

Example of undertaking secondary analysis of Lifespan Collection

Competitive funding from Middlesex University Psychology Department research funds has been provided for pilot secondary analysis of the Lifespan Collection within RADAR:

Project title

Meanings of Lifespan Development for Women and their Families living in London

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Project start date: January 2014. Project end date: July 2014

Objectives and research summary

The Lifespan Collection held at Middlesex University, consists of an intergenerational sample of over 500 family members living in North London in the 1990s, who gave their life stories from childhood to the present day in taped interviews. There are around 3,400 hours of audio taped interviews, rated schedules in the form of paper records, and an electronic quantitative data set that need to be fully archived and made available for future research. The research was part of a rolling programme of Medical Council Research funding through the 1980s and 1990s, investigating psychosocial risks for depression and other common psychological disorders in women and their families.

To date, this unique data set has been the source of many research publications into topics such as childhood neglect/abuse; adult stress and coping; attachment style; self-esteem; relationship with partner and parenting behaviour as well as lifetime psychiatric disorders both affective and behavioural. However, the qualitative aspects are as yet largely untapped and additional analyses still wait to be undertaken, with the long-term aim being to release the collection's interdisciplinary potential for a wider research community.

The current study will analyse a subsection of a qualitative data corpus held as part of the Lifespan Collection both to access new information and to prepare the ground for a larger applications for funds to archive the data for wider access by psychologists and other social scientists seeking to understand lifespan issues in the generations studied.

The study will analyse qualitative case material using a flexible narrative analysis approach (Frost, 2009) in order to discover new material and themes not considered in original analysis. Cases will be selected in relation to certain criteria including age group, gender, risk experience or clinical history. In addition, this study will add to ongoing work in the Psychology Department around qualitative methods, secondary analysis and narrative accounts. It will also overlap with themes around clinical health, childhood experience and development, social relationships/attachment and stress.

There are a number of other sets of data similar to the Lifespan Collection in the US and in the UK. The process and outcomes of this scoping study will enable consideration of possibilities of ways in which these can be joined to provide a large scale, data archive for researchers and scholars interested in Lifespan development across the world. The research will be disseminated using existing networks and through academic publications, conferences and teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

If you wish to find out more about this work, or any other aspect of RADAR or Lifespan Archive Collection please contact us at lifespantraining@mdx.ac.uk