

Editorial - Latest LLCS developments, (John Bynner) and 'lost' datasets (Michael Wadsworth, John Bynner)

This Issue of the Journal contains good news about the Journal's progress, as we develop its 'offer' to readers and authors. We also float below, suggestions for a web-based project to identify and possibly revive 'lost' datasets for potential archiving and use - a means of expanding the historical scope and richness of the suite of existing major longitudinal studies.

First, three news items:

1. In February this year we heard that the Journal has now been accepted into the SCOPUS database, attracting the accolade from one of the assessors: "everything about this journal marks it as a high-quality, well-cited product". The Journal's SJR (SSCI major Journal Rank) and SNIP (Source Normalised Impact per Paper) citation indices will follow.
2. Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) are now functional for all research papers and other items published in the Journal from Volume 4 Issue 3, 2013. They are included as resolvable URLs on the title pages, and also appear on each 'Abstract Page' (seen when a title in the Home Page Contents List is clicked). DOIs for articles published in earlier issues of LLCS are also visible on the respective Abstract Pages, but do not yet resolve; we will be working to complete all DOI functionality for back issues during the coming months.
3. Production of the print version of the Journal has been radically overhauled, including replacement of the A5 page size by the larger and more reader-friendly *Imperial* size (17.5cm x 24.5cm). Subscribers can purchase each of the 15 Issues individually, or the whole set at a discounted price. Go to the SLLS 'online bookshop' at: <http://www.slls.org.uk/#!journal-bookshop/czkc>

The current Issue contains much of topical as well as historical interest. We start with a Special Section developed from an SLLS Paris 2012 conference symposium convened by Jeylan Mortimer (University of Minnesota) on the impact of the post-2008 'Great Recession' on young people and their families. Following Jeylan's overview, four papers follow on: children's achievement (Minnesota), workless families (London), family poverty (Bremen), and teenage (out-

of-school) employment (Penn State, Michigan & Wisconsin). Two responses follow from discussants, Walter Heinz (Bremen) and Robert Crosnoe (Texas, Michigan, Wisconsin) who synthesise the findings in terms of lessons for theory and policy. Apart from the Special Section, there are two additional papers on: the burgeoning interest area of housing pathways (Queensland), and second-world-war history as reflected in the impact of Scottish children's evacuation on their IQ development (Edinburgh).

Identifying lost datasets

In the 21st century there has been an international upsurge of demand for the results of longitudinal enquiry and consequent investment in new longitudinal research. This is intended to address policy makers' questions about, for example, the individual and societal impact of unemployment, and to understand the relationship of social mobility with changes in educational policy. The investment is also prompted by the challenges of increasing length of lives and the socio-economic, welfare and health requirements of ageing populations. As longitudinal studies demonstrate, the course of adult life is affected significantly by the experiences and circumstances of early life and adolescence. Consequently there is a need for greater understanding of the mental and physical processes of development and of ageing. This extends to their relationship with environmental and genetic influences and the interactions between them.

That 21st century extensive investment can be seen in Britain, for example, in the continuation of the four longitudinal birth cohort studies (the *MRC National Study of Health and Development* of 5,362 babies begun in 1946, the *National Child Development Study* of 17,634 babies begun in 1958, the *1970 Birth Cohort Study* of 17,287 babies begun in 1970, and the *Avon Longitudinal Study* of 14,541 individuals begun during pregnancy in 1991) and one of households (the *British Household Panel Study* of 5,500 households comprising 10,300 individuals) begun in 1991. New studies are following in their footsteps: the *Millennium Birth Cohort Study*, which first collected data from 19,000 parents in 2001; the *Understanding Society* study, which began data collections from 40,000 households in 2009; the *Life Study*, which

starts data collections from 80,000 parents and their pre-natal offspring in 2014.

There are, however, two predominant difficulties with the existing British studies. First, many of the questions that policy makers and researchers wish to address require data that cover long periods of individual lives and long periods of historical time - and the new studies will take a long time to provide that information. The second difficulty is that by the nature of their design, longitudinal studies tend to be limited in the historical era they cover and by the state of the art of measurement and conceptualisation of the topics studied at the time of each data collection. There are practical ways of managing some aspects of these time-related difficulties. For instance, accessing data collected for administrative and care purposes can give the opportunity to study very large cohorts over long periods, although at some cost in terms of data range and quality. Long periods of individual lives can also be covered by new follow-ups of samples in studies regarded as completed, although the new aims are limited by those of the original design.

Even though each of these extensions is limited in significant ways, they have nevertheless been of great value. Significant contributions to understanding development and change in individual lives have been made using longitudinal datasets retrieved from oblivion. For example the population samples from whom information was first collected in the inter-war years in the British Boyd-Orr study of diet and health, the Scottish Mental Health Survey, the Isle of White psychiatric epidemiology study and in the US, the Oakland and the Berkeley Growth Studies and the Cambridge-Somerville delinquency study, were each revived and re-contacted for new data collections many years later. Innovative and fruitful research stemmed from those new contacts in studies ranging from the impact on the adult life course of early and adolescent experience to studies of physical and cognitive ageing.

Administrative, medical care and census records have also been found of great value, using such techniques as record linkage upon which productive longitudinal studies have been built. Barker's hypotheses about biological programming, for instance, (first comprehensively described in *Mothers, babies, and disease in later life*, 1984) were in significant part founded on findings from the follow-up of adult physical health in those identified from their birth records, meticulously and routinely collected in an English county. Similarly the follow-up

studies of babies who had insufficient maternal nutrition during periods of famine in the Netherlands during the Second World War, showed its life-long adverse impact on physical health and cognition and mental health, (e.g. Susser et al's 1996 study of schizophrenia risk). The UK Office for National Statistics 'Longitudinal Study' has been used to study health and for socio-economic research, using data on individuals sampled from and linked across five decennial censuses. Comparable census-based studies in other countries have made this approach a fruitful source of international comparisons.

Seen in the context of currently increased demand for research using longitudinal data, it is clear that much can be gained from such sources as well as from new studies. We propose therefore to initiate an international search for *lost* research datasets that are no longer in use but are of potential longitudinal value. Although administrative datasets with potential value for longitudinal research may not be so readily identified, information about their existence as the basis of specially designed past longitudinal studies and potentially new studies would also be helpful.

We intend to use the website of the *Society for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies* (SLLS) to enable members and the wider community of Journal readers to post information about datasets of potential value. Our intention is to bring to light largely overlooked longitudinal resources and to encourage archiving of such research data not yet indexed or documented. We hope, for example, to report on the current state and availability of data from longitudinal studies that have stopped data collection, such as Project Metropolitan undertaken in the Nordic countries, the European Longitudinal Study of Pregnancy and Childhood, and the Paths of the Generation Longitudinal Study, founded on the populations in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

If you are aware of any such lost datasets which you think have potential value as new longitudinal research resources, please draw together information about them for posting on the SLLS website (www.slls.org.uk) 'Data Sources' page where you will find a form to complete and submit. We would like to have sufficient detail in terms of, for example, aims, content, sample coverage, data custodianship, machine readability, indexation of variables and ethical approval and accessibility for research use, in order to establish the status of the data identified and bring it to the attention of potential users. We look forward to hearing from you.