

SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM) SCIENTIFIC REPORT

This report is submitted for approval by the STSM applicant to the STSM coordinator

Action number: IS1409

STSM title: Gender and Health Impacts of Policies Extending Working Life in Western Countries

STSM start and end date: 10/09/2017 to 17/09/2017

Grantee name: Alison Herbert

PURPOSE OF THE STSM:

To collaborate with Associate Professor (AP) of Sociology, Clary Krekula in the host institution of Karlstad University, Sweden, in exploring *The inter-relationship of gender and time on the extended working life of mid-life rural women in Ireland.*

There is a relative paucity of data on rural mid-life women, and of the multiple influences across the lifecourse that may impact their extended working life. My own data and that of AP Krekula's on 'temporal ageing' can be jointly explored and may add a valuable contribution to literature.

This STSM has created the space to explore and examine in depth current data on the concept of 'time' and of its intersection with gender within a rural context. By working on a daily basis with AP Krekula, we are able to lay the foundations for further writing that can be disseminated through journal articles and conferences.

AP Krekula has written extensively in the area of critical gerontology, and is well placed to help me to develop my expertise and offer a contribution to literature in the area of the extended working life and its influences.

This STSM allows me to collaborate with my host on ideas around gendered ageing and time, which can ultimately be expanded into a journal article, a conference presentation, and a book chapter.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSMS

AP Krekula and I discussed the concepts of time and of rural gendered ageing, after which I extracted all my related primary data from my PhD thesis. From this extensive database I segmented participant quotations in relation to different temporalities. These included: the concept of mid-life as a cultural crossroads; how mid-life women's actions are influenced by their

earlier lifecourse experiences; and how decisions being taken at mid-life are in direct relation to their anticipated older age. Further segmentation included an examination of earlier lifecourse experiences influencing general behaviour at mid-life, eg health, social relationships; and secondly on behaviour at mid-life that is specific to future visions of the extended working life. The aim of this is to demonstrate how influences on the extended working life are influenced by behaviours adopted throughout the lifecourse, but particularly in regard to mid-life.

Such exploratory data, aligned to a theoretical framework of the lifecourse, can inform the literature around gendered ageing, and also inform policy and interventionist actions that may positively influence quality of life in older age for all rural women.

AP Krekula and I discussed each day, and from a critical gerontological perspective, how such data may be useful in informing both literature and policy, particularly in relation to Ireland and Sweden.

I delivered a seminar on the overall findings from my PhD thesis to the Sociology departmental staff. The content of my presentation examined how mid-life rural women in Ireland perceive their ageing through multiple influences of their health, their place of residence, their work, and their social relationships. We collectively had a comprehensive discussion on these findings, and I offered and received a new critical perspective. Departmental staff were able to explain to me similarities and differences within a rural Swedish context, and of how these reflect nuances within different cultures, highlighting the heterogeneity of gendered rural ageing. We further discussed analogies of social inclusion and social exclusion, and of how these could best be addressed within different cultural contexts.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED

Qualitative results relate to the writing that I did over my five working days in which I extracted all relevant data that can be used to explore our future writing on *The inter-relationship of gender and time on the extended working life of mid-life rural women in Ireland*.

From the data examined, AP Krekula and I agreed that we had sufficient new data to work with in producing a nuanced look at gendered ageing and work that examines specifically what considerations are in place for mid-life rural women that are likely to influence their decisions on when to retire from employment, and the socio-economic implications.

Specifically, I found began exploring my qualitative empirical evidence that supports decisions taken at mid-life are influenced by earlier lived experiences, and also influence perspectives on later life, particularly in the area of the extended working life of women.

I also examined in detail my empirical data that looks at how mid-life appears to be a pivotal lifecourse stage for women, in which they review past experiences and consider future options. This crossroads period appears to be under-developed within gerontological research, and is thus worthy of greater focus.

FUTURE COLLABORATIONS (if applicable)

AP Krekula and myself plan to continue with this work, meeting again in November, with a view to writing a journal article on temporal influences around the working lives of mid-life rural women. We also aim to present on this theme at two conferences next year: the 1st Temporal Belongings International Conference on ‘The Social Life of Time: Power, Discrimination and Transformation’, which will be held in Edinburgh 5-7th of June 2018, and the 47th Annual British Society of Gerontology Conference, Manchester, United Kingdom, 4 – 6 July 2018.

I would envisage future collaborations with members of the Swedish Research Network on Age (AgeS).