

KPA Bursary Scheme Award 2015 Report

Recipient: Robin Hadley (PhD: defended)

Event: The British Society of Gerontology 44th Annual Conference 1st – 3rd July, 2015. Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.

The British Society of Gerontology Annual Conference is an international event that draws high profile individuals from not only academia but also from policy, practice, third and fourth sector organisations, and private enterprises. The theme of this year's conference was 'Ageing in changing times: challenges and future prospects'. My research into the lived experience of older childless men fitted perfectly and both my abstracts were accepted – one for a poster a presentation and the other for an oral presentation. I applied for a KPA bursary and was fortunate to be awarded a sum that covered the cost of the 'early bird' conference and accommodation fees. In addition to acknowledging the KPA by incorporating the KPA logo on the poster and slides I also tweeted my appreciation of the support the KPA had given me.

The conference programme had timetabled a specific session for the presentation of the posters on the first afternoon of the conference. My poster focused in the challenges of recruiting male participants in a sensitive subject. During the designated session I spoke with around 12 people on both the specific and the general details of my study. Two delegates from Canada, one from The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, and the other from The Université de Sherbrooke, Québec, were interested in the strategies I deployed. Other parties were interested in discussing their own and wider familial experience.

My oral presentation was the second of four in 'Parallel Session 7' on the 3rd July: 11.00am - 12.30pm. The audience of 20 or so consisted of a wide range of delegates: professors, practitioners, members of the U3A, and post-graduates. My talk on the social networks of involuntarily childless older men was well received. However, the only question asked required an in-depth reply that prevented any others being asked. Nonetheless, at the end of the session I discussed the implications of my research with three people and exchanged contact details with delegates from The University of Hertfordshire and The University of Swansea respectively. I provided A4 copies of the poster and other study related material with the majority being taken over the course of the conference.

In summary the KPA bursary helped develop my presentation skills, directly enabled the dissemination of my PhD research, and helped give voice to an otherwise previously unreported population and an under researched area.

Locating the lacunae:

Issues in recruiting male participants for interview in a sensitive subject

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1. Introduction

The aim of this study was to examine the lives of older involuntarily childless (IVC) men. Research in the field of older IV men is important, not only because of an increasingly ageing population and a declining fertility rate (Dykstra 2009), but also because of the lack of research material on men as they age (Dykstra and Keizer, 2009). Divorced and widowed childless men show higher rates of depression than same status women (Zhang and Hayward, 2001). Older childless men have smaller social networks and are poorer in terms of health, diet, self-care, and wellbeing than those married with children (Dykstra and Keizer, 2009).

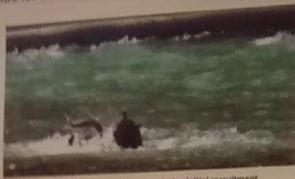


Figure 1: 'Missing the fish' - my feelings during initial recruitment.

Recruitment methods
Initial recruitment methods included:
- Snowball sampling: recommended method for hard-to-reach groups.
- 3rd party contacts of personal and university networks, friends, partners, colleagues.
- Method used: email, letters, leaflets posters, strategic organisations: AgeUK; BfJ; U3A (local & national), VOP (M/cr), More-To-Life, MENSFE.
- Local leafleting: café's, GP surgeries, shops, theatres etc.,
Problem 1: No respondents.
Problem 2: Recruiters reported difficulty in broaching such a sensitive subject.



Figure 2: Research diary extract of the recruitment methods undertaken. Figure 3: The study's website recruitment methods undertaken.

2. Lacunae

Men are missing from both childlessness and ageing research. Childlessness is typically divided into two types: 'voluntary' and 'involuntary'. Most research focuses on the latter and is based on those in pre, participating in, or post, infertility treatment. Men are generally excluded from this research (Dykstra and Keizer 2009). Most gerontological research has focused on older women, as they live longer, had high chronic co-morbidities, received more state benefits, and occupied the majority of the home care sector (Arber et al, 2003; Arber, 2004). Financial research has focused on differences in women's marital status (Arber, 2004).

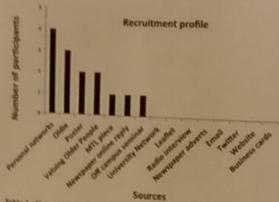


Table 1: The successful recruitment strategies

3. Why hard to reach?

This group is hard to reach because:
- Sensitive topic
- Men's fertility intentions and history is not recorded
- Childlessness viewed as a deep personal and social loss and generally associated with women.
- Men castigated as 'not interested' by researchers
- I am not an insider to any group such as health and care services or any charity

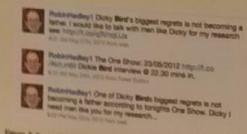


Figure 4: Example of a recruitment 'tweet'

Male volunteers, aged between 50 and 70 years, are needed to participate in a research study. Researcher wants to talk with childless men who wanted to be a father.
For further details contact Rob email: r.a.hadley@keele.ac.uk website: www.wantedtohaveadad.com: Tel: 0784 217 8785 (study-only mobile)

Figure 5: Advert in the 'Oldie'

4. Initial recruitment method

Initial recruitment methods included:
- Snowball sampling: recommended method for hard-to-reach groups.
- 3rd party contacts of personal and university networks, friends, partners, colleagues.
- Method used: email, letters, leaflets posters, strategic organisations: AgeUK; BfJ; U3A (local & national), VOP (M/cr), More-To-Life, MENSFE.
- Local leafleting: café's, GP surgeries, shops, theatres etc.,
Problem 1: No respondents.
Problem 2: Recruiters reported difficulty in broaching such a sensitive subject.

5. Solution

Feeling of missing the fish (Fig. 1).
Reviewed initial progress with supervisors:
- Listened to critical feedback.
- Reviewed recruitment material.
- Broadened approach to be more personal and direct: face-to-face (Fig. 2)
- Increase social media profile: set up website and linked to twitter (Figs. 3 and 4).
- Interviewed on local radio.
- Advertised in the 'Oldie' and local newspapers (Fig. 5).
- Wrote piece for More-To-Life newsletter.
- Recruitment strategies (Table 1).

6. Conclusion

The final sample consisted of:
- 14 men aged between 49-82 years.
- 13 of the participants were White-British, one Australian
- Two Non-heterosexual and 12 heterosexual
- 13 participants were interviewed twice. One refused the second interview. 11 men interviewed face-to-face, 1 Skype, 1 email, and 1 telephone
- Interviews lasted from 1hr 57 mins., to 7hrs 58minutes

