How Long is the “Long Arm of Childhood”
Workshops on the Life Course
Co-sponsored by
The Population Research Institute and
The Center for Life Course and Longitudinal Studies

February 24, 2014 (9:30 – 11:00, 406 Oswald Tower)

Mysteries of Life (course)—Is a common theoretical framework possible?

Focus: A number of concepts from different disciplines (life course, life cycle, life history, and life span) have been applied interchangeably to lives, and each makes a distinctive contribution to the study of childhood. This workshop raises the question of whether we can develop a common cross-disciplinary discourse in the study of the early phases of the life cycle and whether it is possible to integrate varieties of life course concepts in the study of the effects of childhood events and exposures?


Discussant: Duane Alwin, Director, C2LS and Professor of Sociology & Demography

March 31, 2014 (9:30 – 11:00, 406 Oswald Tower)

Resources for Assessing the Effects of Childhood Exposures?

Focus: One of the principle assumptions of life course theories is that early life experiences, particularly exposures to economic adversity and social disadvantages, have major consequences for later life health and well-being. Yet, we have very little data that is adequate for testing some of these assumptions. This workshop focuses on the nature of the available data for studying inequalities in children’s lives and the potential for assessing the impact of early life experiences on health disparities across the entire life span.


Discussant: Marianne Hillemeier, Associate Director of PRI and Professor of Health Policy

April 14, 2014 (9:30 – 11:00, 406 Oswald Tower)

Is there any support for the Matthew Effect?

Focus: One of the most popular, but poorly understood, theories of how inequality works in social life is the theory of cumulative advantage/disadvantage (CAD). The theory is based on Robert Merton’s famous principle, called “the Matthew Effect” that “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” Recently, the theory has increasingly been applied to the study of how health inequalities are perpetuated and increase over the life span. This workshop is aimed at clarifying the key concepts in the application of CAD to the study of health disparities over the life span, from childhood onward.


Discussant: Jason Thomas, Professor of Sociology and Demography
**Childhood Immigration and the Life Course?**

Focus: Life course theory provides a useful framework for the study of immigration. The interest in the study of childhood immigration status from the perspective of events and exposures during childhood and their potential long-term consequences for adult well-being challenges both contemporary theory and research design. This workshop is aimed at introducing life course researchers to the growing literature on childhood immigration and the ways in which the central questions in the field of migration research can inform life course analysis and vice versa.


Discussant: Jennifer van Hook, Director of PRI and Professor of Sociology and Demography