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Wave 1 data release for *Footprints in Time: the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC)*

Footprints in Time is collecting important information about the lives of Indigenous children, covering areas such as health, culture, education, housing and family relationships. The study is designed to better understand the developmental pathways of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and what helps improve their wellbeing, and support good outcomes, as they grow up.

Wave 1 data

In 2008 the study included more than 900 babies aged approximately 6 to 18 months and more than 700 children aged approximately 3 years 6 months

to 4 years 6 months. Most of the information was collected through face-to-face interviews with a parent or carer (usually mother). The data summarised in this article is drawn from those primary carer interviews.

In addition some child assessment interviews and interviews with another parent or carer were conducted. A small number of questionnaires were also collected from teachers or child care providers. The education questionnaires will increase this year with many of the child cohort starting school. In future waves of the study there will be a focus on collecting data from a greater number of fathers. The following outlines some preliminary findings from Wave 1.

Within the study 88 per cent of the children were identified by their parent or primary carer as Aboriginal, 6 per cent were identified as Torres Strait Islander, and 6 per cent were identified as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Of the primary respondents, 76 per cent identified as Aboriginal, 7 per cent as Torres Strait Islander, 4 per cent as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 13 per cent as neither.

There were roughly even numbers of children across remote, regional and urban localities. The communities/localities included in the study are:

- ▶ Darwin, Katherine, Galiwinku (NT) — 239 study children
- ▶ Alice Springs and some surrounding communities (NT) — 64 study children
- ▶ Greater Shepparton (Vic) — 143 study children
- ▶ NSW south coast — 175 study children
- ▶ Greater Western Sydney — 163 study children
- ▶ Dubbo (NSW) — 156 study children

- ▶ Mt Isa, Mornington, Doomadgee, Normanton (Qld) — 172 study children
- ▶ Ipswich, Logan, Inala (Qld) — 211 study children
- ▶ Torres Strait Islands and Northern Peninsula area (Qld) — 132 study children
- ▶ Adelaide (SA) — 106 study children
- ▶ Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Broome (WA) — 126 study children.

LSIC asked questions across a broad range of areas such as household composition — around half of the households (49 per cent) have four or less family members, while 33 per cent have five or six family members, 16 per cent have between seven and 10 family members and the remaining 2 per cent have more than 10 people in the household. Most people (80 per cent) said their children have **not** been involved in or upset by family arguments. Many parents or carers feel that they are too crowded or said they are currently having housing problems (39 per cent).

LSIC also asked about child health. Almost all parents and carers said their children are in good to excellent health. However the study did show that a number of children have problems with their hearing or with their ears (20 per cent), and 13 per cent have asthma. About 12 per cent of the study children had birth weights less than 2,500 grams.

Most of the study children (80 per cent) were breastfed, at least initially. Half of the mothers (50 per cent) told us that they smoked during pregnancy with 51 per cent of them reducing the amount while they were pregnant. Some mothers (22 per cent) still drank alcohol while they were pregnant but the majority of these mothers (79 per cent) drank less than before they were pregnant.

More than one-quarter of LSIC parents and carers had taken the study child to playgroup (29 per cent) in the month before their interview and nearly one-quarter of



Mackaylah Carr

study children (23 per cent) attended child care or family day care. Of the older group of children, over half (53 per cent) were attending pre-school, kindergarten or school.

In the week they were interviewed, most children (77 per cent) had a book read to them, mostly by the mother (82 per cent) but also by the father (29 per cent), sister (23 per cent), grandmother (17 per cent) and brother (14 per cent).

LSIC asked about connection to country and many parents and carers said they take their children to cultural events, ceremonies and sorry business. Over half said their children had a connection to country or place, and identified their children with tribal groups, language groups or clans. Over one-third of parents are already teaching their children traditional practices like collecting food and hunting. Nearly half (48 per cent) of the older cohort have bush tucker in their diet.

Parents were asked about themselves as well. Nearly all the parents and carers speak English (95 per cent). The other languages most often

spoken in the sample are Torres Strait Creole, Kriol, Djambarrpuynu and Kalaw Kawaw Ya (Torres Strait).

Most parents (85 per cent) said they had a strong family that help them and about half of all the children's grandparents (49 per cent) provide care for them when parents cannot be there. When parents needed advice about caring for the study child, they said they most often ask other family members.

When asked about finances, over two-thirds of primary carers reported that they have not had serious worries about money. Some parents and carers have paid jobs (30 per cent) as well as caring for children and about 12 per cent are studying.

On the subject of community, most parents (63 per cent) think their community is a good or very good place for children, and many know of parks and places for children to play. Most (84 per cent) said their community is safe, very safe or okay.

A report summarising findings from Wave 1 of LSIC and providing an overview of the study is expected to be released later in 2009. To request copies please email <LSIC@fahcsia.gov.au>.

Accessing Wave 1 data

The Wave 1 dataset will be available from 20 October 2009. Queries about the study or the data should be forwarded to <LSICdata@fahcsia.gov.au> and queries about applying for the data or licensing arrangements should be sent to <longitudinalsurveys@fahcsia.gov.au>.

The arrangements for access are very similar to those already applying for access to the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) study and the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) datasets. However, there is additional information that LSIC applicants need to provide.

- Users affiliated with an organisation that has signed an Organisational Deed of Licence will need to contact their Data Manager and sign a Deed of Confidentiality and the LSIC data protocols. A complete list of organisations with an Organisational Deed of Licence is found at <<http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/data.html>> or <<http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/data.html>>.
- Users from all other organisations will need to enter an Organisational Deed of Licence or have individual users sign an Individual Deed of Licence.
- For more information, refer to the Manual for the access to and use of FaHCSIA longitudinal survey datasets, which can be found at the sites mentioned above.

All applicants for the dataset should read the Manual, regardless of whether they have previously read it. Information about the additional requirements will be included in the Manual which is being updated and will be available shortly. Anyone interested in applying for the LSIC data should read Section 9 and Appendix A in the Manual before completing their application. Data Managers will also need to become familiar with these new sections.



Brooke Gilchrist and family

There are three key interrelated protocols that LSIC data users need to follow when working with the data, in addition to the formal requirements set out in the Manual and the relevant licence deeds.

The first protocol requires applicants and licensed users to openly acknowledge their standpoint in their application and in the reporting of data outputs in reports or publications. This is a declaration of the context in which the data analysis is being generated, for example, their institutional context and whether in a university, government department, community organisation or cross-sector partnership. This will also require declaring one's personal context, such as cultural background, work background, depth of experience liaising with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and prior research/publications in the area.

The second protocol is a demonstration of cultural competency. Cultural competency refers to the need to respect, understand and acknowledge the benefits, values and realities of Indigenous people and communities. This includes being mindful of Indigenous people's right to have different values, norms and aspirations to non-Indigenous people. Analysts should recognise that Indigenous communities are diverse, with different languages, cultures, histories and perspectives, as well as the diversity of individuals within these communities. Researchers need to be cognisant of diversity by showing an understanding and appreciation of these differences in the analysis, interpretation and reporting of the data.

The third protocol deals with the final research material. Data users need to provide FaHCSIA with their final research material so that the department can honour its commitment to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities (particularly those involved in the study) feedback on how the data is being used and a summary of research project findings. This also allows FaHCSIA to make publicly available a bibliography of all final research material using LSIC data to encourage uptake of findings, avoid research duplication, and facilitate collaboration and the progressive building upon research findings.

It is important that the findings generated from the LSIC data are made available so they can contribute in the policy, planning, evaluation, management and delivery of services. In accordance with the Deed of Licence, the final research material can also be used across the Commonwealth Government to support internal policy development and evaluation.

These unique LSIC protocols have been developed in consultation with a subcommittee including Aboriginal members from the LSIC Steering Committee. Applicants need to provide a response regarding adherence to the protocols in the data application form.

For further information or to request a copy of the Wave 1 Report once it is released, please email <LSIC@fahcsia.gov.au>.

Investing in Indigenous child health research workshop

In Australia there are at least five longitudinal cohort research studies examining Indigenous child health. These include:

- ▶ *Footprints in Time*—the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC)
- ▶ The Study of Environment on Aboriginal Resilience and Child Health (SEARCH)¹
- ▶ The Aboriginal Birth Cohort (ABC)² (Northern Territory)
- ▶ Antecedents for Renal Disease in Aboriginal Children project (ARDAC)³
- ▶ The Gudaga Project: health and development of Aboriginal infants in an urban environment.⁴

While these studies vary in their scope (from national to regional and from urban to remote) they all work with cohorts of Indigenous infants and children, following the participants over time. People working on these studies were brought together in May at a FaHCSIA-funded workshop called 'Investing in Indigenous child health research'. The workshop was organised by the Gudaga project and held at Campbelltown Hospital on 22 May 2009.

Participants attending the workshop included representatives from the five studies as well as staff from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Sax Institute. This was the first formal opportunity for those working on these five studies to come together to share research experiences, exchange ideas and examine issues of commonality.



Shania Teece

The workshop aimed to:

- ▶ examine methodological and theoretical issues pertaining to the conduct of Indigenous longitudinal cohort studies
- ▶ provide a forum for those involved in Indigenous longitudinal cohort studies to come together to share research experiences.

The day commenced with an 8 year-old student from the local Indigenous community conducting the Acknowledgement to Country. She was accompanied by Ms Margaret Anderson, a local elder.

Professor Philip Schluter, head researcher of the Pacific Islands Families (PIF) study,⁵ presented the keynote address. The PIF is a longitudinal cohort study of 1,376 families based in Auckland, New Zealand, which commenced in 2000. It shares many features with the five Australian studies featured in the workshop.

Then representatives from each of the five Australian studies presented a short overview of the projects. The presenters included:

- ▶ Elizabeth Comino (lead investigator of the Gudaga project)
- ▶ Kathleen Clapham (Chief Investigator, SEARCH), and Tracey Skinner and Jess Kilpatrick (project officers, SEARCH)

1 <<http://www.saxinstitute.org.au/>> and search for SEARCH.
2 <<http://edison.menzies.edu.au/clancohort/index.htm>>.
3 <<http://www.kidney-research.org/researchaboriginal.php>>.
4 <<http://notes.med.unsw.edu.au/CPHCEWeb.nsf/page/Gudaga>>.

5 For further information about this study <<http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/119-1228/1814/>>.

- ▶ Sue Sayers (lead investigator of the ABC study)
- ▶ Fiona Skelton (Assistant Section Manager, Content Development, *Footprints in Time*)
- ▶ Sean Taylor (Project Manager, ARDAC).

Dr Lynn Kemp and Associate Professor Elizabeth Comino, from the University of New South Wales, led a workshop on the ethics of longitudinal research of Indigenous children. This session gave the opportunity for small group work, with time at the end to present a summary of the discussions.

The emphasis of the afternoon was on practical issues pertinent to longitudinal cohort studies. There was extensive opportunity for discussion and exchange of ideas. Two workshops ran concurrently.

One workshop was specifically designed to give the Indigenous Project Officers the opportunity to discuss the rewards and challenges of undertaking this type of research. This session was chaired by Ms Debra Fernando from the SEARCH project. The rewards identified included mutual gain for participants and researchers, such as increased knowledge and empowerment for both and increased employment in the community. Other rewards focused on achieving better outcomes in closing the gap through producing quality data.

The Indigenous Project Officers reflected on improvements in skills, job satisfaction and respect. Challenges of the role included confronting issues such as dealing with tokenism and the emotional toll of working in an area so close to the heart. There are also practical issues, such as conducting research in a bureaucratic environment and maintaining high sample retention.

The delicate ethical balance upon which such studies depend was also identified as an issue. Managing the relationship with the community from inception to dissemination requires constant monitoring and energy. Outcomes were a concern and questions about whether the study results would be heard or acted on were raised.

The other session, chaired by Professor Louisa Jorm, University of Western Sydney, identified and discussed the design, analysis and data management of longitudinal research. This covered content issues, including ways to measure environmental factors, staging the introduction of sensitive questions and the need for community-based champions. The group also identified issues to consider and be aware of when conducting and analysing longitudinal research; for example, leaving demographic questions, such as place of birth, for later waves. Another topic covered involved methods of keeping track of questions asked over time.

The workshop raised awareness of all the projects currently underway and the issues and concerns shared by all those undertaking longitudinal cohort studies with Indigenous children. The workshop also provided an opportunity for those working in this area to share experiences and establish networks.

It was proposed that the workshop become an annual event. The Sax Institute (SEARCH) undertook to host the 2010 workshop.

Chinese Social Policy workshop

The Chinese Social Policy Workshop (CSPW) was held at the University of New South Wales on 7 July 2009 and was divided into four sessions: social security and poverty; older people; social services; and future research and collaboration opportunities. The workshop was attended by around 40 people, with two-thirds visiting from China. While the workshop was set against the backdrop of the global financial crisis, it was also in the context of China's accelerated recovery which was around 6 per cent growth in Gross Domestic Product.

We learned from Professor Peter Whiteford and Xin Yi, both from the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), that there is a 'demographic window' of about 15 years for real pension reform in China. The country is experiencing urban drift as younger people move toward cities for economic sustenance. This could cause a crisis for the aged in the decades to come as China's population gets older, the traditional family structure breaks up, there are fewer people to look after the elderly and social welfare and services are slow to roll out in rural China due to issues of distance. On the positive side, the proportion of Chinese below the poverty line has decreased significantly; however, many people are living just above the line. Although the aged pension in China is very good compared to other nations, those that receive it are considered to be the relatively privileged.

Liu Jitong of the Peking University suggested that 'amid this swirl of changes to social structure imposed by market forces', is the

right time for social policy to emerge in China where it is a relatively new concept. The United States (US) model of social policy has a strong following in China but Jitong argued that it would be better to follow the United Kingdom (UK) and Australian examples as they are more socially inclusive.

Professor Lih-Rong Wang from the National Taiwan University spoke about her research, which attempts to measure social inclusion in Taiwan, and included comparisons with South Korea. It was found on average a person's feeling of social inclusion in Taiwan is weak. Although access to education was a significant factor in measurement of social inclusion, there was a high correlation with democratic satisfaction—that is, in Taiwan, social inclusion was strongly based on a feeling of democracy. The researcher therefore concluded that democratic institutions should be maintained and strengthened.

Other important issues covered at the CSPW included empowerment of people with disabilities and child protection in rural China. The workshop expressed a desire for closer engagement between Chinese and Australian researchers, institutions and government agencies. There is already a significant degree of collaborative research as demonstrated by the papers presented from Australia and China. It was noted that Western industrialised nations could be seen as leading the way in social policy reform; however, the workshop demonstrated the mutual benefit in such exchanges and showed the development of social policy in China.

Australian Social Policy conference 2009

The 11th Australian Social Policy conference was held at the University of New South Wales from 8–10 July 2009. The theme of this year's conference was 'An inclusive society: practicalities and possibilities'. The conference gathered together academics, researchers, policy makers and service providers to hear the presentation of over 140 papers.

The conference was opened by Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, who provided a history of social policy research. In her opening address Ms Bryce described a socially inclusive society as one in which individual people are celebrated and enabled and where communities are safe and enriched. Ms Bryce expressed her gratitude and admiration to the social policy makers and researchers for their intellect, empathy and influence.

Keynote addresses

Three keynote speakers provided different perspectives on 'How can we build an inclusive society?'

Ms Naomi Eisenstadt CB, Director of the Social Exclusion Task Force in the UK, presented her experience of tackling complex disadvantage



Naomi Eisenstadt

across the life course and between generations. Ms Eisenstadt described the challenge of 'narrowing the gap' for those who are at most risk of disadvantage and spoke about the fact that public health messages and policies that work for many leave those with the most complex problems behind.

In addressing the ways in which complex disadvantage can be tackled, Ms Eisenstadt drew on three evidence-based projects: Sure Start; Family Nurse Partnerships; and Predictive Risk Modelling. Further information is available at <www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force.aspx>.

Ms Eisenstadt described four themes that emerged through these initiatives:

- Community-based programs shift the curve of poverty, but miss the most disadvantaged.
- Programs must address the needs of the whole family.
- The most promising interventions need rigorous evaluation.
- The common feature of a successful program is the quality of its staff.

In the second plenary session Mr Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and Race Discrimination Commissioner, emphasised the importance of giving Indigenous people a voice in policy decision making. Mr Calma spoke about the establishment of a national Indigenous body, citing examples in the US and Canada where Indigenous representative bodies focus on policy, monitoring and evaluation, not on service delivery. He commented that the provision of services by an Indigenous representative body, such as occurred under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), was not favoured in the new model.

Mr Calma outlined the role of a national body as:

- holding the government to account for Indigenous policies and programs
- having the power to monitor Indigenous programs effectively
- providing advocacy for Indigenous people
- partnering with government, corporate and with Indigenous organisations

- representing Indigenous people internationally
- involved in policy development that affects Indigenous people.

It is anticipated that the national Indigenous body will be established by the end of 2009.

The final keynote speaker, Professor Ann Orloff from Northwestern University in Chicago, discussed changes in government policies, feminist politics and mothers' employment in a number of countries. Professor Orloff argued that these changes represent a shift from the traditional model where males were the breadwinners and women provided most of the care, nurturance and morality to children. Professor Orloff discussed a social policy alternative where both women and men are supported to have a dual earner/carer role, including some issues associated with this alternative. For example, whether care from the father is as beneficial as care from the mother; the need to change employer expectations of all staff availability; and the need for governments to help remove obstacles for both men and women to have a dual earner/carer role.

A range of presentations are briefly summarised into categories below. Starting with **children, young people and families** three papers were presented about research into the use of services by families in crisis.

Ms Marianne Rajkovic and Kylie Valentine from Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) presented 'The experience of families around diagnosis of a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder: findings from a qualitative study'. The project draws on qualitative interviews with families, clinicians and service providers to explore the experience of families in the period following diagnosis, and the support and services that families find most effective. For Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) the

path from diagnosis to treatment is not clear cut. Children with ASD present with a variety of symptoms ranging from sensory deficits to communication problems—with intellectual deficits being present for some children—and the most suitable treatment can be much harder to determine than for many other disabling conditions. Parents often feel disempowered and overwhelmed by the diagnosis of ASD and often want to be told which treatment route to take. The priorities for families in selecting therapies are often based on reducing the severity of behavioural traits of ASD that are antisocial, improving communication and eliciting emotional response from the child. Several therapeutic approaches to ASD involve a 'parent training' component, changing the ways that parents (and sometimes siblings) communicate with and interact with the child with ASD. The paper outlined the processes by which parents make decisions about treatment and their experiences of their child's treatment.

Dr Tamara Blakemore from FaHCSIA presented the paper 'Whom do we reach? Exploring health and community service use by Australian families with young children', which was co-authored by Ms Megan Shipley. The research investigated differences in service use across socioeconomic groups for families with young children. Using Waves 1 and 2 of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), it was found, similar to previous research, that an environment of 'inverse care' exists, whereby those who need access to services are the least likely to receive them. In general, families in lower socioeconomic groups were less likely to have accessed services for their child when compared to families in higher socioeconomic positions. In terms of using services for the family, families in a low socioeconomic position were more likely to access economic support, crisis or emergency care type services.

These families were also less likely to use services such as medical and dental services (except bulk billing GPs), antenatal care services, parent groups, counselling services, church and religious groups, and services provided by the Australian breastfeeding association. The findings suggest that the relationship between family socioeconomic position and the use of services is not necessarily straightforward.

Another report called ‘Moving forward: women’s journeys after leaving an abusive relationship’ by Ms Genevieve Nelson, Ms Kate Spalding, Ms Judith Teicke and Ms Melina Isgro-Rarp from The Benevolent Society, reported findings that explored the challenges eight women with children faced after leaving an abusive relationship and how they coped with these challenges. The women had spent an average of 20 years in the abusive relationship. The study’s focus was ‘moving forward’ and took a strengths-based approach. Five of the women had accessed services. The women had mixed experiences of formal support—legal/justice and domestic violence services. Soft entry points into support services, such as general practitioners or schools, and also informal support such as neighbours and friends were seen as helpful. Some of the barriers to services were costs and the need for anonymity and accessibility (for example, suitable opening hours). None of the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women in the study had shared their experiences with anyone outside their family. It was concluded that for services to be successful they need to be available to women on a long-term basis (over several years), free (or low cost), anonymous, and flexible and responsive to CALD women. The full report is available at <www.bensoc.org.au>.

Two papers about step-parent families included ‘The relevance of family characteristics, family transition and conflict in

explaining poor outcomes for young adults from non-intact families’ by Ms Paula Mance and Dr Peng Yu, from FaHCSIA. This study used the Youth in Focus project, Centrelink administrative data and survey responses from parent and youth interviews. The measures examined were educational attainment and delinquent behaviour (regular smoking, interaction with police and suspension/expulsion from school). The sample was stratified based on parent income support receipt levels. The youths were categorised as being in a lone-parent, stepmother, stepfather or an intact family. Using multivariate regression techniques, the researchers found that youths in families other than intact families had poorer outcomes. In most cases controlling for confounding factors reduced or rendered the relationship non-significant. Contextual factors dominated in explaining poorer outcomes. However, youths in stepmother families were more likely to be regular smokers and to have lower educational attainment. Youths in stepfather families had lower educational attainment.

Also, Ms Heather Crawford from the Australian Bureau of Statistics presented work she has undertaken using the Family Characteristics and Transitions Survey (FCTS) 2006–07, to map parent–child relationships within and across dwellings. Most statistics on families are based on relationships within a household or dwelling, but many relationships between parents and their children cross dwelling boundaries, for example when children are in shared care arrangements. More detailed information is provided through FCTS, which collected information about all children who had a parent ‘living elsewhere’. The analysis presented used information about parent–child relationships within and across dwellings to describe the family situation. The results of the analysis showed that 72 per cent of dwellings contained two parents, 24 per cent contained

one parent and 4 per cent were other situations. Five per cent of the ‘two-parent dwellings’ included step-parents where the stepchild usually lives elsewhere and 8 per cent of the ‘one-parent dwellings’ included a parent whose child usually lived elsewhere. More complex situations include: multi-family dwellings; multi-generational families; and dwellings where other related or unrelated people live with families. Of particular note was the number of non-resident parents who live with their own parents.

Some interesting findings were presented by Ms Jude Brown from the University of New England from her research on the association between television viewing and developmental outcomes using data from Waves 1 and 2 of LSAC. Information on socioeconomic background and time use diaries from Wave 1 was matched with child outcomes from Wave 2. A positive association was found between television watching (mother and baby together) and reading for the birth cohort. Television viewing was found to have a negative effect on vocabulary at Wave 2. A mother’s education and household income was associated with television watching. The researcher suggests that selection effects could apply even at this young age.

Two studies about balancing work and family analysed different data sources.

The first was by Ms Ibolya Losoncz from FaHCSIA who presented ‘Struggling to keep the balance: work–life experience of Australian mothers in paid work between 2001 and 2006’. Earlier research by Losoncz and Bortolotto (2009), using cluster analysis on the HILDA survey data, identified six major homogenous groups of working mothers who had distinctive profiles in terms of their work–family life experience. Mothers in two of these clusters—*Aspiring and struggling* and *Indifferent and struggling*—experience

strong tension in managing their work and family responsibilities. These mothers tend to have long working hours, high work overload and little or no support from others—either because they are without partners, or because the partner’s working hours are not affected by the long working hours of the mother. Longitudinal analysis over six years found a relatively high transition between clusters. While just under one-third of working mothers struggle to manage their work and family responsibilities at any one time, a majority of these mothers will move onto a more positive experience within a couple of years. Nevertheless, about one-quarter of these mothers, or 7 per cent of all working mothers, continued to struggle with the experience for over four years. Mothers with long-term difficulties managing work and family responsibilities are most likely to require more targeted assistance.

The second paper titled “‘The policeman and the part-time sales assistant’: household labour supply, family time and subjective time pressure in Australia 1997–2006’ by Dr Lyn Craig and Dr Killian Mullan from the SPRC, explored the associations between the social and policy context and how parents of young children allocate time to work and family, using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Time Use Survey 1997 and 2006. Over this period, Australia’s economy was growing and there was an increase in women’s labour force participation, particularly those in part-time work. As a result there has been a decline in the single income ‘male breadwinner’ households and a corresponding increase in the ‘one-and-a half earner’ family form among families with young children. The impact these changes had on families included: increased total household work; increased gender specialisation in paid work and caring labour; and much higher subjective time pressure, especially for fathers and the relatively few mothers who were employed full-time.

The topic **social exclusion and economic inequalities** covered a range of papers including a presentation by Ms Joanne Hillermann from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Mr John Landt from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet titled ‘Developing an Australian measurement and reporting framework for social inclusion’. This framework aims to identify the number and characteristics of people and families suffering severe and multiple forms of disadvantage, and to monitor the impact of government policies to address social inclusion.

Professor Maureen Baker, from the University of Auckland focused on ‘The “quintessential problem debtor?” Mother-led households in economic hard times’. This paper examined the gendered patterns of family debt in the liberal welfare states and argued that the social circumstances of sole mothers contribute to unmanageable debt levels which in turn reduce their strategies for recovery. The presenter concluded that women are more vulnerable to the effects of the economic downturn; however, strategies being implemented tend to target men, for example, investment in construction and infrastructure.

Professor Peter Saunders and Dr Melissa Wong from SPRC presented the paper ‘Still doing it tough: an update on deprivation and social exclusion among welfare service clients’. Drawing on results from a new survey of disadvantaged Australians conducted in 2008 the presenters compared these results with a similar survey conducted in 2006. The 2008 survey found that among families, sole parents faced the highest level of deprivation, almost 35 per cent above the national average, and higher than the average experienced by Indigenous Australians and those with an ongoing disability in this study. Participants who were unemployed experienced a 24 per cent increase in deprivation from the 2006 results. More than three-quarters of all respondents

experienced five or more forms of social exclusion ranging from a lack of participation in social and community activities, lack of access to key services and restricted access to economic resources. However, overall the study found no evidence of a decline in levels of social exclusion over the period 2006–08. The deprivation gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians had narrowed slightly based on the results.

Using data from the first seven waves of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, Dr Matthew Gray, from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), explored ‘The effect of relationship breakdown on poverty and social exclusion: the impact of stability of income and control over household expenditure’. This study attempted to explain why a significant proportion of mothers reported a lower rate of financial hardship and higher levels of perceived prosperity despite their equivalent household income being reduced following relationship breakdown. The findings illuminated new insights for policies aimed at increasing employment rates of mothers post-separation and for the equivalence scale literature, which generally assumes that income is allocated across all household members.

Building on this theme, Dr Bruce Bradbury, from the SPRC, estimated the relative pension levels that would enable single and couple pensioners to have the same standard of living (‘consumer equivalence scales’). Dr Bradbury suggested that standard methods for estimating such relativities are not very precise and rely on strong and unclear assumptions. Using an alternative strategy, based on an economic model of household consumption in conjunction with detailed assumptions about the extent of joint consumption of different goods, Dr Bradbury concluded that couples reliant solely on the Age Pension have higher living standards than comparable singles.

He found that expenditure for home-owning couples needs to be 1.3 to 1.6 times that for singles in order to attain the same standard of living (the pension relativity in early 2009 was 1.64). Estimates for renting households and for unrelated people living together were also discussed. This study, conducted by the SPRC, was commissioned by the recent Harmer Review, and provided support for other evidence that also argued for an increase in the relative pension for singles. The government has recently announced changes to the single pension rate which will bring the couple ratio to about 1.5 times that for singles.

Mental health featured in several papers including a presentation by Ms Silvia Mendolia from the School of Economics and SPRC, which explored ‘The impact of job loss on family mental health’. Analysis was based on the complete sample of married/cohabitating couples from the first 14 waves of the British Household Panel Survey. It was found that couples in which the husband experienced a job loss were more likely to experience poor mental health and that this negative effect occurred in both redundancy and dismissal situations.

In the paper ‘The impact of drought on mental health and alcohol use’ by Dr Ben Edwards and Dr Matthew Gray, AIFS, and Dr Boyd Hunter from the Australian National University the researchers used the Rural and Regional Families study, a cross-sectional study of 8,000 people, to compare working-age people who were in drought (as defined by rainfall and also self report) to those that were not in drought.

It was found that in areas of drought farmers along with farm managers and those not in employment, experience significantly worse mental health outcomes. However, researchers also found that drinking alcohol was not a problem in times of drought, with lower rates of alcohol use reported by those in drought, compared to those not in drought.

Disability and carers issues were investigated through a diverse range of data sources, with some examples presented below.

Based on the 2006 Census and the 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Dr Louise O’Rance of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare presented ‘The geography of disability and economic disadvantage’. The study showed that people with disability were mostly living in the south and south-east part of Australia. Inner-regional areas had the highest proportion of people with disability, whereas remote Australia had relatively lower crude rates of disability than other regions. However, these rates in remote areas were mainly due to their relatively young population, and age standardised disability rates show that the highest numbers were in the remote areas. Evidence of a social gradient of disability—disability is clearly associated with socioeconomic disadvantage—was the concluding message in this paper.

Dr Samara McPhedran from FaHCSIA presented findings from the HILDA survey to address the question: ‘Disability and community life: does regional living enhance social participation’. The study found that location and socioeconomic disadvantage were related, and people with disability living in regional areas participated more frequently in community events and volunteering than people with disability living in major cities, consistent with the social cohesion hypothesis of regional living.

Based on the Youth in Focus dataset, Dr Peng Yu from FaHCSIA talked about ‘Social inclusion among young people growing up with a disability’. Using data from a cohort of 18 year-olds the paper analysed the associations between disability and youth outcomes and outlook. It found that young people with developmental/learning disability were more likely to have: poor school attainment; poor school performance;

an unhappy childhood; less frequent contact with friends; received income support; and lower expected education than their peers with no disability. Youths with physical disability were relatively less disadvantaged than those with developmental/learning disability, but they also had poorer school attainment and less happy childhoods than those with no disability. No significant correlation was found between disability and other socioeconomic disadvantages, but combining disability and some other disadvantages led to worse outcomes.

The presentation ‘I’m just helping out the family: profiling hidden carers’ by Ms Cathy Thomson, Dr Trish Hill, Ms Ciara Smyth and Professor Bettina Cass, SPRC, used an innovative method to identify and profile the demographic characteristics and geographical distribution of young carers. Existing research does not capture the full extent of young people’s care giving, because many young carers remain hidden and do not identify with the term ‘young carer’, instead perceiving what they do as part of normal family life. The authors analysed Census data to determine whether caring differentially affects young carers’ current social and economic participation and, hence, their opportunities in later life. Results showed that young people of Indigenous and CALD backgrounds are overrepresented among potential carers.

Ms Margaret Skillman from FaHCSIA presented the results of a qualitative study where 1,600 older carers (over the age of 65 years) were interviewed to gauge an understanding of their service needs. The paper titled ‘Transition support: helping older carers and their families—summary of findings’ concluded that:

- ▶ many older carers did not feel a sense of burden, taking on the caring role out of a sense of responsibility or duty

- ▶ there is a lack of service provision for older carers, especially in remote communities
- ▶ many older carers do not have confidence in services
- ▶ complexity of care arrangements results in many older carers caring for more than one family member
- ▶ early intervention is important.

For many older carers (about one-third) the study interview was the first contact they had from a service provider despite a long history of caring. This highlighted the experience of social isolation many older carers faced.

The presenter concluded that this is a challenge for government, to address the needs of a large group of people who have never accessed services in the past but will need to in the future.

Papers on **retirement and ageing** generally focused on aspects of social inclusion and wellbeing.

For instance, the paper ‘Active ageing in Australia: social, civic and community participation of older people’ by Professor Bettina Cass and Dr Trish Hill, from SPRC, investigated the links between the wellbeing of older people in Australia and their participation in economic, social and community life. Drawing on an analysis of the ABS General Social Survey 2006, the researchers discussed protective factors such as: being Australian born; being English speaking; having a higher education; living alone (for women); in good/excellent health; have no disability; have high income; moving out of a previous locality; having a motor vehicle; and providing unpaid care.

Ms Somali Cerise from the Australian Human Rights Commission presented ‘Should poverty be the reward for a life spent caring?’, which explained that as women are more likely to have broken paid work patterns due to caring responsibilities and have lower lifetime earnings due to pay inequity, there is a

significant disparity between the retirement savings and retirement income of men and women, and women face higher risk of financial insecurity and poverty in retirement. In 2006, the average superannuation was \$35,525 for women and \$69,050 for men, and the gap was larger for older age groups. The average weekly disposable income of retirees aged 55 years and older was \$312 for women and \$430 for men. Ms Cerise proposed several policy responses to the issue: removing barriers to work for women; closing gender gap in pay; reforming the superannuation system; and recognising the economic value of unpaid care.

Using the 2006 Australian Time Use Survey, Dr Roger Patulny from SPRC presented 'Ex-household social contact amongst retired men and women in Australia'. Results varied by how retirement was defined and operationalised, but an interaction effect between men and retirement predicting less social contact was present when a definition of retirement integrating non-work, self-defined retirement and age was used. There was also a consistently strong effect of marital status on social contact, no matter how retirement was defined.

Dr Natalie Jackson and Dr Maggie Walter from the University of Tasmania presented 'Which of Australia's baby boomers expect to delay their retirement? An occupational overview'. The paper reported results from the Australian Survey of Retirement Attitudes and Motivations study, a national telephone survey of 2,500 workers aged between 40 and 59 years about their retirement, collected in 2006. The paper focused on how amenable older workers are to extending their working hours, the effectiveness of current policies and what policies would work better. The results showed that just over half of Australia's baby boomers are open to the idea of a longer working life, with 43 per cent believing they are likely to

consider working beyond age 65. However, they want a useful and meaningful transition from work to retirement. Negotiating this may be their biggest problem, with only 10 per cent having discussed the topic with their supervisor or employer, and less than half knowing of specific government policy interventions.

The paper 'Towards small area indicators of wellbeing for older Australians: concepts and issues' by Dr Riyana Miranti, Ms Alicia Payne and Dr Justine McNamara from the University of Canberra, was part of an ARC-funded project entitled 'Opportunity and disadvantage: differences in wellbeing among Australia's adults and children at a small area level'. The aim is to produce a database of household characteristics at a small area level and to make it available online to provide policy makers with quantitative evidence on the nature of locational disadvantage for older people. The project is still in progress. The authors proposed four domains of indicators at a small area level, including economic, health and physical capacities, social participation and spatial and environmental indicators. The database will be available by the end of the year, with free online maps and tables behind it.

The final theme for papers was **organisation and delivery of human services**, which covered community-based programs and partnerships.

'Building sustainable partnerships: Aboriginal community-controlled and generalist organisations learning together' by Ms Carolyn Atkins and Ms Lauren Matthews, from the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS), drew on the learnings of a recent VCOSS, Uniting Care and Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency forum. It explored the key elements of building sustainable and meaningful partnerships between Aboriginal

community-controlled and mainstream community sector organisations. Barriers faced by Aboriginal organisations included: economies of scale; community disadvantage; individuals/the agency being drawn on by everybody; and a lower skill base. Key success factors included: time; safe environments; power sharing, driven from top-down (champions); resourcing; review and evaluation; acknowledging strengths; and cultural competence.

SPRC researchers presented ‘The impact of the Communities for Children program on partnerships among service providers’ by Dr Christiane Purcal, Kristy Muir, Dr Roger Patulny, Ms Cathy Thomson, Mr Saul Flaxman and Dr Catherine Spooner. This paper examined the outcomes of collaboration and coordination from the Australian Government’s Communities for Children (CfC) program implemented in 45 sites around the country. Based on quantitative and qualitative findings from a three-year evaluation of CfC, the paper outlined changes in partnerships among early childhood service providers and outcomes for services and children, as well as facilitating factors and barriers to change. The data indicated that the partnership focus of CfC helped improve the delivery of early years’ services. Agency staff worked together significantly more and services engaged better with clients, and this was associated with improved outcomes for children and their families. However, the effectiveness of CfC partnerships depended on structural, organisational and practical factors such as the skill of partnership agency staff, pre-existing service networks and the site’s geography.

In addition to the sample of presentations described above, there were a number of presentations that went into an open category. Some of these had direct relevance to the research and policy interests of FaHCSIA, including: disadvantage and children’s rights; prevention of violence against women; and sociology, social inclusion and human rights. Further information is available on the SPRC website at <http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/>.

Trends in interactive gambling activity and regulation

The report 'Review of current and future trends in interactive gambling activity and regulation—literature review' by The Allen Consulting Group, examines the current trends in interactive gambling in Australia, the range and accessibility of services available, the current regulatory framework and future trends in technology that may influence the availability of interactive gambling opportunities in the future.

Interactive gambling broadly refers to the range of gambling activities that occur through interactive mediums—such as internet, phone and digital television. Gambling is a broad term that encompasses 'gaming' (casino style gambling) and wagering, for example, betting on horse/dog racing and sporting events.

In Australia all forms of interactive gaming are prohibited under the *Interactive Gambling Act*. For the purposes of the Act some forms of interactive 'wagering' are allowed as they are not considered to have the same continuous, and addictive, format as many interactive gambling services (such as online poker machines or casino style games).

The report looked at all forms of interactive gambling being offered to Australians, including legal wagering or illegal gambling services.

Key findings include:

- Current participation in internet gambling is very low (ranging from 0.2 to 2.7 per cent of the population).
- Most large internet gambling providers promote responsible gambling strategies and offer responsible gambling initiatives to players.

- Based on current research, there is no evidence to suggest that there are higher rates of problem gambling among interactive gamblers than in the general population.
- Increased broadband access and new technology such as 'iphones', blackberries and the soon to be released 'google' phones have the potential to increase the accessibility of interactive gambling to the Australian public.

For more information or a copy of this report please contact Trish Van Dartel at email <trish.vandartel@fahcsia.gov.au> or tel (02) 6244 6782.

The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey 2009 research conference

The fourth biennial HILDA survey research conference, jointly hosted by FaHCSIA and the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, was held at the University of Melbourne on 16–17 July 2009. The conference, which was well attended by over 200 participants, aimed to exploit the longitudinal nature of the HILDA dataset and provide a forum for the discussion of research based on HILDA data.

A HILDA data users training session was held to coincide with the conference on 13–15 July 2009. This was also well attended by 44 participants. In keeping with the longitudinal theme of the conference, Professor Steve Pudney (one of the keynote speakers at the HILDA conference) presented the majority of the course on panel data analysis techniques. Members of the HILDA team also provided an introduction to the HILDA data and documentation. Notes from the training are available on the HILDA website <http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/doc/user_training_opportunities.html>.

The conference was opened by The Hon Bill Shorten MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services and Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction. In his speech Parliamentary Secretary Shorten acknowledged the importance of longitudinal data, especially in its contribution to evidence-based policy. He also talked about the gaps in disability research and the importance of longitudinal surveys like HILDA in filling those gaps.

Thirty-five papers ranging from preliminary to fully-refereed papers were presented over the two days. Collectively, these

papers covered topics as diverse as housing, income and poverty, marriage and relationships, mental health, employment and maternity leave. In addition to overseas speakers, papers were also presented by Australian academics, PhD candidates, and representatives from Australian government agencies. The department was represented with two papers presented by FaHCSIA staff members Ms Ibolya Losoncz and Dr Peng Yu.

The conference dinner was a highlight, with special guest speaker Professor Bob Gregory, Emeritus Professor from the Economics Program, Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University.

Ms Cheryl Perrett, an interviewer from Roy Morgan, the fieldwork collector for HILDA, was recognised for conducting over 1,000 interviews. Ms Nicole Watson, Deputy Director, Survey Management, from the Melbourne Institute, was awarded the HILDA Survey Distinguished Award in recognition of her commitment and invaluable contribution to the HILDA survey.

This year presentations were divided into three streams: family; income and wealth; and employment and technical papers. The inclusion of a Chair and a discussant in each session helped to facilitate constructive discussions among conference attendees. A brief summary of presentations of key interest to FaHCSIA, including those by keynote speakers Professor Robert Moffitt and Professor Steve Pudney, and by FaHCSIA staff, is provided below.

Keynote speakers, Professor Robert Moffitt and Professor Steve Pudney, provided valuable insight into the benefits and challenges of using longitudinal data in research.

The first keynote speaker of the conference was Professor Robert Moffitt, Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of Economics at John Hopkins University. Professor Moffitt is

a leading advocate of econometric methods and has strong ties with the American Panel Study of Income Dynamics. The focus of this session was on how panel data can be used to analyse income dynamics. Evidence shows that inequality has increased in the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and Europe. There is also evidence of income earnings inequality in Australia; however, this is still less than in the US and some other countries. Professor Moffitt emphasised that although cross-sectional research provides useful trend information, it fails to identify underlying factors influencing trends. This is where the use of panel datasets like HILDA becomes important. Using longitudinal methods, Professor Moffitt explored the permanent and transitory changes in earnings over time. Results for men showed that both permanent and transitory variances of earnings have gone up and the increase in transitory variance explains about 50 per cent of the increase in the cross-sectional variance. Results for women showed that women have higher levels of transitory variance at all times. Professor Moffitt's work emphasised the importance of longitudinal data in providing a holistic picture of income dynamics over time.

The keynote speaker for the final plenary session was Professor Steve Pudney. Professor Pudney is the Director of the Economic and Social Research Council on Micro-Social Change at the University of Essex. He works closely with the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) team and is known for his work on panel survey methods, and especially measurement error and its implications for panel data analyses. His presentation titled 'Ask a silly question—and get a silly answer?' highlighted the ways in which survey design and response behaviour can impact on data and research. Professor Pudney presented two experiments that demonstrated that the common finding that 'in terms of job

satisfaction, men value high pay and women value low hours' may in fact be an artefact of survey design and interview context.

In the first experiment, the effect of changes in labelling of response categories for job satisfaction in the BHPS was examined. In the BHPS, respondents are asked to indicate how satisfied they are with various aspects of their jobs on a 7 point scale. In 1991, only the end points and centre of the response categories were labelled. In 1992 all categories were labelled. Results showed a difference in the distribution of responses in 1991 and 1992 but no difference between 1992 and 1993, suggesting an effect of the labelling.

In the second experiment responses to job satisfaction questions in the main interview were compared with responses to the same question in the self-complete questionnaire (SCQ). Large differences were found between the two interview modes. Specifically, both men and women were more likely to report that wages were important in the more private mode of interview (the SCQ) but women were less likely to report that money was important in the main interview. The negative hours effect was only evident in interview for women. Partners reported lower levels of job satisfaction if their partner was present at the main interview and parents reported higher levels of job satisfaction if their children were present at interview.

Professor Pudney's presentation highlighted a number of key issues. First, privacy of interview mode and wording of questions can be very important and it is essential that survey designers focus on the impact of design on analysis results, not just on data accuracy. Second, collecting contextual information should be a high priority as this provides researchers with further information to investigate what is really driving results.

The impact on women having children and how mothers balanced work and family life was a frequently occurring topic.

Dr Aydogan Ulker, from the School of Accounting, Economics and Finance at Deakin University, presented a paper investigating the determinants of maternity leave duration in Australia. It was found that the difficulties experienced by mothers of newborn babies in finding appropriate child care hinder their ability to return to the labour market following childbirth. Those mothers who had higher hourly wage rates in their pre-birth employment tended to return to labour market at a quicker rate than their lower wage counterparts. Furthermore, mothers who had flexible working arrangements in their pre-birth jobs were more likely to return to work earlier. In contrast, mothers with higher levels of household wealth were more likely to have longer durations of maternity leave.

A research paper by Professor Hideki Nakazato from the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Letters at Japan's Konan University highlighted the effects of work–life harmonisation on the birth of a second child. Mothers working part-time (1–19 hours per week) are significantly more likely to proceed to a second child by the following survey wave than mothers at home or mothers working full-time. Further, mothers working full-time are significantly less likely to have a second child when their partners spend less than 10 hours per week in child rearing.

Using waves one to six of HILDA, Ms Ibolya Losoncz, from FaHCSIA explored work–life tension and its impact on the work hours of Australian mothers. Earlier research by Losoncz and Bortolotto (2009), using cluster analysis on the HILDA survey data, identified six major homogenous groups of working mothers who had distinctive profiles in terms of their work–family life experience. The current research used these six clusters to explore the effect of work–life tension on

mothers' lives, and their choices about work. The research found that mothers from high *work–life tension* clusters did not show a higher tendency to leave paid work or to reduce their paid working hours than mothers from other clusters. For those mothers who did leave work or reduce their hours, the change did not lead to improved satisfaction with family life and parenthood, but mothers in the *Indifferent and struggling* cluster showed a notable improvement in self-reported mental health measures. On average, mothers who left paid work or reduced paid working hours did not experience a decline in household disposable income or an increase in household pension or benefits. An understanding of the typology of working mothers and their engagement with the labour force can inform the development of more targeted policy and program delivery.

Highlighting the impact of caring on mothers, Dr Binod Nepal, of the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling at the University of Canberra, presented a paper exploring the financial impact that taking on a primary carer role has on mothers. The research focused on women aged 30 to 64 years, with two or more children, who were primary carers to their child with disability. Many of these women are not in the paid labour force or, if they were, typically spent fewer hours in paid employment than other women. Dr Nepal found that mothers caring for a child with disability were, over their working life, likely to earn between one-quarter and one-half the income of women with similar demographics but who are not primary carers.

Using HILDA to explore the effect of disability, Dr Peng Yu, from FaHCSIA, presented research investigating the impact of disability on social participation of youth in Australia. Results showed that, on average, youths with disability had lower levels of social

participation as indicated by a lower probability of being an active club member, less frequent contact with friends or relatives and less personal contact. However, after controlling for other observed factors and unobserved heterogeneity, differences in social participation by the incidence, type, onset and severity of disability were not significant. In relation to social participation outcomes, disability was found to be correlated and interact with some other aspects of disadvantage such as low income. The research raises issues about whether young people with disability are at risk of multiple disadvantages.

The mental health consequences of employment were explored in a presentation by Dr Guangyu Zhang of the National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University. Using six waves of HILDA data, Dr Zhang's research examined the mental health consequences (measured by the SF-36 health instrument) of employment on a casual or fixed-term basis compared with permanent employment. Results showed that casual or part-time workers were more likely to report mental health issues. However, there was no evidence that casual employment was harmful to the mental health of women or to men employed part-time or on fixed-term contracts. Dr Zhang believes that these findings support the view that the Australian system of industrial protections and universal access to unemployment and health benefits make contingent work less harmful for workers.

Several studies used HILDA data to examine the nature of relationships and factors associated with relationship dissolution.

Some researchers focused primarily on married couples. For example, Dr Rebecca Kippen from the Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute at the Australian National University presented a paper titled 'Is homogamy good for marriage?

A longitudinal dyadic analysis of factors associated with marital dissolution in early twenty-first century Australia'. Using data from Waves 1 to 7 of HILDA, factors found to be associated with higher risk of marital separation include: large age difference between husband and wife; wife has a much stronger preference than her husband for a child (or another child); young age at marriage; separation of husband's parents; resident children born before marriage; dissatisfaction with the relationship; low household income; husband is unemployed; wife drinks more than her husband; and one spouse smokes where the other does not.

Other researchers were interested in studying couples in cohabiting relationships. Ms Sandra Buchler, a PhD candidate from the School of Social Science at the University of Queensland delivered a presentation on the effect of fertility intentions, relationship satisfaction and union length on cohabitation transitions. Results show that post-marital cohabiters and non-marital cohabiters are the most likely to transition to single status. Furthermore, intentions to have a child are likely to have a destabilising effect on a cohabiting relationship if there are no plans to marry **and** the cohabiter has not been married. This suggests that there is an association between previous marital experience, fertility intentions and the likelihood that a cohabiter will separate. Findings also suggest that cohabiters who have been married but do not intend to marry their current partner have a heightened likelihood of getting married if they intend to have children.

Two studies explored housing affordability and the effect of employment on housing security.

Dr Rachel Ong of the Centre for Research in Applied Economics, Curtin Business School at the Curtin University of Technology presented a paper investigating the dynamics of housing affordability in Australia from 2001 to 2006.

The investigation indicated that, while the majority of Australians escape unaffordable housing circumstances, the unemployed, those with children, and migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds are more prone to persistent housing affordability stress.

Ms Sharon Parkinson, from the School of Social and Behavioural Sciences at RMIT University, presented a paper investigating housing security for households with members not in employment or in non-permanent employment. Findings indicate that renting households with individuals in non-permanent employment were found to be at higher risk of housing insecurity (not being able to pay the rent on time) than renting households with individuals who were permanently employed. Among purchasing households, non-permanent employment as well as joblessness increased the risk of housing insecurity. This research suggests that job security, movement into and out of work and predictability of earnings are important factors in explaining housing insecurity.

Finally, a study by Associate Professor Garry Barrett of the Australian School of Business at the University of New South Wales, provided evidence of a fall in consumption upon retirement in Australia. There was no strong evidence to suggest that a fall in consumption translates into experience of financial hardship, such as skipping meals or being unable to heat the home because of lack of money. However, there was some evidence that it was slightly more common after retirement to experience difficulty in paying utility bills on time or to have asked for help from welfare or community organisations.

In closing the 2009 HILDA survey research conference, Professor Mark Wooden, Director, HILDA survey, Melbourne Institute, provided an update of the progress and future direction for the HILDA survey. The introduction of Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) in Wave 9 and a planned sample top-up for Wave 11, while posing some challenges, will ultimately assist in maintaining the accuracy and relevancy of the survey.

Overall, presentations were of a high standard and the range of topics covered demonstrated the important role of the HILDA survey in informing the evidence base for social policy research and development.

The next HILDA survey research conference will be held in 2011.

Conference papers are now available on the HILDA website at <http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/Biblio/conf2009papers.htm>.

Longitudinal research updates

The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey



Unique among Australian datasets, the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey is an Australian large-scale nationally representative longitudinal survey which has been providing data for social and economic research since 2003.

HILDA is an ongoing project and has contracts in place for 12 waves of data collection. The Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research have a contract with FaHCSIA to administer the survey on behalf of the Australian Government.

Data collection for Waves 9 to 12 will be undertaken by Roy Morgan.

Research

Data from the HILDA survey provide a longitudinal evidence-based approach to research enabling researchers, policy makers and advisors to explore the interdependencies and interrelationships between the various choices made by individuals and households. It also allows for investigation into the impact of various life events and the examination of the contextual determinants of change.

The HILDA Statistical Report Volume 4 was released in June 2009. This report covers a wide range of topics and gives a valuable overview of trends in Australian life. The report is available on the website at www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/.

Access to the HILDA survey data

The Wave 7 dataset is now available. FaHCSIA staff wishing to apply for access to HILDA data can obtain the necessary application package, including an IT systems access form, from the FaHCSIA HILDA intranet site or the HILDA FIRSt Public Folder. All other researchers wishing to obtain the data can apply by downloading the application form and applicable licence from the HILDA website.

The deed of licence can be found at <http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/data.html#section1>.

Deeds of licence issued

As at 30 July 2009 there were 37 organisations signed up to the Organisational Licences (including FaHCSIA). A full list of organisations with an Organisational Licence is available at http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/organisational_licences.html.

Since Wave 7 was released on 2 February 2009, 304 organisational registered user licences have been issued for Wave 7 data and 161 individual licences.

Wave 8

Fieldwork for Wave 8 has been finalised with interviews obtained from 7,065 households. Topics covered include: repeating the extension module on fertility and family formation previously included in Wave 5; and new question sequences on non-co-resident family members.

Wave 8 data is scheduled for release in February 2010.

Wave 9

The fieldwork has now commenced using, for the first time, Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI). It is anticipated that survey interviews will be completed by February 2010.

The main proposed innovation for Wave 9 is the inclusion of a dedicated health module, expected to be included every four years. Among the topics covered are: child health; difficulties caused by health conditions; serious illness conditions; retrospective childhood health; health expectations; private health insurance; utilisation of health services; and diet.

Wave 10

Wave 10 content development is currently underway.

Further information:

Enquiries about the HILDA survey should be directed, in the first instance, to the HILDA website at www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda.

For technical enquiries about the survey email HILDA-inquiries@unimelb.edu.au, and for data access enquiries email longitudinalsurveys@fahcsia.gov.au.

Growing up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)



The longitudinal study of Australian children

LSAC aims to provide data to enable a comprehensive understanding of children's development in Australia's current social, economic and cultural environment, and thereby be a major element of the evidence base for future policies and practices regarding children and their families. Policy areas of interest include: family relationships and functioning; parenting and child care; education; employment and schooling; and mental and physical health.

The study follows two cohorts. In 2004, 5,000 infants, aged 3 to 19 months (B cohort), and 5,000 four to five year olds (K cohort) were surveyed for the first time. Since then, two further biennial main waves, Waves 2 and 3 have been conducted, and Wave 4 is underway. In addition, between-wave questionnaires were distributed in the years in-between the main waves. Data is collected from children, parents, carers and teachers using various data collection methods including computer assisted face-to-face interviews, self-interviews, telephone interviews and self-complete questionnaires.

Wave 3

The data collection phase of Wave 3 was completed in January 2009, reaching a total of 8,685 respondents, or 91 per cent of the retained Wave 2 sample. The Wave 3 data was released on 28 August 2009.

Wave 3.5

Wave 3.5 is the third between-wave questionnaire. Between-wave questionnaires help maintain contact with study families and therefore assist with retention rates in the main waves. The Wave 3.5 form was mailed out at in June 2009. A total of 59 per cent of the forms were received by the week ending 21 August 2009.

Wave 4

The dress rehearsal for Wave 4 was conducted from early August to late September 2009. Wave 4 uses significant methodological innovation that includes Audio-Computer Assisted Self Interviewing (A-CASI) for older children in order to maintain their interest and privacy. The main parent will also experience a change in their interview methods. As well as the computer assisted face-to-face interviews completed in previous waves, they will have a computer assisted self-interview to replace the paper and pencil self-complete form. To reduce time in the home, prior to the home visit, the main parent will be interviewed by telephone for basic household details. A substantial amount of new content for older children is also expected as the children age. Dress rehearsal will provide the opportunity to explore new methodologies and content for the collection of data from study families. The main fieldwork for Wave 4 will commence in April 2010.

Waves 5 to 8

Planning for the next four waves of LSAC data collection has started. At Wave 5, the children in the K cohort will be 12 to 13 years old. The LSAC team is seeking input for new content. If you have any ideas for items that could help build knowledge and improve policy about children and their families, please contact the LSAC team.

Key research questions

At the commencement of LSAC, seven broad research questions were established to guide the direction of the study. The research questions were reviewed in 2009 to ensure that they were relevant to the increasing age of the child, the current literature on child development and the changing policy environment. The revised research questions are found on the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) LSAC website.

2009 LSAC conference

The 2009 LSAC research conference will be held in Melbourne on 3–4 December 2009. The aim of the conference is to provide an intellectual space for the discussion of research based on LSAC data and to highlight the contribution of LSAC in the research and the policy environment revolving around child and family issues.

Recent publications

A list of recent publications using LSAC data can be found on the AIFS website at www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/home.html.

Data access

FaHCSIA staff wishing to apply for access to LSAC data can obtain the necessary application package, including an IT systems access form, from the FaHCSIA LSAC intranet site. All other researchers wishing to obtain the data can apply by downloading the application form and applicable licence from the LSAC website.

Further information:

FaHCSIA: Dr Helen Rogers (Research and Analysis Branch), tel (02) 6244 7726 or email helen.rogers@fahcsia.gov.au or lsac@fahcsia.gov.au or web <http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/home.html>

Footprints in Time—the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC)



Footprints in Time is collecting important information about the lives of Indigenous children, covering areas such as health, culture, education, housing and family relationships. The study is designed to better understand the developmental pathways of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and what helps improve their wellbeing, and support good outcomes as they grow up.

Wave 1 data

In 2008 the study included more than 900 babies aged approximately 6 to 18 months and more than 700 children aged approximately 3 years 6 months to 4 years 6 months. Most of the information was collected through face-to-face interviews with a parent or carer (usually mother). For further information see the feature article on page 1. The data summarised in this article is drawn from those primary carer interviews.

Wave 2 collection

Wave 2 data collection commenced in March 2009 and is expected to be completed later this year. Wave 2 builds on the dataset collected in Wave 1 and explores change in

many of the areas previously covered. These include: social and emotional wellbeing; major life events; child vocabulary; child and parent health and child development milestones; and housing issues. Additional content collected in Wave 2 include questions about the stolen generation, childhood injuries, child support payments and starting school.

Wave 3 design

Wave 3 was piloted in September 2009 in Brisbane, Wagga Wagga, Mount Isa, Mornington Island and Doomadgee. Consultations on content priorities were conducted with policy and program areas across Commonwealth and state government departments, tertiary institutions, Indigenous peak agencies and community groups. Wave 3 will revisit a number of areas covered in Waves 1 and 2 such as child health and development, major life events and housing. Content areas that are new to Wave 3 include questions about Indigenous culture and identity, gambling, and have a stronger focus on education and school life for the older cohort.

Further information:

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web <www.fahcsia.gov.au/lsic>

Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH) — March 2009 to August 2009 update

History

The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH) is conducted by the University of Newcastle and the University of Queensland, and funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The study was established as part of the National Agenda for Women, announced by the then Prime Minister Paul Keating on 10 February 1993, as a commitment to establish 'a major longitudinal study into women's health'. Initial funding of \$3.7 million over four years for the study was provided in the 1993–94 Budget.

This landmark 20 year study, a longitudinal population-based survey, is now in its 14th year and continues to provide valuable information on women across three generations, as a guide to future policy. It examines most aspects of life, including physical health, relationships, reproductive health, body weight, emotional and mental health, paid work and retirement, and ageing and caring roles.

The ALSWH examines the health of over 40,000 women who are broadly representative of the population, with over 60 per cent of participants from rural or remote areas. The study involves three large cohorts of women representing three generations: younger women, aged 18 to 23 years when first recruited in 1996 and now aged 30 to 35 years; mid-age women, aged 45 to 50 years in 1996, now aged 57 to 62 years; and older women, aged 70 to 75 years in 1996, now aged 82 to 87 years. The cohorts have been surveyed at least four times over the past 12 years.

The ALSWH was designed to explore the factors that influence health among women

and to assess their physical and emotional health, use of health services, health behaviours and risk factors, time use, sociodemographic factors and life stages and key events.

The ALSWH has provided an evidence base on various issues of interest to the government particularly in the areas of ageing, caring, continence, weight, physical activity, alcohol, domestic violence, medication use and retirement. Other portfolios, including the Office for Women in FaHCSIA, the Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Treasury actively seek the findings from analysis of the ALSWH data. The Office for Women has commissioned several research reports based on this dataset.

Research findings are used to plan prevention and early intervention strategies to reduce health risk factors, preventable morbidity and avoidable mortality among Australian women.

Current situation

- In December 2008 the Minister for Health and Ageing agreed to the continued funding of the ALSWH. The next project phase is January 2009 to June 2012.
- The study is expected to run for 20 years, until 2015.

Reports

- The most recent report from the ALSWH project is 'Reproductive health: findings from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health'.
- The next major report due in June 2010 is 'Women's Health and Ageing'.
- Work is commencing on the major report 'Rural Health' due in June 2011.

All reports are available on the Women's Health Australia website at <http://www.alswh.org.au/>.

The Youth in Focus data

Youth in Focus (YiF) is a unique data source detailing the experiences of young Australian adults. The project is jointly funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; Centrelink; and the Australian Research Council (Linkage-Project LP0347164), and carried out by the Australian National University. One of the main aims of the project is to increase understanding of the ways in which economic and social disadvantage might be transferred from one generation to the next.

There are two parts in YiF. One is the Second Transgenerational Data Set (TDS2), containing Centrelink administrative records of approximately 128,000 Australian children born between 1 October 1987 and 31 March 1988 and their parents. The latest version of TDS2 was updated to May 2007 and Centrelink is currently updating and improving the data set to coincide with new data releases planned for 2009.

The other part is the YiF survey. The first wave of the YiF survey was conducted in 2006, and approximately 4,000 youths and 4,000 parents were interviewed, including 2,430 matched pairs of youths and their parents. The second wave was conducted in 2008 for youths only. The data is in the final stage of cleaning and will be released in 2009.

In addition, to increase the number of youths in the matched sample, a top-up survey is being conducted for the youths who were non-contactable or otherwise not interviewed at Wave 1 (except those who refused to participate in the project). It is expected that the top-up survey will increase the number of matched parent–youth pairs by capturing those youths who did not respond in the first wave but whose parents were interviewed.

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Seminars at FaHCSIA

Visit by Naomi Eisenstadt, Director of the UK Social Exclusion Taskforce

On 13 July 2009, Naomi Eisenstadt, Director of the Social Exclusion Task Force for the UK Government, met with Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector.

Ms Eisenstadt also met with several government departments and presented a guest lecture to FaHCSIA staff and guests from other departments, as well as a roundtable for FaHCSIA senior executives, on the topic of social inclusion in the Australian context. The title of the guest lecture was 'From pre-pregnancy to old age: ensuring early intervention reaches the most in need — making government work better'.

Topics discussed at these sessions included:

- ▶ lessons learned from the UK Social Exclusion experience
- ▶ progressing the social inclusion agenda during the global financial crisis
- ▶ how to effectively deliver place-based interventions
- ▶ how government departments can work collaboratively to achieve shared goals
- ▶ evidence-based policy making
- ▶ how to engage the community and the third sector.

Ms Eisenstadt also spoke at the SPRC conference during her visit to Australia. See page 8 for further details.

Counting the homeless 2006: state and territory reports

On 27 July 2009, Associate Professor Chris Chamberlain, Director of the Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT University, and Associate Professor David Mackenzie, from the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University, presented a seminar to FaHCSIA staff entitled 'Counting the homeless

2006: state and territory reports'. The state and territory reports published on 9 July 2009 complement the national report released in September 2008.

The findings of the national '*Counting the Homeless 2006*' report, based on information collected from the 2006 Census, were incorporated into the Government's White Paper on Homelessness '*The Road Home*'. The report largely provides the baseline data for reporting against the targets to reduce homelessness by 20 per cent by 2013 and to halve homelessness by 2020.

Dr Chamberlain began by highlighting the transient nature of much of the homeless population. A recent study '*Homelessness in Melbourne*', found that 92 per cent of homeless people in Melbourne are moving around. Of the 4,291 homeless people in the study: 85 per cent had stayed in a boarding house; 59 per cent had been in a Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) service; and 49 per cent had slept rough.

Dr Chamberlain emphasised the importance of taking account of state, regional and local variations when allocating funding and developing services to help the homeless. To illustrate the variations in Australia's homelessness, Dr Chamberlain compared Queensland with other states as well as looking at the national figures.

Queensland has both the second highest number of homeless people in Australia, behind New South Wales, and the second highest rate of homelessness per 10,000 of the population, behind the Northern Territory. The rate of homelessness is much higher in Queensland than in Victoria but it is nearly similar across Melbourne, regional Victoria and Brisbane. Queensland's regional homelessness rate, at 88 per 10,000, is twice that of regional Victoria and brings Queensland's overall homelessness rate to 69 per 10,000.

In addition to significant differences between the states and territories in the number of homeless people and rate of homelessness, the demographics and types of homelessness also differ greatly between the states.

Indigenous Australians are highly represented in the homeless population and especially in supported accommodation. In Queensland Indigenous Australians make up 22 per cent of homeless people in supported accommodation, compared to their overall representation in the Queensland homeless population at 8 per cent, in the Australian homeless population at 9 per cent and in the general population at 3 per cent.

Dr Chamberlain also used information about people in different sectors of the homeless population in different parts of Melbourne and Brisbane to draw some conclusions about service location within capital cities.

In Inner Brisbane, boarding houses make up 64 per cent of the homeless accommodation while only 9 per cent of homeless people access supported accommodation. This trend reverses in the outer areas. Melbourne differed from Brisbane slightly with a much greater use of supported accommodation in the city core, in part attributable to the availability of supported accommodation across Melbourne. The number of homeless people staying with friends and relatives increases dramatically as people move further from the city centre—only 13 per cent in Inner Brisbane but over 50 per cent in Northwest and Southeast Outer Brisbane.

Dr Chamberlain drew attention to homelessness on the Gold Coast and noted that the lack of boarding houses available outside of capital cities pushes many people into the category of marginal residents of caravan parks. When marginal residents of caravan parks are included in homelessness

figures, the rate of homelessness across the Gold Coast rises from 47 to 61 per 10,000. This trend can be seen in a number of other areas outside of capital cities where caravan parks take the place of boarding houses.

Dr Chamberlain finished by discussing two areas of particular interest to the researchers: rough sleepers and improvised dwellings. The study found interesting anomalies in the census data and further investigation of rough sleeper counts in some areas led to an adjustment of the figures. Additional investigations also showed that in the capital cities, about 75 per cent of households in the primary homelessness category were sleeping rough or squatting in derelict buildings while in regional Australia about 60 per cent of these households were living in sheds, garages and shacks.

People living in these improvised dwellings fell into three groups:

- ▶ people who were building houses on land they owned or were purchasing, but living in improvised dwellings
- ▶ households that may have intended to build houses but were living in rural poverty, often families who had moved into the area to buy cheap land with the intention of building houses but had not achieved their housing dream
- ▶ about 20 per cent were in rented accommodation, most of this group were unemployed and nearly everyone was poor.

The Homelessness Branch, FaHCSIA, has been analysing the data in the Counting the Homeless 2006 state and territory reports, looking at the locations of homelessness services and the populations of homeless people to support planning and discussion for new and existing services with the state and territory governments, which provide homelessness services.

Publications

'Counting the Homeless 2006' state and territory reports are available from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website at <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10832>>.

'Counting the Homeless 2006' Australia report is available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2050.02006?OpenDocument>>.

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New publications

Statistical Paper No 4

1. Income support customers: a statistical overview 2005

Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Statistical Paper No. 4—*Income support customers: a statistical overview 2005*, provides a snapshot of the number and demographic characteristics of income support recipients.

Key tables from the paper include:

- time series data for income support payments from 1985–2005
- data on customer characteristics such as: age, gender, country of birth, state and territory, home ownership, duration on payment, and income
- working-age income support payment data, including customers who were unemployed, studying, mature-age or unable to support themselves
- information on payments to assist families with the costs of raising children and child care support services
- details on supplementary payments and services
- an overview of the diversity and economic importance of Australia's social security arrangements with overseas countries.

Australian Social Policy No 8

1. Achievement, aspiration and autonomy: how do youth from stepfather families compare with other young Australians?

Paula Mance and Peng Yu, FaHCSIA

Society's image of a typical Australian family has changed considerably over the last few decades. Increasing rates of cohabitation, separation, divorce and remarriage have not only given rise to a complex array of family

types that challenge the traditional concept of the family, but have also resulted in an increase in the prevalence of non-traditional family types. One such family type is the stepfamily. Given that at least 8 per cent of children lived in stepfamilies in 2008, the stepfamily is a prominent family type in the Australian population, complete with a distinct and complex set of influences when compared to other separated family types.

This research uses multivariate regression techniques to examine outcomes for youths from stepfather families using a unique data source collected in 2006, the Youth in Focus Survey. The survey includes 632 youths who identify as having current or prior experience of living with a stepfather.

Youths from stepfather families were compared to those raised in intact and lone-parent families on measures of educational attainment, educational aspiration, and financial and physical independence. The research found that youths who had ever lived in a stepfather family had lower academic achievement and academic aspirations than youth living in intact families, and were more likely to be financially independent and living independently. Measures for youth from lone-parent families who had never re-partnered were found to be at levels in-between those observed for youth from intact and stepfather families.

2. Carer Payment recipients and workforce participation

Ruth Ganley

Informal carers of people who are aged or have a disability make a valuable societal contribution. However, extended periods out of employment due to caring may lead to long term welfare dependency. One challenge is how to support carers to maintain informal caring, while also maximising opportunities for labour force attachment while caring, or after caring ceases.

This research utilised the longitudinal administrative data collected by Centrelink and a survey of 200 Carer Payment (CP) recipients. Administrative data indicates that the majority of people of working age who exit CP receive another income support payment within 12 months. However, the survey data showed that most cancelled CP recipients surveyed had been cancelled more than 2 years previously, and most were in paid work at the time of the interview.

It is difficult to pinpoint precisely whether and at what point caring responsibilities (as opposed to other factors) impacted on employment. Receipt of Carer Allowance (CA) before commencing CP is one indicator of prior caring responsibilities. However, over 40 per cent of working age CP recipients in June 2006 were on income support without earnings, and were not receiving CA, prior to receiving CP. Administrative and survey data suggest varied reasons for this: lack of employment experience or skills, considering oneself retired, not wanting to do paid work, seeing role as homemaker, other caring responsibilities (such as for young children), own health problems, or undertaking study. Analysis showed that those not in paid work prior to caring were less likely to do paid work while on CP, and after leaving CP.

Only 13 per cent of recipients had earnings in a single fortnight, but around one-quarter had earnings at some time while on CP. The profile of recipients with and without earnings was similar. However, recipients with earnings had more financial resources prior to and while on CP. Survey information indicates that those who had done paid work since starting caring relied heavily on friends and relatives to provide care while they were at work. Those who had not done paid work less commonly identified relatives and friends as a potential source of assistance, and more commonly indicated they would

need a formal service. The article includes information about the types of assistance required to combine caring with paid work (as identified by CP recipients) and perceived difficulties balancing work and caring.

3. Changes in the distribution of food expenditure and family income from 2001 to 2005

Garry F Barrett

International research on economic inequality, poverty and welfare has focused on expenditure-based measures of wellbeing. The research presented in this article provides an analysis of the expenditure information in the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey over Waves 1 to 5.

The distribution of nondurable adult-equivalent expenditure and net income is constructed and trends in inequality, poverty and welfare are examined by applying the concepts of stochastic dominance and Lorenz dominance relations. The various dominance relations have the potential to provide robust conclusions about change in inequality and poverty, which hold for broad classes of indices and settings of the poverty line. The dominance relations are formally tested using nonparametric statistical methods.

The consumption-based measures of economic wellbeing reveal an increase in welfare and a decline in economic poverty over the sample period. The gains were concentrated between 2003 and 2005. At the same time, there was no change in relative inequality over the same period. The trends at the aggregate level were largely mirrored by distributional changes within birth cohorts. The distribution of net income exhibited similar changes over the sample period, but there were significant fluctuations in income inequality across adjacent waves of HILDA, underscoring the value of considering family expenditure in distributional studies.

4. Measuring family socioeconomic position

Tamara Blakemore, Lyndall Strazdins and Justine Gibbings

Socioeconomic position contributes to the physical, economic and social wellbeing of individuals and families. Robust measures are therefore essential for describing and estimating the influence of social and economic position on family and child outcomes.

Following the approach taken in the Canadian National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth (NLSCY), this paper describes the development and application of a summary measure of socioeconomic position for Australian families participating in the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey and the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC).

The derived measure combines information about three distinct elements of the family's socioeconomic position—the parents' educational attainments, their income and their occupational prestige. The resulting composite or summary measure can be calculated for populations of interest, for example: families with one or two resident parents, or all families. The measure can also be aggregated, to characterise all families within a community, and can be calculated cross-sectionally or longitudinally. While the component variables (education, income, prestige) can be used on their own to assess their unique contributions, the summary measure provides a readily understood and interpretable measure that captures all three dimensions. Applying this measure to analyses of HILDA and LSAC datasets has the potential to increase research capacity and comparability between the two studies, thereby supporting policy-relevant research.

5. Personality traits in HILDA

Ibolya Losoncz

Wave 5 was the first time in Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey that respondents were questioned on their personality character traits. The inclusion of personality in HILDA was based on the Five Factor (Big-Five) Personality Inventory, which is a descriptive model of personality identifying five broad dimensions including: emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness.

This article item-analyses responses to the 36 personality questions used in Wave 5 to evaluate how well they capture the separate constructs of the Five Factor Personality Inventory, and to assess the reliabilities of each of the scales. In addition, the author examines how the HILDA personality scales correlate with other measures available in HILDA, known to be associated with personality.

Using a maximum likelihood factor analysis, the items were grouped into seven factors, five of which support the Big-Five structure. Subsequent analysis for a five-factor solution suggested that the majority of items performed appropriately. The resulting five scales show an adequate degree of internal consistency, good variance and discriminating properties, and normal distributions. The association of the five scales with other measures known to be associated with personality were found to be consistent with the literature, with few exceptions.

The conceptual status of the Big-Five has limited the extent to which certain psychometric properties, such as construct and content validity, can be examined. With this in consideration, this study offers an adequate, but not complete, support for the HILDA personality traits inventory and subsequent scales. The author recommends the use of the original Trait Descriptive Adjectives—TDA-40 items, as opposed to the current 36 items, in future waves of HILDA.

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Forthcoming conferences

30th Australian family therapy conference: resilience and relationships

NSW Family Therapy Association
20–22 October 2009
Sydney, New South Wales

Further information:

tel: (02) 4272 4654
email: <aft@dkcinternational.com.au>
web: <www.familytherapyconference.org.au/index.asp>

2nd international conference of the international society for child indicators

The Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre
4–5 November 2009
Sydney, New South Wales

Further information:

tel: (02) 9254 5000
fax: (02) 9251 3552
email: <registration@iscio9.com>
web: <http://www.iscio9.com/>

Maximising the value of longitudinal studies for policy and science: methodological and analysis issues

Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth
12–13 November 2009
Dickson, Australian Capital Territory

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Australia's welfare 2009

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
17 November 2009
Queanbeyan, New South Wales

Further information:

tel: (02) 6244 1202
email: <conference@aihw.gov.au>
web: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

APCCAN Asia-Pacific regional conference on child abuse and neglect

National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Australia (NAPCAN)
15–18 November 2009
Perth, Western Australia

Further information:

email: <apccan2009@expertevents.com.au>
tel: (07) 3848 2100
web: <www.apccan2009.org.au>

The 2nd National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and community strengths conference

The Family Action Centre and the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc
1–3 December 2009
Newcastle, New South Wales

Further information:

tel: (02) 4921 6403
email: <FAC-events@newcastle.edu.au>
web: <www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac/conferences/>

Growing up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) 2nd research conference

Australian Institute of Family Studies
3–4 December 2009
Melbourne, Victoria

Further information:

tel: (03) 9214 7888
email: <lsac09@aifs.gov.au>
web: <www.aifs.gov.au/growingup>

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