



Science Meeting report

SLLS Annual conference EUCCONET Symposium and delegation

26-28 September 2011, Bielefeld, Germany

1. Summary

Again this year the EUCCONET Steering Committee met in the framework of the annual conference of the International Society for Longitudinal and Lifecourse Studies (SLLS), to which the network has close links, and through which it reaches wider contacts. This year's conference took place at Bielefeld, Germany, September 26-28. The concurrence of these two events had two purposes:

- i. to encourage SC members to attend the committee by giving them the opportunity also to attend the conference. With this in mind, a special child cohort related programme was organised on the first day. This started with a keynote speech from Hans Peter Blossfeld, the director of the very ambitious German Education Panel Study. The committee meeting was followed by a EUCCONET-sponsored symposium on comparative analysis of child cohort data;
- ii. to enable the invitation of more stakeholders to participate in the discussions about the programme of EUCCONET activities and its final conference.

The SLLS conference brought together nearly 200 people in Bielefeld, Germany, who contributed around 170 papers or posters. Participants enjoyed the interdisciplinary and international exchange of ideas in the well-appointed setting of a converted linen mill, bathed in warm sunshine, under the general theme of "Life Course and Social Change: Interdisciplinary and international Perspectives". The final programme can be found on the SLLS website.

The funding requested for this meeting covers the cost of the participation of three speakers to the Conference who have been invited by the Steering Committee Chairs to present a symposium. The contributions were selected to demonstrate or initiate internationally comparative analysis of child cohort data, This was an aspect of research on child cohorts which the Co- chairs were seeking to encourage, as it had not emerged spontaneously in responses to the network Calls. . The funding also covers the costs of participation of three Steering Committee Members to the whole SLLS Conference, while other SC were reimbursed through ESF travel claim forms.

2. Description of the scientific content of and discussion at the event

The EUCCONET network convened a symposium on Comparative Analysis of Child Cohort Studies at the SLLS second annual conference, September 28th 2011. Four speakers were invited to present original examples of comparative work



- Three of them were the directors of three child cohort studies in developed countries, who gave exploratory presentations on Diversity of family structure at 9 months.
- The fourth was an example of a comparative analysis already completed. Pooling data from the four third world cohorts in the Young Live Study, a young member of that team presented and econometric analysis of : Gender bias over time in four countries

2.1 Diversity of family structure at 9 months – A cross cohort comparison

Abstracts of the 3 presentations on how child cohort studies find and represent the family structure of their infant subjects follow:

Diversity of family structures at 9 months - a cross cohort comparison – New Zealand

Susan Morton SMB, Atatoa Carr PE, Pryor J on behalf of the Growing Up in New Zealand Research team led by the University of Auckland (in collaboration with researchers from Victoria, Otago and Massey Universities).

Growing Up in New Zealand is a longitudinal study currently collecting the 3rd wave of face-to-face interviews with the parents of approximately 7000 two year olds born in New Zealand. The study began in pregnancy and aims to provide a robust understanding of the developmental trajectories of children in New Zealand in the 21st century in order to inform inter-sectoral public policy for children and families.

Antenatal interviews were conducted with expectant women and their partners in the final stages of their pregnancy. Data collected included living arrangements and family structures into which New Zealand children were being born. Nearly two-thirds of mothers were living with their partner, one quarter were living with extended family and 3% were mothers alone. 7% were living with adult non-family members. The diversity of family structure was associated with parental characteristics including age, educational status and self-identified ethnicity.

Family structure was again explored at the interviews conducted with parents when their children were 9 months of age. This information is now being compared to antenatal data to assess the stability in relationships and living arrangements over the first year of children's lives. The information will be available to compare the diversity of family structure for children born in New Zealand cohort with that of those born in the UK using information from the Millennium Cohort Study who collected comparable information from their families at 9 months of age, and subsequently as the children have grown older.

Family diversity in the Millennium Cohort Study

Lucinda Platt, CLS, Institute of Education

Living arrangements among children of the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) at nine months varied substantially, with, for example, around 14 per cent living in lone parent families, 25 per cent having cohabiting parents and around 60 per cent living with two married parents. Over 40 per cent were only children (at this point), while 7 per cent were living in family with four or more children. Around 9 per cent lived with a half sibling and about 6 per cent lived with one or more grandparents. However, there were substantial differences, in particular across ethnic groups but also country and type of area. These differences have a range of implications beyond their descriptive interest, which intersect with institutional configurations as well as wider cultural and economic circumstances. For example, lone parenthood is strongly associated with poverty and there were high rates of lone parenthood particularly among children living with Black Caribbean and Black African mothers. Grandparents are often a critical source of support and childcare for those with young children; but while minority group members were more likely to be living with grandparents, they were less likely than majority group families to have living grandparents and less likely overall to be in close



contact with grandparents outside the household – often due to geographical constraints. Complex, multi-person families often stem at least in part from economic pressures to pool resources, particularly in the face of limited access to pensions; but have been shown to be related to higher poverty risks even within working families. Both the drivers and consequences of diversity of family forms and how they vary for particular populations are complicated and hard to disentangle. However, cross-national comparisons have the potential to illuminate not only the consequences of particular family circumstances vary with context, but also to suggest the relevance of social and policy contexts to the formation and organisation of families with young children.

This paper draws on comparison of the MCS with Growing Up in New Zealand and Growing up in Ireland to highlight both commonalities and differences in family structure and its implications for child and parental welfare, across three national contexts with different child and economic policy regimes. Analysis of subsequent MCS waves additionally enables a forward look at changes in family forms over time and their longer term consequences, while setting a framework for questions that will benefit from further cross-cohort analysis.

Family Structures among 9 Month Old Infants in the *Growing Up in Ireland* Study

James Williams, *Growing Up in Ireland* Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin

Understanding the influences which impact on children requires that we first know something of the environment in which they live. One of the most important aspects of that environment is the child's family. Family structure and related characteristics have the most substantial and enduring influence on the child's daily life, shaping the opportunities and challenges which s/he will face from day to day. Using data from the *Growing Up in Ireland* study this paper considers family form and structure among 9 month old infants in 21st century Ireland. Although rapidly changing, family structure in Ireland is still largely dominated by the traditional family unit headed by a husband and wife (in 2006 accounting for over two-thirds of families with children). Approximately 6 per cent of 9-month-olds live in single parent families with one child; 8 per cent in single parent families with two or more children; 33 per cent in two parent families with one child and 53 per cent in two parent families with two or more children.

There is substantial diversity in the background characteristics of these different family forms in terms of income levels and related poverty risk; parental education; social class and so on. Lone parent families, for example, are largely characterised as being more socially disadvantaged than other family types. They are more likely to have lower levels of equivalised income; lower levels of parental education and be in lower social class groups. These differences in background characteristics will have direct and indirect influences on a range of child outcomes – socio-emotional, cognitive and developmental. Economic insecurity, for example, will have a direct influence through access to lower levels of resources and (potentially) an indirect influence through, *inter alia*, higher levels of parental stress. Formal and informal supports available to families may help to mitigate some of the adverse effects of their background characteristics.

This paper explores aspects of family context for 9 month old infants in Ireland and their implications for child outcomes. Most importantly, it allows a comparison of the family situation of infants in Ireland with those in Britain (Millennium Cohort Study) and New Zealand (Growing Up in New Zealand).

2.2 From Nutrition to Aspirations and Self-efficacy: Gender bias over time in four countries

Abhijeet Singh, Nuffield College, University of Oxford

We use data at age 8, 12 and 15 from a cohort study of 12000 children across Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam, to document the presence of a gender gap across a wide variety of indicators, including nutrition, education, aspirations, subjective well-being



and psychosocial competencies. We find that there is considerable heterogeneity across countries, ages and indicators in whether there is any gender bias and whether it is in favour of boys or girls. We find strong evidence of an 'institutionalised' gender bias against girls in education in Ethiopia and India; the bias emerges in educational aspirations at age 8 by parents, is transmitted to aspirations by children at 12 and is transformed into gender gaps in test scores related to cognitive achievement at age 15, despite relatively high enrolments. We also observe lower empowerment (as measured by efficacy) for girls in these two countries at age 15. Similar patterns exist in Vietnam but in the opposite direction – in favour of girls rather than boys. We also find that a bias in favour of boys exists in non-cognitive skills, more specifically in psychosocial competencies such as esteem/pride, trust, inclusion and agency, in Ethiopia and rural Peru. Evidence in other studies suggests that lower human capital and non-cognitive skills both lead to poorer performance in the labour market, leading to predictions of continuing bias in outcomes for these groups.

Aside from the EUCCONET symposium, the work of European child cohort studies was well represented in the other sessions of the conference. There were an additional 23 presentations (see Table) about studies belonging to the EUCCONET family. 11 were analyses of the UK Millennium Cohort, which has by now reached a stage where the analysis of the children's early years data is possible by researchers in and beyond its home base and in a range of disciplines. The NEPS study is at an earlier stage of its existence, but its team contributed three items about their development work. We also heard from two epidemiological cohorts in Germany, and received two papers from another biologically oriented cohort, PIAMA in the Netherlands. The other papers or posters were one each from ALSPAC in the Bristol area of Britain, Ireland, Scotland, the socially oriented cohorts in Denmark. These do not include all of the member cohorts, but the turnout suggests that there is a thriving multi-disciplinary activity around the studies, which promises to provide another crop of outputs for the 2012 conference. The abstracts for all these can be found in the online journal *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, as a supplement to Vol. 3, No 1 2012.



EUCCONET STUDIES REPORTED IN SLLS Sessions Bielefeld, 2011	
Cohort +Country	Presentation at Bielefeld
UK Millennium Cohort	Parents' relationship quality, parental divorce and children's wellbeing <i>Anna Garriga, Kathleen Kiernan, University of York, UK</i>
	Family hardship, family instability and children's development <i>Barbara Maughan, Institute of Psychiatry, UK</i>
	Protection against cumulative risk in early childhood <i>Ingrid Schoon, Institute of Education, UK</i>
	Parental rearing confidence and positive parenting as protective factors of children's behaviour adjustment: Findings from the Millennium Cohort <i>Helen Cheng, Institute of Education, UK</i>
	Childcare as a protective factor for children growing up in disadvantaged circumstances <i>Elizabeth Jones, Institute of Education, UK</i>
	Body size, body shape and body composition as risk factors for cardiovascular disease in ethnic minority children of the Millennium Cohort study <i>Amanda Sacker, Yvonne Kelly, University of Essex, UK</i>
	Childcare exposure in early childhood: an application of event history analysis <i>Elizabeth Jones, Institute of Education, UK</i>
	Do children whose birth was unintended have different cognitive development from others? Evidence from the UK Millennium Cohort <i>Elise de la Rochbrochard, Institute National d' Etudes Demographiques, France, Heather Joshi, UK</i>
	Class inequalities in education at age 7 <i>Alice Sullivan, Sosthenes Ketende, Heather Joshi</i>
	A good place to bring up children <i>Anna Schiewe, Yvonne Kelly, Mai Stafford, Richard Watt, University College London, UK</i>
The changing compatibility of childrearing and employment: evidence from British cohort studies <i>Heather Joshi, Institute of Education, UK</i>	



Germany NEPS	Measuring Competencies in Early Childhood in the NEPS , Jennifer Lorenz (Claudia Schlesiger, Sabine Weinert), University of Bamberg, Germany;
	Language indicators across the life course in NEPS Karin Berendes, S. Zimmermann, National Educational Panel Study, Germany
	Parent interview & day-care questionnaire in the birth cohort study of the NEPS , Sebastian Megerle, NEPS, Germany;
Germany GINIplus and LISApplus	Growth velocity during infancy and onset of asthma in school aged children: results of 09:00 – 11:00 the GINIplus and LISApplus birth cohorts Claudia Flexeder, Helmholtz Zentrum Munchen, Germany
Netherlands PIAMA	Musculoskeletal complaints among 11 year old children and associated factors - the PIAMA birth cohort study Sandra Van Oostrom, Susan Picavet et al, National Institute of Public Health and the Environment, The Netherlands
	What determines child's declining overweight trajectory? Alet Wijga, Lenie Van Rossem, Utrecht University, The Netherlands
UK ALSPAC	ALSPAC: an international resource of lifecourse epidemiology for social scientists Eszter Szilassy, University of Bristol, UK
Growing Up in Scotland	What influences cognitive development in the pre-school years? Evidence from the Growing Up In Scotland Study Paul Bradshaw, Scottish Centre for Social Research, UK
Growing Up in Ireland	Predictors of child's well-being in Irish families Ela Polek, University College Dublin, Ireland
Denmark DALSC	The Collective Danish Longitudinal Surveys of Children (DALSC) , Mette Lausten, Danish National Centre for Social Research, Denmark

3. Assessment of the results and impact of the event on the future direction of the field

The presence of EUCCONET in the SLLS conference made a major impact on the visibility of the network. The Eucconet and ESF logos appeared on all Conference's documents. The conference gave a focus on the specificity of Child Cohorts in the European longitudinal landscape. Many bilateral collaborations between participants were facilitated. At the level of the two organizations, further cooperation was agreed, in the joint organization of the EUCCONET final conference with the third SLLS annual meeting.

This symposium represents a first attempt to get away from methodological discussions which had so far dominated the workshops held by the EUCCONET network. It represents a real response to the lack of such initiatives in this matter. As the network is running,



substantive issues linked to cross cohorts comparison will be developing in the network activities.

The three study directors report that the Bielefeld symposium provided a very valuable opportunity to begin collaborative work and to build more of a working relationship between the three of them. The potential for comparison across the cohorts became evident as part of this process and their ongoing plans to continue the collaboration. A specific outcome was the inclusion of all three cohorts in a bid put to Health Research Council of New Zealand by Susan Morton. The other participants in the symposium are also exploring ways to support work through funded collaboration. The upcoming Euconet conference will provide an invaluable opportunity to present the development of this initial work and to take forward the emerging collaboration.

The young researcher who presented the paper on gender differences in India, Vietnam, Peru and Ethiopia writes:

As a doctoral student in economics, focusing entirely on data from developing countries, the conference was very useful to me by having exposed me to how longitudinal data is used in other social science disciplines and in context of OECD countries. Much of my own work focuses on children in four developing countries: the EUCCONET symposium, in particular, was a very good illustration of how similar child cohort studies are used in the UK, Ireland and Australia and provided ripe ground for cross-fertilization of ideas both in terms of research methodologies and substantive research questions. I benefited from comments received on my presentation in the conference which were helpful in subsequent revisions to the paper. The paper has since become a Background Paper for the World Development Report 2012, is available both on the World Bank website and the Young Lives website, and is currently under peer review for journal publication. As a result of my participation in the Bielefeld conference, there is now greater interest within Young Lives in membership of SLLS and in submissions for the upcoming SLLS conference.

EUCCONET's interdisciplinary and international focus provides a unique forum for researchers, young and not so young to exchange ideas, broaden their horizons and forge collaborative plans. This is exactly what the establishment of the network was intended to do. These aims were successfully achieved by the gathering at Bielefeld, not only in the dedicated EUCCONET sessions but in the wider forum it provided.

4. Final Programme

The full programme of the conference is available online on the SLLS website: <http://www.longstudies.longviewuk.com/pages/conference.shtml>

The Steering Committee was held on the first day of the Conference, September 26th, from 2 to 4pm. Topics discussed included :

- Financial planning and programme of activities till the end of the ESF funding
- Preparation of the final conference
- Recommendations for the follow up of the network

The EUCCONET Symposium on Comparative Analysis of Child Cohort Studies included the following presentations:

- Diversity of family structures at 9 month – a cross-cohort comparison:



- Lucinda Platt for MCS, UK
 - James Williams for GUI, Ireland
 - Susan Morton for Growing up in New Zealand
- From Nutrition to Aspirations and Self-efficacy: Gender bias over time in four countries: Abhijeet Singh,

5. Final list of Participants at the Steering Committee:

- **Steering Committee members:**

Dr. Henri Léridon

Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques (INED) Paris, France

Professor Heather Joshi

University of London, Institute of Education Centre for Longitudinal Studies, London, United Kingdom

Dr Lynn Molloy

University of Bristol, Department of Social Medicine, Bristol, United Kingdom

Professor Johan Fritzell

Stockholm University Centre for Health Equity Studies (Chess), Stockholm, Sweden

Dr. Tine Brink Henriksen

Aarhus University Hospital, Department Pediatrics and Perinatal Epidemiology Research Unit, Aarhus, Denmark

Dr. Claudia Flexeder

German Research Center for Environmental Health, Research Unit Environmental Epidemiology, Munich, Germany

Dr. Oskar Jenni,

University of Zurich, Medicine Faculty, Switzerland

Dr. Vincent W.V. Jaddoe

Erasmus Medical Center Rotterdam, Erasmus Medical Center Rotterdam, Generation R, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Dr. Wenche Nystad

Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Oslo, Norway

Professor Harald Werneck

University of Vienna, Faculty of Psychology, Department of Developmental Psychology and Psychological Assessment, Wien, Austria

- **ESF Observer:**



Dr. Kirsten Steinhausen

- **Coordinator:**

Anne-Claire Blanchard

- **Invited Delegates:**

Paul Bradshaw, United Kingdom

Cialina Daraganova, Australia

Ben Edwards, Australia

James Williams, Ireland

Mette Lausten, Denmark

Susan Morton, New Zealand

Hans-Peter Blossfeld, Germany

Lucinda Platt, United Kingdom