

## Editorial: present and future prospects

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Executive Editor

The second conference of the *Society for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies (SLLS)* took place in Bielefeld, Germany, from 25-28th September 2011, attracting 209 Longitudinal and Life Course researchers from 20 countries across every continent, and was of much historical significance for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies (LLCS). At the Society's AGM, it was agreed that following the end of development funding from the Nuffield Foundation, by the end of September, SLLS should take over responsibility for running LLCS. This change signals exciting opportunities for the journal, offering a communication and dissemination platform for the research projects and programmes in which the society's members are engaged. The Society's annual conference and growing programme of associated activities are where the publication outcomes crystallize in the form of individual presentations and symposia devoted to particular topics - ensuring a steady flow of papers, including special Issues, for the journal.

A journal's reputation, on which indexing and impact ratings are judged, is critically dependent on the more senior and well-known readers using the journal as the outlet for their own work, as well as advising their more junior colleagues to select it as the publication outlet of choice. As we know, career advancement, not to mention research funding, follow in the wake of indexation and impact ratings for the journals in which researchers publish. The vitally needed funding for 'payment to publish' in Open Access journals can also rely on it. This is why LLCS needs the help of everybody engaged in longitudinal and life course study by making sure their next paper or proposal for a symposium-based Special Journal Issue goes to LLCS!

The development of the Society, (with membership now over 240 and just below 1000 registered readers of the journal) is a central part of the strategy for assuring the journal's future. We have set a target of 100 additional SLLS members per annum, to achieve a membership of over 600 by 2015. Safeguarding the journal's future, while holding onto, as far we are able, the principle of

world-wide Open Access, now lies in the Society's hands. So please join the Society if you have yet to do so, and persuade at least one other colleague to become a member with you - go to: [www.longstudies.longviewuk.com/pages/membership.shtml](http://www.longstudies.longviewuk.com/pages/membership.shtml)

Corporate membership brings special benefits so please get your institution to apply for it and advantage more of your colleagues, including a reduced annual conference fee - also remind them to advertise in the journal. The society's bimonthly Newsletter (restricted to members), which replaces the journal's original section *News, Events and Resources*, will supply more up-to-date information of much interest to journal readers.

### 2011 SLLS Conference

The Society's second annual conference took place in a beautifully converted Victorian linen factory, now serving as an adult education facility and conference centre in parkland close to the centre of Bielefeld. Sponsorship came from the German Research Council, the British Academy, the European Science Council, through EUCCONET and from the University of Bielefeld who serviced the conference. The delegates heard over 120 papers presented, in 8 symposia and 24 other themed sessions, and took part in four round tables, one panel and one poster session (26 posters). They also heard keynote lectures from Professor Hans-Peter Blossfeld (University of Bamberg, Germany) on the *National Education Panel study: idea, theoretical frame, design and research potential*; Professor Marjo-Riitta Jarvelin (Imperial College London, UK) on *Health from an Early Life Perspective - the Roles of Genes and Environment*; Professor Jutta Heckhausen (University of California, Irvine, California, USA) on *A Motivational theory of Life Span Development*. Topics ranged from early child development to divorce and ageing, and from methodology through youth and the great recession to psychological well-being and biobanks. The final session was devoted to four major European longitudinal studies: Understanding Society UK, the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP), the British Cohort

Studies and the German Family Panel (PARFAM) as preparation for the *Data Discovery* training workshops, held the following day. The conference abstracts will be published as a special supplement of the January 2012 Issue of LLCS.

The next conference will be in France in September 2012 (possibly Paris) with sponsorship from ESF/EUCCONET. The 2013 conference is likely to be in Amsterdam and the 2014 conference in Copenhagen.

### This Issue

This seventh LLCS issue comprises some novel features. Seven individual papers span a wide range of the journal's and now the Society's interests, including our first example of a paper on qualitative longitudinal research findings - *Middle income families in the economic downturn: challenges and management strategies over time* (Iversen, Napolitano, Furstenberg). We also have our first *Study Profile*, a reflective account of the design of the new longitudinal study, *The German National Educational Panel study: a wealth of potential for research in school to work transitions* (Leuze, Ludwig-Mayerhofer, Solga). Finally we have a new book review format, *Review Symposium*, comprising three reviews, from contrasting disciplinary perspectives (Goldthorpe, Sociology; Murray, Health Sciences; Maughan, Developmental Psychology) of the new book *A Companion to Life Course Studies*.

Health sciences are well represented in three of the individual papers, each concerning an aspect of obesity. The first, *Developmental trajectories of body mass index (BMI) throughout the life course an application of latent class growth (mixture) modelling* (Hoekstra, Barbarosa-Leiker, Koppes, Twisk), uses data collected over the period 13 to 42 years in the Amsterdam Growth and Health longitudinal study, to identify three trajectories relating BM trajectories to cardio-vascular risk; the second, uses data from the Australian, diabetes,

obesity and lifestyle (AusDiab) cohort study in an analysis of *Incidence of cardio vascular risk factors by education level* (Beauchamp, Wolfe, Magliano, Turrell) across a five years follow-up interval; the third, *BMI and hearing ability at 45 years* (Ecob, Russ, Davis), using UK National Child Development Study data (NCDS), focuses on the changing relationship between BMI and hearing from age 7 to age 45.

The other papers are social science fare concerning education, employment, family, abilities and gender. *Cross cohort changes in gender pay difference in Britain over the period 1972 to 2004 accounting for selection into employment using wage imputation* (Neuberger, Kuh, Joshi) compares male and female earnings at comparable ages in the three British Birth cohort studies starting in 1946, 1958 and 1970 respectively; *Family caring and children's reading and maths skills* (Michael) takes an economics perspective on the relationships between various indicators of 'family caring', using NCDS data to investigate the inter-generational relationship of caring, with child test scores from parent to child, from grandparent to parent and from grandparent to child.

If you find the content of a paper particularly interesting and thought provoking do not hesitate to write to the author through the journal or submit papers of your own on the same or related themes. We also welcome alternative interpretations of findings or short reports of new findings for the journal sections, *Notes, Comment and Debate* and *Research Notes*. More suggestions for discussion symposia based on a book or paper or special issue will also be well received as will ideas for other formats we have yet to think of.

Most importantly, next January marks the opportunity to participate in the next stage of a great publishing venture, which the Editors are confident that the journal, now linked to the Society, will continue to be.