

Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), Age 17 Survey

MCS7 topic and instrument proposal form

Instructions Please submit one form per suggestion and email it to Emma Nixon at e.nixon@ioe.ac.uk by **September 11th 2015**.

Name

Date

Theme:

- Activities and Daily Life
- Socio-Emotional Development
- Cognitive Development

Examples of areas within each theme (not exhaustive)

Activities and Daily Life

- Education, training, work
- Relationships, e.g. family, peers, romantic; fertility
- Risky behaviours e.g. alcohol, gambling, bullying, drug taking
- Other e.g. social media, culture participation, exercise, diet...

Socio-Emotional Development

Personality, motivation, decision-making, mental health, wellbeing, attitudes, beliefs, preferences, expectations, identity...

Cognitive Development

Crystallised skills, fluid intelligence, numeracy, executive function...

Proposed topic/instrument/question:

We are interested in the topic of experiences of bereavement of a close family member. Most of the outcomes of interest are included in the MCS6 survey but we would like to suggest the inclusion of a measure of locus of control (Nowicki and Strickland 1973)

We would also like to ensure that as much data as possible is gathered on young people's experiences of bereavement in the family. In relation to the questions in the Household Questionnaire on 'dates moving in and out for all transitions in household composition and reasons for moving out of household' we would suggest asking some supplementary questions if the reason was death:

What was the cause of death?
Was the death expected by the Cohort Member?

Was this included in MCS6?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

If no, please indicate the source (please provide a URL, a survey source or attach a copy of a scale to the form):

Nowicki and Strickland: <http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/1973-21097-001>

Scientific justification for inclusion (please include salience at age 17, relevance in life course context, relationship to key themes, scientific contribution):

In the 1970 cohort, 1 in 20 young people had been bereaved of one or both parents by the age of 16. (Parsons, 2011). Other will have been bereaved of a sibling.

Studies from the US and Scandinavia suggests the death of a parent in childhood is associated with more somatic symptoms, serious illnesses and accidents (Worden, 1996); early mortality (persisting into late middle age) (Li and others, 2014; Smith and others, 2014); risky health behaviours (Sweeting et al 1998; Hamdan et al 2012); substance and alcohol abuse disorders (and hospitalisation for these) (Brent et al 2009; Wilcox et al 2010); clinical levels of mental health difficulties (Worden 1996; Melhem et al 2008); psychosis by early middle age (Abel et al 2014); suicide attempts during young adulthood (Jakobsen and Christiansen 2011); hospitalisation for psychiatric disorder (Wilcox et al, 2010).

This is an under-researched area in the UK, with only a small number of analyses of longitudinal data (Sweeting et al 1998; Parsons 2011; Jones et al 2013). This is acknowledged to be a gap in the UK literature, which limits our understanding of the experiences and outcomes of bereaved children and young people (Penny and Rice, 2012).

A growing body of evidence suggests a 'late effect' of bereavement. In his longitudinal (2-year) study of 125 parentally bereaved children, Worden (1996) found new significant differences emerging between the sample and their controls two years after the death: differences which had not been significant closer to the death. This included differences in social and emotional difficulties, self-efficacy and self-esteem. Analysis of the ALSPAC data concluded 'family bereavement had continuous, cumulative effects on children's emotional and social well-being, long after the event happened' (Jones et al 2013).

By the age of 17, we anticipate that a large enough cohort of young people will have experienced the death of a parent or sibling to allow for analysis comparing this group with those not bereaved. Strengthening data on deaths in the family would allow for more robust analysis of the associations between being bereaved by a certain age and later outcomes.

Most of the variables of interest are already included in previous sweeps (eg relationship of the person who died to the young person), but others which could usefully be included (as previous research suggests they may influence outcomes) are cause of death, and whether the death was expected by the cohort member.

References:

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Brent, D and others (2009) 'The incidence and course of depression in bereaved youth 21 months after the loss of a parent to suicide, accident, or sudden natural death.', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 166(7), 786–794.

Fauth, B, Thompson, M and Penny, A (2009) *Associations Between Childhood Bereavement and Children's Background, Experiences and Outcomes: Secondary Analysis of the 2004 Mental Health of Children and Young People in Great Britain Data*. London: National Children's Bureau.

Hamdan, S and others (2012) 'Effect of parental bereavement on health risk behaviors in youth: A 3-year follow-up', *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 166(3), 216–223.

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Li, J and others (2014) 'Mortality after parental death in childhood: A nationwide cohort study from three Nordic countries', *PLOS Medicine*, 11 (7), e1001679.

Melhem, NM and others (2008) 'Antecedents and sequelae of sudden parental death in offspring and surviving caregivers', *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 162(5), 403–410.

Parsons, S. (2011) *Long-term Impact of Childhood Bereavement: preliminary analysis of the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70)*.
<http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/CWRC-00081-2011> (Accessed 13.12.11)

Penny A and Rice H (2012) <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/research/gaps-in-research.aspx> (Accessed 14 September 2015).

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Sweeting, H, West, P and Richards, M (1998) 'Teenage family life, lifestyles and life chances: Associations with family structure, conflict with parents, and joint family activity', International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family, 12(1), 15–46.

Wilcox, HC and others (2010) 'Psychiatric morbidity, violent crime, and suicide among children and adolescents exposed to parental death', Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 49(5), 514–523.

Worden, WJ (1996) Children and Grief: When a Parent Dies. New York: Guilford Press.

