

# Three generations of Australian women ageing in drought – a textual analysis

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# Jane Rich PhD candidate

- ☞ Background in Human Geography and Public Health
  - ☞ BA Dev Studies (Hons).
- ☞ Employed by the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health
- ☞ Interest in understanding how the environment around us affects our health and experiences of life

# women's health *australia*

the australian longitudinal  
study on women's health

**20 year longitudinal cohort study of the health and well-being of Australian women.**

**Goal: To determine the social, psychological, physical and environmental factors which determine good health, and those which cause ill-health, in women throughout life.**



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# ALSWH Cohorts

- 1973-78 Cohort - These women were 18-23 when the study began in 1996 and are now 35-40 now, they have completed 6 surveys.
- 1946-51 Cohort - These women were 45-50 when the study began and are now aged 57-62 years, they have completed 6 surveys and the 7<sup>th</sup> is in process.
- 1921-26 Cohort - These women were aged 70-75 when the study began and are now aged 87-92 years, they have completed 6 surveys.

# ALSWH Qualitative Data

<u>Cohort</u>	<u>N comments</u>	<u>N Words</u>
1921-26 cohort	Over 18 400 comments from over 12 000 women	1159 061
1946-51 cohort	Over 13 700 comments from over 14 000 women	828 309
1973-78 cohort	Over 11 400 comments from over 14 000 women	560 022



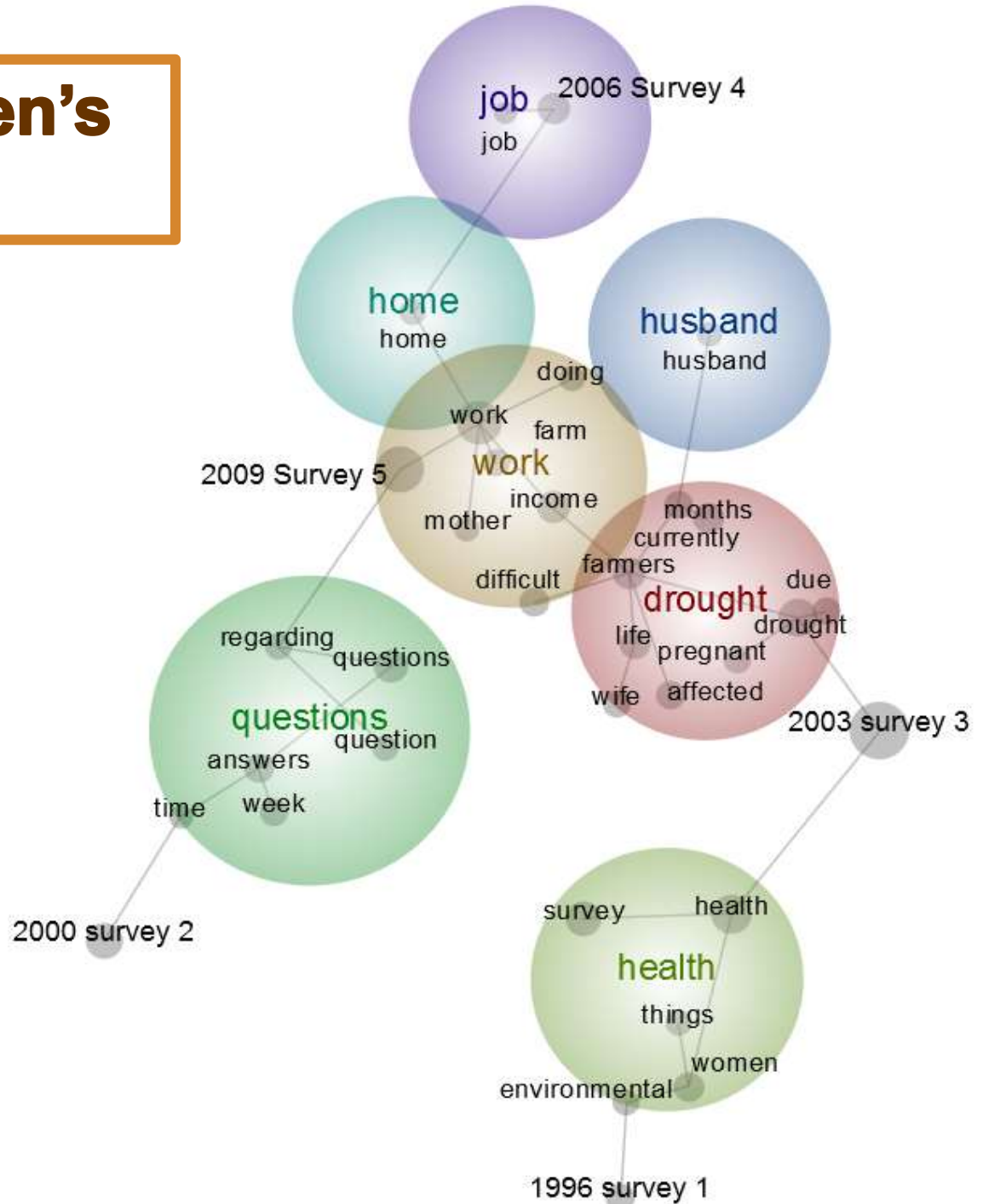
# LEXIMANCER

*from words to meaning to insight*

## ☞ **Word Association Software**

- \* Leximancer is a software tool designed for analyzing natural language text data
- \* Uses statistics-based algorithms
- \* Automatically analyzes a text collection
  - \* User can direct search, add, remove, merge terms
- \* Extracts *semantic* (meaning) and *relational* information
- \* Outputs include concept map, network cloud, quantitative data, concept thesaurus

# Younger Women's Comments



# Younger women's comments

## Survey 1 participant 1

*"I think this survey is extremely thorough - but I feel that some issues which are very important for women's health Are you happy with you position and role in the world - do you feel you are achieving a better world ?I am also interested in contributing to issues relating to environmental/pollution"*

## Survey 3 participant 2

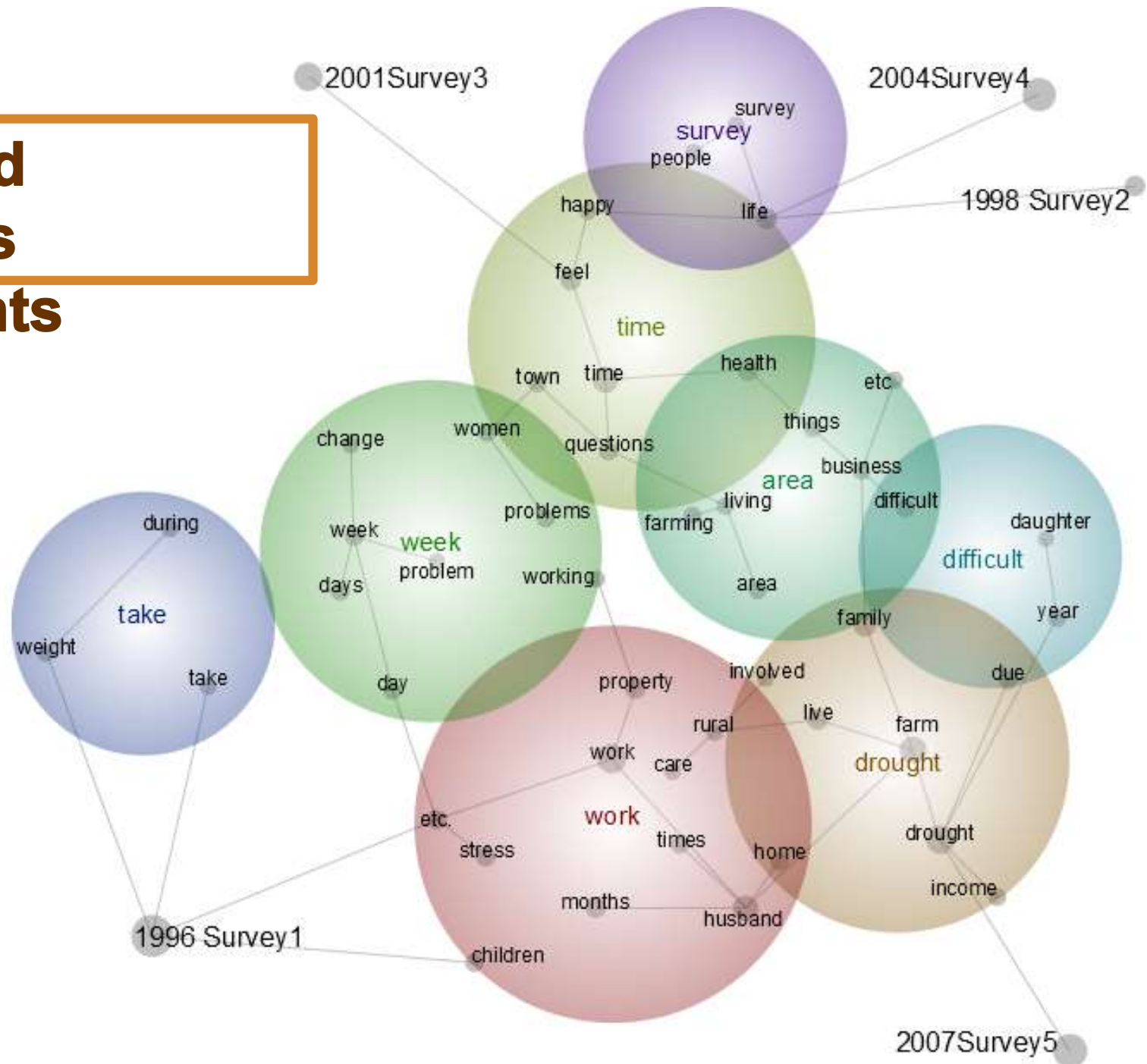
*"Being in the outback has a new set of women's health challenges and sometimes I think that the women out here get forgotten, in that the pressures of schooling, motherhood & being a wife are just everyday things. What about the emotional strains when there is a drought on? No-one seems to ever talk about how taxing it is on a wife/mother."*

## Survey 5 participant 3

*"I do not have much of a social life, we are farmers who have been in drought for the last 7 years - and this all takes its toll on your health & emotions."*



# Mid-aged women's comments



# Mid-aged women's comments

## Survey 1 participant 12

*“My days are varied. Some days or weeks I may do book work (for property) and house work. Other days/weeks I might only see my house to fall into bed at night after long days mustering or feeding drought stock. In other words I don't normal weeks or if I do, then they are extreme one way or the other.”*

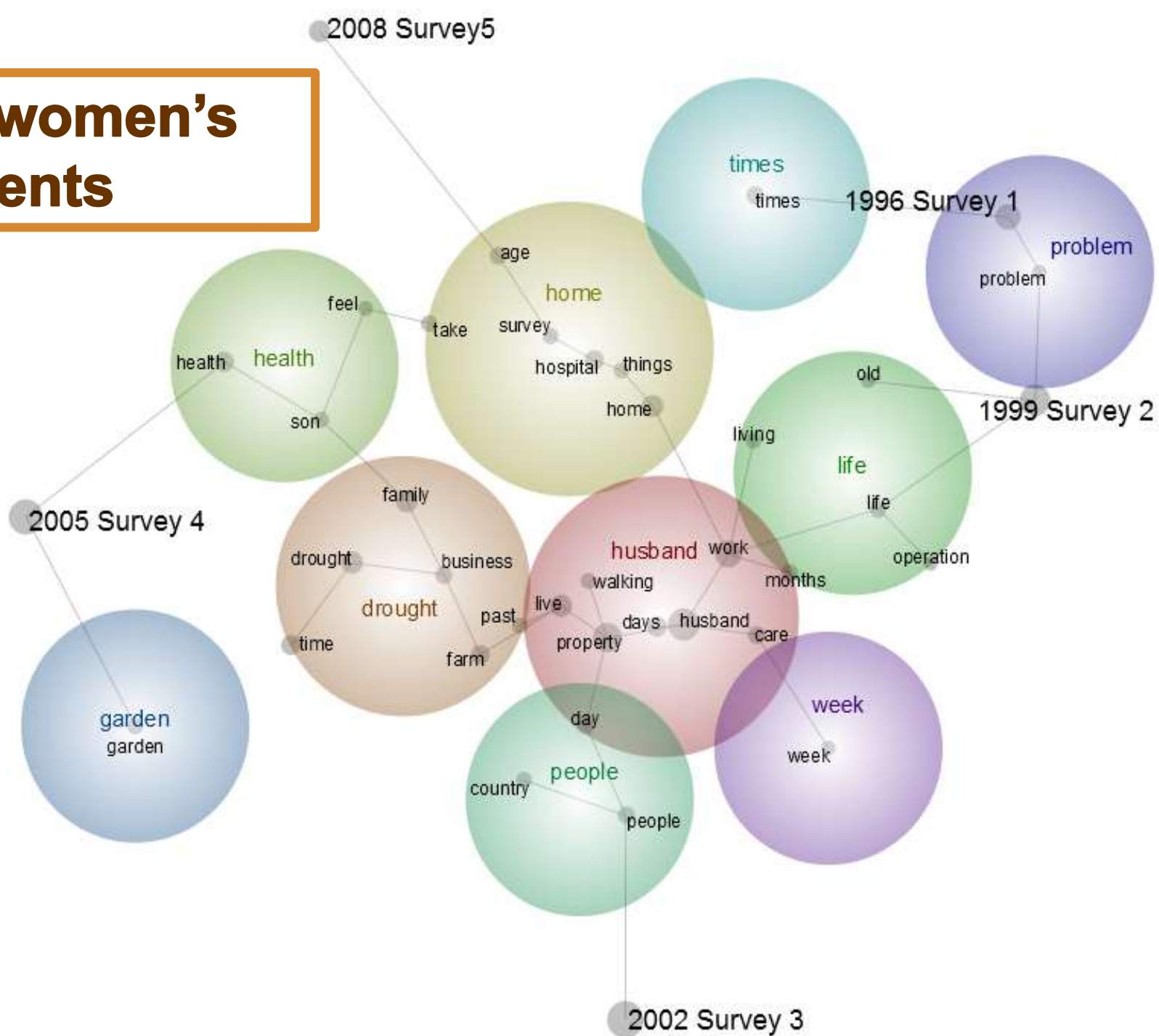
## Survey 3 participant 8

*“Life on the land breaks everyone's hearts and pockets but most of us never say die - We just live in hope”*

## Survey 5 participant 25

*“...coping with drought on our farm & wondering what our future is a the land & will we loose our home & farm...”*

# Older women's comments



# Older women's comments

## Survey 1 participant 5

*“I would like a pension for all women who live on the land when they reach the age of 60 years. Also better medical care for women over 60 years of age. Cheaper phone rent for old aged pensioners as the phone is the only form of commission with the outside world especially when you live hundreds of miles from a town or city.”*

## Survey 3 participant 15

*“Living on a property 40kms from a country town we have to be well & independent to do all we do to run the farm.”*

## Survey 5 participant 2

*“...had rather much to worry about to keep everything going and 15 years of drought to carry on from. I took very ill shortly after being home and nearly died from septicaemia. However after 8 days back in hospital I lived to tell the tale and now I am going along quietly until I celebrate my 80th birthday then I will have to do some serious thinking to allow me to live on in my own home, I will for a little longer when the drought breaks & I will then retire. Best of luck to you all.”*

# ... Generational differences ...

## Approach to dealing with the drought:

- ☞ Younger women : Personal, heartbreaking reality...
- ☞ Mid-aged women : Concern for future, worn down over time
- ☞ Older women : Pragmatic and realistic

## Shared stories:

- ☞ Resilience erosion? Solastalgia theory
- ☞ What doesn't kill you makes you stronger? (More exposures > resilience)

# So what now?

## Clinical and practical implications

### This research helps us :

- ∞ Understand the complex nature of women's roles and how this complexity is related to drought i.e. parenting
- ∞ Understand how time impacts and endured droughts over many years has a different impact
- ∞ Understand the age-affect
- ∞ Open-text comments can be used as data – they reveal important insights!

### Clinical and Practical implications :

- ∞ Internet and telecommunications (subsidised)
- ∞ E-health and tele-health
- ∞ Subsidised child care costs if Mum is required to work off-farm due to drought
- ∞ Financial support not more red tape
- ∞ Property assistance for the elderly who choice to stay at home
- ∞ Security or insurance package so mid-aged women don't have to worry about future
- ∞ Continued emotional support and large scale publicity of this

# Thanks

- ☞ To the women that participate in the ALSWH for sharing their health and stories with us.
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