, everyday ... they think they are exercising ... But they are not getting the full benefit, unless the pulse rate

goes up ... you're not really getting it [or] the competitive side of things.
(Arnold, 71-year-old swimmer)

I do enjoy competitive sport more [than doing an aerobics class] ...
physically I get more out of it because I try so much harder. (Irene, 64-year-
old field hockey player)

Furthermore, many 'late starters'¹⁶ said that competing in sport was a 'natural' progression from their desire to remain healthy. In fact, four out of the nine 'late starters' in the in-depth interviewee sample said that a health scare, such as back pain, being overweight, lack of fitness, or a brain haemorrhage, prompted them to begin playing sport. Consider Ingrid's story for example:

I have a lower back problem ... but swimming was one thing that I took up again and I wasn't even thinking of the competitive side when I started, I was thinking what benefit it was going to be for my back, my body, generally, but then we started, and we sort of worked our way into the competitive side slowly [which helped with] ... Motivation, to keep us going and swimming. (70-year-old swimmer)

Not only does the desire to be fit and healthy motivate competition, but competition acts as a motivator for physical fitness and conditioning. As Betty, a 73-year-old triathlete, demonstrates, "I like to have a goal ... I do like competing and if I've got these Games on then that motivates me to go out, to ride my bike and have a run and go swimming". Likewise, Lara said:

If you only play social [squash] you start to get *slack* in your game ... you wouldn't concentrate as much. Whereas when we go to practice, we sort of try hard because you're thinking, well, I've got to practice to make sure I'm right for comp [competitive squash] ... if you didn't have that *aim* you'd just have a chat to someone ... in the middle of the game ... [competition

¹⁶ 'Later starters' refer to the participants who did not begin competing in their sport until later in their life, usually over the age of 55 years.

gives it] a purpose, definite purpose ... (65-year-old squash and tennis player and runner)

So, despite participants claiming “fitness” as their motive, the nature of competition itself is significant to their experience because it is competition that drives them to keep active and train. Knowing that they will be competing against others in their sport, wanting to perform at their peak during a competition, and aiming to win medals or break world records, provide the participants with a goal that ensures they keep active. This finding is supported, in part, by Fontane and Hurd (1992) who argued that older athletes express their health-consciousness in the context of sport because competitive goals act as motivators for physical fitness. However, my findings suggest that the process of satisfying health and fitness motives within a competitive sporting context is not as straightforward as previous studies have indicated. It is a circular and complex process in which fitness can motivate competition and competition can motivate fitness and health. It also requires a negotiation of the contradictory discourses of ‘serious competition’ and ‘friendly participation’ that frame Masters sport.

Participation as Winning

In explaining why they compete in sport, several participants felt that having the fitness and health levels to be able to compete, take part or merely ‘participate’ was the key to their involvement, not aiming to outperform others or practice ‘serious competition’. In other words, they perceived ‘participation’ as a victory in itself. For example:

You keep getting benefits like *being there* ... It’s not winning, it’s just [that] winning is an aspect of the game, but as long as you play ... then you’re winning when you’re being healthy and you’re winning ... when you’re sort of *achieving* things that make you feel better about yourself. (Richard, 61-year-old NSW Veterans field hockey player)

... the majority of people feel that competitive is beating other people of their own ... ability, but to *me* competitive is being able, finishing healthy and being able to walk away ... (Trevor, 67-year-old runner)

... to be able to still play [squash] is the major thing for me. To be fit enough about my age ... and still playing ... (60-year-old male)

A typical viewpoint expressed by the participants was, “Good on you for having a go” or “it’s just better to be there”. As Alison elaborates:

To me, with the Masters, participation is the *most important*, you know, to get in there and have a go ... I just think, having a go and I think *staying in there*, you know [slight laugh]. To just do your best, really ... I’m lucky to be able to go in the Games ... “Good on you!” I think that’s the attitude people take, “Good on you for having a go”. (70-year-old runner)

In rationalising their behaviour in this way the participants were mobilising the “just being here is a victory” message that was also used by the AMG organisers to describe the “Spirit of the Games” (see Hurley, 2001, p. 9).

The spectators and volunteers at the AMG and the Lake Macquarie Masters Games (LMMG) appeared also to demonstrate this attitude as they cheered for every competitor in a race or game, especially during individual races in which the last competitor of every race was applauded just as enthusiastically, if not more loudly, than the competitor who had finished first. As a volunteer at the AMG, I felt energised and inspired by watching the performances and enthusiasm of the participants. Even the athletes barracked for each other and I saw many hug their fellow competitors at the end of a race or game, regardless of the result. The following quotes further demonstrate this idea of ‘participation’ *as* winning:

... we enjoy the game, we enjoy playing sport, the competition part is secondary. It’s just more of the pleasure of being able to play sport. (60-

year-old male squash player)

I think when you get to our age you have a different outlook on competition. It's just the fact of being able to participate. My sister is my age and she has osteoporosis, so being able to participate and being able to compete is what it's all about and if you win that's just a bonus. (67-year-old female tennis player)

Well competing is sort of you really, really go there to win ... I don't think we *care* whether we win or lose, it's playing the game, it's being *able to play* the game, especially as you get older, being *able* to continue ... (Emily, 71-year-old badminton player)

Having the ability, fitness and health in later life to participate in sport indeed provided the participants with a feeling of personal empowerment, as will be elaborated and analysed further in the next chapter. Following Grant (2001) and Wearing (1995) I would argue that the participants situated themselves within discourses of good health and fitness and resisted the stereotype that ageing is exclusively defined by inability and deterioration. However, in extending these arguments, my findings suggest that this resistance is diminished through conformity to notions of positive ageing which partly frame Masters sport. The participants quoted above recognise the contradiction that competition is embedded in Masters sport, but its importance is played down with their focus being on 'friendly participation' and 'fitness' rather than beating others. In emphasising the "fun, friendship and fitness" side of their involvement in Masters sport, the participants either did not consider themselves competitive, or were (subconsciously or deliberately) choosing not to talk about their competitiveness.

Interestingly, this theme relating to fun, friendship and fitness emerged as salient from the data that was collected in Stage 1. That is, it surfaced prominently when participants were experiencing the 'here and now' of a major sporting event that was intentionally organised to encourage 'friendly participation' and concurrently

promoted the same way in the local media (for example, Hurley, 2001). Therefore, my findings suggest that some participants deal with the two contradictory sides of Masters sport by talking about or perhaps internalising the age-appropriate messages of “Fun, friendship and fitness” or “Just being here is a victory” (Hurley, 2001, p. 9) and remaining silent on the competitive nature of their behaviour. In doing so, however, their voices are consistent with the philosophy underlying the Masters Games. Therefore, they actually serve to reinforce at some level the orthodoxy that older people are not competitive or serious about winning.

Competition and competing in physically intense ways are not considered appropriate for older people in the West. Therefore, the foundation of resistance lies not in older people being physically and socially active and having fun in later life, but in competing to win. In contrast to the above findings, it was also found that a majority of participants valued winning, even though some of them found it hard to acknowledge. Notably, many of the same participants who were quoted above, emphasising the ‘friendly participation’ side, are quoted below defining themselves as competitive (see Richard, for example). By competing to win, the participants were (unintentionally or intentionally) resisting the negative stereotypes of ageing while simultaneously proposing a challenge to the positive ageing discourses that underlie the “Fun, friendship and fitness” philosophy of Masters sport. These key issues are central to the following discussion which explores the significance of competition to participants and the multiple ways in which it is experienced and spoken about.

“Competing to win”

The majority of participants said that when they participate in sport they “try to win” and/or aim to achieve a “personal best”. In other words, these people are competitive. They are competing against themselves and/or others. While these two forms of competition are unique, the focus here is on competition in a general sense (as defined in Chapter 1). Several participants expressed difficulty in admitting that they were competitive (with some telling me that they were not

competitive and then displaying competitiveness ‘on the field’) while others openly embraced the competitive side of Masters sport through their words and actions. Notably though, when participants admitted to being competitive, many of them were quick to rationalise it by rejecting that their behaviour aligns with mainstream understandings of competition. They justified their competitiveness by stating that their behaviour was not overly aggressive, violent or about winning-at-all-costs. For example:

... I am [a competitive person] when I play, but I’m not aggressively competitive, but I like to win, but ... I don’t do it at-all-costs ... If I lose that’s the end of it ... I don’t brood over it and I don’t make excuses. (Jan, 60-year-old squash player)

... sports great ... particularly the Masters Games for older people ... I mean to say, there’s a competitive edge, but it’s not the be all and end all ... we’re all *trying*, but ... there’s more enjoyment ... (Alena, 76-year-old swimmer and tennis player)

... I like *competing*. I’m a competitor there’s no two ways about that ... you don’t go out to lose, you go out to try and win anyhow ... if you don’t go out there trying to win, there’s no point in going out there is there? ... I’m not *aggressive*, I’m competitive, always have been ... (Darren, 60-year-old badminton player)

I’m not really competitive, but I’m competitive in terms of, I want to do as well as I can. I’ll run hard and try hard and do all the things I need to do but ... winning’s [not] all that important, but you need to do that to make it a game, if you don’t actually compete and try and win then the game isn’t a game. It loses its appeal ... it’s purposeless. I may as well go for a stroll in the park, if I wanted to exercise ... so there *has to be* an ambition, although not the unhealthy aspect of win-at-all-costs. (Richard, 61-year-old, field hockey player)

A typical phrase used by participants was that playing sport at an older age was “not for sheep stations”. That is, “it isn’t the end of the world” if you lose (Richard, 61-years-old, field hockey) or, “You’re still competitive and you want to win, but if you don’t win, it doesn’t matter a damn” (75-year-old, male ice hockey player). Najima, a 68-year-old baseball player who migrated to Australia from the United States in the 1970s, elaborates:

I go over to win and I, during the game I want to win and I’m thinking about how to win. So it’s not a matter of not having any competitiveness, it’s just that it doesn’t have a huge [effect on you] – when you lose a game, you don’t kick the water bucket and smash the bat against the cage, get into a fit and storm around ... I now enjoy just the fun of competition.

These findings relating to competition are similar to the theme about ‘serious play’ that emerged from Grant’s (2001) research into older people’s beliefs about sport. He found that the participants valued a fair and challenging competition; achieving their personal best; and striving to win; however, they did not display a win-at-all-costs approach. As argued in Chapter 1, competing in sport to win-at-all-costs is associated with youth and mainstream sport in the West (Cashman, 1995; Lawrence & Rowe, 1986; McKay, 1991; McKay et al., 2000; Vamplew et al., 1994). These understandings of competition are not about healthy ageing nor are they considered appropriate for older people. Therefore, the participants quoted above seem to recognise that it is not socially acceptable for them to be competitive and they deal with this tension by attempting to define competition as trying to win, but not in a violent manner or not being overly concerned about the outcome. Herein rests a major contradiction. If they are not concerned about winning, why are they trying so hard (not just in competition but in training and preparation)? Trying to win is, after all, at the heart of what it means to compete or be competitive. This entrenched tension and ambiguity about the nature of competition when undertaken and expressed by older people is elaborated in the following discussion and examples.

In particular, the aforementioned inconsistency was noted when participants tried to mesh the contradictory motives of competing “to win” and competing for “friendships and fun” when discussing their experiences in sport. For instance, a 57-year-old male baseball player said:

... [the Masters Games] is a great competition. It's high level, it really is quite a high standard ... the games are ... keenly contested ... No one gives in. We all want to win, but then again it's not for sheep stations. So at the end of the day, you know, you'll say, “Well done”, and have a beer and that's it. It's all over until next time. So it's competitive on the track, but when it's all over, it's friends and relations and it's a good time. It's great, so it's a good – a whole good concept really.

The words and phrases “competitive on the track”, “keenly contested”, “no one gives in” “friends”, “a good time” and “it's not for sheep stations” provide insights into the complex and confusing definition of competition being mobilised. While participants say that it is friendly and not about winning-at-all-costs, they still talk about training rigorously, playing intensely and trying extremely hard to win their game or event. For instance, a 66-year-old woman, who considers herself “a late bloomer” because she converted from indoor cricket to outdoor cricket at age 53, described her feelings about playing cricket (immediately after her team came off the field with a victory):

It's great to play with a great bunch of girls ... I just love the competitive feeling out there and all the comradeship out there amongst the girls of both teams [it's] ... wonderful ... There's nothing else ... Fitness, friendship, comradeship and just the oh, excellent feeling, especially when you win! But it's not too bad if you lose though. I'm only out there just to enjoy myself and just add a bit of whatever I can to the side.

Evidently, there are mixed feelings in the above response, as well as a sense of

excitement from having just won her game. The “comradeship” within her team (and with her opponents) is a valued part of her competitive sport experience. At the same time, she gets more satisfaction from winning than losing, she gives her best effort for the team, and she loves the feeling of competing. For this woman, like many other participants, competing to win *is* fun! As another competitor put it, “... the main thing is that you play hard and serious, but it’s still fun and exercise ...” (55-year-old male baseball player). Furthermore, a male tennis player, aged 55, who has played tennis most of his life exclaims:

I play because it’s, you know, great camaraderie, against friends your own age ... it keeps you physically fit and it’s just great fun. Apart from that ah, mixing with people and talking about a sport we like. It’s fantastic fun.

This participant undoubtedly enjoys the social interaction he associates with tennis, but he also highlights the common finding that competing “against friends” *is* fun! Many participants compete in sport to win, to have fun and to make friends. These people are involved in negotiating the conflicting discourses about mainstream sport and Masters sport in attempting to rationalise their behaviour.

But at times competing did not appear to be ‘fun’, or ‘friendly’. For example, on one occasion at the AMG, a 65-year-old man became quite upset, shaking his head and displaying verbal hostility with officials when he learnt that he was disqualified in the race walk. I also watched an over 60 years men’s basketball game and an over 50 years women’s basketball game and both were very competitive and aggressive. For instance, in the men’s game I saw several players get frustrated and bellow, “Oh no”, if they missed a shot. In a couple of instances players would look to the referee for a foul to be called and shake their head in annoyance when it was not acknowledged. In the women’s game I watched one woman elbow an opposing player (who fell to the ground) when attempting to keep possession of the ball. While I was spectating at these basketball games a 68-year-old male player informed me:

... everybody that plays this game has 'white line fever' ... that means once you're over that white line [of the basketball court] things have changed. You're highly competitive. You're there to win. Hey, this is the Australian Masters, you are out there with no other purpose of being here than to win! Club games are just for fun, games where there are no medals ... it's fun, but when you are playing for medals, it's serious!

Despite the aforementioned isolated incidences of anger, frustration and aggression, it would be an overstatement to say that most of the participants displayed this behaviour. Regardless, the terms 'competitiveness' or 'competition' have a much broader definition than aggression and winning-at-all-costs. They can include striving for one's personal best, monitoring performance levels and comparing performances with others, gaining a sense of achievement, receiving recognition for success, and striving to win (Coakley, 2001; Grant, 2001).

Therefore, my study participants fall well within the description of being competitive. For example, I observed participants taking their involvement in sport seriously by exerting intense effort and using strategies in order to win or perform at their best while 'on the field'. In particular, the use of up-to-date sporting equipment to enhance performance was seen at the cycling (such as Lycra outfits and clip-in shoes) and track and field events (for example, spiked shoes and starting blocks for sprints). In between games or events a lot of the competitors were wearing team or club tracksuits and many participants were observed warming up and getting themselves mentally and physically prepared for their performance. I also witnessed elation when teams or individuals won their game or event. For example, at the pool side I saw an lady in her 60s jumping up and down, screaming with excitement and hugging her team-mate when she realised they had finished in the top three for their relay race.

Additionally, a significant number of participants said that they trained for their sport on a regular basis in order to be at their physical and mental peak during competitions and this gives them a greater chance of victory. By way of example,

Josef, a 65-year-old beach volleyball player who migrated to Australia from Latvia when he was 12-years-old, provides an account of his AMG experience. “In my part certainly participation wasn’t the issue *at all*. The fact that to just participate, nah, we certainly were ... going for the gold medal. That’s all there is to it. So, we wanted to *win*”, he exclaims. He goes on to describe the preparation that he and his beach volleyball partner (who lives approximately an hour’s drive away) had gone through prior to the AMG:

... we made all the gear ... to be able to play on the beach. All the net and the post. Although in the beginning we only used the rope, because we thought, “Oh well, we can’t spike, so it doesn’t matter about that”. But now we’re starting to get a bit better, so we got a net and fixed up the net ... at least once a week we played on the beach or sometimes we met twice a week on the beach we practiced and once a week we [played in a local indoor beach volleyball competition].

Undoubtedly, Josef values winning over merely partaking in sport for “fun, friendship and fitness” which works against the accepted view that sport for older people is, or should be, mainly about seeking friendship, having fun and keeping fit; not about winning. This finding also contradicts conclusions drawn from some previous quantitative studies, such as the claim made by Gill et al. (1996, p. 317) that older athletes “are not particularly focused on winning”. In addition, my study participants were taking on board some discourses and practices of mainstream competitive sport (such as training hard and trying to win), but at the same time rejecting other aspects (such as the win-at-all-costs mentality). These outcomes are similar to those emerging from the study of women in ice hockey (Theberge, 2000) and bodybuilding (Guthrie & Castelnovo, 1992) (discussed in Chapter 3) in which the female athletes were seen to concurrently resist and comply with dominant competitive ideologies underlying mainstream sport.

Nevertheless, due to the embedded discourse in society that inactivity was once the virtue of later life and given that it is not age-appropriate for older people to be

serious about competition, many participants seemed to find it hard to disclose that they are indeed competitive. For example, Josef declared:

... maybe I don't want to admit it that I am still competitive and maybe that's pulled apart by playing in these things [competitive beach volleyball and bridge] ... it makes me feel good ... I don't know, maybe because I think I should be retired I shouldn't be like I am.

Similarly, a 60-year-old female swimmer said:

It should be for fun, but I take it too serious ... Oh, it's just me. I'm just competitive and I feel really guilty [she giggles] because a lot of these people are just here for fun and that's what it should be. It's supposed to be fun, but I can't make it fun.

Emily, a 71-year-old woman who has competed in racquet sports since the age of 12 and currently plays badminton twice a week, does not like to admit she is competitive or that she plays to win. She explains that at her local indoor centre there is:

No competition, it's purely social. We just play for laughs. You can't get too serious at our age ... Because at [nearly] 72 ... I think that's the main thing ... to *enjoy* what you are doing, not worrying about going out to win ... you can't play to what you used to be able to play. You can't move as quick, you haven't got the strength, so you can't take yourself too seriously. You are just happy that you are able to do that at our age ... I haven't got the great killer instinct ... Well, some of my opponents might think it. I mean, if I find a hole I'll hit the shuttle there. I don't always hit it to them ... but no, I'm not real competitive. I just enjoy sport. I've thought sport should be fun ...

Notably, Emily feels that because her body is not as capable as it was when she was

younger then she does not have the physical ability, and therefore the right, to be seriously competitive. However, whilst she states initially that she is not competitive and uses the ‘just being here is a victory’ discourse that was described earlier, even she admits that, “if I find a hole I’ll hit the shuttle there”. This latter statement reveals that she still likes to play at her best and try to win. Likewise, Alena, a 76-year-old woman who competes in both swimming and tennis, said she believed that competition is not as important to older people as it is to younger people:

I think it comes, mainly because of *age and aspiration*. I think when you’re young, you want to be the best, that means a lot, or to win maybe I think is what you are really *striving* for, but, in the latter years, as long as you’re enjoying it. I mean you still like to win the game of tennis, but it’s not *paramount* ... but then, I suppose I’m competitive in [tennis], to a degree ...

Also, 82-year-old Marjorie, who won five gold medals in track and field events at the AMG and still holds the world record for the over 70s women’s triple jump, had the following to say when I asked her about the importance of winning medals and competitions:

Oh, I don’t worry, never have worried. With winning I think if I’ve done it, I’m happy to think that I’ve been able to *do it*. Medals, no doesn’t matter. I always like to win, win anything, I mean, I’m perhaps a bit competitive in nature. You know, I mean I’m not saying that I wouldn’t try to win, but I think when you get to my age anyway, it’s not important ... because ... by doing it you are proving something ...

The participants quoted above believe that their age is a reason why they cannot (and should not) take competing in sport or winning seriously. They feel they are ‘past it’ and should accept that they are ‘too old’ to be competitive, as suggested by the lifespan development theories (Erikson, 1962; Havighurst, 1972) and the traditional negative stereotypes of ageing that were discussed in Chapter 2.

Competing in sport is considered to be for the young, not for the old! Although physical activity is now encouraged for older people, the participants in this study have lived through a period where sport was not available for older people and retirement was characterised by rest, disability and withdrawal from society, not competitiveness in sport (Grant, 2001). As Fred, a 68-year-old basketball player, acknowledges, someone of his age taking sport too seriously is, “sort of, if I can use a sixties expression, it’s ‘non-you’. It’s sort of unusual and unacceptable generally”. Due to the values which are entrenched in Western society these participants find it difficult to admit that they are competitive. They seem deliberately to understate their competitiveness and mobilise the orthodoxy that it is not age-appropriate for them to be competitive. However, they simultaneously and unintentionally (or intentionally) resist this age-appropriate orthodoxy by either eventually stating or demonstrating that they are competitive and do like to win.

Along the same lines, contradictions were noted between the ‘voices’ of the participants when ‘off the field’ and their behaviour while ‘on the field’. For instance, some common words and phrases used by a 55 years and over women’s netball team to describe their sporting experiences (when they were sitting around a table at the AMG Games Village) were, “social contact” “friendships” “a way of life”, “it keeps us fit”, “not intense competition”, “an achievement at our age” and “we just enjoy it”. However, when I watched this team play later in the week their performances were a lot more competitive, serious and physical than I had anticipated from their comments. The game was not modified for ‘older women’ and the competition was very intense with both teams trying their hardest to win. Interestingly, while I was watching this game, team members from an opposing netball team were beside me watching the same game. They were making notes about how the teams played and were attempting to determine their strongest players. In other words, they were monitoring these teams’ strengths and weaknesses so that when it was their turn to play them they would know what to expect and could develop strategies to outperform them. Moreover, at various other team sports during ‘time outs’, I overheard team members discussing tactics and ways of making successful plays with the goal of winning their game. This is

standard practice in mainstream competitive sport but not what one would expect in supposedly ‘non-serious’ Masters sport!

Similarly, when asked about the importance of medals, many participants played down their significance, saying that they were just a “bonus” and not the reason why they compete in sport. A couple of competitors said that they hide their medals under a mattress or out of sight in their homes. As Ingrid, a 70-year-old swimmer, explains, “Well, what do I do with my medal? I bring them home and I stick them in a drawer ... because that’s done, that’s over, I’m looking to the next thing [laughs]”. Nevertheless, during my interview with Ingrid and her husband Arnold there were a number of swimming and golf trophies that they had won sitting beneath the glass-topped coffee table in their living room where we were having the interview. Likewise, Fontane and Hurd (1992) found in their research on Senior Olympians that athletes tended not to admit that they valued public recognition. Therefore, what has emerged is a tension between participants either expressing their competitive ideals or conforming to behaviours considered appropriate for older people in Western society (such as not being expected to worry about winning medals or taking competition seriously). As shown above, some participants struggle with this tension when explaining their competitive sport experiences. Many of the participants display competitive behaviour when participating in sport, but in talking about their experience they either play down their competitiveness, or do not mention it.

In contrast, a surprising number of participants were quite candid in discussing competition. Both male and female participants of varying ages and sports, who had commenced competing at different stages in their life, identified themselves as being “competitive”. The following discussion explores the connection between participation in sport and “a competitive spirit”. Indeed, many participants enjoyed winning, appreciated the medals, recognition and status that accompanied competition, and constantly monitored their performance levels in comparison to their own previous standards and/or others of a similar or significantly younger age.

“A competitive spirit”

A number of study participants did not attempt to rationalise their behaviour in terms of age-appropriate discourses. For instance, a male basketball player, aged 62, explained, “... we still play tough, we get out there and put our all in and I play with a competitive spirit, which is very strong. So we hate to lose ... we love to win”. Victoria, a 76-year-old tennis player, said that she had a “doggedness to win” when she was younger and that eagerness remains with her now. “You’re out there to outwit your opposition, and if you can do it by powerful play, or clever play or just good luck [laughs], that’s what you do,” she explains. Like many ‘continuers’ and ‘rekindlers’ in the sample¹⁷, Victoria said she came from a “sporty family” and as a child was encouraged to compete in sport by her parents. Because competitions in a wide range of sports are now available for older people, those who were competitive in sport in their youth can continue to be so. For example, many participants said that they had always been a “physical person” who valued competition, sport and fitness. “... I think it’s just *me*. I’ve done it for so long ... I probably started the competition sport when I was about 13 [years] ... and I’ve continued all the way through ... and I enjoy doing it,” said Lara (a 65-year-old squash player). A 57-year-old male baseball player explained, “any sport, once it’s in your blood, it’s in your blood and you just love it”. For Dan, a 60-year-old past Australian representative basketball player, his involvement in competitive sport is:

... just my lifestyle. What ... I’ve done all my life. I’ve been involved in sport from day one, which means it’s a natural partnership of mine, like some people ... might read a book, but I can’t do that. I’ve got to be active and it’s just that continuation ...

66-year-old Ellen provides an example of a typical ‘continuer’ response:

¹⁷ ‘Continuers’ were those participants who had competed in sport throughout most of their life, while ‘rekindlers’ include participants who played in their youth and re-started involvement in their sport after an extended break, usually due to work or family obligations.

I've always been a fairly active person. I have always played sport. I like sport ... it's just rolled over. I just enjoy playing netball and ... it's just sort of gone on from one year to the next ... as long as I feel well, that's the main thing. Yeah, just keep going.

These findings are supported by Fontane and Hurd (1992), Langley and Knight (1999) and Roper et al. (2003) who used the continuity theory (Atchley, 1993) to argue that prior competitive athletic experiences among older people is a key motivating factor in becoming an athlete in later life. The participants' comments also suggest that they identify themselves as competitive athletes and they were expressing this identity through their continued involvement in competitive sport.

On the other hand, it was also found in my study that not all "competitive" participants were confined to 'continuers' or 'rekindlers' in the sample. For example, typical statements made by 'continuers', 'rekindlers' and 'late starters' alike, were, "I like to see how well I measure up to others" or "I love the exercise and the competition against each other". In particular, many 'later starters' in the sample now consider themselves to be competitive sportspeople. It is possible that these people were (or are presently) competitive in other contexts, such as employment, and since taking up sport they now express their competitiveness in that context. For example, an 81-year-old cyclist, Edward, said that he was not a competitive athlete in his youth (he began cycling at age 66 as a health precaution after he had a minor brain haemorrhage). He continues to work full-time in the building industry and he had the following to say about competing in cycling:

Oh, at the Masters Games it's everything. Oh, my word. I mean I want the lot! I'm greedy ... when I go into say events like in a Masters Games, it is competitive – *extremely* ... I want to win ... I want to be better than the chaps who are with me, right. I know then that, "Ok I have trained right" ... Oh well [if I lose] I can shake their hand off because they're better than what I am. I've done something wrong, or, no matter what I done I couldn't have beaten that certain person.

Edward travels overseas to race in Veterans cycling tournaments and he has bike equipment in his home in order to adhere to a strict training regime:

... each night I do a minimum of an hour and a half on an indoor cycle trainer ... here in my own house. I've got two forms of that [he has a bike he has to balance on rollers as he rides and a stationary bike] ... then I would do fifteen minutes of stretching, and I just love doing it. It's no chore and I don't say I have to do it ... I've got the ability to do it, in the first place and ... I don't have to be driven to it.

Marjorie, an 82-year-old track and field athlete who competed in her first Fun Run at age 60 and tries to maintain competing whenever it is "convenient" (because she currently cares for her husband suffering from dementia), said:

... competitiveness I suppose that's ... one thing that keeps you going too, because you're always trying to better something ... If anyone's against me I think well, I've got to beat them ... I mean I'll *try* to beat them, not got to, but I'll do ... my best to sort of beat them. It's still there, I've got that little bit of *streak* still there [laughs] ... I suppose it's just the competitiveness in me is why I do it anyway. I can't see that there'd be anything else. It's just that *drive* I suppose that's there, where perhaps another person, just wouldn't do it ... I suppose my nature makes me keep pushing.

A 66-year-old female runner who began running with her son when she was aged in her 40s said:

My aim in life when I turned 60 was to win my age division in the Canberra Times Fun Run, that's a ten [kilometre] run, and I did and that's all I wanted out of running was to win my age division there, but I've gone on since then.

The findings presented above demonstrate that both men and women of varying ages and sporting histories, and participants of both individual and team sports, equally define themselves as competitive. Clearly, competing to win was important to them. These findings open up the possibility of understanding participants' behaviour in terms of traditional notions of identity as the core self or "the real me" (Erikson, 1968, p. 19) and the continuity theory (Atchley, 1989, 1993, 1997). Ageing generally involves an orientation towards leisure domains that are self-expressive and help construct or maintain a person's identity; and/or a person's established identity determines their leisure activities (Atchley, 1993; Kleiber, 1999; Kuentzel, 2000; Weiss, 2001). Words and phrases, such as "my nature", "it's just me", "driven", a "streak still there" and "it's in your blood", used by participants to justify their behaviour, regardless of when they commenced competing in sport, imply that they identify themselves as competitive and that their competitiveness has not diminished in later life. The participants are seeking to maintain this identity through their continued (psychological, physical and social) involvement in competitive sport. The findings also indicate the pervasiveness of competition as a discourse in the West. In other words, while competition may be part of their "nature", their behaviour also reflects a society that idolises competitiveness. This latter point is one to which I will return in Chapter 6. To further demonstrate the significance of competition to study participants, the following discussion highlights how competing against others and oneself were both qualitatively different, yet equally valued, components of the sport experience.

"I hope I get a medal"

Many participants appreciated the recognition that came with achieving in sport. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, competing in sport brings external rewards, such as medals, trophies, records, awards, and status. Winning a national medal was considered a great achievement by most of the participants. During the AMG I heard many competitors say, "I hope I get a medal" and "If I don't, I'm going to buy [a souvenir] one". Many medal-winners wore their medals proudly around their necks throughout the Games not only during the day but also to social

activities at night. In fact, prior to being interviewed three participants contacted me about coming to their houses for the interview so that they could show me medals, trophies and newspaper articles related to their involvement in sport. Since the interviews several participants have contacted me by phone or in writing to inform me of their latest achievements.

During the in-depth interviews I noticed that eleven participants had their medals and trophies or photographs of their sporting performances on display in their homes. For instance, 85-year-old Benny had his living room wall covered with his medals, awards and trophies from running. Marjorie (age 82) had a photograph of herself doing triple jump (at the AMG) framed and positioned on a low table at her home's entrance, in hope that it would "inspire women" to get involved in sport, she said. Ray, a 69-year-old former Australian Olympic ice hockey representative, has a shed in his back yard, a glass cabinet in his home and a scrapbook dedicated to his ice hockey memorabilia, awards, and newspaper clippings. Marjorie, Ray and Lara (aged 65) (who were all runners in the 2000 Olympic Torch Relay) each had the official Olympic Torch displayed in their living rooms. Moreover, Kenneth, the 89-year-old runner, has a den under his house devoted to his home brew (beer) and the medals, certificates, newspaper articles and trophies that he has received for running over the past eight years. This was the place where he brought me to have our interview as he explained, "Oh well, I mean, these medals, they mean a lot to me, for a fellow that's never been any good at any sport to suddenly become good at running, you know and ... it makes me feel good". One of his most prized possessions was an Australian Sports Medal which he received for his achievement in sport and his dedication in time and effort to enhance his respective sport in Australia.

Other forms of recognition, such as breaking national or world records, being awarded a club championship or getting in the 'Top Ten' in the State were also welcomed outcomes of competing in sport. For example, the first point 79-year-old Eldon made during our interview was that he had been awarded Club Champion by his local AUSSI Masters swimming club for attending forty-seven training sessions

and fifteen major competitions throughout 2001. He also informed me that he is currently in the 75-80 years men's 'Top Ten' in New South Wales for swimming. "It makes you feel good doesn't it? You are in the 'Top Ten' in the state ... it feels really good ... that you're competing ... in a very competitive sport," said Eldon. Benny (85-year-old runner) said that when there is no one else his age for him to run against his incentive is to get his "name in the record book". Approximately two years after his initial interview, Benny rang me to give an update on his recent victories. He won seven gold medals for track and field events at the 2003 Australian Masters Games held in Canberra. External rewards clearly brought feelings of pride, status and satisfaction to the participants. These older people also wanted to be acclaimed and have their successes noted (which is understandable in light of the negative positioning of older people in the West). In addition, not only did participants enjoy competing against others and receiving external rewards, but they also liked competing against their own previous standards.

"What was my time?"

Several participants told me that they kept records of their times or past performance standards so that they could monitor their physical improvements (or deterioration). Indeed, striving for one's personal best is a concept that is grounded in the competitive ideology of mainstream sport (Coakley, 2001) and it is generally seen as a more acceptable type of competition for older people than is competing to outperform others (Pepe & Gandee, 1992) (as discussed in Chapter 1). At both the AMG and LMMG, after the completion of a running race or swim, the initial question I often overheard participants ask the officials was, "what was my time?" In this sense, the study participants were competing to win against themselves. This act also motivates participants to train in order to maintain or improve their current performance level in their sport. For example:

... the main motivation for me ... is physical fitness ... and then I suppose there's a little bit of that competitive spirit [smiles] that says, "Ok, try and improve your time". Just see how far you can push yourself without doing

physical damage ... mostly [competing] against yourself. (Ingrid, 70-year-old swimmer)

Oh yes I keep track [of my swim times] ... I'm pretty dedicated ... I generally write this [his times and distances] down at the pool side ... so that I know how I'm going. [He shows me a sheet of paper with his times listed on it] I took a minute off that [his time from last year] ... Oh it's great isn't it, I mean you are not going backwards are you? It makes you feel good ... I've got my times at all the carnivals I swam, my PB [personal best] and so forth, it's just like these Olympics ... I mean, look out Ian Thorpe! [laughs] ... (Eldon, 79-year-old swimmer)

I always time myself [she nods her head]. I go about nine kilometres on one run and the other one's six and a half [kilometres] [she measures the distances out using her car]. So I always *try* to keep my times. I got slower, and slower, and slower, but I've *still* always timed myself ... just to make sure I'm not getting too slack. (Lara, 65-year-old squash player and runner)

I keep an eye on my own times and I try to keep them up to about what I think is my level. As you get older that's not always possible. You can't keep improving all the time, but you slow down the rate of deterioration. (66-year-old male swimmer)

In particular, the following story told by 89-year-old Kenneth further demonstrates the significance some participants place on beating their previous performance standards. Kenneth was the only competitor in his age group in the five kilometre Fun Run at the AMG. Despite the heavy winds, he was determined to finish the race and achieve his personal best time:

... it was the wind ... I knew I should do it ... So I thought I don't care ... I was going to finish no matter what – if they're going to pick me up off the side of the road, *I'm going to finish!* And when I got there – you have no

idea the feeling. *Oh*, I was that pleased ... [he said that he immediately asked for his time] ... and it was six minutes better than I've ever done it ... I just kept going and I was determined to finish ...

Pushing the body to achieve maximum performance levels is consistent with standard practice in mainstream competitive sport, but not expected or considered 'appropriate' for older people in sport. The nature of competition provides participants with objective comparisons with others of their own age and of similar ability, as well as objective measures of their own ability. The participants like to push their bodies through competing in physically demanding sports and monitor their performance capacity. In the next chapter, a further analysis of key factors underlying this behaviour will be provided.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored various reasons why the older adults in my study compete in strenuous sports and how their motives and experiences interact with the multiple and conflicting discourses that are at the centre of this phenomenon. In particular, it examined the ways in which the tension between 'friendly participation' and 'serious competition' was managed by the participants when they spoke about and were observed competing in sport. What emerged were a set of significant contradictions between competing for fun, friendship and fitness, participation *as* winning and competing to win (against self and others). It was in the negotiation of these opposing viewpoints that the concepts of resistance, empowerment and conformity were played out and developed.

This chapter demonstrated that there are a range of negotiations taking place when participants justify why they compete in sport. A discourse of 'serious competition' does not yet exist for older people; therefore, some participants have internalised the 'friendly participation' discourse and they did not acknowledge or contemplate their competitive behaviour. In doing so, their voices are consistent with the positive ageing and health promotion approaches which underpin the Masters

Games and actually serve to reinforce at some level the dominant view that older people are not serious competitive athletes. Foucault (1983) would argue that these individuals have accepted the view that it is not appropriate for them to be competitive which can result in the development of docile bodies or normalised identities that are consistent with such discourses. Simultaneously, however, by having fun and being physically and socially engaged in later life, the participants were unintentionally resisting dominant negative stereotypes of ageing that are ingrained in Western society. On the other hand, some study participants recognise the orthodoxy that it is not age-appropriate for them to be competitive and find it hard to admit that they are. That is, they were seen concurrently to accept and reject the orthodoxy that sport for older people should be non-serious. In doing so, study participants were simultaneously rejecting and accepting aspects of competitive discourses and practices underpinning mainstream sport. Therefore, although experiences of fun, social interaction and physical activity were extremely important to all of the participants, for a majority of them these were side benefits to competition.

Many participants did state (albeit candidly) that they were indeed competitive. They train hard, push their body to its limit and compete to win, whether it is against others or themselves. This desire to compete does not necessarily ‘die off’ as people age. Despite the orthodoxy that older people are not competitive, my findings suggest that many people are ‘competing for life’. That is, they understand themselves as being a competitive person ‘for life’, whether it be through sport or other contexts. In other words, the study participants demonstrate that a person is ‘never too old’ to be serious about competing in sport. It is here that the seeds of resistance lie. They are resisting (intentionally or unintentionally) positive ageing discourses (which promote ‘fun’ physical and social activity, not competition); negative understandings of ageing (which stereotype older people as disabled, disengaged and dependent); and the accepted view that serious competition is only for the young. In Foucaultian terms, and following Wearing (1995), the competitive older athletes in this study are refusing what the accepted view informs that they are or should be and are reaching for what they want to be or can be.

Thus, the actions of my participants have the potential to establish new normative boundaries or sets of legitimising discourses about competition and ageing in Western society. Older athletes are (perhaps) the vanguard of a growing leisure phenomenon.

The next chapter shows how embracing the competitive ideology of mainstream sport as an expression of resistance, personal empowerment and identity in later life is driven primarily by a fear of deep old age. This process also rests on managing two major tensions: first, the contradiction between resisting age-appropriate norms and conforming to Western ideals of youthfulness, athleticism and competition; and second, the tension between accepting and denying the physical ageing process and deep old age.

CHAPTER 6

“A FEELING OF POWER”¹⁸ OR DENIAL?

Introduction

The previous chapter has established that many of the participants in my study were serious about competing in physically demanding sports and identify themselves as competitive. This finding in itself challenges the orthodoxies that competition, especially competing in physically strenuous sports, is only the domain of youth and that sport for older people is not about winning. My research demonstrates that in addition to enjoying themselves, making friends and keeping fit through sport, many participants strive to win, compare their performance levels to others, push their bodies to achieve a personal best, and enjoy the recognition that comes from achieving in competitive sport. The premise underlying this chapter is that although identifying an ageing self in terms of these youthful and athletic ideals is personally empowering, this empowerment is driven primarily by an ingrained fear of deep old age or the onset of the Fourth Age.

It will be demonstrated that competitive sport behaviour in later life can be problematic at both the social and personal levels. Placing so much emphasis on extreme physical ability and athletic achievement in later life pivots on two major tensions. On one level there is the friction between participants' behaviour resisting negative stereotypes of older age and conforming to Western ideals of youthfulness and athleticism. On a more individual level is the process of managing the tension between accepting or denying the uncertainty of the biological ageing process and the eventuality of deep old age. Therefore, this chapter explores how the contradictions between resistance and conformity, empowerment and denial, and identity and ageing are important dimensions of the ways in which older athletes negotiate their motives and experiences within the context of competitive sport. In taking this stance, the chapter centres on describing and interpreting participants'

¹⁸ This statement was made by a study participant (a 73-year-old female runner and swimmer).

behaviour within the context of discourses associated with mainstream sport, negative stereotypes of older age, notions of positive ageing and understandings of the Third and Fourth Ages.

The initial discussion in this chapter, “I’m out here and I can do this”, centres on the theme of youthfulness and personal empowerment. It is shown that in mobilising discourses and behaviours associated with mainstream competitive sport the participants are defining ageing in terms of them. That is, they are expressing an identity in terms of youthfulness, physical ability, power, strength, resilience, determination and independence. This process is found to be an extremely empowering experience for the participants as well as a means of providing feedback on the competency of their ageing bodies. It is argued that they are attempting to prove to themselves and society that ‘old’ can be ‘young’ through competing in physically demanding sports. Their behaviours set them apart from dominant negative stereotypes of older age and they express a sense of control of their life. In other words, the feelings of youthfulness and empowerment expressed by participants are central to the way in which they manage the relationship between sport, identity and their ageing bodies. However, the participants were also reflecting and reinforcing the values of youthfulness, athleticism and achievement and the fear of old age that are embedded in Western culture.

In relation to the second theme framing this chapter it is revealed that these feelings of youthfulness, vitality and liberation rest on managing the contradiction between acceptance and denial of the inevitability of deep old age. To maintain a sense of personal empowerment, youthfulness and ability the participants were driven by a fear of their opposites – loss of control, old age and disability. This finding was expressed in the phrase “Use it or lose it”. By pushing their body to its limit within the context of competitive sport the participants were attempting to ward off the Fourth Age for as long as possible (or avoid it altogether). As critics of the theory of the Third Age claim, this behaviour can represent a denial of, or desperate resistance to, the irrevocability of physical ageing (Blaikie, 1999; Coleman et al., 1993; Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, 2002). Therefore, this chapter takes the debate

beyond the negotiation of discourses and shows how participants deal with the physical and psychological realities of the ageing process.

“I’m out here and I can do this!”

The discussion to follow is organised around four key ideas which emerged from my research: An exception to the rule?; “It keeps me young”; “[I know] that I’m not losing it”; and “I can do everything I want to”¹⁹. These motives and experiences reveal participants’ feelings of being exceptional and youthful due to their involvement in physically demanding competitive sport. They also point to the significance participants place on maintaining their health, physical ability, and sense of personal empowerment.

An Exception to the Rule?

As outlined in Chapter 1, the phenomenon of older competitive athletes is growing. As it stands, however, they still only represent a small percentage of the ageing population in any given Western country. The reality is that not all older people have the desire, means or ability to compete in physically demanding sports. Therefore, perhaps older athletes could be considered ‘privileged’ or ‘exceptional’ in the sense that they have the finances and physical ability to live an extremely active leisured lifestyle. But, this does not mean that those with little money or a disability are not happy or healthy. It cannot be assumed that because older people are not competing in sport they are unhealthy, disabled or living in a nursing home. It was revealed in Chapter 2 that ninety-five percent of people over the age of 60 in most Western nations lead independent lives outside the health and welfare systems and that age-related disease and disability are generally compressed to the last couple of years before death (Blaikie, 1999; Davis, 1994; Lamdin & Fugate, 1997; Laslett, 1989; McPherson, 1998; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Thompson et al. 1990).

Nevertheless, this discussion shows that because of their involvement in

¹⁹ The latter three phrases are direct quotes that were given by participants in my study.

competitive sport the participants in my study considered themselves advantaged compared to ‘other’ older people, imagined or known. In particular, many participants said that they feel “lucky” and believe that they differ markedly from the rest of the ageing population. In expressing these beliefs they were comparing themselves to dominant negative stereotypes of older people (which are based on the five percent of older people who are in the Fourth Age) and not to the reality that ninety-five percent of older people (their peers) are healthy. However, by accepting and mobilising the negative stereotypes of ageing when talking about competing in sport and believing that their competitive and athletic behaviour is ‘exceptional’ or unattainable for most, my study participants have the potential to “unwittingly contributing to ageism” (Flatten, 1991, p. 67). At the individual level, however, feeling ‘exceptional’ appears to help them manage their ageing identity and contribute to feelings of personal empowerment.

According to Biggs (1993) and Thompson et al. (1990), many older adults accept the view that older age is a period of life dominated by physical, social and emotional loss or deterioration. In realising that later life is not as bad as expected, my study participants consider themselves to be an exception to the rule, which consequently increases their life satisfaction, self-esteem, and feelings of youthfulness and empowerment. By way of example, a 64-year-old man said:

I love that I am still fit to do it at my age ... I feel very good about it ... I don't know of anyone my age. I've been the oldest competitor now for probably eight or nine years still competing at indoor cricket.

89-year-old Kenneth (a long distance runner and walker) explicates, “... I suppose what I'm doing is actually an achievement that thousands of others can't do, you know? It gives me a boost ...”. Kenneth's feeling of pride associated with seeing himself as an ‘exception’ was a response to a discussion about the high level of media attention he has received since he began long distance walking and running at the age of 81. In the local newspaper of his home town he is dubbed a “Local Hero”:

I am so well known in Maitland. Everywhere I go, people know me ... from these paper [articles] and [from] seeing me running ... I'm that proud to think I'm still [running] ... I'm not just a skinny old bloke ... I'm *somebody* ... and they're interested in *me* ... and it's quite a thrill to go up to town and have people say, "Good on ya mate! Gee, you're still running?"

Like Kenneth, several other participants commented that they were well known in their locality, and some had appeared in the local media because of their involvement in competitive sport. Consequently, many of the participants have been given the status of a role model by the media; for example, Lara, Ray and Marjorie were runners in the 2000 Olympic Torch Relay, and 81-year-old Edward cycled around Australia for the Department of Veteran's Affairs in 1999 as part of the 'International Year of the Older Person'. Many study participants commented that they often receive recognition and praise for their efforts in sport, particularly from younger players. For instance, "People come up to you that are fifteen, sometimes twenty years younger than you and say, 'They tell me you're 63, Oh, well played ... you're an inspiration, I wanna be doing that!'" said a male soccer player. Likewise, 64-year-old male badminton player said:

... the wife's over 65 ... she's a bit of an icon in the area [her hometown in New Zealand] ... they all admire her and they come up to her and say "Man, if we can get around like you can at your age, it would be marvellous ... you're ... an inspiration to us" ...

This status and recognition seems to provide participants with confirmation that they are indeed an exception to the norm and are considered someone of worth in society. These factors appeared to be important in motivating them to continue their involvement in sport, as was also shown in Chapter 5. While the participants valued ability, independence and competitiveness at an individual level, this finding also suggests that, due to the power of competition and youthfulness as discourses in Western culture, older people may seek to express these ideals and perhaps hide their own ageing in order to feel valued by society. This finding is an

understandable reaction to the typically negative positioning of older people as socially insignificant in the West. As Erikson (1997, p. 109) argues, “It is not necessary to be original or inventive, but it is mandatory to be competent in order to excel in our practical [and competitive] world”. Theories about the challenge of managing an ageing identity arising from postmodernity, discussed below, provide additional insight into these notions.

Being an athlete in later life set the participants apart from the dominant negative stereotypes of older people that are embedded in Western society. According to Biggs (1993) and Woodward (1991) older adults measure their own age and ability by comparing themselves to other older people’s bodies and appearances. Competitive sport presents an effective context for such comparisons to take place. A common finding from my study was that the participants accept Western ideas about older age as primarily a period of disability, disengagement and dependency, and yet they simultaneously disassociated themselves from these stereotypes. “Once you get to our age most slow down, but we continue,” said members of an over 55 years women’s netball team. Similarly, “I know a lot of people my age who actually sit around and do nothing and the blokes at work say, ‘You’re mad because you’re running around at your age,’ but I say, ‘Why not?’” commented a 65-year-old male softball player. These findings are similar to a study by Thompson et al. (1990) (discussed in Chapter 3) who found that a group of British people aged in their 60s had preconceived notions of what older people ‘should’ do and how they ‘should’ feel. In other words, many of the older adults in their study had internalised the negative stereotypes about ageing and later life. Therefore, like my participants, they were surprised to find that their own experiences were in contrast to “... the common stereotypes of old age as involving disease, disability, and deterioration ...” (Thompson et al., 1990, p. 117).

Many of my study participants seem to acknowledge that their behaviour challenges age-appropriate norms, as the following passages demonstrate:

... they [her grandchildren] see me playing tennis, ‘cause they said, “Oh,

whose grandma can be playing tennis and going on the boogy board and doing all these things that we do?” You know. Not many would be doing that with them. (Lara, 65-year-old squash player)

A man that works at the retirement village, where I now live, he said, “I wish the rest of the residents were like you”, because I ride a bike and I swim and I run. I don’t worry about trivial things, which happens very often when people get very old and they worry about things that don’t really matter. I’m too busy to worry about that. (Betty, 73-year-old triathlete)

... it’s sort of a feeling of POWER, [she squints her eyes and really emphasises this word] alright, when my grandsons can go to school and say, “My grandma runs half marathons” and everybody else says, “Oh no, my grandma’s in a nursing home,” you know, and so, that’s good [she stands straight and looks proud] and I like that kind of feeling. (female, 73-year-old, running, swimming)

The ability to compete in physically demanding youth-associated sports signified to them and to others that they were not like the stereotypical older person. The participants expressed feelings of pride and personal empowerment when discussing this differentiation. In particular, the statements, above, highlight the notion that resistance to the dominant beliefs about older age can be interpreted as a form of “power”. According to Minichiello et al. (2000, p. 274), “older people negotiate with ageist stereotypes by trying to create an image of themselves as an ageing person who differs markedly from the stereotypical image”. For example, the participants in my study used words and phrases such as “sitting”, “pain”, “use a stick”, “worry” and “operations” when discussing ‘other’ older people. In contrast, to describe themselves they used expressions including “super fit”, “mentally alert”, “more active” and “able to do things”. Indeed, by “playing such a young person’s game” (Josef, 65-year-old, beach volleyball player) and embracing the competitive ideology embedded in mainstream sport, the participants in my study are seeking to express a powerful, youthful, vital and active image of older people that challenges

the passive, disabled and dependent image that is prevalent in Western society. This recognition of their behaviour as ‘going against the grain’ is interpreted as a conscious form of resistance to the expectations and norms that are placed upon older people in the West. In setting themselves apart from stereotypical understandings of older age (through their involvement in physically demanding competitive sports) it is argued that the participants are attempting to define ‘old’ as ‘young’.

“It keeps me young”

A common expression I heard during my research was that competing in vigorous sports “keeps me young”. By participating in a youth-associated activity the participants said they were mixing with younger people (rather than segregating themselves with people of their own age), as well as feeling and possibly looking younger than their chronological age. As Kenneth explained, “... part of the process of keeping you young, is mixing with young people ... I don’t think of myself as being old ... at present I’m just one hundred percent healthy” (89-year-old runner). More examples follow of how socialising and competing with people who were in their 30s and 40s (as part of the Masters cohort) helped the older participants feel younger:

If you play in an interclub team, then you could be playing [against] people who are fifteen and sixteen years younger ... so you are getting breadth of age ... and if you’re old and always socialising with people of your own age group you are going to age ... up here [she points to her head]. (63-year-old female badminton player)

... because you are mixing with such a wide range of age groups, you know, younger people and older people, I think it tends to help the older people. It gives them a bit of youth ... in their outlook on life ... we mix with 30-year-olds and 40-year-olds in our club back home and we don’t seem to have an age barrier. Whereas I think *normally*, young people think you are all old

fogies. (female, 64-year-old swimmer)

I think it helps narrow the gap, between young and old ... I do think that mixing with young people at times just helps you to keep a little more vital ... they never look at us as old. (Ingrid, 70-year-old swimmer)

By interacting with younger people through sport the participants were avoiding, some consciously others subconsciously, segregated settings for older people. For example, many participants mentioned that they did not want to participate in age-appropriate and age-segregated activities like “lawn bowls” or “going to the club”. Thompson et al. (1990, p. 122) argue that the disassociation of older people from the stereotypes and social category of ‘old age’ could “be regarded as a commendable form of resistance to the pressures and injustices of the prejudices against the old”. In other words, the actions of the participants in my study could be interpreted as an attempt to protect themselves from being identified and treated as a stereotypically ‘old’ person in society. By competing in sport they were feeling younger, being perceived by others as ‘youthful’ and, as mentioned above, attempting to establish an identity that differentiated themselves from the denigrating stereotypes. Likewise, Minichiello et al. (2000, p. 253) found that older people tend to perceive “Active ageing ... as a positive way of presenting and interpreting oneself as separate from the ‘old’ group”.

Active older people generally use a variety of strategies to distance themselves from negative stereotypes, such as trying not to look ‘old’ (Hurd, 1999; Katz, 2000; Minichiello et al., 2000). For example, a minority of my participants admitted that one reason why they competed in sport was because they did not want to appear frail, unhealthy or ‘old’ (as it is typically understood in society).

... a lot of people have ego trips and it varies from person to person and in my case I’d say it’s ... looking reasonable and not having a pot belly or a pear shape. The ability to [he pauses] look healthy ... I would be rather distressed if someone said, “Oh look at that old man walking down there”.

(Trevor, 67-year-old runner)

Oh, I think [playing netball] keeps you looking on the younger side ... I know I'm getting older with age, but I don't think I'm *old-old*. I try to keep up ... a little bit with the younger ones ... I just like to feel younger ... I don't want to look old-old. (Ellen, 66-years-old)

... I suppose it's admitting that I'm getting old if I stop. So while I still keep on going I feel that I am young and I'm not in the '*old*' bracket. (female, 62-years-old basketball player)

Through the appropriation of symbols of youth, vitality, fitness and ability the participants were consciously (or subconsciously) attempting to appear younger and thus separate themselves from being labelled as 'old' in the eyes of others. Furthermore, it was observed that some of the older athletes wore bright, colourful and 'trendy' sports apparel (such as race singlets, tracksuits, cycling shorts), that is, clothes that according to Hargreaves (1994) and Poole (2001) are not typically categorised as 'old'. They also represent "visible markers of pace and movement" (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000, p. 79). Additionally, many participants mentioned that they took pleasure in getting told that they appear younger than their chronological age:

... people say to me, "How old are you," I say, "80", [they say] "Aw, you don't look 80" [I say] "Well how old do you reckon I look?" [they say] "Oh about 65, 70". See? So, in other words ... the physical activities that I do *must* be keeping me down, looking younger. (Eldon, 79-year-old, swimmer)

... you get a lot of compliments ... people think I'm not as old as I am because of what I do. (Ray, 69-year-old ice hockey player)

... most people look at us and don't really think we are as old as we are, you know, and with what *we do*, because we are capable of doing just *normal*

things much easier. (71-year-old male gymnast)

According to Minichiello et al. (2000), Woodward (1991) and Biggs (1993, 1997), many older adults contrive a deceptive social façade or ‘persona’ of youthfulness in order to minimise the impact of ageism and prevent others from seeing or treating them as ‘old’. Because these older adults were competing in sport, an activity that is socially accepted as a pursuit of the young, and wearing ‘trendy’ sporting apparel, the ‘persona’ theory suggests that they were putting on a youthful façade through pressure to conform. In extending this premise, the social masking theory implies that older people are practiced players in the game of power with a ‘matured inner self’ who acknowledge the need for self-protection in an ageist society and thus contrive a ‘social mask’ of youthfulness to deceive others into thinking they are younger (Biggs, 1997). In this sense, many of my participants could be said to have been embracing the practice and discourses of competitive sport as an expression of the values of youthfulness to protect themselves from the hostile attitude society projects towards older people. However, this was not the case for all of the participants in the study. As was revealed in Chapter 5, many participants were expressing what they described as their internal competitive drive, not competing in sport as a form of deliberate deception on their part. Regardless, in an attempt to negotiate the struggle between self and society and remain feeling empowered, the participants were simultaneously resisting old age stereotypes and conforming to Western ideals of youthfulness, athleticism and competition. Expressing values of youthfulness has the potential to (unknowingly) perpetuate ageism and the fear of old age, at least at the micro-level. My findings also demonstrate the tensions an older person has to manage in terms of their personal and social identity, especially when living within a society that values youth, fitness and health and devalues ageing.

The social masking theory (Biggs, 1997, 1999) also helps explain the sense of personal empowerment and identity affirmation the participants feel from achieving in their sport, using their body in extreme ways and by appropriating the markers and symbols of youth, regardless of whether they are conforming to societal ideals.

Biggs (1997) argues that the flexibility of the ‘social mask’ means that older people may adopt alternative identities in later life and actively create new understandings of what it means to be old for themselves, which can be a very empowering experience. Although my findings undoubtedly reveal the power of youthfulness in Western culture, feeling and looking younger in later life can be a source of confidence, self-esteem and personal empowerment (Poole, 2001). It seems that my participants seek to signify their feelings of success, competency, and pleasure through the use of metaphors and symbols of youth. For example, the majority of the participants argued that competing in sport “keeps you feeling younger at heart” and “mind”. The quotes presented below elaborate on the general internal feeling of youthfulness that so many participants referred to when discussing their competitive sport experiences:

I think if you’re healthy, I think you feel in the mind, you’re ok, but if you’re not well and you’re really in pain, you don’t feel *young*, you can’t ... it’s just if you’re physically reasonable ... your mind tends to think no different to what you were years ago ... [in my] 30s and 40s. (Joanne, 67-year-old field hockey player)

I feel probably late 40s early 50s. I mean who knows ... but I just noticed that I’m moving as freely as people that are ten, fifteen, twenty years younger than I am and I watch them and I know they’re only 45 ... yet they are moving no freer than I am ... (Najima, 68-year-old baseball player)

Many participants felt that the ability, fitness and health levels associated with competing in sport made them feel younger than their chronological age. The quotes from Joanne and Najima (above) exemplify a typical opinion held by the participants, whereby feeling healthy and able provides a feeling of youthfulness. Therefore, unless they felt physically unable to do what they wanted, or if they were sick or unhappy, the participants did not feel ‘old’. To them, later life is more about activity, ability and vitality and they do not consider themselves ‘old’ while they are still active and productive.

While a lot of participants said that they felt young on the inside and others indicated that competing in sport made them appear younger, many also commented that they do look older. “The mind always stays young, the body gets older” or “even though we may look old, we don’t feel old” were typical statements made by both men and women of varying ages. For example, “As long as I don’t look in the mirror, [competing in gymnastics] makes me feel good again ... it makes you feel younger,” described a 66-year-old man. Some participants commented that by competing in sport they were satisfying their youthful inner self. “I’m just hiding in this body, I’m only 19 in here,” laughed a female 65-year-old sport aerobics competitor. Similarly, a 69-year-old ice hockey player, exclaimed, “there is a boy in here [puts his hand to his chest] trying to get out!” Eldon, a 79-year-old swimmer, said, “... I feel young. I reckon I’m about 19 [laughs] ... because I feel good, that’s all”. When talking to 74-year-old Max about being the oldest player in the field hockey competition at the 2001 AMG, he replied, “It doesn’t matter to me, you know ... You’re just one of the fellas [men]. No I don’t think of my age, no, 21 in my heart”. Jolene said, “Sometimes I think I *do look* my age, but body wise I think I’m as fit as someone about say in their 40s” (63-year-old basketball player). This negotiation between the inner and outer body that older people refer to when they talk about their sports experiences can be understood with reference to the ‘mask of ageing’ hypothesis (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1990), introduced in Chapter 3.

The ‘mask of ageing’ is where the physical signs of ageing are perceived as an inflexible mask trapping an inner youthful self. In this sense, their bodily signs of ageing are conceptualised as a mask that cannot be removed, or a cage that entraps the inner self, and eventually it becomes unresponsive to contemporary opportunities (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1990). In addition, the ageing body becomes a signifier of identity in later life, even though it may not represent how people feel, which emphasises the ongoing struggle between the internal self and external body (see Oberg & Tornstam, 2001). In the case of my participants, because many of them operated with a fixed sense of who they were as athletes,

they perceived themselves to be young, competitive people trapped in an ageing body. A problem arises, therefore, from the friction between the potential for self-expression and the reality of their physically ageing body as they try to maintain their identity as an athlete and continue competing in physically demanding sports. This continuity can be understood as a fascination with an extended midlife. Biggs (1997, 1999) argues that hanging onto mid-lifestyles can be problematic to identity in later life as it represents a denial of existential issues that have to be faced (such as reflecting on the meaning of one's life, bodily limitations and mortality). In other words, identifying oneself in terms of youthfulness and ability is empowering while such attributes are maintained, but has the potential to become problematic for an ageing person due to the inevitability of physical decline (or the onset of the Fourth Age) as an outcome of longer life expectancy. Issues related to acceptance and denial of the ageing process will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Below is a discussion on the value the participants place on the effective use of their ageing bodies, which highlights the importance of maintaining their identity as a physically active and competent person (or athlete).

“[I know] that I’m not losing it”

The findings from my research indicate that, among other things, the participants take pride in being involved in an activity that sets them apart from the negative stereotypes associated with older people and they value the ‘youthful’ feeling that competing in sport gives them. Competing in physically demanding sport is a strategy which provides participants with confirmation that they are coping with the ageing process, have control over the use of their body, and, therefore, have not yet entered the Fourth Age. This discussion focuses on the self-satisfaction, pride, esteem, sense of achievement, and feeling of empowerment that came with the maintenance of their identity as a physically active person (or athlete) and with the reassurance that they were still capable of competing in sport at an older age. As one man said, it was about “the satisfaction of knowing that I’m not losing it” (62-year-old male 300-metre hurdler). Gilleard & Higgs (2000) explain that “... old age symbolizes individual failure – ‘losing it’ by a failure to ward off disease, a failure

to act positively, a failure to be selective, a failure to actively engage with modern lifestyle ...”. Later in the chapter a discussion on the perceived consequences of ‘losing control’ will be highlighted.

As discussed in Chapter 1, participation in physically demanding competitive sport requires varying degrees of physical skill, vigorous physical exertion, prowess, conditioning and sport-related knowledge (Coakley, 2001; McPherson, 1986). This type of behaviour is associated with young people. For ‘late starters’ to sport, it was the realisation that it could be done that gave them confidence to enter competitions. As 89-year-old Kenneth explicates:

I didn’t think I had any ability on the athletic field ... I started going for these walks [at age 81] and every time I’d go, I’d go a bit further and I thought, gee, I’m not getting sore, my muscles are good [he touches his biceps and quadriceps] ... I must be pretty fit ... I was *that pleased* about ... being able to do this that I wanted to do it again ... that gave me the courage to go in competitive walking [and running].

Or this quote from Benny, an 85-year-old, who started going in Fun Runs at age 67:

I found that I was, in my age group, I was beating people that were a lot younger than myself and I thought, oh well, perhaps I’m not so bad after all. So I’ll try myself out in open competition.

Likewise, a 73-year-old woman who ran in her first half marathon at age 67 explains:

Well, it is just satisfying to know you can run a half marathon or swim 1,500 metres, which I do, and that makes you feel as though you are actually still here ... I really didn’t think I could do it ... [then] somebody talked me into it, and I could do it [she puts her shoulders back and raises her chest] and I haven’t fallen apart so I keep on doing it.

Trevor, a 67-year-old, admits that he began running at age 50 for:

... a very selfish reason to start off with – I wanted to remain *fit* and I would like to run a half-marathon under one hundred minutes and I'd like to run a Marathon under four hours ... it's sort of an *ego* thing that I could *do* it without any punishment ... I wanted to ... acknowledge that I could do something ... I don't have to prove myself to anyone, accept myself ... it's just so wonderful that I'm able to [run long distances].

In this statement Trevor is acknowledging the 'ego boost' he gains from being able to compete in a physically demanding activity. This feeling was a common finding among the participants.

For 'continuers' and 'rekindlers' it was the satisfaction and sense of achievement associated with knowing that at an older age they were still capable of competing in a sport they had played in their youth. A typical statement made by these participants was, "I can still do it!" For example, 65-year-old Josef, who returned to competitive volleyball with his friend in retirement, elaborates:

... over thirty years we hadn't played ... nothing strenuous like that ... that was a challenge in itself, to be able to even play in the beginning, let alone compete, just to be able to hit the ball ... I enjoy it more now [compared to when he played in his youth] for ... the idea that I ... still can do it ... it's just the joy of being able to ... hit the ball and get it and pass it and execute it ... it makes you feel good ... [a] sense of achievement.

A 71-year-old man who competed in gymnastics from age 10 to 25 years and did not return to the sport until he was aged 50 said:

... I just like to be able to ... think that I can still do something. That I am still capable of throwing my body around and pulling it and twisting it,

turning it and being able to put it where I want to put it and of course, keep fit at the same time.

Prior to making the above statement I watched him do what he called a “flying angel” on the high bars, which involved suspending his body in the air as he flung himself around the bar. The sense of control he experienced with regard to the use of his body was evident. At a different venue I saw a 79-year-old male tennis player serve the ball so quickly and accurately that he aced his significantly younger opponent four times in a row to win the game. I observed Marjorie compete in the 80-85 years women’s triple jump, which involved making a short sprint down the track (in spiked shoes), hopping on one leg, leaping forward on the other, then jumping and landing on both feet into the sand pit. Being able to use their bodies in such strong, natural and effective ways was a very empowering and liberating experience, especially when dominant beliefs about the ageing body assume that it is not capable of such extreme activity (Hargreaves, 1994; Wearing, 1995; Vertinsky, 1995).

These findings echo those of studies into women and people with physical disabilities in competitive sport that were discussed in Chapter 3. For example, women’s participation in martial arts has been interpreted as a valuable site for empowerment due to the sense of control, self-confidence and self-discovery that can arise from using the body effectively and the sense of satisfaction an athlete experiences from achieving their best (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; Lawler, 2002; Noad & James, 2003). Similarly, athletes with physical disabilities have used competitive sport as a strategy to challenge social expectations of a disabled body by demonstrating their body’s strength, athleticism, liberty, fitness and health (Taub et al., 1999). Research by Blinde and McClung (1997) found that athletes with physical disabilities developed personally through competing in sport by experiencing their bodies in new ways and gaining a sense of physical improvement. This process resulted in athletes redefining their physical abilities and increasing their confidence. Furthermore, Ashton-Shaeffer et al. (2001a, p. 107) interpreted the experiences of men and women with physical disabilities at a

disability sports camp as resistance in the form of challenging traditional attitudes toward disability by proving to others that they “can still do things,” and expressing confidence in their right to participate in competitive sport. Similar results have emerged from studies of the participation of women in male-dominated pursuits (Little, 2002; Theberge, 2000).

When applied to older persons, leisure emphasizes what a person *can* do rather than what they are no longer physically capable of doing. Therefore it has distinct possibilities for resistance to ageism. (Wearing, 1995, p. 272)

For example, Marjorie, an 82-year-old track and field athlete and cross-country runner who competed in her first Fun Run at age 60 comments:

... You are proving that a person can still participate at an older age, if they really want to ... [proving it] To yourself, for one, and also hoping to stimulate others [to participate at an older age].

Demonstrating to themselves and others that they are capable of vigorous physical activity and skilful athleticism in later life confirms their identity as an athlete, and challenges ageist discourses.

In addition to challenging dominant views, however, they were also resisting the physically ageing body. A common viewpoint expressed by study participants of both genders and varying ages, regardless of when they commenced competing, was a desire to “test” their body’s competency in order to prove to themselves that they were not “losing it”. Richard, a 61-year-old ‘rekindler’ of field hockey, provides a typical sentiment:

... I play because of the satisfaction of ... doing something ... a competitive thing. Even though you’re not fussed about whether you win or lose, you still play these sports to ... *test* yourself about the fact that you can do it ... that personal challenge ... The marvellous thing is you can still do it, and

it's great to be able to test yourself that you *can* still do it ... it's a revelation as you get older to realise you can.

Likewise, Alison, a 70-year-old runner whose first competition was at the 2001 AMG, said:

I belong to a walking club [she joined about seven years ago] ... I usually pick the hardest walk ... they go down these steep hills and along these boulders and heavens knows what, and then *up* the steep hill ... I always pick those, just to test myself, that I can still do it [laughs] ... I do like to have little achievements for myself.

Testing one's fitness and physical ability, whether against their body, the elements or other people, in the context of competitive sport provided participants with verification of their identity as a healthy, physically active and athletic person which contributed significantly to the development of feelings of empowerment and a sense of control. These findings also indicate the high importance participants place on fitness, physical ability and competitiveness. As 89-year-old Kenneth explains, the main motivation behind his commitment to running since the age of 81 has been:

... knowing that I'm testing my fitness. Knowing ... that I'm ok. I go to the doctor once every year for check ups, because I have to do that when I renew my licence. I'm still driving a car ... it's just *proof* to myself that I am a very fit person ... it's proving that I'm alright, I'm healthy ... sort of personal satisfaction that I can do this, and I'm hoping to go on for another couple of years or more [laughs] ... it just proves something to me ... that I did have some athletic tendency.

Likewise, Alison, the 70-year-old runner quoted above also states:

... it wasn't easy doing those runs [the one mile and five kilometre road

race], you know [laughs]. I'm amazed they didn't kill me [laughs] ... but once you've done it you think, Oh well that's good, I can still do it ... I think it's very important to me to know that ... I'm mentally and physically *capable*, without being super, but ... capable of doing things.

Consider also Najima's story. He is a 68-year-old American who began playing baseball in the United States when his father gave him a glove at the age of seven. He migrated to Australia when aged in his late 30s and, below, he describes the continuation of his involvement in baseball:

I remember when I was in my 40s I thought, well I'll try and make 50 and when I got to about 49, I said, alright, 55, that's a *good*, good age. Then when I got to 55 I thought, maybe 60? ... and ... somewhere down in there there's a little bit of ego, "Hey man, yeah, I'm still out here, I wonder how long I can keep this up?" It's sort of like a king of the mountain ... [It provides] confirmation that things still work, legs and arms still work ... I go out and I run and my knees don't break and my hamstring doesn't tear and I pitch and I still am able to throw a curve ball, yeah it still works!

The above findings provide support for Kayser's argument that older athletes compete in sport "because they want to enjoy and prove their existing health and performance capacity" (1992, p. 65). By testing the use of their bodies through sports competition, the participants were seeing how far they could push their ageing bodies. Undoubtedly, proving their ability to themselves was a way of monitoring their ageing bodies, maintaining their 'athletic' identity and providing reassurance that they had not yet entered the 'disability zone' or the Fourth Age.

Another strategy participants used to test their capabilities, prove their existing health, fitness and ability and to continue to define themselves in athletic, youthful and empowering ways was by comparing their own ability and standards to those of others, particularly those who are younger. It was discussed earlier that participants enjoyed competing against others of similar or younger ages in Masters sport.

Additionally, outside the specific Masters context, competing in and training for sport in general can involve participating with and against athletes of varying ages. The following quotes provide examples of why many participants gained satisfaction from comparing their own aptitude to the performances of younger people.

I'm 65 and I'm still running around here with fellas [men] fifteen years younger than me. I'm proud of it ... I feel that while I'm still moving and still playing a competitive sport, I feel good. (Male, touch football player)

I'm pretty proud of myself. I mean I can out pace a lot of those young kids ... down there because *I want to keep up* ... I really push *myself*, probably to the limit (Jan, 60-year-old squash player)

We can still stop goals. We can still stop the ball and get the ball off to players, which makes it a thrill for us because we can still play the game as fast as [the younger players] can. (a member of a 55-years plus women's field hockey team)

I can still do it! I'm not too old, I'll never be too old ... It's perception whether you are too old or not, we don't perceive ourselves as being too old to play in a normal competition [against younger teams], not just the Masters competition. (Female, 60-year-old softball player)

Participants said they were capable of pushing their body to its limit, playing skilfully and competing against younger athletes. They were aware that they were partaking in a leisure activity that was generally considered a pursuit of the young and there was a sense of pride in beating "the young" at their own game. These feelings helped confirm their identity as a competitive athlete and provide reassurance that they were not "losing it". No one better exemplified this point than Josef, a beach volleyball player. He is 65-years-old and not afraid to tell people his age. In fact, for the 2001 AMG he purchased a team tracksuit and shirt for himself

and his volleyball partner and gained sponsorship through his son-in-law's business. A logo labelled "The 37's" was printed on the clothing, which advertised the fact that they were both born in 1937. Josef admits:

... I think we are probably quite proud of the fact that at 65 we're playing such a young person's game ... I mean the conditions on the surface that you play are very, very hard for old people ... I doubt that there are that many people at 65 that could do what we're doing ... we get a lot of satisfaction also beating the young ones too, and I suppose that there comes some kind of pride to the fact that even at this age we can do it ... you're physically able to do it ...

Notably, a few participants believed that they could move their bodies in ways that a younger person could not. Najima, the 68-year-old baseball player said, "... I can tell you I can get up and do things ... one of the little ego trips is that I can do things that people 30 can't do". Soon after making this comment he stood up and demonstrated to me a yoga exercise that involved him balancing on one leg. Similarly, during a different interview, 89-year-old Kenneth said, "I don't want to be a show off, but ..." and then he rose from his chair and did the splits on the floor. Next he sat up with his legs outstretched and touched his toes to display his flexibility. It appears that these participants wanted to prove to me that they were capable of doing something that differentiated them from the average person of their age, from the negative stereotypes of older age, and from younger people, as well as show me that their bodies were in good physical condition. They attributed these skills to the physical training that was associated with competing in sport. As Ray, a 69-year-old ice hockey player who played ice hockey for Australia at the 1960 Olympics, explains, "... because you're doing something very physical, it conditions your body better. I can do squats, that my 32-year-old son and his wife can't do". Jolene, a 63-year-old basketball player said, "I can run rings around even my grandkids who are in their 20s". There was certainly a sense of ego associated with beating a younger person, which confirmed for participants that they were coping with the ageing process and was proof to others that they were not yet 'old'.

Furthermore, several ‘continuers’ compared themselves to their performance level when they were younger. A 67-year-old female cyclist said, “I’m still doing things I did when I was 30 ... exactly at the same pace. I’ve just never slowed down”. Darren said, “... I think I’m playing just the same as I did when I was 40. But maybe not as consistently, but at times, I’m playing as well ...” (60-year-old badminton player).

Alternatively, some participants, especially those involved in team sports, accepted that they may never be able to perform as well as people who are younger than them, or at the same level they did themselves in the past:

It’s personal pride to think, “OK. I’m out here and I can do this!” So as long as you realise and accept that you are older and you can’t do things as well as ... the younger ones, I mean there’s not a problem. (female, 59-year-old field hockey player)

Other participants recognised the limitations placed on them by their ageing bodies, such as lack of stamina, speed and strength. They commented that they had to make adjustments to their style of play in order to adapt to these changes and continue competing in “such a young person’s game”. For instance:

... you can’t do things that you could do when you were [younger] and you have got to sort of compensate for that. If you are playing against a team with players who are mainly all 35 [years old] ... you realise you can’t say, “Well, I’m going to chase them all night” ... after a while I’ll need a rest and I’ll call another bloke on ... once I could go all day, but not anymore [laughs]. (male, 75-year-old ice hockey player)

... you’ll find as you get older, you get slower and you can’t last as long. You start finding new ways to kill the ball and play the winning shot. And you find that a lot of people that were fit and could hit the ball hard in their youth, have now got a much more subtle type of game with a lot more

variety in their stroke play and they use their head more than their feet ...
(male, 61-year-old squash player)

... as you get older, you get a bit canny ... you place [the shuttle cock] more
than you bash the heck out of them ... you haven't got the strength. (Emily,
71-year-old badminton player)

According to Grant (2001, p. 795), having the desire and knowledge to manage their ageing bodies helps provide older athletes with “a sense of self-worth, identity and empowerment”. My participants felt personally empowered because they expressed an ability to manage their ailing bodies and maintain their identity as a physical or athletic person. The confidence and pride they had in their abilities and accomplishments made them feel more empowered to continue to resist the ageing process and stereotypical notions associated with sport and older people. In other words, the participants were embracing the ideology and practice of competitive sport as an expression and symbol of youthfulness, resilience, ability and achievement. This feeling of empowerment was central to the way in which the participants managed the relationship between sport, identity and the body. Furthermore, being able to express self-competence and continue involvement in a leisure activity that is self-defining is important to ego-integrity (Kleiber, 1999). Also associated with participants' feelings of youthfulness, ability, health, pride and satisfaction was a perceived sense of control over their bodies and life in general that went beyond the context of sport.

“I can do everything I want to”

The health, fitness and feelings of confidence that participants gained from the confirmation that their body “still works” in the context of sport correlated with a perceived sense of control over their life in general. When discussing their sports experiences, words and phrases that I heard repeatedly to capture this feeling of control were that participants were “not frequenting doctors' surgeries”, taking minimal or “no medication”, “feeling great”, “looking after themselves”, “not

depending on others”, “able to do what [they] want to do” and having an overall “positive outlook” on life. A sense of self-care, independence and, ultimately, of being in charge is apparent in these statements. For example, because he is fit, healthy, able, and a competitive cyclist, one athlete said, “I can do everything I want to ... I’m 70, but there’s not much I can’t do”. Or, “it just gives you a new lease on life,” said Ellen, a 66-year-old netball player. A 71-year-old male cyclist elaborates:

By keeping fit, you keep mentally alert and you are able to do things ... I think it’s a benefit all round. I ride and my wife runs ... so I think it [competing in sport] increases our options to enjoy our lifestyle. We can do more things, more energy.

A male gymnast (age 71) adds, “I think at our age, it’s nice to be able to do things, you know. If you want to run up a set of steps, you run up a set of steps, if you want to go for a walk, you can go for a walk”. These quotes provide more examples of people enjoying their existing health. However, it is the sense of personal empowerment and perceived control people have over their lives that extends from sport and is experienced in other contexts that I want to now bring to the foreground.

Benny, an 85-year-old runner, who began making a conscious effort to keep fit in later life due to concerns about being overweight and the associated potential for health problems, describes how the health and fitness levels gained through his participation in sport were valuable beyond this setting:

... you can do things ... I mean I can still lift heavy objects, yes I can cut my garden ... I do lots of work around the place ... I suppose the basic thing is that I feel good ... I haven’t got any pains. I haven’t got any aches ... I’ve got nothing to worry about. I’m great and it gives you confidence in doing other, you know ... you can tackle more things.

Richard, a 61-year-old field hockey player, agrees:

... you are *able* to do the sorts of things that you want to do. Comfortably get up, you know, and walk across the road or climb this or get up the ladder and fix that and just sit around without being in pain ...

“I don’t pay anyone to do the lawn,” exclaimed 89-year-old Kenneth, “I do my own lawn mowing, and it’s all part of the thing to keep me active”. Not only a sense of control over life, but an associated feeling of independence emerges from the above statements. Several women also commented that because they were maintaining their ability, fitness and health through participation in sport they could do their own housework and yard maintenance without having to employ someone to do it for them.

Enjoy life [smiles] ... also maybe doing work around the house. You can do it so you don’t have to get people in to do it ... I think that the fitter you are, the easier you can paint or mow grass or [laughs] do all the things that you have to do otherwise you’ve got to pay someone else to go and do it ... I think the fitter you are [laughs] the better ... better lifestyle ... have a bit of fun. (Irene, 64-year-old field hockey player)

... You’re setting your own quality of life by being fit and active, I mean, if I didn’t do anything, I mean I probably couldn’t mow my lawn even. I’d have to get someone to do that, because ... I wouldn’t be fit enough to do it ... it keeps your mind active ... you can react to things a bit quicker. (Jan, 60-year-old squash player)

Like most of the participants Jan implies that she is in control with regard to her perceived quality of life. Edward, an 81-year-old man who began cycling at age 66, claims he is able to remain in full-time work as well as do all of his housework and care for his disabled wife because of cycling. He said:

The benefits are unlimited ... not only your daily activities or things like that, no matter what I do physically, and I assist in the building industry on a full-time basis and I never get tired, never, ever ... it doesn't matter to me what I've got to do ... I will cook ... wash up and ... change the beds ... [do] the laundry ... it's no effort to do it. I know it would be drudgery if I wasn't into this sport. If I wasn't training and getting the physical fitness from being a sports person, I would *not* be able to continue the way I do ... and you find that your whole lifestyle is changed. There is no such thing as hard work. Everything becomes easy because you are physically and mentally *fit*.

Participants expressed self-confidence and personal competence in their physical ability, as well as independence and endurance that extended beyond the context of competitive sport. This behaviour helped them identify positively with themselves, gave them a perceived sense of control over their lives and provided confirmation that they were adapting to the challenges of later life. In line with Rowe and Kahn (1998) my findings indicate that taking some responsibility for the way you age is potentially an empowering experience. When a person feels a sense of control over their life, especially later in life, they generally experience increased life satisfaction, improved self-concept and self-confidence, positive self-esteem, and decreased levels of stress, anxiety and depression, all of which assist in achieving a sense of ego integrity (Kleiber, 1999; McAuley & Rudolph, 1995; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Stathi et al., 2002). The above outcomes also provide qualitative support for the study by Pepe and Gandee (1992, p. 195) on 466 Ohio Senior Olympians aged between 55 and 90 which found that 87.2 percent of the sample reported on a questionnaire "that they are 'almost never' or 'never' unable to control their life". To summarise, personal empowerment is understood in my study as the means by which participants have a sense of perceived control over their body and their life; the power to resist social norms and redefine their experiences based on their own terms; and experience a sense of pleasure, pride, achievement, mastery, adventure, belonging, friendship, independence, self-expression, enhanced self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-worth.

The beliefs expressed by my participants are, again, consistent with the health promotion and positive ageing messages about self-care and the benefits of physical activity for older people, such as improving one's quality of life and retaining a sense of control, autonomy and independence. However, as argued in Chapter 2, these discourses were developed to talk about physical activity and 'age-appropriate' activities, not strenuous competitive sport. Thus, in mobilising these accepted views, the participants are conflating physical activity with extremely strenuous and competitive behaviour, and treating them as if they are equal (as does the leisure studies literature and popular discourse). But, physical activity and physically demanding competitive sports are objectively and subjectively different activities. However, because there is no discourse available to justify extreme physical activity or serious competition among older people the participants were using notions of positive ageing to rationalise their involvement in physically intense competitive sports, in spite of their behaviour being far more extreme than the positive ageing approach endorses.

Moreover, previous research into older athletes (discussed in Chapter 2) fails to acknowledge that older people identifying themselves in terms of ability, independence and youthfulness can be problematic due to the physical ageing process and the eventual decline that comes to those who live long enough. A person cannot be 'athletic' and 'youthful' forever, unless they die suddenly and do not live to reach deep old age. How do older athletes deal with this tension and is this a factor driving them to strenuous competitive sport rather than non-competitive physical activity, such as a daily walk around the block? The following discussion centres on the uncertainties and potential losses associated with the ageing process and argues that they are significant motivating factors for competing in physically strenuous sport for as long as possible. The feelings of youthfulness and empowerment exemplified by my participants are shown to, first, be driven by a fear of deep old age (or the Fourth Age), and second, rest on managing the contradiction between acceptance and denial of the physical ageing process. This course of negotiation provides additional evidence that it was not only the

stereotypes that the participants were resisting, but also their ageing body.

“Use it or lose it”

To maintain a “feeling of power” – the sense of being an exception to the stereotypes, youthful, physically able and in control (which is so central to how the participants negotiate their relationship with sport, identity and the ageing body) – all of the participants believed that they had to use their body as much as possible. Arguably, this was an almost desperate attempt to avoid or delay losing their physical ability, because with this loss they would also lose their independence, a sense of control over their life, and a sense of self. In other words, the feeling of control participants experienced and valued was driven by a fear of its opposite – loss of control. This principle seemed to coalesce around the idea of “use it or lose it”, which was a phrase that I heard often during my study. What is explored in the discussion of this major theme is how the adage “use it or lose it” operates as meaningful within the context of competitive sport participation among older people. All participants were motivated by the concern that if they stopped participating, they would become “old”, “age badly” or enter what Laslett (1989) calls the Fourth Age. This concern (or fear) of deep old age centres on the relationship between two interconnected yet contradictory notions: a desperate resistance to (or denial of) the potential physical problems associated with ageing and; an acceptance of the eventuality of the Fourth Age.

As discussed in Chapter 3 the “Use it or lose it” catch phrase is often used by older people to rationalise their involvement in sport and physical activity (Fontane, 1996; Grant, 2001). Similarly, my participants used this expression and others, such as “wear out not rust out”, “keep going and get more out of life”, “I don’t want to seize up” or “I want to keep mobile as long as I can”, when discussing their reasons for competing in sport. Interestingly, a team of women field hockey players at the 2001 AMG wore a T-shirt with the slogan “move it or lose it” across the back. A 65-year-old male badminton player explains the necessity of sport in his life, “You have to play [a sport]. If you stop, you seize up, that’s the problem once

you get to our age. You have to keep moving”. A female tennis player elaborates:

It’s a way of life when you get to 81 like me ... people kind of get to 60 and think life’s had it, but as long as you keep fit, eat right, exercise [grins]. It’s a way of life ... to wear out not rust out [laughs] ... you just have to keep going and keep on keeping on.

When interviewing Emily, a 71-year-old badminton player, “use it or lose it” was the first point she made:

Well, I’ll tell you what [playing badminton is] all about. If you don’t use it, you lose it. It’s not mine, it’s a well known one you have really got to keep your body going, because if you don’t you just rust up [she says matter-of-factly]. You just rust up like anything else.

Ingrid agrees:

I think keeping active – use it or lose it [she smiles] ... use your body and your mind, you know, keep your mind active. Do things that involve thinking and concentration and also use your body in doing physical things [to maintain] ... Mobility, flexibility, that’s physically and mentally [laughs] ... they just become stagnated, I suppose. (70-year-old swimmer)

In fact, participants expressed a desire to fight the ageing body and keep competing in sport until they were no longer physically capable. Ingrid, quoted above, said “... I have to admit, there are times when I wake up in morning and I think ‘Oh, aches and pains,’ you know [slight laugh], ‘I’m getting old’, but you don’t give in to that”. Marjorie, a ‘late starter’, explains how she battles through bodily pain and injury in order to “keep going” with her sport:

... I get a pain and I try and run through it ... I get a lot of pains in my knees now [chuckles] ... but I still *try* and do my running ... I’ll keep plodding

along for it won't I? [laughs] ... until my knees won't let me do anything else and they're getting to that point now ... It's pretty sore now to do anything but, while I can still move them, I will ... I'd hate to think I can't move. It distresses me to think I couldn't and if I can make myself do it, I'll make myself do it ... (82-year-old runner and track and field athlete)

I observed Marjorie approximately six months after this interview competing in the track and field sprints at the LMMG, indicating her commitment to continue competing in athletics in spite of her ageing body. It was also encouraging to see that she was still going and that her body had not 'rusted'! Like the majority of participants in my study, Marjorie exemplifies an almost desperate resistance to her ageing body. The fear of being unable to move their body was a strong motivating factor for the study participants' persistence with competitive sport.

Many 'continuers' also showed this resilience and determination to remain active in their sport despite their body's deterioration. For instance, 76-year-old Victoria, who has played tennis since the age of 10 and at the time of the interview had a tennis court in her back yard, explained:

... until I was 75 there was no doubt ... I felt very fit. I felt I can run, and in the last two years ... I've been having a few medical tests ... but ... I won't give up [tennis] while I can still [play] ... If we move to Forster [another town] and I'm asked to play in matches, I think I could still play in good ones.

I conducted a follow-up telephone interview with Victoria approximately one year after the above interview and she had relocated to Forster. She was still playing competitive (rather than social) tennis, regardless of the fact that she has had recent eye surgery. Similarly, a 62-year-old female basketball player said:

I like sport, I have always loved sport ... I like to keep fit, keep on going while you can ... I've been a very competitive person all of my life and it

means that I refuse to give up, I refuse to stop at this stage, even though I am 62 years of age ... and I think that the older you get the more important that is, because you are ageing and you have to keep the motors going while you can.

69-year-old Paula has been playing netball continuously for over forty years and her comment below is typical of the ‘continuers’ in the sample:

... since I turned 50 ... every year I decide, “Ok, I’ll give up,” and then I come to the start of the season the next year and I think, “Why should I give up? I’m feeling great, I’ll go and do it again?” ... I think for the fact that I’ve been playing ... pretty much continuously ... that I just don’t want to give it up. I still enjoy it. As long as I enjoy it, I can’t see why I should give it up?

This confirmation that their bodies are handling the physical stress of competitive sport participation was a reason often cited for continued involvement. “I enjoy the game and while I’ve got two good legs and two good arms, I’ll keep playing and I’ll go to 90,” laughs a 79-year-old male Veterans tennis player. “I haven’t broken down yet ... If you can stay in one piece, you can keep going” believes a 60-year-old male touch football player. Or, “I’ll know when I’m too old to play badminton,” said 60-year-old Darren, “because I won’t be able to run [laughs]. That’s the only thing that’s going to stop me, my body stopping”. Like the Masters athletes in the research by Grant, the participants in my study would rather keep playing sport until “something unforeseen caused them to stop” (2001, p. 271).

All of my participants seemed to believe that continued involvement in competitive sport would verify that they were in control of their bodies, and were retaining their positive health and well-being (as well as maintaining their identity). It has been argued in the sports science literature that if people do not move their body or bear weight, then the onset of a disability or age-related disease and/or the loss of ability to live independently and perform activities of general daily living (such as

cooking, cleaning, gardening) will happen earlier in life (Fiatarone, 1996; Hurley & Roth, 2000; Shephard, 1997, 2001; Tseng et al., 1995; Work, 1989). Furthermore, contemporary health promotion and positive ageing discourses indicate that older bodies and “old muscles are suppose to be moved” to prolong healthy living (Grant, 2001, p. 780). Again, these investigations fail to recognise that the positive ageing approaches promote exercise, but not extreme competitive physical activity. Because there is no discourse available to legitimise serious competition among older people, it is shown here that the participants are not only mobilising accepted beliefs about positive ageing to justify their strenuous physical competition and training, but also to rationalise their fight against the ageing body. Therefore, competing in sport is significant to the lives of the participants because of a deep ingrained fear, or denial, of the Fourth Age. This behaviour appears to be an unintended consequence of health promotion and positive ageing approaches. As argued in Chapter 2, healthy ageing in general and the theory of the Third Age in particular, pivot on the tension between empowerment and denial. Consequently, as the participants, in part, use positive ageing discourses and practices to justify their fight against the ageing body, a negotiation of the empowerment-denial contradiction is evident through their words and actions. These issues are explored below through four key dimensions to emerge from the study: “I’ll get old if I stop”; “[I’d rather] just go ‘plop’ one day”, “[Turning] a blind eye” and “It’s life!”²⁰

“I’ll get old if I stop”

The participants variously displayed resilience in the face of an ageing body, resistance to stereotypes of older age, and conformity to ideals of youthfulness in the face of an ageist society. They did not perceive themselves to be ‘old’ nor did they feel ‘old’ because they were enjoying later life and feeling capable of doing whatever they wanted to do. In addition, the participants were concerned that if they stopped being active through competitive sport they would not only lose their ability, fitness and overall health and well-being, but become ‘old’ and possibly institutionalised. In other words, for many, competing in sport was almost their

²⁰ These phrases are direct quotes that were given by participants in my study.

‘life blood’. For example, a 65-year-old male cyclist said, “... unless I do my exercises, unless I go training, I become very old very quickly, as well as very fat [he grins] ... for my health [competing in and training for cycling] is critical”. So how do the participants define ‘old’? Earlier in this chapter it was argued that when the participants use the word ‘old’ it encapsulates the dominant negative stereotypes about older people. In general, participants defined ‘old age’ in terms of physical disability, ill-health, institutionalisation and a negative state of mind (rather than chronologically or by the social category of retirement). For example:

I just suppose, the thing is you don’t want to get *old*. You want to keep moving, keep mobile, active [and] ... playing sport against [younger people] ... old is when I can’t move around properly, I suppose [she chuckles]. I don’t want to be one of those persons, like you see in a nursing home that are just - [she demonstrates what she means by sitting limp with her head down]. (Ellen, 66-year-old netball player)

... old is visibly diminished, physically diminished powers I suppose, physically diminished hearing and sight, all those sorts of things are part of physical ageing, and *old* also is a state of mind, and I don’t know what that is like. If you think you’re old, you are old ... old’s always someone much older than you are, like ... my mother-in-law on her death bed, so feverish, she couldn’t get up, that’s really old. Old is always someone a bit worse off, further down the degeneration than you are ... so there’s always someone older than you ... when you were 30, 60 was old. You’re 60 now, it’s not old, 80 is old ... (Richard, 61-year-old field hockey player)

The understanding that participants have of ‘old age’ articulates Laslett’s (1989) definition of the Fourth Age or deep old age, as well as the dominant negative stereotypes of ageing in Western society. The participants mobilised the discourses that underpin these understandings when discussing their experiences and motivations. But, as Richard explained, above, old age was also viewed by participants in a relative sense and they did not think of themselves as being in the

Fourth Age. This finding is supported by Thompson et al. (1990, p. 128) who examined the experiences of later life among a group of British adults and found “a tendency for people to think of ‘old people’ as ‘other’ than themselves, someone else at some other age, never oneself at whatever age one might be”. For example, a typical quote made by participants in their study was, “other people my age are old but not me” (Thompson et al., 1990, p. 128). Also, Minichiello et al. (1992b, p. 15) claim that, “Personal definitions of what is ‘aged’ rise with one’s own ageing”.

Therefore, my participants believed that by maintaining involvement in physically strenuous sport and pushing their bodies they were preventing or delaying deep old age and perhaps most significantly the onset of age-related disabilities. The words of 76-year-old swimmer Alena (below) typify this finding:

I suppose the main thing is to keep it up as long as you can because the alternative of just sitting ... it wouldn’t be a healthy situation ... I think you’re body’s like a *machine* in one way, you’ve got to keep it well oiled and running ... I have no medical knowledge what so ever, it’s just a sense of well-being, that when ... you’ve got it you want to *hang on* ... as long as you can [slight laugh], because some people have strokes and things like that and that must be ghastly ... I don’t know too much about it, I don’t want to know [laughs] ... just to be dependent that would be terrible! But still and all, that comes to most of us, doesn’t it? But you put it off as long as you can.

To Alena, what she sees as the potential alternatives of not being extremely physically active, such as arthritis, stroke, age-related diseases or dependency on others, are far too frightening to face. This idea of alternatives relates to the discussion earlier in the chapter about participants feeling that they were an exception to the rule. That is, on accepting the negative stereotypes associated with ageing, study participants are choosing to be extremely active and competitive because they believe that if they are not then they will get age-related disabilities. However, as was pointed out also, the majority of people over the age of 60 are

healthy and the majority of these people are not necessarily extremely physical, competitive athletes.

Furthermore, Alena (above) recognises that deep old age is unavoidable and imminent and she plans to resist, or deny, it for as long as possible. Many participants also expressed feelings of uncertainty regarding the future; for instance, “No one knows what the future holds, you know [slight laugh]. My mother had a few strokes, she died fairly quickly, but I mean, you don’t know what’s ahead of us,” explains Alison, a 70-year-old runner. As Grant (2001, p. 791) argues, “such comments reflect a potential dilemma for all older people irrespective of whether or not they play sport”. Or, consider this statement from Erikson (1997, pp. 105-106), “In spite of every effort to maintain strength and control, the body continues to lose its autonomy ... As independence and control are challenged, self-esteem and confidence weaken”. This feeling of uncertainty and the irrevocability of time contradicts the sense of control that participants claim to have over their lives. Therefore, the relative “feeling of power” expressed by the participants is temporary and at anytime they could slip into what they consider to be the depths of despair, disability and disease. There is a common view among the participants that control is tenuous and the threat of becoming ‘old’ and losing control over their life is ever present. For instance:

... if you don’t use ... your body as a whole, you know all the components in your body, your heart your lungs, your liver your kidneys, the lot and externally your muscles ... well, you’re losing I suppose, the best part of your life really ... If your muscles don’t work and you don’t exercise your knees start to go, arthritis sets in and it all builds up. You’ve got to keep things moving, that’s why I do a lot of flexibility exercises to keep my joints free. (Benny, 85-year-old runner)

I don’t want to stop, because if I stop [bike] racing then I’m going to stop having the health that I’m enjoying. (Edward, 81-year-old cyclist)

Well, if I wasn't healthy, I wouldn't be able to do *any* of the things that I do ... I couldn't do ... all the things that go with *living* ... The body can only last that long, certain organs are going to start to *fail* eventually. By exercise, it prolongs your organs functioning properly ... prolong[s] ... your ability to *move* and then do things. (Josef, 65-year-old beach volleyball player)

... I've been around nursing homes and old people all my life. I was born into my grandmother's home, when she was about 72 ... and I think that, you know, I've seen it and the one's that keep *active* ... they stay healthy and alive and alert and everything, but if you sit down, you can think about yourself, all sorts of things start happening, will happen. (Emily, 71-year-old badminton player)

Therefore, on one hand the participants think they have the power to choose one 'alternative' (to be extremely active) over the other (to be unhealthy or disabled), but on the other hand they fear they ultimately have no control over the ageing process – the Fourth Age could 'jump up and grab them' at any time. This finding presents a fascinating set of contradictions that all older people have to negotiate.

In particular, seeing other people, including close friends who have aged 'badly' was a strong factor in driving participants to begin being or continue to be extremely active through sport. The following anecdotes elaborate on what the participants perceived as consequences of inactivity:

... well, I had a friend. I used to go and see her once a month and *all she did* was sit in a lounge chair and watch TV, and she'd say, "But I can't, I can't walk" ... See, she wasn't *active* and that's why she couldn't walk, oh she could walk, but just around the house ... it is important to *keep* yourself *active*, even if you just walk around the yard, or just walk up and down the street and come back inside, *you've got to do it!* And then, of course she died at home – no good. (Janet, 80-year-old swimmer)

When I go shopping ... there's lots of elderly people there ... but to look at some of those folks they're grossly overweight, or their legs have gone, their knees have gone, their hips have gone, and I think to myself, "Oh my, there but by the grace of God go I" ... you know, I could be like *that* if I didn't look after myself and if I didn't get some help from the old fella upstairs [God], because you've got to have a certain amount of luck as well, but *most* of it's not luck, it's the work that you put in for it and that pays dividends. (Benny, 85-year-old runner)

Like Benny, quoted above, Grant (2001) found in his study of New Zealand athletes aged in their 70s that some participants prayed that playing sport was helping them 'age well', and maintain healthy bodies and control of their lives. In addition, Benny is pointing out that vitality is not only about 'luck' but also determination and resilience on the part of the individual. Similarly, Kenneth said:

... if you've got good health, you've got to *use it* and *keep*, keep fit. Just to sit around ... your muscles go ... as I say, keep going ... if I was to sit around ... I'd get rusty ... like a lot of old people do ... they're sitting at home getting around in their pyjamas. I know one fellow ... he retired ... he'd just given everything away ... he didn't last very long. (89-year-old runner and walker)

Another fear that drove many participants to keep competing and training was that of being dependent on others or having to relocate to a retirement village. For example, Arnold commented:

We want to stay here ... in this house ... we see these units and things old people are moving into, you know. It's not really our scene, being closed in like that, so that's a bit of motivation to keep fit as well, keep active and independent as long as possible ... and we don't want to be a burden on our kids ... seeing what happened to my parents and Ingrid's father and older

people around the place, you see them deteriorate and you think, you know, you've got to get out and do things. (71-year-old swimmer)

Likewise, Jolene, a 63-year-old basketball player, acknowledged the underlying reason why she competes in sport when discussing her memories of her mother:

Oh when you see old people, you know my age and they're *old* for their age ... my mother was *old* ... she never had any get up and go in her ... when I look at my mum at 50, she was an *old lady*, compared to me, now ... because she wouldn't *do* anything ... and my attitude is different to my mum ... I want to be as fit as I can for as long as I can, you know, and I keep up with the grandkids ... My mother wouldn't even bounce a ball ... maybe it's just me thinking, well I don't want to get old like my mother, maybe that's what's in the back of my mind.

Jolene has an image of her mother as an “old lady” at 50 years of age. Although her mother lived in a cultural period where sport was not encouraged for older people, the point is that Jolene is keen to differentiate herself from this negative image. Consequently, she is motivated to keep fit and active for as long as possible in order to continue to feel youthful and in control, and avoid becoming old and immobile in the way she remembers her mother.

The varied stories that the participants told of their elderly friends, parents, or other older people in general, paint an extremely dark and negative picture of old age, which corresponds with the dominant negative discourses associated with ageing in Western society and understandings of the Fourth Age. The participants can only associate with these images at a level of fear and avoidance. In accordance with Neumayer and Goddard (1998, p. 213) such attitudes towards ageing and disability are, in part, shaped by living in a culture that “places a great deal of importance on being highly active and independent in life”. Clearly, my participants are enjoying the health, self-fulfilment, independence and pleasure of the Third Age, while desperately trying to avoid entering the Fourth Age, which is characterised by

disability, illness, dependence, frailty and the imminence of death. The major premise of Laslett's theory of the Third Age is that the onset of the Fourth Age, "and hence its duration, should be put off for as long as possible by appropriate behaviour in the Third Age [that is, continued activity of body and mind in the pursuit of self-fulfilment]" (Laslett, 1989, p. 154). My participants felt that the more active and intense they were, the better it was for their health, but what this finding suggests, however, is a deep or unspoken fear, or denial, of the Fourth Age and all it promises.

If people live long enough old age will come to them, whether they like it or not. As Spirduso (1995, p. xi) claims, "One of the certainties in life ... is that everyday everyone grows older". Furthermore, Erikson (1997, p. 107) states, "Time takes its toll even on those who have been healthy and able to maintain sturdy muscles, and the body inevitably weakens. Hope may easily give way to despair in the face of continual and increasing disintegration, ...". Therefore, attempting to maintain an identity as an athlete and continue involvement in competitive sport in later life may represent a denial of the physical ageing process and the imminence of the Fourth Age. Biggs (1997, 1999) argues that in trying to continue activities of mid-life into old age there is the potential to avoid thoughts of existential issues, such as reflecting on the meanings of one's life, and coping with bodily limitations and death. In other words, competing in sport in an extreme way may be a form of avoidance or 'escapism', such as keeping the body active (and mind occupied) as a distraction from an ailing body. In fact, positive ageing approaches including the theory of the Third Age that underlie the promotion of this 'keep going' mentality have been criticised as 'escapist' responses to the realities of the physiological ageing process (see Coleman et al., 1993) and as being rather idealistic (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002).

Competing in physically demanding sport was significant to the study participants because it was temporarily an empowering way to keep themselves physically and mentally active, while they simultaneously struggled against the natural ageing of their bodies and the final eventuality of the Fourth Age. Therefore, this feeling of

empowerment rests on managing the tension between accepting and denying deep old age. The following discussion demonstrates the contradictory ways in which participants negotiate the conflict between acceptance and denial of the Fourth Age when they talk about what competing in sport means to them.

“[I’d rather] just go ‘plop’ one day”

To some participants the fear of living in the Fourth Age was so ingrained that they said that they would rather die suddenly and avoid it altogether. As one participant put it, he would rather “just go ‘plop’ one day” (72-year-old gymnast). Study participants competed in sport to prolong independence, their current state of health, well-being and feelings of control. However, this finding should not be confused with a fear of death or desire for increased longevity *per se*. It is not the quantity of years lived that these individuals seem to be trying to extend because, as Kleiber (1999, p. 161) argues, “Very few people wish to extend their lives if doing so means living in constant pain and illness”. Rather, competing in sport was for them about extending the *quality* of the remaining years in their life. That is, prolonging healthy independent living, free from disease or disability, and full of enjoyment and a sense of control. Indeed, the participants were more concerned about outliving their independence than dying and they wanted to remain in the Third Age for as long as they could. In other words, competing in sport was for them about adding ‘life’ to the years, not years to their life.

Benny, an 85-year-old masseuse and regular Fun Runner, explains, “I want to live as long as I possibly can, provided I’m in good health [and] provided I can do the things I want to do”. A 56-year-old male badminton player said, “... exercise is, I think, the most important thing ... just to keep going. It’s no good living to 90 and not enjoying it. It’s 90 years you *live*”. Or, consider this comment from Josef:

Everybody ... like[s] to live a life that you can *participate* in, not be a vegetable somewhere ... I can’t think of anything worse than you can’t go to anywhere and, I think that’s what I’m doing the walking for [in addition to

volleyball], to try to keep [healthy]. (65-year-old beach volleyball player)

Similarly, 76-year-old tennis player, Victoria, stated:

... I have a friend I see ... who's in a nursing home ... This woman is 85 and I know through her what it is like to be in a home and I say to my husband, "Where is the nearest *gap*? We shall jump over it", rather than do that. It's like an imprisonment. She feels it. It's morbid, it's sad, it's unfeeling.

Like many of the participants, Victoria expresses a fear of being institutionalised and to avoid the same fate as her friend she is motivated to keep active through sport and make her "latter years as enjoyable as [she] can".

Competing in sport, in particular the effective use of their bodies, was extremely important to the study participants because they held a strong belief that it would help them remain happy and healthy and in control of their lives. In essence, they were 'competing for life'. That is, they were competing for a prolonged enjoyable, active and empowered life, as well as competing to avoid the Fourth Age. As, Darren said, "Playing badminton keeps me alive! ... I've always been a competitor and I probably will be when I die ... If I die on the badminton court I'd be happy" (60-year-old). It appears that they could be empowered until the end. The following conversation between two male gymnasts further exemplifies this point:

72-year-old: ... nursing homes are dreadful places and they won't get me in either!

66-year-old: I see people walking along and I say, "Never a walking stick!" I'd rather fall flat on my face!

72-year-old: I don't know about the walking stick, but when I can't look after myself, I mean my parents were in nursing homes not that very long actually, they died pretty well once they were in there. But you see all the others lying in beds, never get out of bed and God knows

what's happening in bed ... someone's got to clean it up, at great expense. That's *not living!*

66-year-old: Well, that's the point, what we are doing here [competing in gymnastics], we will most probably just go 'plop' one day and that will be a good thing ... fall from a great height on our head.

72-year-old: Well, hopefully, because that's the way to go, you don't want to drag it out ...

Indeed, because they are involved in strenuous, and in some cases high-risk sports like gymnastics, it is perhaps more likely that they will die abruptly than live in a nursing home! However, if people do not die suddenly they are faced with the tension between acceptance and denial in old age, as highlighted by Erikson (1962, 1980, 1997).

“[Turning] a blind eye”

While discussing how they would cope when they got to a stage where they were unable to compete in physically demanding sport many participants admitted that they were “[Turning] a blind eye” to (or denying) deep old age. Participants made comments like “I don't know what I'd do without it”, “I'll worry about that when I have to”, “It would be a terrible blow to my life” or “there's always something you can do”. For example, Ingrid hopes that there is always an alternative to physical and mental decline:

[She said she would cope] With difficulty, I'd imagine. I would hope that for many more years anyhow that we'll be able to [keep swimming]. God willing. If the more difficult sports have to be given up, then we'll look at more sedate things like walking, and even exercising sitting ... there are certain things that you can do with the body, and we both love reading and as Arnold said, cryptic crosswords, so that would keep the mental part going. But if, when one door closes, you know, if you search long enough you find another opening. (70-year-old swimmer)

Similarly, 64-year-old field hockey player Irene said, "... I thought, 'What am I going to do if I'm not playing sport?' But then I look at the gym and I see ... some ladies are 80 ... It's terrific! You can always do something, if you want to".

Several participants admitted that they avoid thinking about potential inability as the thought distressed them too much. For example, 60-year-old Dan said that if he could not continue playing sport he would cope, "Badly [laughs]. I'd be impossible. I wouldn't be a happy chappy ... I've got be active," he explained. Likewise, Emily, age 71, stated:

It is very important ... I don't know what I'd do if I couldn't keep playing badminton and I don't like to think about it ... I would be very miserable if I couldn't keep on going. I think I'd have to find something else and I don't know what because I can't see myself playing bowls [laughs].

Participants indicated that they would only change to less physically demanding activities (or stereotypical activities for older people) as a last resort. That is, out of a necessity to keep their body (and mind) moving via whatever means possible in a final attempt to delay the Fourth Age. As Erikson et al. (1986) argue, older adults are likely to do their utmost to try and awaken and empower their ageing bodies to remain active. And in the case of some of my participants their 'utmost' was extreme by any standards. For instance, Jan, a 60-year-old competitive squash player, does a minimum of four aerobics classes, swims and/or runs once a week and plays squash twice a week. I asked her how long she intended to keep up this intense schedule:

As long as I can ... I think now you've got this mind set that you have to keep your body ... moving and clean ... I probably don't look ... that far ahead. While I'm able to do it, I don't want to look at the sort of negative side ... so while I'm able to [do it] ... I turn a blind eye to maybe what's down the track a bit.

85-year-old Benny, another extremely active person who regularly competes in Fun Runs, swims in his backyard pool and works-out in his home-based gym, said:

I don't know [how he'd cope without being able to run]. I don't want to think about that too much, [slight laugh] ... I just want to keep going as long as I can ... I will obviously slow down a lot, but I'm determined to keep going and the current rate of decline is so minimal that it appears that if I can keep up this [fitness] program I'll be alright for another five years or so, and still run about the same level as I am now, which would be great.

Benny contacted me almost two years after the above comment was made and informed me of his latest achievements and gold medal performances. At age 87 he is still training and competes regularly in track and field athletics and Fun Runs. His determination and resilience to defy and perhaps deny the Fourth Age is ever present. As mentioned above, however, maintaining a lifestyle of such intensity can be problematic to identity in later life. With so much emphasis being placed on maintaining their physical ability and feelings of youthfulness there is a very real risk that older athletes will not be able to cope with deep old age. As Erikson (1997, pp. 105-106) states, despair haunts people in old age "... because it is almost impossible to know what emergencies and losses of physical ability are imminent". Interestingly, many participants claimed to accept the inescapability of deep old age when attempting to negotiate and justify their participation in physically intense competitive sport.

"It's life!"

When considering the aforementioned uncertainty about the physical ageing process and the inevitability of the Fourth Age, several participants said, "It's life!" They stated that they accept that they would soon be unable to continue intense competitive activity, so therefore were making the most of the 'here and now' while they had the ability, means and desire to do so. As Joanne said, "... it's another two

years and I'm 70 ... you can't keep going forever and I won't be able to play hockey – this might be my last [year] ... but then that doesn't matter, been there, done that ... *It's life!* You just take it all as it comes". Several men also expressed an acceptance of the reality of physical ageing, for example:

Well, I'd have to find some other interests to keep the brain ticking over. I'd go back to playing chess ... I'd have to find something to do, I couldn't sit at home ... it would be a big blow to me. I thought of this on my run actually, "Imagine not be able to do this," you think that can't happen to me, but it can happen, you've got to be realistic, but that's what I'd do. (Trevor, 67-year-old runner)

Well, I think that I'm mature enough to know, that ok, this is something that happens, it's not my doing, but while it is left up to me, I will do it. When JC [Jesus Christ] says to me that, "Listen son, your body's worn out [slight laugh] you can no longer do that," well then my body will tell me, but it will not be my desire to do it ... I've got enough common sense to know that others have fell by the way side and look younger than me ... (Edward, 81-year-old cyclist)

Edward implies that while he is in control of his health he will make the most of it, but once something out of his control happens he will cope with it.

Because participants were unsure of their future they have decided to make the most of their current state of health and ability and fight the ageing process for as long as possible, and one way they have chosen to do this is by competing in sport. This is not to say the participants did not have other leisure or social interests, but the strenuous physical activity associated with competitive sport was the activity that they believed helped most in keeping them "socially, mentally and physically alive". As 79-year-old Eldon said, "I always look at the positive side ... maybe I've had my life, but I've still got a lot to live ... and [competing in Masters swimming] is the one way I'm doing it". Similarly, in the study by Erikson et al. (1986, p. 64)

on ‘vital involvement in old age’ it was found that many of the informants recognised that death is imminent and they viewed “... the time that remains as a valuable resource, to be used well for as long as it lasts”. A way in which this behaviour has been interpreted is that “rather than being ‘over the hill’ ... they are taking the hill by storm” (Grant, 2002, p. 285). From this perspective my participants’ behaviour may be more about “lives well lived” and personal empowerment than anything else, as argued by Poole (2001, p. 312) in her study on women’s commitment to exercise.

However, a major contradiction is evident in the behaviour of my participants that the above explanations do not take into account. The older athletes in my study are saying that they ‘accept’ old age, but at the same time they are ‘fighting’ (or desperately resisting) it for as long as they can! In addition, this contradictory process of negotiation is central as they move towards achieving ego integrity. To exemplify this point, Victoria elaborates on what it means to her to be competing in sport at this point in her life:

Making these latter years as enjoyable as I can by being fit ... you *can’t* avoid old age, it’s inevitable [slight pause]. I count myself lucky, for the things I’ve done and the way I feel now. I’ve just had all the check-ups and I seem to be going alright, and I think that’s why sport and still going with it at my age is ... important ... I just can’t believe that I haven’t got that same get up and go and I’ve sort of said, “Well, if this is it, the way you are going to go, you’ve got to get used to it, but aren’t you lucky that you’ve been so fit for so long?” (76-year-old tennis player)

While, Najima explains:

I suppose it’s just a very balanced sort of recipe and at some point something will become overpowering and you say, “Ok that’s it” ... that’s how everything in life should be treated. Nothing should be so obsessive that you can’t just say, “Hey yeah, that was cool”. Even life itself, that was

good I had a good run ... so life's that way, I think baseball's that way, I think everything you do in life should be that way, you do it as long as you enjoy it and you gracefully back out ... (68-year-old baseball player)

This notion of acceptance and feeling content with the life one has lived that was expressed by several participants can be understood using Erikson's theory on ego integrity (Erikson, 1980, 1997). The antithesis of ego integrity is despair – regret, discontent and disgust with one's life and a belief that life is too short to change one's path. According to Erikson achieving ego integrity in older age is about reflection, acceptance of one's life, a sense of connectedness between oneself and the world, and harmonising the tension between integrity and despair. In addition to Erikson's ideas, my findings provide empirical data which demonstrates that the process of reaching ego integrity is complicated by contradictions, ambiguities and tensions. It is not a straightforward route, and at the centre of this process for some is competing in sport. In the case of my study, the conflicts and negotiations involved in achieving ego integrity revolve around participants simultaneously accepting and denying the ageing body; resisting and conforming to dominant ideas about sport and ageing; feeling a sense of empowerment; and expressing a fear of losing control. Nevertheless, "it is important to remember that conflict and tension are sources of growth, strength and commitment" (Erikson, 1997, p. 106).

Conclusion

While the stories of the participants in this study illustrate the private victories of persons who possess perseverance and resilience in the face of an ageist society and an ageing body, these stories are undercut by tensions, uncertainty, fear and denial. A complex interplay of resistance and conformity, empowerment and denial, and identity and ageing was unearthed as the participants spoke about why they compete in sport and as I observed them actually competing. This interplay was simultaneously empowering and problematic at both the social and individual levels.

Participants identifying themselves as competitive athletes were setting themselves apart from negative stereotypes of old age and seeking to prove that older people were capable of competing in physically intense sports. They were overtly resisting the dominant discourse in the West that says extreme competitive sport is meant only for the young. By embracing competitive practices and associated ideologies of mainstream sport the participants were attempting to define ageing in terms of youthful and competitive ideals. This process has the potential to establish positive images of the capabilities of older people that continue to challenge traditional stereotypes of ageing. Simultaneously, however, this behaviour reflects the power of competition and youthfulness as discourses in Western culture and suggests that older people may be striving to express these ideals in order to feel valued. Here exists the potential to perpetuate the fear and denial of ageing that is embedded in the West. Therefore, it was argued in this chapter that identifying oneself as ‘youthful’ in older age, in part, pivots on the tension between resisting the negative stereotypes of older age and conforming to the ideals of youthfulness, ability and competition.

On an individual level, it was shown that competing in physically demanding sport is significant to older athletes, despite the orthodoxy that it is not intended for them, because it is extremely empowering for them to feel ‘young’ and be ‘athletic’ in their later years. The first theme framing this chapter, “I’m out here and I can do this!” revealed that competing in sport was a strategy used by some older people to monitor the ageing process and demonstrate to themselves and society that they were capable of physically taxing activity and athletic achievement, and thus not yet in the ‘disability zone’. The feelings of vitality, competence, pride and sense of control expressed by participants were brought to the foreground and interpreted as positive examples of personal empowerment. However, the desire to maintain these feelings of empowerment, youthfulness and athleticism for as long as possible was also driven by a deep fear of the Fourth Age. The trepidation displayed by the participants in my study is more than just the result of individual characteristics (such as their personality, demographics, current lifestyle or life history). My findings point to much wider social issues that suggest older athletes are at the

forefront of a rising leisure trend in the West.

The fear of deep old age also rested on negotiating the tension between accepting and denying the eventual decline of the body as an outcome of increased longevity. It was shown in the chapter that in justifying why they competed in sport and what it meant to them the participants were not only involved in negotiating contradictory notions of sport and ageing, but were also dealing with the physical realities of their ageing bodies and the psychosocial processes of achieving ego integrity. They were competing in such a physically extreme way in order to feel young, appear younger, keep their bodies active and delay or avoid the onset of deep old age. “Use it or lose it” was the phrase used by participants to capture this desire. In other words, participants were competing for the continuation of an empowered, youthful and independent life, and to defy deep old age. Therefore, competing in sport was so significant to the participants because in essence they were ‘competing for life’.

CHAPTER 7

COMPETING FOR LIFE: A TREND EXPANDING INTO THE FUTURE?

I began this thesis by drawing attention to the emerging leisure trend of older people competing in physically demanding sport in Australia and the rest of the Western world. Although rising as a potentially significant social phenomenon, it is still in its infancy. But with the ageing of populations and the increasing value being placed upon the maintenance of physical activity and retaining ‘youthful’ attributes into older age (by government sectors, commercial agencies, positive ageing literature and popular press) the trend will rapidly develop. I argued in Chapters 1 and 2 that the participation of older people in strenuous competitive sport opens up a fascinating set of contradictions that have not been unearthed in previous studies. First, I suggested that competing in sport in later life works against the established expectations and norms that society has placed on older people. Competition, especially the act of competing in physically demanding sport, is considered the realm of young, able-bodied, physically skilled, powerful and robust athletes. In contrast, I demonstrated that older people have been stereotyped for the majority of the twentieth century as weak, socially disengaged and dependent on the health care system. Second, I argued that sporting competitions for older people are framed in terms of two conflicting discourses – ‘friendly participation’ and ‘serious competition’. Third, I emphasised that as older people attempt to continue their participation in sport they are faced with the inevitability of time, which eventually takes its toll on the physically ageing body. In essence, older people who compete in sport appeared to be doing so in the face of an ageist society and an ageing body.

The aim of this thesis was to explore why competing in physically intense sport was so significant to some older people, given that it is not considered an ‘age-appropriate’ activity for them. In particular, it sought to determine the ways in

which older people negotiate the abovementioned contradictions when they talk about and participate in physically demanding competitive sport. In order to investigate these issues, a qualitative study examining the experiences of a group of Masters athletes over the age of 55 years in an Australian context was carried out. It was revealed that the key themes through which participants negotiate conflicting discourses associated with sport and ageing, as well as manage the contradictions between their identity and the physical ageing process related to: friendship and fun; competition; youthfulness; and the ageing body. These four major themes were highly conflicting and interacting. It was through these opposing themes that the concepts of resistance, empowerment and identity management (that were initially conceptualised in Chapter 3) were played out, critiqued and developed (in Chapters 5 and 6) as the participants justified their behaviour and experienced the ‘here and now’ of competing in sport.

It was demonstrated in Chapter 5 that participants were simultaneously resisting, ignoring, mobilising and internalising or conforming to age-appropriate norms associated with sport for older people. Indeed, the participants experienced fun, friendship and fitness when they competed in sport and cited these aspects as key motives for their continued involvement. On one hand, following Wearing (1995), this socially, mentally and physically ‘engaged’ behaviour can be interpreted as an unintentional form of resistance to the negative stereotypes associated with ageing. Their actions constitute and promote ‘positive’ images of older people as extremely active and independent. On the other hand, however, in emphasising these aspects of their involvement some participants had internalised or were complying with what was expected of older people in a sporting context – by having fun, keeping active and making friends. In doing so, their behaviour has the potential to reinforce the orthodoxy that older people are not really serious athletes.

Therefore, it was argued that the seeds of resistance lie in older people competing in sport to win. As I asserted in Chapters 1 and 2, there is currently no discourse available that justifies older people as competitive athletes. By defining themselves as competitive, training for peak performance and trying their utmost to outperform

others, break Australian or world records and improve on their previous performances, participants are not only resisting negative understandings of ageing, but also challenging the philosophies that underlie Masters sport. They are expressing themselves beyond limiting discourses that claim competition is only significant to the young. Here, resistance lies in challenging discourse as a type of power which pervades daily life and makes individuals subject to others by authority or reliance and subject to their own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. In Foucaultian terms, the primary nature of the power relationship is about individuals rejecting what dominant beliefs tell them they are or ought to be and aiming for what they desire or could be (Wearing, 1995, 1998).

There is a need for the messages underpinning Masters, Veterans or Senior sport to acknowledge that winning and individual achievement is also highly valued and sought by many of the participants – not only those in their 30s and 40s, but those aged from late 50s to mid-90s. This recommendation has implications for the way sport for older people is structured. To address the multiple, dynamic and contradictory motives of older athletes, event organisers could encourage competition as much as they do the social and fun side of sport. Furthermore, the feelings of personal empowerment associated with competition in later life may also provide support for the incorporation of competitive activities (in conjunction with non-competitive ones) in other contexts, such as retirement villages or nursing homes. This action will provide a variety of opportunities for older people to be self-expressive without feeling that their behaviour is inappropriate. These suggestions establish intriguing areas for further study.

In addition, the behaviour of older competitive athletes has the potential to re-write contemporary understandings of competition and what it means to be ‘old’ or ageing. Post-structural perspectives on power and discourse also support this argument. If power is conveyed through discourse, there is always a chance for resistances to the power of others through the development of counter-discourses that have the possibility to establish new ‘truths’ and ways of understanding (Wearing, 1998). The findings from my study establish that people can be

extremely physically active and competitive well into older age, as explored in Chapters 5 and 6. Through their involvement in sport my study participants were seeking to express that ‘old’ can be ‘young’. Their actions demonstrated that the ageing body is capable of running marathons, playing competitive team sports and so on – pursuits that were once considered dangerous for older adults. My research shows that competitive sport can be as significant to the ‘old’ as it is to the ‘young’. Therefore, understandings and discourses of competitive sport in the West need to expand to include people of any age.

The outcomes of this study have the potential to raise society’s expectations of the aged, inspire future generations of older people, as well as establish new orthodoxies that legitimise older people as serious competitive athletes. Although today’s older athletes are commonly perceived as deviant or exceptional, they are the vanguard of an expanding leisure trend. As I outlined in Chapter 1, each successive generation of older people is healthier, more physically active and leisure-oriented and less accepting of older age than its predecessors. In particular, the ‘baby-boomer’ generation appear to be more concerned about retaining their ‘youthfulness’ and physical ability than previous generations (van Norman, 1995). Having been exposed to the positive ageing mantra for most of their adult lives and being young adults during the 1970s fitness boom, it is likely that many baby-boomers will have competed in sport at some stage in their life. Given the association of competitive sport with youth and ability, many baby-boomers may follow in the footsteps of today’s extremely active and competitive older athletes. Specifically, if the statistics presented in Chapter 1 are an indication of what is to come, the popularity of Masters sport and major events like the Australian and World Masters Games will continue to rise. Due to the ageing population, these trends will place an increasing demand on sport, leisure and health care services.

The ABS (2002a, 3101.0) predicts that by 2051 six million people or approximately one quarter of the population will be over the age of 65. It is possible that growing numbers of older people in the future will prefer physically active leisure services relating to sport, competition, fitness, lifestyle management and bodily maintenance

as opposed to traditional passive pursuits or conventional health care services. It is acknowledged that people expressing such demands have the means and ability to do so, thus it is not about reducing traditional services to older people, but offering a variety of leisure options for them. This trend also presents challenges to conventional health care service delivery and gerontology, such as a need to reassess the expectations and capabilities of each successive generation of older people. Further research is required to explore the extent to which service providers are addressing the varying needs of a rising number of ‘healthy’ older people. Promoting and providing sport and leisure opportunities to older people has the potential to help them feel empowered and enjoy their independence, reduce social expenditure on health care, and lead to a change in attitude towards older people. However, it is important to keep in mind that the above developments are complicated by an embedded valuing of youthfulness and a repression of factors associated with deep old age in Western culture.

My empirical research revealed clear indications of a society that idolises youthfulness, ability and competition and devalues ageing. The participants in this study (who were born between 1907 and 1946) have lived through a cultural period in which understandings of ageing have been predominately negative and, as argued in Chapter 2, sport was considered inappropriate, dangerous and unnecessary for older people. Now they live in a climate that is shaped and defined by a resistance to old age and in which ‘positive ageing’ is promoted. Today, “old muscles are supposed to be moved” (Grant, 2001, p. 780), but not in extreme ways and not in the context of ‘serious competition’, rather, for fun and fitness. Being exposed to these conflicting discourses throughout their lives undoubtedly influenced the way they rationalised their competitive behaviour and made sense of their experiences in physically demanding sport. The participants were seen to mobilise negative stereotypes associated with ageing: when they spoke about ‘other’ older people (known or imagined) and believed they were ‘an exception to the rule’; when they defined the term ‘old’; and when they discussed the fears of their own ageing bodies. While this process helped them manage their ageing identity, the findings also demonstrate that the participants themselves devalue ageing and in doing so

they are (unknowingly) perpetuating, at least at the micro-level, the fear of ageing that is entrenched in Western society.

Simultaneously, the participants used discourses associated with positive ageing and the Third Age when they justified why they pushed their bodies so hard and why they sought to continue sports participation and remain fit and healthy for as long as possible. The participants expressed a strong belief in the ‘use it or lose it’ mantra that underlies the positive ageing and health promotion approaches. Therefore, their behaviour actually serves to reinforce the value society places on the maintenance of physical (and mental) ability and health into later life. This cultural emphasis on ‘active living’ or ‘ageing well’ is empowering to Third Agers (for which my findings provide empirical support), but is often problematic for Fourth Agers (Blaikie, 1999) and serves to further marginalise them.

In addition, the majority of my participants were embracing the competitive and ‘youthful’ ideology and practice underpinning mainstream sport in the West when they spoke about and were observed competing in physically demanding sport. Although this behaviour was intrinsically rewarding, it also reflects a society in which some older people seek to publicly express youthful values and use their body in intensely competitive ways to avoid being categorised as ‘old’ and to feel someone of worth. After all, as was shown in Chapter 6, many older athletes did not want to appear or feel ‘old’ and they did not define themselves as ‘old’. Having the ability to compete in physically demanding sports – a context in which the body is on display – also provided the participants with confirmation, as well as proved to others, that they were not yet ‘old’ or in the Fourth Age. This behaviour is an understandable reaction to the dominant positioning of older people in the West as socially and culturally unimportant.

Postmodern understandings of the challenge of identity management in later life, in particular the persona and social masking theories, were useful in explaining this contradictory finding (Biggs, 1993, 1997, 1999; Woodward, 1991). Competitive sport participation was an important context in which the negotiation of an ageing

identity could be played out. My findings make a unique contribution to extending debates about the use of mask motifs in understanding identity management in later life, an area that is well developed theoretically, but not empirically (Biggs, 1997). Specifically, it was demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6 that the management of identity among older athletes pivots on the tensions between expressing one's competitiveness, negotiating the 'norms' of older age, fighting or accepting the ageing process and conforming to the ideals associated with youthfulness and athleticism. The study participants' actions show the power of competition and youthfulness as ideals in the West and again reinforce the devaluation of ageing, and the perpetuation of ageism – the very thing they are (consciously or subconsciously) aiming to resist!

These conflicting outcomes reveal avenues for further research into the competitive nature of older individuals or the broader social implications of a culture which values youthfulness and competition. For example, a personality or life history approach to exploring older athletes may provide further insight into the extent to which they are acting out an internal drive within the parameters set by society. This type of research may also determine if any major differences can be drawn between the competitive sport experiences of male and female athletes; athletes within specific age cohorts; those who have been competing continuously and those who began competing later in life; competitors of individual and team sports; athletes from different cultural and/or socio-economic backgrounds and so on. A sociological study that critiques the youth-oriented and competitive structure of Western society is also needed to shed light on the personal dilemmas of ageing within a culture that values youthfulness.

Furthermore, in embracing 'healthy ageing', the participants did not differentiate between the type of physical activity that this approach endorses and their extremely competitive behaviour. Because there is no discourse available that justifies physically extreme competitive sport behaviour among older people, the study participants were using notions of positive ageing to rationalise their physically intense behaviour. The literature on physical, psychological and social

health benefits of regular physical activity for older people (discussed in Chapter 2) remain silent on the unintended consequence of individuals taking their physical activity to an extreme level in order to maintain these benefits. A key message underpinning positive ageing is that physical activity, sport and leisure (in general) are central ingredients to ageing in good health and vitality (Grant, 2002; Rowe & Kahn, 1998). In other words, positive ageing reflects an emerging emphasis on physical activity and sport (among other activities) for resisting the ageing body and postponing old age (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1990; Featherstone & Wernick, 1995). My study participants internalised this message and believed that without sport they would 'age badly' or quickly become 'old'. Competition played a key role in motivating them to train and keep their body moving not only for peak performance and winning, but also to assist them in delaying the onset of age-related disabilities and the Fourth Age. In essence, the participants were acting out a deep fear, or perhaps denial, of the physical and psychological realities of the Fourth Age. Here, resistance means the desperate fight against an ageing body.

As argued in Chapter 6, this process may have a profound affect on how older athletes cope with the final stage of life or the 'disability zone'. It also raises questions about the effectiveness of positive ageing approaches in informing health and fitness promotion policies. Should the behaviour demonstrated in this study, that is in some ways very empowering and in others ways a sign of desperate resistance or denial, inform policy? As I discussed in Chapter 1, the economic concerns of an inactive ageing population have been influential in the promotion of exercise in later life. This occurrence raises an issue of whether the health promotion movement is more about saving money on health care than addressing the 'needs' and 'fears' of older people. If the trend of older athletes (or active and healthy older people in general) expands with the ageing of the population, there is an apparent risk that increasing numbers of older people will find it extremely difficult to cope with age-related disabilities or institutionalisation if they have deeply internalised the virtues of a physically active later life.

This movement will challenge aged care providers to develop support strategies,

such as counselling advice, 'life after sport' seminars or life-course information sessions, for assisting older people to come to terms with life in the Fourth Age. This process would not be about reducing health care services to older people, but changing the nature of the services being offered, increasing awareness of these services and providing alternative options to accommodate their changing needs (see Biggs, 1999). With the mounting emphasis on health promotion, active living and self-care there needs to be a corresponding increase in health protection and care for those who need it (an issue that I raised in Chapter 2). The relationship between older athletes and the extent to which they cope with deep old age presents an important area for further study. For example, a follow-up study involving interviews with the same twenty-eight in-depth interviewees from this study, if possible, would provide valuable insight into how their experience of competitive sport may change as they age, and for those who are no longer competing, show how they cope in that situation and what services they require. Such knowledge will contribute to suggestions for people who work in aged care, as well as understanding the dilemma between acceptance and denial of old age that emerged when the participants spoke about the eventuality of being unable to compete in physically demanding sports.

In Chapter 6 it was shown that in attempting to maintain their identity as a 'youthful', 'athletic' person the participants were faced with the contradiction of their inevitably ageing body. The participants dealt with this complex predicament in a variety of ways as they moved towards achieving ego integrity (Erikson, 1980, 1997). This thesis demonstrates that the road to ego integrity is a rocky one; embedded with tensions and ambiguities. At the centre of this process for study participants was competing in sport. The key themes through which the contradictions and negotiations of achieving ego integrity were played out were friendship and fun, competition, youthfulness and the ageing body. My findings indicate that individuals can be concurrently accepting old age (consistent with traditional lifespan development theories) and denying (or resisting) old age (parallel to contemporary understandings of 'positive ageing'). They were also simultaneously experiencing social-connectedness and fighting an individual battle.

My study suggests that it is not necessarily a matter of resolving the tensions, or achieving ego integrity or not (which seems to be implied in traditional lifespan development theories), but it is the process of managing the tensions and making sense of one's life and actions that is significant. This process occurs in a range of contexts, including sport and leisure. Therefore, the findings from this thesis add to Erikson's ideas about ego integrity by contextualising the ambiguous experience of older age within dominant discourses of sport and ageing and the embodied experience of competing in sport. Additional empirical research into the relationship between acceptance and denial of old age in other contexts is recommended to inform the 'here and now' processes of moving towards ego integrity in old age.

Despite dominant orthodoxies, competing in physically demanding sport was significant to the majority of participants because fundamentally they were 'competing for life'. That is, it was in part an expression of their competitive identity, as well as a strategy for maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle and warding off deep old age. However, this expression of identity and fear or desperate resistance to the onset of the Fourth Age was not simply a product of individual differences but potentially the bell-wether for structuring new normative boundaries and legitimising discourses about competitive sport, ageing and the older person. In other words, the participants of this study are not just a group of individuals who are predisposed to being competitive or 'maladjusted' in their attempt to defy ageing. Their behaviour represents a socio-cultural phenomenon that is on the rise. A deeper understanding of the fears and desires that drive contemporary trends among older people is needed if we are to accommodate their changing needs. Consequently, the findings from my study frame questions that are important for people who work with or provide opportunities for older people to consider. For these questions to be answered further research in the aforementioned areas is recommended.

In addition, this thesis contributes to social theory, in particular contemporary understandings of sport and ageing. Evidently, a single overarching theory cannot

explain the complex, multi-faceted and ambiguous phenomenon of older people competing in physically demanding sport. In order to effectively address the research questions underpinning this thesis a combination of traditional and contemporary life-stage theories, post-structural theories on resistance and empowerment, and traditional and postmodern understandings of identity management in later life was required. In doing so, this thesis makes a unique contribution to knowledge by bringing together insights from different yet complementary theories, applying key concepts to a context in which they have not been used previously, as well as critiquing and developing them within that context. The thesis also provides insights into how qualitative methodologies might effectively be used to explore this intriguing phenomenon. More of this type of research is necessary to better understand the meanings, complexities, subtleties and contradictions of the relationship between sport and ageing. Such research furthers the ‘voices’ of older people and its findings remain grounded in their experiences. Understanding their stories is beneficial for policy writers, service providers and researchers as this trend of ‘competing for life’ expands into the future.

In essence, the phenomenon of older people competing in physically demanding sport is a reflection of an ageist society in which many individuals seek to express the ideals of youthfulness and use their body to delay the onset of old age, but it is also about resistance, resilience and personal empowerment. In spite of the embedded ambiguities and uncertainties of ageing (that may well subconsciously or consciously be within all of us), the stories presented in this thesis exemplify lives well lived and lives lived to their potential. The energy, enthusiasm, vitality and determination displayed by the participants in this study was (for me) extremely uplifting. On that note, I will close with an inspirational quote from one of my study participants which encapsulates the ‘competing for life’ theme of this thesis:

... keep battling on ... you have just got to face life and make the best of it.
(Alison, 70-year-old runner)

APPENDIX A

METHODS

Introduction

In Chapter 4 the methodological approach of this thesis was explained and justified. The methods used for data collection, sampling and data analysis were only briefly described. The following discussion is an extended, sequential and more in-depth account of the research process that illuminates my influence as the researcher. The purpose of this discussion is to provide enough information about how the research was conducted to enable readers to judge the trustworthiness and creditability of the findings, as well as understand the situations in which the research was produced.

Stage 1: Data Collection at the 8th Australian Masters Games

The main purpose of Stage 1 was to gain access to a setting where the phenomenon under study was naturally occurring, to conduct fieldwork in that context, and to seek out potential participants for Stage 2 of the research. The 2001 8th Australian Masters Games (AMG) held in Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia from 5th-14th October, was a ten-day major multi-sports event for mature athletes with age being the only qualifier for participation. The event consisted of 61 sports being played across 80 venues. It involved over 600 volunteers, 11,225 competitors aged 20-94 years, and an additional 1,165 sports officials or accompanying persons (Newcastle & Hunter Events Corporation, 2001). Of the 11,225 competitors, approximately 65 percent were from New South Wales, 12 percent from Victoria, 9 percent from Queensland 0.5-5 percent from Northern Territory, Tasmania, Western Australia and Australia's Capital Territory, respectively, and 2 percent from overseas (Newcastle & Hunter Events Corporation, 2001).

To gain access into the field setting I participated as a volunteer worker over the ten days of the AMG, as well as one day prior to the Games when competitor

registrations had begun. I wore a distinguishable volunteer t-shirt and hat, and an accreditation card around my neck for the duration of the Games. Being a volunteer at the AMG provided me with the opportunity to introduce myself and get to know older athletes in an informal context. During the first three days of data collection I was situated at the entrance to the ‘Games Village’ (a local social/entertainment Leagues club) where each participant of the Games was required to go to register for their sports. My role was to ‘meet and greet’ the competitors as they entered the club on the day prior to the commencement of the Games and the first two days of competition. This was a valuable location for me because it provided me with the opportunity to help participants when they needed it, introduce myself, and ask them questions about their interest in competitive sport. As a volunteer, I also socialised with many competitors at sport venues during the day and at evening social events. I met many local older competitors (those residing within four hours drive of Newcastle) who agreed to participate in Stage 2 of my study. In this way, an initial rapport and trust was built between the prospective participants of my study and myself (see Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2003). Furthermore, to familiarise myself with the field setting, I had various meetings with event organisers before, during and after the Games, and collected documents and newspaper articles related to the Games.

For the purpose of Stage 1 data collection, I took on a “peripheral membership role”, (see Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 85) in which I had the flexibility to merely observe (observation) or interact (participant-observation and short interviews) with the competitors while I circulated as a volunteer at the Games. This enabled me to get close enough to the participants being studied to establish an “insider’s identity” without undertaking the activities constituting the core of their group participation (Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 85). It is not always feasible or at all possible for researchers to participate in all settings or in the same manner of those under investigation. For instance, as a woman in my mid-20s, full participation in most of the sport events with older athletes was not possible. After my initial three days of volunteer duty at the Games Village, I had the freedom to enter and leave the

setting with ease and move from one sporting or social venue to another throughout the duration of the Games. Consequently, I was able to spend a substantial amount of time making detailed observations of the context in which the participants competed in sport. My time as a volunteer afforded me, “invaluable vantage points for appreciating certain aspects of [the older athletes’] particular life-worlds” (Prus, 1996, p. 19). Not only did being a volunteer allow me to understand the experiences of those under study, but also attend to my own experiences in the field setting.

Over the eleven days of data collection I simultaneously conducted observation, participant-observation and short semi-structured interviews with older athletes (refer to Table A.1, below, for a summary of Stage 1 fieldwork). According to Prus, (1996, p. 21) concurrent gathering of observational and interview data in a natural setting “generally leads to a more complete understanding of the other”. That is, “Researchers who become more completely immersed in the setting ... are typically in a much better situation to inquire about, pursue, and assess incoming information” that has been collected using different methods (Prus, 1996, p. 21). A discussion of the methods of observation, participant-observation and short interviews and the sampling techniques employed in Stage 1 is presented below.

Field Observations

Naturalistic, or field, observation is one of the earliest and most basic forms of research. It consists of gathering impressions of the surrounding world in a context of interest through sight, smell, sound, taste and touch (Adler & Adler, 1998). Observations are a particularly useful starting point when little is known about the area of research. Observations allow the researcher to explore the natural world and the dynamics of the social behaviour of the participants under investigation. The major difference between observation and participant-observation lies in the role of the researcher. In the process of observation the participants are not manipulated, stimulated or interacted with by the researcher. Consequently, observation allows

Table A.1 Summary of Stage 1 Fieldwork

Day	Time	Data Collection Method	Description
One	7:00am – 2:00pm	Observation	'Meet and greet' volunteer duty at the entrance to the Games Village (an entertainment club).
	2:00pm – 4:30pm	Observation	Observed the registration room and information booths situated within the Games Village.
Two	7:00am – 2:00pm	Participant-observation	'Meet and greet' volunteer duty. I asked competitors questions and made notes on their responses.
	1 hour break	Interviews	Went to the venue for the mile race and conducted short interviews with 60+ years runners.
Three	7:00am – 5:30pm	Participant-observation and short interviews	'Meet and greet' volunteer duty. When I was not busy I conducted short interviews. After completing volunteer shift I continued with short interviews with competitors at the club.
Four	9:00am – 11:00am	Observation	Track and Field venue. Moved around and covered many events, listened/observed, made notes.
	11:00am – 2:00pm	Interviews	Interviews with athletes who had just finished their race, or who were in the crowd spectating.
	3:00pm – 10:00pm	Participant-observation	Participated in the Opening Ceremony and the March Past, recruited local competitors for Stage 2
Five	9:00am – 9:30am	Observation	Men's badminton, observed games, took authorised photographs, and made notes.
	9:30am – 11:00am	Interviews	Interviews with men over the age of 60 years, after or in between their game. Observations at volleyball revealed few players 60+, oldest team: 45+ years. So, conducted fieldwork at tennis.
	11:00am – 12:00pm	Observation and interview	Went to the track and field venue, observed and conducted an interview.
	2:00pm – 3:00pm	Interview	Watched a women's 50+ years netball game and collected observational data.
	3:30pm – 5:00pm	Observation	Carried out interviews with men and women tennis players, recruited participants for Stage 2.
Six	9:00am – 10:00am	Interviews	Group interviews with the two oldest women's hockey teams (aged 45 years– 63 years).
	10:30am – 12:00pm	Group interviews / observation	Carried out short interviews and observations with men and women at indoor archery.
	12:00pm – 1:00pm	Interviews	Conducted interviews and observations at men's baseball and men's softball.
	2:00pm – 4:00pm	Observation and interviews	Conducted interviews and observations at men's ice hockey, recruited participant for Stage 2.
	6:00pm – 9:00pm	Observation and interviews	Conducted additional interviews and observations at men's ice hockey.
	8:00am – 9:30am	Observation and interviews	Interviews and observations at women's cricket.
Seven	10:00am – 2:00pm	Observation and interviews	Group interviews with the two oldest women's softball teams (aged 50 years– 60 years).
	3:00pm – 4:00pm	Group interviews / observation	Conducted interviews and observations at men's and women's basketball.
	5:00pm – 6:00pm	Observation and interviews	Participated in the Games Mid-week Party, mingled with competitors and made observations.
	7:00pm – 10:00pm	Participant-observation	Observed and carried out interviews at men's soccer and men's and women's squash.
	10:00am – 12:00pm	Observation and interviews	Conducted observations and interviews at swimming. An abundant of athletes 60+ years.
Eight	1:00pm – 5:00pm	Observation and interviews	Conducted observations and interviews at basketball and then swimming, recruited for Stage 2.
	9:00am – 11:00am	Observation and interviews	Conducted observations and interviews at touch, met up with event organisers and had a chat.
	12pm – 2:00pm	Observation and interviews	Carried out interviews and observations at indoor cricket and women's netball.
	2:30 pm – 5:00pm	Observation and interviews	Interviews with cyclists who had finished their race, observation of races and medal presentation.
Nine	9am – 10:00am	Observation and interviews	Conducted interviews with men soccer players at the soccer venue after their final game.
	10:30am – 11:30am	Observation and interviews	Observed gymnastics events and interviewed gymnasts aged 65+ years.
	12:00pm – 2:00pm	Observation and interviews	Interviews with swimmers who had just finished their race, or who were in the stands spectating.
	2:30pm – 5:00pm	Observation and interviews	Interviews with cyclists who had finished their race, observation of races and medal presentation
Ten	8:00am – 9:30am	Observation and interviews	Interviews with swimmers, observation of atmosphere / races, recruited participants for Stage 2.
	10:00am – 1:00pm	Observation and interviews	Participated in the Games Street Party, mingled with competitors, held interviews, observations.
	2:00pm – 7:00pm	Participant-observation	

events and behaviours to unfold ‘naturally’, with the participants being uninterrupted and often unaware of the researcher’s presence (Adler & Adler, 1998). On the other hand, during participant-observation the researcher interacts with the participants and experiences the setting as an insider, as is discussed below (Patton, 1990).

Observational techniques not only differ in the levels of researcher participation, but also according to where the observation is situated along a continuum from overt (open) to covert (closed) (Henderson, 1991). Covert observation, that is, unobtrusive observation in which the participants are unaware that research is being undertaken, is often acknowledged as achieving better results due to the limited influence of the researcher on the situation (Henderson, 1991; Patton, 1990; Sarantakos, 1993, 1998). However, the use of covert observation was given serious consideration because issues of ethical concern have been raised regarding covert techniques (see Adler & Adler, 1994). I used a combination of overt and covert observational strategies. Prior to the commencement of the AMG I met with several event staff and volunteers and informed them that I was undertaking observations and recording field notes throughout the duration of the event. It was impossible and impractical, however, to inform every participant at an open, public sporting event that observations were taking place. Therefore, my status as observer was overt to some event organisers and volunteer workers, but kept covert to the competitors under observation (unless I approached them for an interview). To reduce ethical concerns regarding the rights of the competitors to privacy the observations were non-intrusive and only used for the purpose of describing the context of investigation so that the reader understands the activities that took place and the behaviours of the people who participated (Patton, 1990).

As a qualitative observer, I was not bound by pre-established “categories of measurement or response, but ... free to search for concepts or categories that appear meaningful to subjects” (Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 81). Therefore, my initial observations were primarily descriptive in nature, as well as unfocused and general in scope, allowing me to stay open-minded to the subjective experiences of the

participants under study. As I became more familiar with the setting and the older competitors, I shifted to more focused observations and directed my attention to areas of research interest and of significance to the participants. For example, I referred to the program of events and sought out physically intense competitive sports that involved athletes aged over 60. I went to those venues to observe the respective event or game. Observational data were recorded throughout the duration of the Masters Games on the entire population of staff, volunteers, competitors and spectators at the event. However, particular attention was given to the older competitors. I attempted to cover as many sporting and social venues as possible (spatial sampling) and observations were carried out in the morning, afternoon and evening (time sampling) (Getz, 1997). This strategy was useful in ensuring that most of the site and activities relevant to the research aims were covered at some stage during the Games (Getz, 1997). My observations were recorded as field notes in a notebook or by talking into a Dictaphone at the first available private moment, which was subsequently transcribed.

In addition to making observations, I collected programs, reports, letters, brochures and newspaper articles and downloaded Internet websites about the 2001 AMG. These documents were an invaluable source of data that supplemented my observations and provided an additional perspective of the event. They were analysed using coding techniques, as will be described in the section on data analysis. Yin (1994, p. 81) provides a rationale for the use of documentary analysis in research:

First, documents are helpful in verifying the correct spellings and titles or names of organizations that might have been mentioned in an interview. Second, documents can provide other specific details to corroborate information from other sources. Third, inferences can be made from documents.

The use of observations in any research has its strengths and weaknesses. A key

strength of the observation of social behaviour is that it “can challenge existing stereotypical interpretations of events,” (Veal, 1997, p. 119) by contrasting the researcher’s observations with what has been observed by others, such as police, officials or the media. For example, during the Games the media was promoting friendly competition and fun by focusing on the inclusive side of the Games experience, whereas I found that competing to win was also important to participants. On a couple of occasions I witnessed fierce competition (for example at basketball) and verbal hostility toward an official when one 65-year-old male competitor felt he was unjustly treated when he got disqualified in the race walk. These types of contradictions were important in regard to my research aims.

A weakness of observational techniques is the potential for researcher bias. The observer is very reliant on their own interpretations of what they observe. Furthermore, even the most descriptive observational data is much too limited on its own (Prus, 1996). However, when observation is used in conjunction with other methods, such as participant-observation and interviewing “it is the most powerful source of validation”, comparison and contextualisation (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 389). For example, direct observations may reveal information that participants are unable or unwilling to give, because observations are free from participants’ opinion, self-perception, manipulation or false front that may be presented in an interview. As was shown in Chapter 5, many participants said in an interview they were not competitive, however my observations of their behaviour proved otherwise. Observation “thus stands as the fundamental base of all research methods” (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 389). Furthermore, “Observational materials ... can be very valuable in helping researchers formulate questions to be pursued in interviews” (Prus, 1996, p. 19).

Participant-observation

The major distinction between straight observation and participant-observation is that the participant-observer interacts with the participants and becomes more

involved in the dynamic setting under investigation. According to Prus (1996, p. 19):

Participant-observation adds an entirely different and vital dimension to the notion of observation ... the participant-observer role allows the researcher to get infinitely closer to the lived experiences of the participants than does straight observation.

An advantage of becoming more interactive in the group life being studied is that the researcher can learn what is meaningful to the participants by attending to how their own behaviour is received, gaining an understanding of how their experiences may be similar or different to others in the setting, and articulating the meaning of what was being observed from the perspective of the participant (Patton, 1990; Prus, 1996). For example, to understand how older women were exploited in the context of lawn bowls, Boyle became a member of the women's association of the bowling club she was studying (Boyle & McKay, 1995). The researcher gained "rich insights into the gender regime of the club" by attending coaching sessions, and learning the rules and codes of etiquette (Boyle & McKay, 1995, p. 562).

My participation in Stage 1 was limited to that of a volunteer not a competitor. As with observation, I had no set guidelines to follow and the specifics of my participant-observation approach evolved as I became more familiar with the context and participants under investigation. I was a participant-observer when I verified my observations by asking participants questions about their behaviours. It also included having informal conversations with competitors, volunteer workers and event organisers, and participating in organised social events, such as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, and the Mid-week Party. My role as participant-observer was covert to the competitors. They merely saw me as another volunteer at the Games. However, to reduce ethical concerns regarding the rights of the competitors to privacy, whenever I approached a participant to ask them questions or if a participant approached me and asked what I was doing, I was honest and open and I informed

them of my research.

Participant-observations were conducted at as many different sport and social venues as possible for the duration of the Games and field notes were taken accordingly. In addition, field notes of participant-observations were recorded prior to the commencement of the Games and after the Games had finished. These notes comprised mainly of information about meeting face-to-face with event organisers and socialising with volunteers (for example, at the volunteer training and volunteer recognition dinner). These encounters provided me with insights into the context under study from the perspective of people other than the competitors. Furthermore, the field notes included my own feelings, interpretations, ideas, tentative themes and future areas for investigation. This self-reflective practice helped me to clarify my thought processes as decisions were made about data collection, analysis and write-up, and to appreciate in what ways my experiences compared to the participants of the study. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) argue that the act of directly observing people, interacting with them and listening to their comments at the scene, (that is, participant-observation), is the most effective method for achieving depth of understanding. When supplemented with interviews, the data collected during participant-observation also serve as a benchmark for trustworthiness and credibility.

Short Semi-structured Interviews

Qualitative interviewing, including semi-structured interviewing, is an extremely versatile research method which relies extensively on verbal accounts of participants' feelings, actions, attitudes, intentions and opinions (Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Interviews differ in their length, objectives, format (unstructured, semi-structured or structured), question type (open-ended or closed-ended), where they are conducted (natural field or arranged setting), the way they are administered (face-to-face or over the telephone) and how many are interviewed (one-on-one or focus group). The 110 interviews completed

during Stage 1 of this study were semi-structured in nature, used open-ended questions, were conducted in the natural setting of a sporting event, administered face-to-face and relatively short in length (between five and thirty minutes). I conducted one interview per person.

In semi-structured interviews, researchers do not use a specific fixed set of questions and strictly follow them word for word, nor do they suggest a topic area or encourage the interviewee to discuss whatever is important to them. The semi-structured interview lies somewhere in between, in which researchers introduce the topic to be addressed, guide the discussion by asking relevant open-ended questions while allowing the interviewee to raise issues that are of significance to them (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). According to Bernard (1994) this type of interview may be the most suitable approach in circumstances where there is only one opportunity to interview participants and when there are some specific questions that need to be addressed. Since the AMG was a temporary context, and due to the financial and temporal constraints of a PhD, the only chance I had to interview an extensive number of older competitors from Australia and overseas was during the event. Interviewees were chosen at the Games using convenient and snowball sampling techniques within a theoretical sampling framework.

Many qualitative researchers employ theoretical or purposive sampling frameworks to consciously select groups, settings and individuals where and for whom the processes being studied have most relevance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Henderson, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, I initially sought out men and women who were aged 60 years and over and currently competing in physically demanding competitive sports. When sampling in interpretive research the researcher is not concerned about having a large number of participants or a random selection (as in quantitative approaches) but is aiming to present a rich description of the broad phenomenon from which the data are drawn to facilitate the application or generation of theory. With this argument in mind, my total sample size of 110 participants from Stage 1 is rather large for a qualitative

study and the interviews were short. However, as justified in Chapter 4, the purpose of Stage 1 was to get a surface scan of the common issues surrounding their behaviour so that a much smaller sample could be interviewed in-depth during Stage 2.

Choosing convenient cases to represent a phenomenon and using snowball sampling procedures are two ways of selecting a sample when applying a theoretical sampling framework (Henderson, 1991). Convenience sampling is considered viable when certain groups of people are hard to access or when certain types of individuals make up only a small percentage of the population (Maxwell, 1996) (which is the case with older competitive athletes). A drawback of convenience sampling is the potential for researchers to select whomever they want. To address this problem, I used a range of different approaches to identifying people (described below).

Snowball sampling refers to the process of researchers becoming acquainted with one person, or a small group of people and having them introduce the researcher to others (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). This process happened occasionally during Stage 1 data collection. To ensure privacy during snowball sampling I did not request personal information about third parties, rather, people recommended or introduced a third person to me. For example, after arriving at a venue and locating a relevant age group and event to observe, I interviewed participants once they had finished competing, or while they were waiting in between their games or events. After one interview, an interviewee said, “[So and so] would be great for you to talk to. Come with me and I’ll introduce you”. Or, on a couple of occasions, the initial person I interviewed left and returned with a friend whom they thought I should interview. Alternatively, I gave the initial contact person an information statement (see Appendix B) to pass onto the third person and left it to up to the third person to contact me if they were interested in participating. A potential limitation of snowball sampling is that it can reduce the diversity of the participants (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Therefore, snowballing was not the only

sampling technique I used.

Originally, I was interested in a sample of adults aged 60 years and older. However, some group interviews were held with whole sports teams in which other players in the team, aged in their 50s, also became respondents. Furthermore, on a few occasions I mistook a person as 60 years of age or older because according to the program I was watching an event for 60-65 years athletes, when in fact after interviewing them, I was informed that they were aged 55-59 years. Instead of discarding these data, I believed it was valuable to keep athletes aged 55-59 years as part of the sample of older athletes in Stage 1 data collection, because they provided interesting perspectives from the 'early-retiree' cohort of older adults (see McPherson, 1999). However, for the in-depth interviews, I adhered to my initial decision of interviewing people aged 60 years and over. A qualitative researcher generally uses flexible sampling techniques in which the exact number or type of informants is not specified in advance, but added up at the end (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Henderson, 1991).

I interviewed as many older people at the Games, varying in age, sporting interest and place of residence, as was required to reach theoretical saturation within the confines of preliminary data collection and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical saturation is attained through joint data collection and analysis, and it happens when the researcher realises that the data being collected becomes repetitive and no additional relevant data is being found (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After simultaneously collecting and interpreting data from observations and interviews for eleven days at the Masters Games, I began to see similar behaviours over and over again and hear the same responses in the interviews. However, because I was carrying out initial data collection, I believe that only a preliminary saturation point was reached and further research was needed to achieve complete theoretical saturation as defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Hence, I carried out Stages 2 and 3.

The semi-structured interviews were arranged with interviewees on-site, not weeks in advance. The interviews were conducted with participants at various times and locations over the duration of the AMG. I approached prospective interviewees and introduced myself. I explained my research, gave them a research information statement and asked them to participate in an interview (see Appendix B). Every person I approached was willing to participate. The majority of the participants said they were flattered to be asked. When they agreed, I requested their permission to tape record the interview and I recorded their verbal consent as I commenced. On one occasion a woman preferred not to be taped, in which case I took written notes as she responded. The interviews became a foundation for developing further topics and questions for the in-depth interviews conducted in Stage 2. The majority of the interviews were conducted one-on-one, however nine interviews were held with two respondents at once, and on three occasions a group interview (consisting of members of a sport team) was carried out. While all three types of interviews proved quite successful, the latter two were effective because respondents tended to bounce ideas off each other, as in a focus group interview (see Fontana & Frey, 2003, for a discussion on group interviewing). The general characteristics of the 110 participants who were briefly interviewed in Stage 1 were provided in Chapter 4.

A weakness of on-site interviews is that there may be distractions in the setting that can inhibit the interview process. For example, an interview with an 87-year-old female track and field athlete was conducted near a loud speaker. This location made her tape recorded voice barely audible when announcements were being made. Furthermore, the interview had to be cut short because her race was to start. Other limitations include the short length and 'one-off' nature of the interviews, as this did not allow me to explore issues in depth. Still, Stage 1 data collection was preliminary and its main purpose was to give me the opportunity to immerse myself in the world of older athletes and gain a sense of what was meaningful to them at a broad surface level. At the completion of the initial fieldwork the tapes were transcribed verbatim and the transcripts were analysed for key themes. Field notes

that were pertinent to the interview and the surrounding environment were also recorded. Hence, the data collected through the short semi-structured interviews and observations were extremely beneficial in setting the foundations for the interview guide used in the subsequent in-depth interviews that were conducted in Stage 2.

Stage 2: Data Collection via In-depth Interviews

The purpose of Stage 2 data collection was to gather deeper insights from individual participants into the multiple meanings they attach to their participation in strenuous competitive sports (see Appendices C and D). Recent studies into older adults' participation in sport or physical activity have found in-depth interviews to be a valuable method for exploring the complexities and ambiguities of leisure experiences in later life (see Boyle & McKay, 1995; Grant, 2001; *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 2001; Langley, 2001; Langley & Knight, 1996, 1999; O'Brien Cousins, 2000; O'Brien Cousins & Keating, 1995; O'Brien Cousins & Vertinsky, 1995). A profile of the twenty-eight participants interviewed in Stage 2 is provided in table A.2, below. None of these participants were included in the Stage 1 sample of 110. Twenty-seven participants were met and recruited at the AMG while one 61-year-old man (Richard) did not compete at the Games because he had committed himself to the Australian Veterans Titles for his sport which was held concurrently.

A theoretical sampling framework, as described above for Stage 1, was applied to select the sample for in-depth interviews. However, due to the financial and time constraints of PhD research the participants had to reside within a four hour driving distance from where I lived (Newcastle, NSW, Australia) so I could conduct the interview at their place of residence within a day. A strategy that helped me locate possible participants among the 11,225 competitors at the AMG was reading and collecting newspaper articles leading up to the event and during the event, as well as watching the local news each night of the Games.

Table A.2 Profile of In-depth Interviewees

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Place of residence</i>	<i>Current circumstances</i>	<i>Sport</i>	<i>History of involvement</i>	<i>Current per week Participation</i>	<i>Interview context</i>	<i>Sampling technique</i>
Emily	Female	71	Newcastle area	Retired, lives independently with husband	Badminton	Began tennis age 12, Badminton age 34	Badminton x 2 Walking x 5	Her home, dining table, one-on-one	Purposive
Victoria	Female	76	Lake Macquarie	Retired, lives independently with husband	Tennis	Tennis continuously since age 10	Tennis x 3	Her lounge room, one-on-one	Purposive
Eldon	Male	79	Lake Macquarie	Retired, lives independently with wife	Swimming	Restarted swimming at age 50	Swim trains x 3, competes monthly	His study/computer room, one-on-one	Snowball
Marjorie	Female	82	Lake Macquarie	Lives with and cares for husband (he has dementia)	Track and field, runs	Began running fun runs at age 60	Cross-country running x 2	Her lounge room, one-on-one	Purposive
Alison	Female	70	Newcastle area, family migrated from Scotland	Works part-time, lives with husband, her children are mentally ill	Running	Began running at age 70 to compete at the Masters Games	Walking x 3	Her back porch, one-on-one	Convenience
Josef	Male	65	Newcastle area, migrated from Latvia at age 12	Retired, lives independently with wife	Beach Volleyball	Played volleyball since age 17, began beach volleyball for the Masters Games	Beach volleyball x 3 (x 1 training, x 2 compete), walking x 4	His home, dining table, one-on-one	Convenience
Alena	Female	76	Newcastle area	Non-worker, lives independently with husband	Swimming, tennis	Swam all her life, tennis since age 12	Tennis x 1, golf x 1, swim x 5	Her home, the sun room, one-on-one	Convenience
Kenneth	Male	89	Hunter Valley	Retired, widower, lives independently	Running	Began running at age 81 after his wife passed away	Walking x 1 Running x 1	A room under his house where he keeps his medals etc, one-on-one	Purposive
Janet	Female	80	Hunter Valley	Widow, lives independently and does volunteer work	Swimming	Began swimming at age 77.	Swimming x 3 Line dancing x 2	Her lounge room, one-on-one	Purposive
Lara	Female	65	Newcastle area	Lives independently with husband, does volunteer work	Squash, running, tennis	Played netball age 10 -24, started squash age 24, tennis age 50 and running age 42	Squash x 3 Running x1 Tennis x 1	Her home, dining Table, one-on-one	Snowball
Irene	Female	64	Lake Macquarie	Retired, lives independently with husband	Field Hockey	Started hockey age 12, represented Australia for hockey from 1957-65	Now plays golf x 2 Tennis x 1 and aerobics x 3. Hockey only in Masters Games.	Her back balcony, view of the Lake, one-on-one	Snowball
Darren	Male	60	Newcastle area	Retired, helps run his and his wife's business, lives independently with wife	Badminton	Played soccer in youth, badminton since age 28	Badminton x1, Golf x 1, rest of time with business	His lounge room, one-on-one	Convenience

Table A.2 Profile of In-depth Interviewees (continued) * Indicates the three interviews that were conducted in pairs.

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Place of residence</i>	<i>Current circumstances</i>	<i>Sport</i>	<i>History of involvement</i>	<i>Current per week Participation</i>	<i>Interview context</i>	<i>Sampling technique</i>
Ingrid*	Female	70	Lake Macquarie	Retired, lives independently with husband (Arnold)	Swimming, golf	Began swimming at age 66, on Dr. word	Swimming x 2, Golf x 2	Their lounge room, with husband	Snowball
Arnold*	Male	71	Lake Macquarie	Same as above, he is Ingrid's husband	Swimming	Began swimming at age 67, played sport	Swimming x 2	Their lounge room, with wife (Ingrid)	Snowball
Betty	Female	73	North Sydney, family migrated from England	Retired, lives alone and independently in a retirement village	Triathlete (run, swim, ride)	Began running and cycling at age 51, 1st triathlon at age 54	Cycling x 2 Swimming x 2 Running x 2	My apartment, dining table. She preferred to travel	Convenience
Jan	Female	60	Lake Macquarie	Works part-time, never married, lives independently	Squash	Played squash since age 26, continuous	Squash x 2, run x 1 Gym x 4, swim x 2	Her lounge room, one-on-one	Convenience
Jolene	Female	63	Newcastle area	Retired, widow, lives independently	Basketball (only at the Masters)	Played basketball for 10 years in her 20's, restarted at age 60	Running, walking or cycling every day, dancing x 1	Her home, dining Table, one-on-one	Convenience
Joanne	Female	67	Newcastle area	Retired, widow, lives independently	Field Hockey	Played continuously since age 12	Hockey x 1, tennis x 1, family duties	Her backyard table, one-on-one	Snowball
Ellen*	Female	66	Central Coast (C.C.)	Volunteer netball coach, lives independently with husband	Netball	Started age 10, had 10 years off on 30's, restarted age 39	Netball x 1, personal trainer x 2, walks x 3	Netball Clubhouse, with Paula (below)	Convenience
Paula*	Female	69	Central Coast	Volunteer netball executive lives with husband	Netball	Played continuously since age 20	Netball x 1, Tennis x 2	Netball Clubhouse, with Ellen (above)	Convenience
Benny	Male	85	C. C., migrant from England	Works part-time and cares for wife (who has dementia)	Running	Began running at age 67	Run x 3, walk x 3 Home gym x 5	His lounge, one-on-one, but wife present	Convenience
Trevor	Male	67	Newcastle area	Doing a TAFE course, lives independently with wife	Running	Began running at age 50	Running x 3 Gym workout x 3	A local TAFE library, one-on-one	Convenience
Ray	Male	69	Lake Macquarie	Lives independently with partner in retirement village	Ice Hockey	Played since age 15, represented Australia	Ice Hockey x 2 Coaches x 2	His home, dining Table, one-on-one	Snowball
Max*	Male	74	Newcastle area	Lives independently with wife, works part-time	Field Hockey	Played since age 11, 1 year off (car crash)	Hockey x 1, walks x 3	Richard's house, dining table (below)	Purposive
Richard*	Male	61	Lake Macquarie	Retired, lives independently with wife	Field Hockey	After 35 years break, restarted at age 49	Hockey x 1	His dining table, with Max (above)	Snowball
Dan	Male	60	Newcastle area	Works full-time, lives independently with wife	Basketball (Masters)	Played since age 12, represented Australia	Tennis x 1, golf x 2-3	His place of work, one-on-one	Purposive
Najima	Male	68	Newcastle area, migrant from US	Retired, lives independently with wife	Baseball	Played since age 7, had break age 18-38	Baseball game x 1, Training x 1	His front balcony, one-on-one	Purposive
Edward	Male	81	Wollongong	Works full-time, lives with wife and cares for disabled wife	Cycling	Began cycling at age 66	Home indoor bike x 5, long cycle x 1	His dining table, one-on-one	Convenience

For example, one local free weekly newspaper, *The Post*, had a “Dob in a legend” section where readers were encouraged to inform the paper of any older athletes they knew who intended to compete at the Games and the paper profiled them. Throughout the Games, another local daily newspaper, *The Newcastle Herald*, included a “Masters Games Souvenir Lift Out” full of photographs, stories, results and highlights from each day. The local television news also featured stories about competing local athletes. Hence, from such articles and media exposure I could purposively seek out these individuals. I knew their appearance, name, age, sport, place of residence and a brief background about how and why they became involved in sport. This information was not only valuable in identifying them at the event, but it also introduced relevant themes to be followed-up with them in an interview situation.

Eight out of the twenty-eight in-depth interviewees were sampled in the purposive way described above. Eight of the participants were introduced to me either by a respective friend, another participant or a sport official at the Games (snowball sampling) while the remaining twelve were conveniently sampled at the Games. Information about age, gender, sports and sporting history in relation to the in-depth interviewee sample were provided in Chapter 4. In addition, the majority of participants in the sample live in Newcastle or the Hunter Region, while three participants live on the Central Coast, one lives in Sydney and one in Wollongong (all of the cities are in eastern New South Wales). Twenty-three of the participants were born in Australia, two migrated to Australia from England (Betty and Benny), one from Scotland (Alison), one from the United States (Najima) and one from Latvia (Josef). Seventeen of the participants were retired or not working, nine were involved in volunteer or part-time work and two said that they worked full-time (Edward and Dan). Participants were given a pseudonym to respect confidentiality.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews are long in duration (thirty minutes to several hours) and

qualitative in nature (flexible and open-ended) (Patton, 1990). In my study, each of the twenty-eight participants was interviewed once face-to-face, however three of the interviews were conducted in pairs (a husband and wife, and two pairs of friends), leaving a total of twenty-five in-depth interviews conducted over the course of three months. When compared to the one-on-one interviews, the interviews involving two people consisted of less questioning from the researcher and included more participant interaction and discussion (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). While extensive data were collected from these interviews (within the confines of a PhD candidature) it is recommended that future studies of older athletes incorporate multiple interviews with a smaller number of participants over an extended period of time.

The interviews were conducted at a location suitable to the interviewee (usually their home) and each interview ranged between 50 and 150 minutes in length. The length, depth and flexible structure of in-depth interviews encourage participants to discuss their unique and complex story in detail. In-depth qualitative interviewing is characterised by careful and receptive listening, open-ended questions, and extensive probing on the part of the interviewer (Prus, 1996). This process brings the interviewer into the world of the participant and provides them with an understanding of participant perceptions, attitudes, feelings and opinions (see Patton, 1990). Hence, “Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (Patton, 1990, p. 218). According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998, pp. 90-1) in-depth interviews are best when the researcher has:

- established relatively clear and well-defined research interests through collecting preliminary data and conducting background reading;
- a limited amount of time to devote to the study. For example, due to the time pressure to write a PhD thesis, and;
- an interest in understanding a broad range of people.

The above circumstances are clearly relevant to my research project.

Qualitative in-depth interviews can be carried out using an informal conversational interview (unstructured), a general interview guide, or a standardised open-ended interview (Patton, 1990). The general interview guide approach was the method I used for the in-depth interviews. With the interview guide approach, the interviews were conversational and flexible which encouraged the participants to share their stories openly. I listed the topics and example questions for discussion in advance, but did not develop formal questions or exact wording prior to the interview (see Appendix E). For example, my background reading of relevant theories and previous studies combined with the analysis of preliminary data collected from Stage 1 of the research process assisted in specifying the topics of discussion on the interview guide. The interview guide was pilot tested on an 83-year-old female competitive sportsperson for clarity and, based on the feedback received, minor alterations to the topics were made.

The guide began with broad descriptive questions to ease participants into the conversation, and then to questions about feelings and opinions, and ended with some demographic details (see Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). However, decisions about the exact sequence and wording of questions were made in the course of the interview, depending upon who the interviewee was and how the conversation was developing (Patton, 1990). Also, when using such a guide, there is room to ask follow-up question or use probes for clarification, explanation or elaboration based on the response given by the interviewee (see Fontana & Frey, 1998, 2000; Kvale, 1996; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The guide was used solely to remind me to ask about certain topics, so that the key issues were explored with all participants. This flexible approach allowed other topics to emerge during the interview, specifically those topics of importance to the respondent which were not listed explicitly in the guide. Patton (1990, p. 283) summarises the rationale for the use of a general interview guide in in-depth interviewing:

The interview guide helps make interviewing across a number of different

people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored ... but allows individual perspectives and experiences to emerge.

A weakness of the interview guide approach, however, is that significant topics may be unintentionally omitted (Patton, 1990). To address this concern, as mentioned, the combination of data collection and analysis in Stage 1 with my background reading revealed salient topics for discussion in the in-depth interviews. Another limitation of the interview guide approach is that the flexibility given to the interviewer in ordering and wording the questions “can result in substantially different responses from different perspectives, thus reducing the comparability of the responses” (Patton, 1990, p. 288). In response to this issue, Taylor and Bogdan (1998, p. 91) argue that when the researcher is interested in understanding a broad range of perspectives, interviewing multiple informants in a way that is most suitable to that individual actually “lends itself to building general theories about the nature of social phenomena”. On the other hand, Taylor and Bogdan (1998) believe a limitation of in-depth interviewing is that problems can arise with what participants say they do when compared to how they actually behave. This problem was addressed, and indeed embraced, in my study by supplementing interviews with observations and highlighting the tension between what the participants said and what I observed.

Gaining trust and rapport are essential ingredients to a successful qualitative interview (Fontana & Frey, 1998, 2000; Prus, 1996; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). When using interviews as a method there is always the problem of how informants choose to present themselves in the interviewer’s presence. As the interviewer, I was aware that the majority of participants were open, honest and willing to share their stories; while others may have concealed information and engaged in deliberate deception. However, I believe that a level of trust and rapport was established with the participants during Stage 1 fieldwork and through ongoing telephone conversations, mail correspondence and unexpected encounters. For

example, I received encouraging comments by participants, such as “I’m looking forward to our interview”, “Anything I can do to help” and “Call me if you need any more information”. Also, every interviewee gave consent to have a second interview if necessary. The rapport was also apparent through the way some of the participants provided me with additional information about their lives (before and after the interview) without request. For example, 89-year-old Kenneth wrote a letter about why he runs and sent it to me three months before his interview. He also provided me with newspaper articles, a recorded radio broadcast about his recent achievements, and another letter (one year later). This autobiographical information was a valuable source of data which supplemented the interview. Furthermore, in reference to unexpected encounters, one hot summer’s day I met up with 76-year-old Alena at a local beach. We spoke about the Masters Games and she informed me about the trouble she had to go through in order to receive the medal she had rightly won at the Masters Games. In general, the majority of participants indicated that they were honoured that I was enthusiastic about listening to their experiences in sport.

The in-depth interviews in my study were scheduled so that there were no more than two interviews on one day. This afforded me time to reflect on each interview immediately after the interviewee and I had parted. I recorded information about the setting (such as, outside on a porch, at a dining table, in a lounge room), the atmosphere and emotional tone of the interview (for instance, excitement, joy, sadness), non-verbal communication (for example, appearance, looks, pauses, body gestures), methodological or personal problems, and any immediate hunches, themes, personal feelings and thoughts (see Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 83). I also jotted down key words relating to the above factors in the course of the interview and elaborated on them in my field notes once the interview had finished. This process also helped me keep on top of what was being said during the interview and drew my attention to questions to ask the participants before the interview was over (see Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 87). Furthermore, I transcribed each interview a day or so after conducting it. While very exhausting and time-consuming it proved

to be extremely resourceful. I was able to immerse myself in the data, reflect on the way I had carried out the interview, and make necessary adjustments for subsequent interviews. Furthermore, I was able to perform coding and memoing (see the discussion on data analysis below) as I went along, rather than after all the interviews had been conducted (see Lofland & Lofland, 1995, pp. 87-88). For example, if an insight occurred to me as I was transcribing the tape I wrote it into the transcription as an analytic note. Consequently, transcribing as you go can help stimulate analysis (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 88). At the completion of Stage 2 interviews responses had become repetitive across multiple cases, no new themes were emerging, or new concepts being developed to explain the data. However, I did use some minor follow-up strategies to ensure that theoretical saturation had been reached within the confines of my study's design.

Stage 3: Follow-up Strategies

The purpose of this final stage was to bring data collection to a close and to reach theoretical saturation (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To this end, I conducted observations and participant-observations at the 2002 Lake Macquarie Masters Games (LMMG) in Newcastle, Australia, and carried out follow-up telephone conversations with five participants from Stage 2. The LMMG are a regional multi-sports competition for Masters athletes which is held over a weekend (from Friday evening to Sunday). The inaugural LMMG were held in 2001 and they involved 500 competitors. The 2002 LMMG attracted approximately 830 competitors across 29 sports and were conducted from 6th – 8th September. I was not a volunteer during these Games, but a competitor. I ran in the five kilometre Fun Run with about one hundred other Masters athletes. This experience was possible due to the event having an open entry, that is, there were no age restrictions placed on participants. It was a very rewarding and exciting experience, not to mention valuable for my research because I was able to interact with participants and experience the event as a Masters athlete. In addition, I caught up with several of the participants from Stage 2 who were also competing at these Games. In general,

I observed similar behaviours and heard similar words in regards to participant experiences as I did at the 2001 AMG. The data were becoming repetitive and no additional relevant themes or insights emerged.

Finally, to seek clarification or elaboration upon information given by respondents in their in-depth interview, I contacted five participants from Stage 2 (Marjorie, Alena, Victoria, Betty and Kenneth) and conducted further questioning over the telephone. After my conversation with these participants I felt satisfied that my data collection within the confines of this research was complete. Admittedly, very little new data were collected from Stage 3.

Data Analysis

As was briefly discussed in Chapter 4, to explain the phenomenon of older people competing in physically demanding sport I used a combination of description, analysis and interpretation to make sense of the data I had collected (see Wolcott, 1994). For example, at times I stayed as close to the data as possible and used the participants' words to *describe* what I had found. The *analysis* of data in this study was primarily inductive and it included a combination of coding, constant comparative analysis and the generation of common themes. *Interpretation* involved an application of theories to explain the phenomenon under study. These three types of sense-making strategies were carried out somewhat simultaneously and continuously throughout data analysis.

Initial analysis of data occurred while preliminary data were being collected at the 2001 AMG. During this time I reviewed my field notes, listened to the taped semi-structured interviews, and identified recurring themes, initial insights and hunches derived from the data. According to Ryan and Bernard (2003, p. 261):

Themes are abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that investigators identify before, during, and after data collection. Literature reviews are rich sources

for themes, as are investigators' own experiences with subject matter. More often than not, however, researchers induce themes from the [data] itself.

In the latter sense, themes are a collection of statements or concepts grounded in the data that attempt to capture the essence of why something happened or what something means (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; van Manen, 1990, 1998). Once the eleven days of fieldwork at the AMG was completed I transcribed the audiotapes verbatim and formally coded and compared the data that had been collected through observations and interviews to develop tentative themes.

Coding involves breaking down the data into categories of unique and coherent themes, behaviours and events (which are significant to participants and address the research aims), and labelling and sorting them through a process of examination, comparison and conceptualisation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The data as transcriptions were analysed by finding meanings in large blocks of text (as opposed to single words) (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For instance, I used a hard copy of the transcripts and systematically assigned relevant word and number codes that represented units of meaning in the margin alongside statements or blocks of text (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I often used "*in vivo* codes" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 105) which are catchy words taken from the quotes made by respondents (see also Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). During the initial coding stages, the codes were numerous and varied. As coding continued (especially after data from all three stages were collected) I focused on a selected number of relevant codes, which were applied to an increasing array of data (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Coding also forced me to make judgements about the meanings of adjoining segments of text (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 261). After coding all Stage 1 data it was manually cut, sorted, pasted using a computer word-processing program (that is, Microsoft Word) and grouped into common topics or raw data themes (consisting of observational data, participants quotes or paraphrased quotes) (Miles & Huberman, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Despite the creation of these files, a full data set in chronological order was maintained. Therefore, I could return to the data

in the order I collected it and review the context surrounding a particular piece of filed information (see Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Although the preliminary data was revisited to develop higher order themes when all data for this study had been collected, this initial theme building process was important in guiding subsequent data collection. Furthermore, as part of my initial data analysis I wrote two different journal articles based on the data collected from Stage 1 (see Dionigi, 2002a, 2002b). This writing process was invaluable in clarifying and consolidating my initial thoughts on the research.

The procedure described above is consistent with constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constant comparative analysis is the process whereby data collected from each different method are continually contrasted throughout ongoing analysis in order to develop concepts that are grounded in the data (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, although I had reviewed the concepts of resistance, empowerment and identity management in relation to the phenomenon of older people competing in sport, I did not force the data to fit these theories. In other words, although deduction played a part in my analytic process, the main aim of data analysis was to make sure the theory explains the data and emerges from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Constant comparative analysis involves identifying and concentrating upon the major themes and hunches that emerge relatively early in data analysis, thereby allowing the researcher to compare subsequent data to these tentative themes or intuitions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This process of allowing previous data to give direction to ensuing data collection is also consistent with the procedures of theoretical saturation described earlier. The constant comparative method was also used to inductively analyse the data collected across each method at each stage of the research for maximum credibility. That is, data collected and analysed from Stages 2 and 3 were compared and contrasted with preliminary data collected during Stage 1. According to Patton (1990) this inductive type of analysis is the most appropriate process when dealing with the convergence and divergence of data, and when aiming to let the findings emerge from the data. Furthermore, due to the potential for contradictions between

what participants spoke about in interviews and what I observed in the field, it was important that I constantly compared one piece of data to another.

Data collected from Stages 2 and 3 were analysed using coding strategies and the generation of common themes and patterns as described above for Stage 1 preliminary data analysis. Once in-depth interview transcripts and Stage 3 field notes were completed, all transcripts were read through in their entirety and tape recordings were listened to repeatedly. My next step was the preparation of data into a profile of each participant from Stage 2. These profiles contained all the relevant data collected about each in-depth interviewee regarding their demographics and current circumstances, the actual interview transcript, the interview context, observations and secondary data (such as letters) that they had sent me or newspaper articles about their achievements (see Lofland & Lofland, 1995, pp. 82-83). From this information I constructed a table for each participant highlighting their personal background, current circumstances, demographics and sporting interests as well as the key themes relevant to each interviewee. This process enabled me to determine raw themes and patterns specific to each individual.

The second phase of analysis involved addressing codes, themes and topics common across the complete in-depth interview data set. This process is referred to as cross-case analysis, and it recognises that each person and each story is unique, but highlights the common topics, patterns, themes and concepts among participants (Huberman & Miles, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The third step entailed examining transcripts for themes in groups according to age cohort, gender, type of sport (individual or team sport), length of involvement in sport (late starter, rekindler or continuer) and current circumstances (for example, widow(er), married, employed, retired or pensioner). However, because of the relatively small sample size in Stage 2, subgroup comparisons of such factors are not representative of all older people who fall into those groups. Therefore, the purpose of this third stage of analysis was to determine if any subtle inferences could be drawn between the

groups to shed light on the major themes. As a result, no major differences between these groups emerged from data analysis, and any minor differences that surfaced from analysis were discussed in the presentation of the research findings in Chapters 5 and 6. It is recognised that my study's sample is not truly representative of the total population of older athletes within Australia. Thus, generalisations to other older athletes should be made with caution. However, being a qualitative inquiry the purpose was not to make generalisations across all older athletes, but to illuminate the multiple perspectives of the people who participated in the study.

Each phase of my data analysis entailed data reduction, as the reams of collected data were manually cut, sorted and brought into manageable chunks. For example, after coding the data from Stages 2 and 3, they were grouped into tentative themes. These raw themes and their associated categories were then compared, contrasted and combined with the initial codes, themes and ideas that were derived from the preliminary analysis of Stage 1 data. Each segment of text was examined to determine if they provided insight into the research aims. Themes that were unrelated to the research aims were dropped from analysis. The relevant raw data themes were linked together to generate higher order themes (that is, into a more refined concept) and the key components within each theme were elaborated (see Miles & Huberman, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Four major themes about friendship and fun, competition, youthfulness and the ageing body emerged from data analysis and they were presented in Chapters 5 and 6. In addition, I was continually drawing and refining thematic charts to visually communicate the relationships between themes and to gain an in-depth understanding of each theme. Such diagramming is not only an integral strategy used during analysis, but also a product of analysis (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Jacobson and Samdahl (1998) refer to the phases of analysis described above as phenomenological analysis.

The final stage of analysis involved extending the analysis beyond mere description of the themes to explanation via the application of theories. As supported by

Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 22), “theory denotes a set of well-developed categories (e.g., themes, concepts) ... that explains some relevant ... phenomenon”. Theories generally strive for broad social significance, “but remain firmly grounded in the experiences and understanding of the interviewees” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 63). However, with the increasing acceptance of postmodern sensibilities in the practice of qualitative research, “The search for grand narratives is being replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and particular situations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, p. 29). At the core of theorising lies the interplay between making inductions (from the data collected) and deductions (from relevant literature, existing theories and personal bias). For example, I read theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the phenomenon under study throughout the research process in order to refine my research questions, as well as help explain the data that I had collected. Hence, theory application and building is the outcome of the deductive and inductive interaction between relevant existing theories, the researcher’s assumptions, and my data collection process, findings and data analysis. From this interplay, new insights into the phenomenon under study emerge and contributions can be made to existing theory.

The entire process of data analysis was ongoing throughout the writing of this thesis. Throughout the course of analysis I occasionally distanced myself from the data. This provided me with the opportunity to reflect on what I was learning, discuss conceptual links and patterns in the data, summarise the major findings, and elaborate codes in the form of analytical memos (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). These memos were useful in keeping me focused. They were also important in the application of theory because they forced me “to move from working with data to conceptualizing” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 218). According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 72), memos “are one of the most powerful sense-making tools at hand”. I also recorded personal experiences of the entire research process in a reflective journal and included some of these thoughts and feelings as data in my analysis. As argued by Howe (1990, p. 201), “should bias enter into participant-observation, conversationally-oriented interview, or the review of

documents or records, then phenomenological researchers record and describe their feelings and include them as data in their analysis”.

Researcher’s Influence

In traditional research the researcher’s accounts and personal experiences throughout the research process were missing from reports (Fontana & Frey, 1998, 2000). Contemporary postmodern researchers, in particular qualitative sociologists, are self-reflective. They confess their problems and acknowledge the conflicting nature of data and the great influence the researcher has as instrument and author (see Geertz, 1988; van Maanen, 1988). In other words, behind all stages of interpretive practice “stands the biographically situated researcher” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, p. 30). Implied in this recognition is the notion of ‘researcher-as-instrument’ (Sarantakos, 1993) where it is acknowledged that the researcher’s subjectivity ultimately affects the outcomes of qualitative research. According to Fontana and Frey (1998, p. 70) when the influence of the researcher is exposed, “alternative ways to look at the data are often introduced”.

My role as researcher has been discussed above in the sections about gaining access and ‘fitting in’ as a volunteer worker, approaching participants, gaining trust and rapport, experiencing and dealing with problems and surprises, and collecting, recording and analysing a variety of data (see Altheide & Johnson, 1998, p. 302). Also, explained above was the potential for researcher bias in observations and sampling techniques, as well as how to deal with and incorporate these biases. The purpose of this section is to highlight other researcher influences that have not been discussed in detail, such as my interest in competitive sport and the impact of my age on the participant-researcher relationship.

I consider myself a competitive sportsperson. Since the age of five I have always been involved in a competitive individual or team sport and I wish to maintain participation in sport for as long as I am capable and continue to enjoy it. My

research interests have always related to understanding sport and exercise behaviour from the participants' own frames of reference. For example, my Honours thesis was based on research conducted at a major university multi-sports event (see Dionigi, 2001). I have also completed a qualitative study on the factors underlying adult adherence and compliance to a worksite exercise program (see Leslight, 1997). This passion for understanding people's experiences in sport and my desire to continue participation in sport as I age were factors directing me to research the perspective of those who are competing in sport in later life.

Furthermore, as the research proceeded and themes emerged I became more aware of how close my experiences in sport were to the participants in my study. For example, being a woman in my mid-20s who has played soccer since childhood (but only in a regular women's competition since the age of 18), and participated in martial arts over the past four years, I am partaking in male-dominated sports. In these pursuits I have encountered disbelief, ridicule and praise from men, women and children. I have often sensed that I was 'going against the grain' of what was expected of a young woman or young girl and I felt good about it. I now know that my actions can be interpreted as a resistance to traditional gender roles and the constraining discourses on femininity, and that my feelings can be described as personal empowerment. For instance, like the experiences of the women (and others) involved in non-traditional sports (described in Chapter 3) and the experiences of the older athletes in my study, due to my involvement in soccer and martial arts, I too have had the opportunity to use my body in ways I never thought possible, develop my own identity as a sportsperson and be taken seriously, maintain friendships, travel and experience a sense of achievement, pride, great joy and excitement. Therefore, resistance, empowerment and identity management are concepts that can help explain my experiences in sport, as well as those of the participants in this study. My behaviour can also be interpreted as embracing the mainstream competitive ideology and its association with masculinity, similar to the participants in my study using the competitive ideology to define themselves in terms of youthfulness.

Furthermore, being a competitive person and finding it hard to admit it, like many of the participants in this study, meant that initially I had difficulties in interpreting the conflicts that emerged in the data. For example, I originally underestimated the significance of the finding that many of the participants do not like to admit or chose not to talk about their competitiveness, seemingly because it is not ‘appropriate’ for them to be that way. Instead, I emphasised the finding that their behaviour was primarily a celebration of “fun, friendship and fitness”. I did not realise I was showing this bias until I became more self-reflective throughout the research process. Consequently, in order to bring the themes about “Competing to win” and “I’m out here and I can do this!” to the forefront in my study, I had to overcome my own denial and admit that I do like winning and proving to myself and others that I am capable of competing in physically demanding sports, like the participants in my study. This dilemma that I was forced to confront and manage demonstrates how the personal characteristics of the researcher has the possibility to subconsciously affect data analysis (see Dionigi, 2004).

Having an interest in sport and having identified potentially similar or shared experiences with the people I interviewed and observed meant that I had to make a conscious effort to avoid imposing my opinion and perspective on the participants; or, when I did, I had to be aware of it and record it as part of my analysis. I had to be non-judgemental and remain somewhat detached, so that the research voices were the participants’, not my own, while still showing empathy, reassurance and sensitivity so that they felt comfortable expressing themselves in my presence (see Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). During the first couple of interviews I felt that some of my questions or comments were too leading. To monitor this occurrence I noted on my transcripts “solicited response” or “leading question” before or after their reply (see Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 157). Alternatively, having an interest in sport, sharing similar experiences at major sporting events, and having conducted my Honours research on a major multi-sports event were advantageous. My familiarity with the format of sports events allowed me to efficiently identify and locate

interesting research phenomena as well as potential participants at both of the sporting competitions where fieldwork was undertaken. My background in sport also predisposed me to notice the nuances of the interactions between competitors that may have been overlooked by less experienced researchers or sportspeople.

Finally, being a 26-year-old woman at the time of data collection meant that the people I was observing and interviewing had between 30-68 more years of life experiences than I had. These age differences forced me to be aware of barriers to communication and accept that the way interviewees perceive me would ultimately affect their responses (see Rubin & Rubin, 1995). According to Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 111), “interviewing people similar to yourself can pose difficulties, because the interviewees assume that you know what they know [and they] may not explain taken-for-granted meanings”. Therefore, I found that the age difference between the participants and myself had a positive influence on the depth of data collected. For example, on several occasions interviewees would bring up historical events that they had experienced and say, “oh, you wouldn’t know about that” or “that was before your time”, then they proceeded to explain the event in more detail. In reference to their ageing bodies, some made comments along the lines of “you wouldn’t know what that feels like, you’re too young and fit”. These comments gave me the opportunity to say, “please explain”, and I was able to gain deeper understandings of their perspectives and feelings. Even without asking, participants endeavoured to explain their behaviour or emotions to me, that is, to someone who they believed did not share these experiences or sentiments (see Rubin & Rubin, 1995). My interactions with the study participants are comparable to Helen Kivnick’s experiences in interviewing older people. Thus, her words best describe my situation:

I could not offer comparable experiences of my own; neither did I pose a standard of comparison or judgment ... I seemed to elicit in these [older] subjects the kinds of warm, concerned, trusting feelings they express for their grandchildren ... often seeming to feel that they were passing on

valuable advice in sharing their personal views with me ... they responded to my sincere interest in what they had to say – about historical eras and life cycles stages with which I have had no direct contact. (Erikson et al. 1986, p. 30)

Finally, a practice that helped me to deal with researcher influence and personal experiences was keeping a research journal throughout the entire research process (in addition to using a triangulation of methods and data sources). This journal writing procedure allowed me to record and describe my own feelings and experiences throughout data collection and analysis, as well as organise ideas about method, make ethical decisions, document links to the literature and record tentative themes identified in the data. Indeed, it has been suggested that during the research process, the researcher as observer and interviewer should be reflective and record their own feelings (Janesick, 1999, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). This introspective practice helped clarify my thinking as decisions were made about data collection, analysis and write-up.

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR SHORT SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The Experience and Meaning of Competitive Sports Participation

I am currently undertaking research exploring the experiences of people involved in competitive sport. The research forms part of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy program in which the student researcher, Rylee Dionigi, is currently enrolled.

I am particularly interested in understanding the stories of older adults who are currently participating in competitive sport, the nature of the sports they partake, the history of their involvement, as well as their motivations for and outcomes of their sporting experiences. The research will be greatly enhanced by interviews with competitors of the 2001 Australian Masters Games who are over the age of 60 years. Accordingly, we would appreciate your participation in the study.

Participation involves taking part in at least one interview. The interviews will be conducted by the student researcher and undertaken "on-the-spot" while you are at the Masters Games. It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately 15 minutes. Interviews will involve the discussion of a range of issues regarding: the reasons for your involvement in competitive sport; the place competitive sports participation has in your life; your experiences in competitive sport and the outcomes of those experiences.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you decide on your level of involvement. You may choose to take part in only one interview, or two. If you agree to take part in one or more interviews, the student researcher will seek your permission to audiotape the interviews so that they can be transcribed for analysis. During an interview, you may decline to answer any questions, you may request that the tape recorder be turned off and you have the right to review, edit or erase the audio recordings. In addition, you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence to yourself. Unless you give consent to be identified, your name will not be used during the data collection and analysis, or in any reports or publications arising from the research. If you wish to view the results of the study, upon completion a copy of the thesis by the student researcher will be held in the University of Newcastle library. Audiotapes, transcripts and field notes will remain confidential with access restricted to the researchers. At the completion of the study, audiotapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in a room in the Department of Leisure and Tourism Studies and kept for the statutory period as determined by the NSW State Records Authority and then will be destroyed.

The University requires that all participants are informed that if they have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the University's Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Branch, The Chancellery, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW 2308, telephone (02) 4921 6333.

Thank you very much for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Rylee Dionigi

Student Researcher

Telephone: (02) 4921 5552

Facsimile: (02) 4921 7402

Faculty of Arts and Social Science, Dept. of Leisure and Tourism Studies

The University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW 2308

Dr. Kevin Lyons

Project Supervisor

Lecturer

Telephone: (02) 4921 8989

Dr. Deborah Stevenson

Co-Supervisor

Lecturer

Telephone: (02) 4921 6031

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The experience and meaning of competitive sports participation.

Dear _____,

Thank you for your interest in my research exploring the experiences and meaning of competitive sports participation among adults such as yourself. The research forms part of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program in which I, Rylee Dionigi, am currently enrolled.

I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study and I am looking forward to meeting with you early in the New Year for an in-depth, yet relaxed and conversational-style, interview. I will contact you in the near future to arrange a time and place for the discussion that is convenient to you. It is anticipated that it will take approximately 45 minutes.

Through your participation in this study I hope to understand the meaning of competitive sports participation as it reveals itself in your experience. I am interested in hearing your story about how you came to be competing in sport at this point in your life, as well as the reasons for your involvement in competitive sport; the place competitive sports participation has in your life; your experiences in competitive sport and the outcomes of those experiences.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you decide on your level of involvement. I will seek your permission to audiotape the interview so that it can be transcribed for analysis. During our discussion, you may decline to answer any questions, you may request that the tape recorder be turned off and you have the right to review, edit or erase the audio recordings. In addition, you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence to yourself. Furthermore, unless you give consent to be identified, your name will not be used during the data collection and analysis, or in any reports or publications arising from the research.

If you wish to view the results of the study, a copy of the thesis that I produce will be held in the University of Newcastle library upon completion. Audiotapes, transcripts and field notes will remain confidential with access restricted to the researcher and supervisor. At the completion of the study, audiotapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in a room in the School of Social Science and kept for the statutory period as determined by the NSW State Records Authority and then will be destroyed.

I appreciate your involvement and thank you for your time and effort. If you have any further questions, I can be reached at (02) 4942 4559 or at the number below.

Yours sincerely,

Rylee Dionigi
Student Researcher
Telephone: (02) 4921 5552
Facsimile: (02) 4921 7402
6031
School of Social Sciences
Faculty of Education and Arts
The University of Newcastle
Callaghan, NSW 2308
Home Ph. No.: (02) 4942 4559

Dr. Kevin Lyons
Project Supervisor
Lecturer
Telephone: (02) 4921 8989

Dr. Deborah Stevenson
Project Supervisor
Senior Lecturer
Telephone: (02) 4921

The University requires that all participants are informed that if they have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the University's Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Branch, The Chancellery, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW 2308, telephone (02) 4921 6333.

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the project titled 'The Experience and Meaning of Competitive Sports Participation'. I understand that the study will be carried out as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained. I realise that I can withdraw from the study at anytime and do not have to give my reasons from withdrawing. I understand that a pseudonym will be used in any reports arising from the study to conceal my identity. I have had all my questions relating to the study answered satisfactorily.

Please circle:

I **do / do not** give my consent to be contacted again, if necessary, for follow-up questions or an additional interview. **Please note:** The student researcher will only contact you if clarification or elaboration upon information given in your initial interview is required.

I **do / do not** give permission for you to put a photo of me from the newspaper into any reports arising from your study.

You **can / cannot** link the photo of me with my quotes or my pseudonym used in any reports arising from this study.

Signed

Date.....

Name.....

Thank you,

Rylee Dionigi
Student Researcher
Telephone: (02) 4921 5552
Facsimile: (02) 4921 7402
School of Social Sciences
Faculty of Education and Arts
The University of Newcastle
Callaghan, NSW 2308
Home Ph. No.: (02) 4942 4559

Dr. Kevin Lyons
Project Supervisor
Lecturer
Telephone: (02) 4921 8989

Dr. Deborah Stevenson
Project Supervisor
Senior Lecturer
Telephone: (02) 4921 6031

APPENDIX E

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Topic	Sample Questions
Sporting history	Can you start by telling me how you came to be competing in sport at this point in your life?
Centrality of sport	Describe a typical week, in order to give me a sense of how central competing in sport is to your life.
Meanings	What does it mean to you to be competing in sport at this point in your life? Why is it so important to you?
Motives/Benefits	Why do you compete in sport? Have your reasons changed over time? Why do you choose a competitive activity over a non-competitive one?
Current Experiences	Describe some outcomes or experiences you have had from competing in sport? How does it feel to be competing in sport?
Competition vs. participation	The motto for the 2001 Masters Games was 'Serious Fun', there seems to be a serious/competitive side and a friendly/fun side to Masters sport. What are your thoughts on this?
Future plans	How long do you anticipate competing? How will you cope if you get to a point when you can no longer compete?
Other	Is there anything else you would like me to know about your experiences in sport?

Notes:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

9th Australian Masters Games. (2003). *Australian Masters Games Information*, viewed 7 August 2003, <<http://www.amg2003.com/news/amgi.html>>.

ABS - *see* Australian Bureau of Statistics

Active Living Coalition for Older Adults. (1999). *A Blueprint for Action for Active Living and Older Adults*. Toronto, Ontario: ALCOA.

Adair, D., & Vamplew, W. (1997). *Sport in Australian History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 377-392.

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1998). Observational techniques. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 79-109.

Aitchison, C. (2000). Poststructural feminist theories of representing Others: A response to the 'crisis' in leisure studies' discourse. *Leisure Studies*, 19(3), pp. 127-144.

Altheide, D. L., & Johnson, J. M. (1998). Criteria for assessing interpretive validity in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Material*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 283-312.

American Association of Retired Persons, American College of Sports Medicine, American Geriatrics Society, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The National Institute on Aging, & The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2001). *National Blueprint: Increasing Physical Activity among Adults Age 50 and Older*. Princeton, NJ: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Angrosino, M. V., & Mays de Perez, K. A. (2003). Rethinking observation: From method to text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (2nd ed., Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage Publications, pp. 107-154.

Armstrong, T., Bauman, A., & Davies, J. (1999). *Physical Activity Patterns of Australian Adults: Results of the 1999 National Physical Activity Survey*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Ashton-Shaeffer, C., Gibson, H. J., Autry, C. E., & Hanson, C. S. (2001a). Meaning of sport to adults with physical disabilities: A disability sport camp experience. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 18(1), pp. 95-114.

Ashton-Shaeffer, C., Gibson, H. J., Holt, M., & Willming, C. (2001b). Women's resistance and empowerment through wheelchair sport. *World Leisure Journal*, 43(4), pp. 11-21.

Atchley, R. C. (1989). A continuity theory of normal aging. *The Gerontologist*, 29, pp. 183-190.

Atchley, R. C. (1993). Continuity theory and the evolution of activity in later adulthood. In J. R. Kelly (Ed.), *Activity and Aging: Staying Involved in Later Life*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 5-16.

Atchley, R. C. (1997). *Social Forces and Ageing: An Introduction the Social Gerontology* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

AUSSI Masters Swimming Australia. (2003). *AUSSI Masters Swimming Home Page*, last updated 2 June 2003, viewed 5 June 2003 <<http://www.aussimasters.com.au/index.html>>.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2002a). *Population: Special article - Australia's older population: Past, present and future (June, 1999)*, electronic version, Catalogue no. 3101.0, ABS, Canberra, viewed 19 November 2003, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/47B4A1E252B14CD9CA2569DE002139C5>>.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2002b). *Culture and Recreation: Special Article - Sporting Australians*, electronic version, Catalogue no. 1301.0, ABS, Canberra, viewed 24 April 2003, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs%40.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/44f57072c0bb05cbca2569de0025c186!OpenDocument>>.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003). *Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories*, electronic version, Catalogue no. 3201.0, ABS, Canberra, viewed 19 November 2003, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/093DE2D848E3A319CA256E0000757AFB>>.
- Australian Masters Games. (2001). *Volunteer Orientation Manual*. Newcastle: The Newcastle Hunter and Events Corporation.
- Australian Sports Commission. (1999). *Active Australia: Older Adults in Sport*, Australian Sports Commission, Canberra, viewed 7 July 2003, <<http://www.activeaustralia.org/older/>>.
- Australian Sports Commission & Department of Veterans' Affairs. (2001) *Older, Smarter, Fitter, A Guide for Providers of Sport and Physical Activity Programs for Older Australians*, Belconnen, ACT.
- Bain, L. L. (1995). Mindfulness and subjective knowledge. *QUEST*, 47, pp. 238-253.
- Bauman, Z. (1995). *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bernard, H. R. (1994). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Bevan, C., & Jeeawody, B. (1998). *Successful Ageing: Perspectives on Health and Social Construction*. Artarmon: Mosby Publishers Australia.
- Biddle, S., & Smith, R. A. (1991). Motivating older adults for physical activity: Towards a healthier present. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 62(7), pp. 39-43.
- Biggs, S. (1993). *Understanding Ageing: Images, Attitudes and Professional Practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Biggs, S. (1997). Choosing not to be old? Masks, bodies and identity management in later life. *Ageing and Society*, 17(5), pp. 553-570.
- Biggs, S. (1999). *The Mature Imagination: Dynamics of Identity in Midlife and*

Beyond. Buckingham: Open University Press.

- Birrell, S., & Richter, D. M. (1987). Is a diamond forever? Feminist transformations of sport. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 10, pp. 395-409.
- Birrell, S., & Theberge, N. (1994). Feminist resistance and transformation in sport. In D. Costa & S. R. Guthrie (Eds.), *Women and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, pp. 361-376.
- Blackman, H. (1997). *How to Look and Feel Half your Age: For the Rest of your Life*. London: Virgin.
- Blaikie, A. (1999). *Ageing and Popular Culture*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Blinde, E. M., & McClung, L. R. (1997). Enhancing the physical and social self through recreational activity: Accounts of individuals with physical disabilities. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 14, pp. 327-344.
- Blinde, E. M., Taub, D. E., & Han, L. (1994). Sport as a site for women's group and societal empowerment: Perspectives from the college athlete. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 11(1), pp. 51-59.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Boag, A., & Cuskelly, G. (1996). Lifecycle participation profiles in sporting activities: Their use in exploring opportunities and constraints. Paper presented at the 20th Biennial National/International ACHPER Conference, Melbourne, 14-19 January.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1992). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bond, J., Briggs, R., & Coleman, D. (1993). The study of ageing. In J. Bond & D. Coleman & S. Peace (Eds.), *Ageing in Society: An Introduction to Social Gerontology*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 19-52.
- Boyle, M., & McKay, J. (1995). 'You leave your troubles at the gate': A case study of the exploitation of older women's labour and 'leisure' in sport. *Gender &*

Society, 9(5), pp. 556-575.

Burns, R. (1992). *Play on. The Report of the Masters Sport Project on Mature Aged Sport in Australia*. Canberra: Australian Sports Commission.

Bury, M. (1998). Ageing, gender and sociological theory. In J. Ginn & S. Arber (Eds.), *Ageing, Gender and the Lifecourse*. London: Sage Publications, pp.15-34.

Butler, R. (1969). Ageism: Another form of bigotry. *The Gerontologist*, 9, pp. 243-246.

Bytheway, B. (1995). *Ageism*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Carron, A., & Leith, L. (1986). Psychology of the Masters athlete: Motivational considerations. In J. R. Sutton & R. M. Brock (Eds.), *Sports Medicine for the Mature Athlete*. Indianapolis: Benchmark Press, pp. 233-239.

Cashman, R. (1995). *Paradise of Sport: The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press Australia.

Castelnuovo, S., & Guthrie, S. R. (1998). *Feminism and the Female Body: Liberating the Amazon Within*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Chodzko-Zajko, W. (2000). Successful aging in the New Millennium: The role of regular physical activity. *QUEST*, 52, pp. 333-343.

Chogahara, M., O'Brien Cousins, S., & Wankel, L. (1998). Social influences on physical activity in older adults: A review. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 6(1), pp. 1-17.

Chopra, D. (1993). *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind: A Practical Alternative to Growing Old*. London: Random House.

Clark, J. (1992). *Full Life Fitness: A complete Exercise Program for Mature Adults*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Coakley, J. J. (1994). *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies* (5th ed.). St.

Louis: Mosby-Year Book.

Coakley, J. J. (2001). *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies* (7th ed.). St. Louis: Mosby-Year Book.

Coleman, P., Bond, J., & Peace, S. (1993). Ageing in the Twentieth Century. In J. Bond, P. Coleman & S. Peace (Eds.), *Ageing in Society: An Introduction to Social Gerontology* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications, pp. 1-18.

Commonwealth of Australia. (1999). *The National Strategy for an Ageing Australia: Healthy Ageing Discussion Paper*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Cotton, R. T., Ekeroth, C. J., & Yancy (Eds.). (1998). *Exercise for Older Adults: ACE's Guide for Fitness Professionals*. San Diego: American Council on Exercise.

Crawford, D. W., Jackson, S. A., & Godbey, G. (1991). A hierarchical model of leisure constraints. *Leisure Sciences*, 13, pp. 309-320.

Cumming, E., & Henry, W. F. (1961). *Growing old: The Process of Disengagement*. New York: Basic Books.

Cuskelly, G., & Boag, A. (1996). Perceived benefits and constraints of Masters sports participants. Paper presented at the 20th Biennial National/International ACHPER Conference, Melbourne, 14-19 January.

Cuskelly, G., Boag, A., McIntyre, N., & Coleman, D. (1993). Perceived benefits of Masters sport participation. Paper presented at the 19th National/International Biennial ACHPER Conference, Darwin, 6 July.

Dale, T., & Ford, I. (2002). *Participation in Exercise Recreation and Sport, 2001*. Canberra: Australian Sports Commission.

Davis, J. A. (1994). *Older Australians: A positive view of ageing*. Marrickville, NSW: Harcourt Brace & Company, Australia.

Deforche, B., & De Bourdeaudhuij, I. (2000). Differences in psychosocial determinants of physical activity in older adults participating in organised versus non-organised activities. *The Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical*

Fitness, 40(4), pp. 362-372.

Denenberg Segal, D. D., Crespo, C. J., & Smit, E. (1998). Active seniors: Protect them, don't neglect them. *Public Health Reports*, 113(2), pp. 137-139.

Denzin, N. K. (1998). The art and politics of interpretation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (Vol. 3, pp. 313-344). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 1-17.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 1-34.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Part III: Strategies of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 366-378.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003a). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (2nd ed., Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 1-45.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003b). Part II: The art and practices of interpretation, evaluation, and representation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (2nd ed., Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 419-425.

Dionigi, R. A. (2001). Participant experiences in a special sporting event: The case of the United Games, Bathurst, Australia. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 4, pp. 17-37.

Dionigi, R. A. (2002a). Leisure and identity management in later life: Understanding competitive sport participation among older adults. *World Leisure Journal*, 44(3), pp. 4-15.

- Dionigi, R. A. (2002b). Resistance and empowerment through leisure: The meaning of competitive sport participation to older adults. *Society and Leisure*, 25(2), pp. 303-328.
- Dionigi, R. A. (2003). Older adults. In J. Jenkins & J. J. Pigram (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation*. London: Routledge, pp. 343-346.
- Dionigi, R. A. (2004). Conflicts in representing and interpreting the 'voices' of older athletes. In G. Whiteford (Ed.), *Proceedings from the Inaugural RIPPLE Qualitative Research as Interpretive Practice Conference*, Charles Sturt University, Albury, NSW, pp. 48-61.
- Dupuis, S. L. (2002). In celebration of later life. *Society and Leisure*, 25(2), pp. 251-255.
- Ellingson, T., & Conn, V. (2000). Exercise and quality of life in elderly individuals. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 26(3), pp. 17-25.
- Ericsson, K. A. (1990). Peak performance and age: An examination of peak performance in sports. In P. B. Baltes & M. M. Baltes (Eds.), *Successful Aging: Perspectives from the Behavioral Sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 164-196.
- Erikson, E. (1962). *Childhood and Society*. New York: Norton.
- Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: Norton
- Erikson, E. (1980). *Identity and the Life Cycle*. New York: Norton.
- Erikson, E. (1997). *The Life Cycle Completed: Extended Version*. New York: Norton.
- Erikson, E. H., Erikson, J. M., & Kivnick, H. Q. (1986). *Vital Involvement in Old Age*. New York: Norton.
- Evans, W. J. (1999). Exercise, nutrition and healthy aging: Establishing community-based exercise programs. In K. Dychtwald (Ed.), *Healthy Aging:*

Challenges and Solutions. Maryland: Aspen Publishers, pp. 347-360.

Featherstone, M., & Hepworth, M. (1989). Ageing and old age: Reflections on the postmodern life course. In B. Bytheway, T. Kiel, P. Allat & A. Bryman (Eds.), *Becoming and Being Old*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 143-157.

Featherstone, M., & Hepworth, M. (1990). Images of aging. In J. Bond & P. Coleman (Eds.), *Aging in Society*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 250-275.

Featherstone, M., & Wernick, A. (Eds.). (1995). *Images of Aging*. London: Routledge.

Feldman, S., Kamler, B., & Snyder, I. (Eds.). (1996). *Stories of women growing older: Something that happens to other people*. Milsons Point, NSW: Random House Australia.

Fiatarone, M. A. (1996). Physical activity and functional independence in aging. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 67(3), p. 70.

Fiatarone Singh, M. A. (Ed.). (2000). *Exercise, Nutrition, and the Older Woman: Wellness for Women Over Fifty*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Fisher, K. J., Pickering, M. A., & Li, F. (2002). Healthy aging through active leisure: Design and methods of SHAPE - a randomized controlled trial of a neighborhood-based walking project. *World Leisure Journal*, 44(1), pp. 19-28.

Flatten, K. (1991). Senior athletes: A profile in courage and spirit. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 62(5), pp. 66-68.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1998). Interviewing: The art of science. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 47-78.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2000). The interview: From structured questions to negotiated text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 645-672.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2003). The interview: From structured questions to

- negotiated text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (2nd ed., Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 61-106.
- Fontane, P. (1996). Exercise, fitness, and feeling well. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 39(3), pp. 288-306.
- Fontane, P., & Hurd, P. (1992). Self-perceptions of National Senior Olympians. *Behavior, Health and Aging*, 2(2), pp. 101-111.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1983). The subject and power (afterword). In & H. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (2nd ed.). Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, pp. 208-226.
- Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In L. Martin & H. Gutman & P. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, pp. 16-49.
- Freysinger, V., & Flannery, D. (1992). Women's leisure: Affiliation, self-determination, empowerment and resistance? *Society and Leisure*, 15(1), pp. 303-321.
- Friedan, B. (1993). *The Fountain of Age*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Gadd, M. (2001). Margaret's on track. *The Post*, 10 October, p. 82.
- Gandee, R. N., Campbell, T. A., Knierim, H., Cosky, A. C., Leslie, D. K., Ziegler, R. G., & Snodgrass, J. E. (1989). Senior Olympic Games: Opportunities for older adults. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 60(3), pp. 72-76.
- Gard, M. (2001). *Aesthetics, Athletics and Art: A Study of Men Who Dance*.

Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wollongong, NSW.

Geertz, C. (1988). *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

George, L. K. (1998). Self and identity in later life: Protecting and enhancing the self. *Journal of Aging and Identity*, 3(3), pp. 133-152.

Getz, D. (1997). *Event Management and Event Tourism*. New York: Cognizant Communication Corporation.

Gibson, H. B. (2000). It keeps us young. *Ageing and Society*, 20(6), pp. 773-779.

Giddens, A. (1974). *Positivism and Sociology*. London: Heinemann.

Giddens, A. (1976). *New Rules of the Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretive Sociology*. London: Hutchinson.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gill, D. L., Williams, L., Dowd, D. A., Beaudoin, C. M., & Martin, J. J. (1996). Competitive orientations and motives of adult sport and exercise participation. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 19(4), pp. 307-318.

Gilleard, C. & Higgs, P. (2000). *Cultures of Ageing: Self, Citizen and the Body*. Harlow : Prentice Hall

Gilleard, C. & Higgs, P. (2002). The Third Age: class, cohort or generation? *Ageing and Society*, 22(3), pp. 369-382.

Giorgi, A. (1997). The theory, practice and evaluation of the phenomenological methods as a qualitative research procedure. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 28(2), pp. 235-260.

- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Godbey, G. (1994). *Leisure in Your Life: An Exploration* (4th ed.). State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Godbey, G. (1997). *Leisure and Leisure Services in the 21st Century*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Goffman, E. (1969). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Grant, B. C. (2001). 'You're never too old': Beliefs about physical activity and playing sport in later life. *Ageing and Society*, 21(6), pp. 777-798.
- Grant, B. C. (2002). Physical activity: Not a popular leisure choice in later life. *Society and Leisure*, 25(2), pp. 285-302.
- Grant, B. C., & O'Brien Cousins, S. (2001). Aging and physical activity: The promise of qualitative research. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 9(3), pp. 237-244.
- Grant, B. C., & Stothart, B. (1999). Ageing, leisure and active living. *The ACHPER Healthy Lifestyles Journal*, 46(2/3), pp. 29-32.
- Green, E. (1998). 'Women doing friendship': An analysis of women's leisure as a sight of identity construction, empowerment and resistance. *Leisure Studies*, 17(3), pp. 171-185.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 105-117.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2000). Analyzing interpretive practice. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 487-508.
- Guthrie, S. R., & Castelnovo, S. (1992). Elite women bodybuilders: Models of

resistance or compliance? *Play and Culture*, 5(4), pp. 401-408.

Guthrie, S. R., & Castelnovo, S. (2001). Disability management among women with physical impairments: The contribution of physical activity. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 18(1), pp. 5-20.

Hammond, M., Howarth, J., & Keat, R. (1991). *Understanding Phenomenology*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Harada, M. (1994). Early and later life sport participation patterns among the active elderly in Japan. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 2(2), pp. 105-114.

Harahousou, Y., Lailoglou, A. & Kabitsis, C. (2003). The impact of physical health and functional status on the "aging well" of elderly people in Greece. *World Leisure Journal*, 45(1), pp. 26-34.

Hardcastle, S., & Taylor, A. H. (2001). Looking for more than weight loss and fitness Gain: Psychosocial dimensions among older women in a primary-care exercise-referral program. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 9(3), pp. 313-328.

Hargreaves, J. (1994). *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports*. London: Routledge.

Harris, J. (2001). Playing the man's games: Sites of resistance and incorporation in women's football. *World Leisure Journal*, 4(1), pp. 22-29.

Hartsock, N. (1990). Foucault on power. In L. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, pp. 157-175.

Havighurst, R. J. (1963). Successful Ageing. In R. Williams & C. Tibbits & W. Donahue (Eds.), *Processes of Aging* (Vol. 1). New York: Atherton Press.

Havighurst, R. J. (1972). *Developmental Tasks and Education*. New York: Longman.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time* (J. Macquarie & E. Robinson, Trans.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Hemingway, J. L. (1995). Leisure studies and interpretive social inquiry. *Leisure Studies*, 14(1), pp. 32-47.
- Henderson, K. A. (1991). *Dimensions of Choice: A Qualitative Approach to Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Research*. State College: Venture Publishing.
- Henderson, K. A., & Ainsworth, B. E. (2001). Physical activity and human development among older native American women. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 9(3), pp. 285-299.
- Henderson, K. A. & Bialeschki, M. D. (1994). The meanings of physical recreation for women. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 3(2), pp. 22-38.
- Henderson, K. A., Bialeschki, M. D., Shaw, S. M., & Freysinger, V. (1989). *A Leisure of One's Own: A Feminist Perspective on Women's Leisure*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Henderson, K. A., Bialeschki, M. D., Shaw, S. M., & Freysinger, V. (1996). *A Both Gains and Gaps: Feminist Perspectives on Women's Leisure*. University Park, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Hill, M. (2001). Chairman's Welcome. In *8th Australian Masters Games: Games Guide*. Newcastle: Newcastle & Hunter Events Corporation, p. 5.
- Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (1994). Phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and interpretive practice. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 262-272.
- Howe, C. Z. (1990). The analysis of qualitative data: An example from the evaluation of a community reintegration program. Paper presented at the 6th Canadian Congress on Leisure Research, University of Waterloo, Ontario, 11 May.
- Huberman, A. M., & Miles, M. B. (1998). Data management and analysis methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Material*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 179-210.
- Hurd, L. C. (1999). 'We're not old!': Older Women's negotiation of aging and oldness. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 13(4), pp. 419-439.

- Hurley, A. (2001). It's the spirit of the Games that inspire. *The Newcastle Herald*, 5 October, p. 9.
- Hurley, G. R., & Roth, S. M. (2000). Strength training in the elderly: Effects on risk factors for age-related diseases. *Sports Medicine*, 30(4), pp. 249-268.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *Logical Investigation*. New York: Humanities Press.
- Iso-Ahola, S., & St. Clair, B. (2000). Toward a theory of exercise motivation. *QUEST*, 52(2), pp. 131-147.
- Jackson, S. A., Ford, S. K., Kimiecik, J. C., & Marsh, H. W. (1998). Psychological correlates of flow in sport. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 20, pp. 358-378.
- Jacobson, S., & Samdahl, D. M. (1998). Leisure in the lives of old lesbians: Experiences with and responses to discrimination. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 30(2), pp. 233-256.
- Jaffe, D. J., & Miller, E. M. (1994). Problematizing meaning. In J. F. Gubrium & A. Sankar (Eds.), *Qualitative Methods in Aging Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 51-64.
- Janesick, V. J. (1999). A journal about journal writing as a qualitative research technique: History, issues, and reflections. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5(4), pp. 505-524.
- Janesick, V. J. (2000). The choreography of qualitative research design: Minuets, improvisations, and crystallization. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 379-400.
- Johnson, T. (1995). Aging well in contemporary society. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 39, pp. 120-130.
- Jones, D., Sloane, J., & Alexander, L. (1992). Quality of life: A practical approach. In V. Minichiello & L. Alexander & D. Jones (Eds.), *Gerontology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. Sydney: Prentice Hall, pp. 224-265.
- Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*. (2001). The promise of qualitative research,

9(3), pp. 237-344.

Katz, S. (2000). Busy bodies: Activity, aging, and the management of everyday life. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 14(2), pp. 135-152.

Kaufman, S. R. (1986). *The ageless self: Sources of meaning in late life*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Kaufman, S. R. (1993). Values as sources of the ageless self. In J. R. Kelly (Ed.), *Activity and Aging: Staying Involved in Later Life*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 17-24.

Kavanagh, T., & Shephard, R. J. (1990). Can regular sports participation slow the aging process? Data on Masters athletes. *The Physician and Sportsmedicine*, 18(6), pp. 94-104.

Kayser, D. (1992). Competitive sports for middle-aged and older persons: Practical and theoretical considerations. In W. Harris & R. Harris & W. Harris (Eds.), *Physical Activity, Aging and Sports: Practice, Program and Policy* (Vol. 2). New York: The Center for the Study of Aging, pp. 63-74.

Kelly, J. R. (1983). *Leisure Identities and Interactions*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Kelly, J. R. (Ed.). (1993). *Activity and Aging: Staying Involved in Later Life*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Kelly, J., & Freysinger, V. (2000). *21st Century Leisure: Current Issues*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Kerry, D. S., & Armour, K. M. (2000). Sport sciences and the promise of phenomenology: Philosophy, method, and insight. *QUEST*, 52(1), pp. 1-17.

Kipfer, B. A. (Ed.). (2004). *Roget's Interactive Thesaurus* (1st ed.), Lexic Publishing Group, LLC, viewed 21 February 2004, <<http://thesaurus.reference.com/search?config=roget&q=competition>>.

Kleiber, D. A. (1999). *Leisure Experience and Human Development: A Dialectical*

Approach. New York: Basic Books.

Kluge, M. A. (2002). Understanding the essence of a physically active lifestyle. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 10(1), pp. 4-27.

Krane, V. (2001). We can be athletic and feminine, but do we want to? Challenging hegemonic femininity in women's sport. *QUEST*, 53(1), pp. 115-133.

Krane, V., & Romont, L. (1997). Female athletes' motives and experiences during the Gay Games. *Journal of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Identity*, 2(2), pp. 123-138.

Krane, V., & Waldron, J. (2000). The Gay Games: Creating our own sports culture. In K. Schaffer & S. Smith (Eds.), *The Olympics at the Millennium: Power, Politics and the Games*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, pp. 147-164.

Kuentzel, W. F. (2000). Self-identity, modernity, and the rational actor in leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32(1), pp. 87-92.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Lamdin, L., & Fugate, M. (1997). *Elderlearning: New Frontier in an Aging Society*. Phoenix: Oryx Press.

Langley, D. J. (2001). The influence of functional constraints on sport-skill learning in a senior adult. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 9(3), pp. 269-284.

Langley, D. J., & Knight, S. M. (1996). Exploring practical knowledge: A case study of an experienced senior tennis performer. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 67(4), pp. 433-447.

Langley, D. J., & Knight, S. M. (1999). Continuity in sport participation as an adaptive strategy in the aging process: A lifespan narrative. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 7(1), pp. 32-54.

Laslett, P. (1989). *A Fresh Map of Life: The Emergence of the Third Age*. London:

George Weidenfeld and Nicholson Ltd.

Laslett, P. (1996). *A Fresh Map of Life* (2nd ed.). Hampshire: Macmillan.

Laura, R. S., & Johnston, B. B. (1997). *Fit After Fifty*. Sydney: Simon & Schuster Australia.

Lawler, J. (2002) *Punch: Why women participate in violent sports*. Terre Haute, IN: Wish Publishing.

Lawrence, G., & Rowe, D. (Eds.). (1986). *Power Play: Essays in the Sociology of Australian Sport*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger.

Lenskyj, H. (1994). Sexuality and femininity in sport contexts: Issues and alternatives. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 18, pp. 356-376.

Leslight, R. (1997). Factors affecting adherence and compliance to a worksite exercise program. *The Active and Healthy Magazine of Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, 4(3), pp. 6-9.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Little, D. E. (2002). Women and adventure recreation: Reconstructing leisure constraints and adventure experiences to negotiate continuing participation. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(2), pp. 157-177.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1995). *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Lopata, H. Z. (1993). Widows: Social integration and activity. In J. R. Kelly (Ed.), *Activity and Aging: Staying Involved in Later Life*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 99-105.

MacNeil, R. D. (2001). Bob Dylan and the Baby Boom generation: The times they are a-changin' - again. *Activities, Adaptation and Aging*, 25(3/4), pp. 45-58.

MacNeil, R. D. & Teague, M. L. (Eds.). (1987). *Aging and Leisure: Vitality in*

Later Life. Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall

- Markula, P., Grant, B. C., & Denison, J. (2001). Qualitative research and aging and physical activity: Multiple ways of knowing. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 9(3), pp. 245-264.
- Marriner, C. (2004). Prepare for a different kind of workforce. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February, p. 9.
- Martin, D. (2002). *World Masters 2002: Melbourne Uni Renegades at World Masters Games 2002*, last updated 8 October 2002, viewed 10 June 2004, <http://www.renegades.com.au/news/20021008_world_masters1.html >
- Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- McAuley, E., & Rudolph, D. (1995). Physical activity, aging, and psychological well-being. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 3(1), pp. 67-96.
- McCormack, J. (2000). Looking back and moving forward? Ageing in Australia 2000. *Ageing and Society*, 20(5), pp. 623-631.
- McGuire, F., Boyd, R., & Tedrick, R. (1996). *Leisure and Aging: Ulyssean Living in Later Life*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publications.
- McIntyre, N., Coleman, D., Boag, A., & Cuskelly, G. (1992). Understanding masters sport participation: Involvement, motives and benefits. *The ACHPER National Journal* (Summer), pp. 4-8.
- McKay, J. (1991). *No Pain, No Gain?* Sydney: Prentice Hall.
- McKay, J., Hughson, J., Lawrence, G., & Rowe, D. (2000). Sport and Australian society. In J. M. Najman & J. S. Western (Eds.), *A Sociology of Australian Society* (3rd ed.). South Yarra: Macmillan Publishers Australia, pp. 275-300.
- McPherson, B. D. (1984). Sport participation across the life cycle: A review of the literature and suggestions for further research. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 1(3), pp. 213-230.

- McPherson, B. D. (1986). Chapter 1: Sport, health well-being and aging: Some conceptual and methodological issues and questions for sport scientists. In B. D. McPherson (Ed.), *Sport and Aging: The 1984 Olympic Scientific Congress Proceedings, Eugene, Oregon*. Champaign, IL, Human Kinetics pp. 3-24.
- McPherson, B. D. (1991). Aging and leisure benefits: A lifecycle perspective. In B. L. Driver & P. J. Brown & G. L. Peterson (Eds.), *Benefits of Leisure*. Pennsylvania: Venture Publishing Inc, pp. 423-430.
- McPherson, B. D. (1994). Sociocultural perspectives on aging and physical activity. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 2(3), pp. 329-353.
- McPherson, B. D. (1998). *Aging as a Social Process: An introduction to individual and population aging* (3rd ed.). Toronto, Ontario: Harcourt, Brace & Company.
- McPherson, B. D. (1999). Population aging and leisure in a global context: Factors influencing inclusion and exclusion within and across culture. *World Leisure and Recreation*, 41(3), pp. 5-10.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Source Book*. London: Sage Publications.
- Minichiello, V., Alexander, L., & Jones, D. (Eds.). (1992a). *Gerontology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. Sydney: Prentice Hall.
- Minichiello, V., Brown, J., & Kendig, H. (2000). Perceptions and consequences of ageism: Views of older people. *Ageing and Society*, 20(3), pp. 253-278.
- Minichiello, V., Browning, C., & Aroni, R. (1992b). The challenge of the study of ageing. In V. Minichiello & L. Alexander & D. Jones (Eds.), *Gerontology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. Sydney: Prentice Hill, pp. 1-16.
- Minkler, M. (1999). Personal responsibility for health? A review of the arguments and the evidence at Century's end. *Health Education and Behavior*, 26(1), pp. 121-140.
- Mobily, K. E. (1987). Chapter 7, Leisure, lifestyle, and lifespan. In R. D. MacNeil

- & M. L. Teague (Eds.), *Aging and Leisure: Vitality in Later Life*. Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, pp. 156-180.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Murphy, J. W., & Longino, C. F. (1997). Toward a postmodern understanding of aging and identity. *Journal of Aging and Identity*, 2(2), pp. 81-91.
- Neumayer, R., & Goddard, L. (1998). Challenging the myths of older adults with disabilities. In C. Bevan & B. Jeeawody (Eds.), *Successful Ageing: Perspectives on Health and Social Construction*. Artarmon: Mosby Publishers Australia, pp. 208-249.
- Newcastle & Hunter Events Corporation. (2001). *8th Australian Masters Games, Newcastle & Hunter, 2001: Final Report*. Newcastle, Newcastle & Hunter Events Corporation.
- Noad, K., & James, K. (2003). Samurai of gentle power: An exploration of Aikido in the lives of women Aikidoka. In *Refereed Papers: 6th Biennial Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Leisure Studies, 10-12 July*, Sydney: ANZALS, pp. 90-103.
- Oberg, P., & Tornstam, L. (2001). Youthfulness and fitness: Identity ideals for all ages? *Journal of Aging and Identity*, 6(1), pp. 15-29.
- O'Brien Cousins, S. (1995). Anticipated exertion for exercise activities among women over age 70. *Canadian Women's Studies Journal*, 15(4), pp. 73-77.
- O'Brien Cousins, S. (1998). *Exercise, Aging, and Health: Overcoming Barriers to an Active Old Age*. Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis.
- O'Brien Cousins, S. (2000). 'My heart couldn't take it': Older women's beliefs about exercise benefits and risks. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 55B(5), pp. 283-294.
- O'Brien Cousins, S., & Burgess, A. (1992). Perspectives on older adults in physical activity and sports, *Educational Gerontology*, 18, pp. 461-481.
- O'Brien Cousins, S., & Horne, T. (1999). *Active Living Among Older Adults:*

Health Benefits and Outcomes. Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel.

- O'Brien Cousins, S., & Keating, N. (1995). Life cycle patterns of physical activity among sedentary and active older women. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 3, pp. 340-359.
- O'Brien Cousins, S., & Vertinsky, P. (1995). Recapturing the physical activity experiences of the old: A study of three women. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 3, pp. 146-162.
- O'Bryan, M. (1985). The Masters Games: From dream to reality. *World Leisure and Recreation*, 27(2), pp. 12-15.
- Olson, L. T. (2001). *Masters Track and Field: A History*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Publishers.
- Onyx, J., & Benton, P. (1995). Empowerment and aging: Toward honoured places for Crones and Sages. In G. Craig & M. Mayo (Eds.), *Community Empowerment: A Reader in Participation and Development*. London: Zed Books.
- Onyx, J., Leonard, R., & Reed, R. (1999). *Revisioning Aging: Empowerment of Older Women*. New York: Lang.
- Palm, J. (1985). A worldwide trend in the leisure life of the eighties. *World Leisure and Recreation*, 27(2), pp. 16-21.
- Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pepe, M. V., & Gandee, R. F. (1992). Ohio Senior Olympics: Creating the new adult image. In W. Harris & R. Harris & W. Harris (Eds.), *Physical Activity, Aging and Sports: Practice, Program and Policy* (Vol. 2). New York: The Center for the Study of Aging, pp. 75-82.
- Perls, T. T., & Silver, M. H. (1999). *Living to 100: Lessons in Living to Your Maximum Potential at Any Age*. New York: Basic Books.
- Phillipson, C., & Biggs, S. (1998). Modernity and identity: Themes and perspectives in the study of older adults. *Journal of Aging and Identity*, 3(1),

pp. 11-23.

Poole, M. (2001). Fit for life: Older women's commitment to exercise. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 9(3), pp. 300-312.

Prus, R. (1996). *Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Resnick, B. (2000). Exercise and older adults. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 26(3), p. 3.

Resnick, B., & Spellbring, A. M. (2000). Understanding what motivates older adults to exercise. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 26(3), pp. 34-42.

Richardson, L. (1998). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 345-371.

Roper, E. A., Molnar, D. J., & Wrisberg, C. A. (2003). No "old fool": 88 years old and still running. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 11(3), pp. 370-387.

Rotella, R. J., & Bunker, L. (1978). Locus of control and achievement motivation in the active aged (65 years and over). *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 46, pp. 1043-1046.

Rowe, J., & Kahn, R. (1998). *Successful Aging*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Rowe, D., & Lawrence, G. (Eds.). (1990). *Sport and Leisure: Trends in Australian Popular Culture*. Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers.

Rowe, D., & Lawrence, G. (Eds.). (1998). *Tourism, Leisure, Sport: Critical Perspectives*. Rydalmere, NSW: Hodder Education.

Rowe, D., McKay, J., & Lawrence, G. (1997). Out of the shadows: The critical sociology of sport in Australia, 1986 to 1996. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 14, pp. 340-361.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing*

Data. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

- Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Data management and analysis methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (2nd ed., Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 259-309.
- Ryan, C., & Lockyer, T. (2000). The South Pacific Masters Games - A working paper studying participants' attitudes. Paper presented at the 4th New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference, New Zealand, 6 December.
- Samdahl, D. M. (2000). Reflections on the future of leisure studies. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32(1), pp. 125-128.
- Sankar, A., & Gubrium, J. F. (1994). Introduction. In J. F. Gubrium & A. Sankar (Eds.), *Qualitative Methods in Aging Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. vii-xvii.
- Sarantakos, S. (1993). *Social Research*. Melbourne: MacMillan Education Australia.
- Sarantakos, S. (1998). *Social Research* (2nd ed.). South Melbourne: Macmillan Education Australia.
- Sarup, M. (1996). *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press.
- Schulz, R., & Salthouse, T. (1999). *Adult Development and Aging: Myths and Emerging Realities* (3rd ed.). New York: Prentice Hall.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 118-137.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructivism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 189-214.
- Secker, J., Hill, R., Villeneuve, L., & Parkman, S. (2003). Promoting independence:

- but promoting what and how? *Ageing and Society*, 23(3), pp. 375-391.
- Sharpe, D. (2001). Keith on mark and game for anything at 89. *The Post*, 4 July, p. 70.
- Shaw, S. M. (1994). Gender, Leisure, and constraint: Towards a framework for the analysis of women's leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 26(1), pp. 8-22.
- Shaw S. M. (1996). The gendered nature of leisure: Individual and societal outcomes of leisure practice. *World Leisure and Recreation Association Journal*, 28(4), p. 4-6.
- Shaw, S. M. (2001). Conceptualizing resistance: Women's leisure as political practice. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 33(2), pp. 186-201.
- Shaw, S. M., Kleiber, D. A. & Caldwell, L. L. (1995). Leisure and identity formation in male and female adolescents: A preliminary examination. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 27(3), pp. 245-263.
- Sheehy, G. (1996). *New Passages*. London: Harper Collins.
- Shephard, R. J. (1994). Determinants of exercise in people ages 65 years and older. In R. K. Dishman (Ed.), *Advances in Exercise Adherence*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, pp. 343-360.
- Shephard, R. (1995). Physical activity, health and well-being at different life stages. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 66(4), 298-302.
- Shephard, R. J. (1996). Habitual physical activity and quality of life. *QUEST*, 48(3), pp. 354-365.
- Shephard, R. J. (1997). *Aging, Physical Activity and Health*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Shephard, R. J. (2001). Quality of life in old age: A key reason for promoting 'Sport for All'. In C. Simard & G. Thibault & C. Goulet & C. Pare & F. Bilodeau (Eds.), *Sport for All and Government Policies*. Quebec: Sports Internationaux de Quebec, pp. 529-539.

- Silverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Smith, C., & Storandt, M. (1997). Physical activity participation in older adults: A comparison of competitors, noncompetitors, and nonexercisers. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 5(2), pp. 98-110.
- Spirduso, W. (1995). *Physical Dimensions of Aging*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Stathi, A., Fox, K. R., & McKenna, J. (2002). Physical activity and the dimensions of subjective well-being in older adults. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 10(1), pp. 76-92.
- Stevenson, C. L. (2002). Seeking identities: Towards an understanding of the athletic careers of Masters swimmers. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 37(2), pp. 131-146.
- Stoddart, B. (1986). *Saturday Afternoon Fever: Sport in the Australian Culture*. North Ryde: Angus and Robertson Publishers.
- Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Sutton, J. R., & Brock, R. M. (Eds.). (1986). *Sports Medicine for the Mature Athlete*. Indianapolis: Benchmark Press, Inc.
- Tantrum, M., & Hodge, K. (1993). Motives for participating in Masters swimming. *New Zealand Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, 26(1), pp. 3-7.
- Taub, D. E., Blinde, E. M., & Greer, K. R. (1999). Stigma management through participation in sport and physical activity: Experiences of male college students with physical disabilities. *Human Relations*, 52(11), pp. 1469-1484.
- Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods:*

A Guidebook and Resource (3rd ed.). New York: Wiley.

Tennis Veterans Australia. (2002). *Tennis Vets Australia: About us*, viewed 6 June 2003, <http://www.tennisvets.org.au/about_us.html>.

The Newcastle Herald, (2001), Veteran aces serve up style, 8 October, p. 31.

Theberge, N. (1986). Toward a feminist alternative to sport as a male preserve. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 3, pp. 193-202.

Theberge, N. (1987). Sport and women's empowerment. *Women Studies International Forum*, 10, pp. 387-393.

Theberge, N. (1991). Reflections on the body in the sociology of sport. *QUEST*, 43, pp. 123-134.

Theberge, N. (1995). Gender, sport and the construction of community: A case study from women's ice hockey. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 12(4), pp. 389-402.

Theberge, N. (1997). 'It's part of the game' physicality and the production of gender in women's hockey. *Gender & Society*, 11(1), pp. 69-87.

Theberge, N. (2000). *Higher Goals: Women's Ice Hockey and the Politics of Gender*. New York: SUNY Press.

Thomas, R. B. (1999). Over the hill and picking up speed. *Parks and Recreation*, 34(8), pp. 46-51.

Thompson, P., Itzin, C., & Abendstern, M. (1990). *I don't feel old: The experience of later life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tomlinson, A. (1998). Power: Domination, negotiation and resistance in sport cultures. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 22(3), pp. 235-240.

Tseng, B. S., Marsh, D. R., Hamilton, M. T., & Booth, F. W. (1995). Strength and aerobic training attenuate muscle wasting and improve resistance to the development of disability with aging. *Journal of Gerontology*, 50A(Special

Issue), pp. 113-119.

Valentine, R. (2001). Roy vows to stick with lifelong obsession. *The Newcastle Herald*, 8 October, p. 31.

Vamplew, W., Moore, K., O'Hara, J., Cashman, R., & Jobling, I. (1994). *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. Chicago: University Chicago Press.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. London, Ontario: The Althouse Press.

van Manen, M. (1998). *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). London, Ontario: Althouse Press.

van Norman, K. A. (1995). *Exercise Programming for Older Adults*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

van Norman, K. A. (1998). Motivation and compliance in exercise programs for older adults. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 69(8), pp. 24-27.

Veal, A. J. (1997). *Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism: A Practical Guide* (2nd ed.). London: Pitman in Association with the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management.

Veal, A. J., & Lynch, R. (2001). *Australian Leisure*. Frenchs Forest: Longman.

Vertinsky, P. (1995). Stereotypes of aging women and exercise: A historical perspective. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 3, pp. 223-237.

Victorian Masters Athletics. (2004). *Welcome: Victorian Masters Athletics*, home page, last updated 15 April 2004, viewed 28 April 2004, <<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vicvets/introfr.html>>.

Vicvets Australia. (2003). *Vicvets*, home page, last updated 8 May 2003, viewed 5

June 2003, <<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vicvets/introfr.html>>.

Washburn, R. A. (2000). Assessment of physical activity in older adults. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 71(2), pp. 79-88.

Wearing, B. (1990). Beyond the ideology of motherhood: Leisure as resistance. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 26(1), pp. 36-58.

Wearing, B. (1991). Leisure and women's identity: Conformity or Individuality? *Society and Leisure*, 14(2), pp. 575-586.

Wearing, B. (1995). Leisure and resistance in an ageing society. *Leisure Studies*, 14(4), pp. 263-279.

Wearing, B. (1996). *Gender: The Pain and Pleasure of Difference*. Frenchs Forest, Australia: Longman.

Wearing, B. (1998). *Leisure and Feminist Theory*. London: Sage Publications.

Wearing, B., & Wearing, S. (1990). Leisure for all? Gender and policy. In D. Rowe & G. Lawrence (Eds.), *Sport and Leisure: Trends in Australian Popular Culture*. Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, pp.161-173.

Weber, M. (1949). *On Methodology in the Social Sciences*. Glencoe: Free Press.

Weedon, C. (1987). *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Weiss, O. (2001). Identity reinforcement in sport: Revisiting the symbolic interactionist legacy. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 36(4), pp. 393-405.

Wheaton, B., & Tomlinson, A. (1998). The changing gender order in sport? The case of windsurfing subcultures. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 22(3), pp. 252-274.

Whitson, D. (1976). Method in sport sociology: The potential of a phenomenological contribution. *International Review of Sport Sociology*,

11(1), pp. 53-68

- Wiley, C., Shaw, S. M., & Havitz, M. E. (2000). Men's and women's involvement in sports: An examination of the gendered aspects of leisure involvement. *Leisure Sciences*, 22, pp. 19-31.
- Wimbush, E., & Talbot, M. (1988). *Relative Freedoms: Women and Leisure*. Milton Keynes, Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Wood, M. (2003). Baby boomers choosing fit over fat, *The Sun-Herald*, 18 May, p. 46.
- Woodward, K. (1991). *Aging and its Discontents*. Indiana: Bloomington.
- Work, J. A. (1989). Strength training: A bridge to independence for the elderly. *Physician & Sportsmedicine*, 11, pp. 134-140.
- World Health Organization. (1997). The Heidelberg guidelines for promoting physical activity among older persons. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 5(1), pp. 2-8.
- Yeates, R. (1999). *A chronology of the development of Australian Veterans Hockey*, last updated 19 October 1999, viewed 6 June 2003, <<http://www.alphalink.com.au/~hockeyv/vetchron.htm>>.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications.
- Young, M. & Schuller, T. (1991). *Life After Work: The Arrival of the Ageless Society*. London: Harper Collins.