

Editor: Melanie Channon

Devastation and Development: the Nepal Earthquake

I left Nepal 2 weeks before the April earthquake. I was there researching sex-selective abortion, but I wasn't sad to be leaving as trying to work in Kathmandu is not easy, and I knew I would be returning in a few months. The day before I left there was a bandh (general strike or shutdown) making it impossible to attend meetings I'd arranged. Sporadic violence broke out and the owner of the guest house I was staying in told me not to leave Patan. I ignored the advice and walked miles around Patan and Kathmandu, enjoying the traffic free old streets that are usually heavy with smog and congestion. Many of the monuments and buildings I saw that day no longer exist.

Of course, I knew an earthquake was coming. We've known for years. Nobody knew it would be so soon. Nepal sits on a fault line between two tectonic plates. This is the fault line, which has created the Himalayas. They come roughly every 75 years and the last "big one" was in 1934, just over 80 years ago.

The epicentre was in Gorkha district where I travelled while in Nepal (and where the photos were taken). Many villages there (and in other rural areas) are yet to receive much aid, if any. When I was there it was clear that the area was developing fast. Building work was everywhere, and a road head was approaching fast. It had been a bad winter. Unseasonal, heavy snowfall continued to cause avalanches and rockfalls well into Spring meaning that many of the mini hydropower stations powering villages have been wiped out. In some villages we heard stories of hundreds of yaks being killed in the avalanches. Despite this, there was an air of hope and impending prosperity in the air. No longer.

How do supplies normally reach these remote villages? Either mule train or on the backs of porters. One particularly hot day we met a small group of porters carrying rolls of corrugated iron to the Tsum Valley (a remote place near the Tibetan border, 5/6 days walk from the road head). We got chatting to these men and found that their loads weighed 80kg or more a piece. They carry them balanced on their backs and braced against their foreheads

from sunrise to sunset. I couldn't even pick one of their loads an inch off the floor. Another day we came across a group of villagers carrying a man down the valley in a basket. His ankle was broken and he was to be carried for two days to reach the nearest hospital. That hospital no longer exists, and it's a further two days walk to reach the next one.



In these remote villages nearly every dwelling has been destroyed. The initial death toll was lower than feared as the earthquake struck in the middle of the day when most people were working in the fields. However, food supplies were buried and the planting season has been severely disrupted meaning that food will be scarce for some time to come. The monsoon also brings with it the prospect of more landslides. This is an area which relies heavily on

tourism, but with infrastructure so damaged tourists are likely to stay away, leaving the Manaslu and Langtang regions struggling to earn the income they need to re-develop.

The relief operation throughout has been beset by problems: customs duty being charged on essential aid, blocks at the only international airport causing food aid to be spoiled, refusal to make use of Chinooks offered by the UK.

As the world's media walks away Nepal's crisis is only just beginning.

Newsletter and Conference

This edition of the newsletter has plenty to interest you, including the return of our "5 minutes with..." section featuring Jakub Bijak, winner of the Allianz European Demographer Award 2015. We also have reports on international conferences and day meetings.

Somehow, it is already May and this year's conference in Leeds is rapidly approaching. If you haven't already registered, then what are you waiting for? I hope (nay expect) to see all of you there.

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Summer is nearly here. Summer usually conjures up images of sunshine, beaches... and for the enthusiastic BSPS student member, population conferences! This summer season, BSPS student members have two conferences to look forward to. In July, Popfest the postgraduate multidisciplinary population conference will be held from July 6 – 8 at Plymouth University. With wide-ranging thematic sessions and two workshops specifically targeted for postgraduate research students on getting published and academic careers, Popfest promises to be an exciting event.



Then, come September, the BSPS annual conference will be held at the University of Leeds from September 7 - 9. The final programme of the conference features presentations and posters scattered across diverse thematic sessions from a large number of student members, including several new members from Britain and from across Europe. The BSPS annual conference has always been a fantastic opportunity to meet other members as well as learn about them and their research and I am certain this year will be no different. The conference promises to be a lively

event, both intellectually and socially, and I look forward to meeting all of you there.

Given that we've seen a number of new members join the BSPS, this edition's newsletter features the research of one of them: Alina Pelikh from the University of Liverpool. Having studied in Moscow, Germany and now Britain, Alina exemplifies the growing diversity of past experiences, educational trajectories and research interests of the student membership of the BSPS – a subject, as you will see, that is not far from what she also researches. BSPS student members come from different parts of the world, move fluidly between subjects and across different universities.

I encourage you to contact me at ridhi.kashyap@nuffield.ox.ac.uk with ideas on how the BSPS can better engage with student concerns, events you'd like to see organised at the BSPS conferences or suggestions for BSPS day meetings. And of course, you're not really a BSPS student member unless you're a member of the Facebook group so please do join us at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/300124886760445/>.

Centre for Spatial Demographics Research, Centre Symposium and Launch Event, University of Liverpool Thursday 11th and Friday 12th June 2015

This is to invite you to a symposium and launch of the Centre. The event will focus on recent research and challenges in spatial demographics research. It will bring together leading researchers in spatial demographics who will present cutting-edge research and engage with key agendas in the field. Six key research themes provide the focus of the event:

1. Demographic change
2. Small-area estimation
3. Migration and ethnic diversity
4. Geodemographics
5. Long-term change
6. Future opportunities

Each theme will feature talks from a Centre member, an invited external speaker who will reflect on their own work as well as wider issues about the theme, and an invited external speaker on the theme's policy context. Confirmed speakers include: Professor Tony Champion (Newcastle University), Professor Phil Rees (University of Leeds), Dr Alice Reid (University of Cambridge), Alan Smith (Office for National Statistics), Professor Richard Webber (King's College London), Professor Li-Chun Zhang (University of Southampton).

To register for this event, please visit: http://payments.liv.ac.uk/browse/extra_info.asp?compid=1&modid=2&deptid=38&catid=38&prodid=838

A Little Reading: Interesting Miscellanea from the Web

- ⇒ [Where are we?](#) An article in the Nepali Times about post Earthquake migration.
- ⇒ [Is Divorce Beneficial to the Environment?](#) An interesting question posed by Solveig Glestad Christiansen on Openpop.
- ⇒ [The Art and Science of Being Uncertain.](#) A blog post by Jakub Bijak.
- ⇒ [Bad poster bingo:](#) something for those of you attending conferences over the summer, and especially for anyone preparing a poster.

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Son Preference and Prenatal Sex-Selection Against Females: Evidence, Causes and Implications ?

Supported by and held at the Nuffield Foundation, London, 3rd Oct 2014 with additional support from BSPS

Workshop organisation: Dr Sylvie Dubuc (sylvie.dubuc@spi.ox.ac.uk), with Dr Aisha K. Gill (panel chair, A.Gill@roehampton.ac.uk)

Report produced by Dr Sylvie Dubuc

Son preference may lead to and motivates sex selection against females. Traditionally, postnatal forms of sex-selection resulted in excess female mortality still observed in many countries where son preference prevails. Since the 1980s and the increasing availability of prenatal gender diagnostics, the strong desire to have a son(s) has resulted in prenatal sex selection against females for non-medical reasons, well documented in some Asian Countries and more recently in Eastern Europe and among Asian Diaspora in Britain and North America. Prenatal sex selection against females (PNSSaF) engenders a multitude of social, medical, ethical and policy concerns for a variety of stakeholders.

In her introductory address, Dr. Sylvie Dubuc emphasised the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to grasp some of the complexity of the issues around sex-selection. The inclusive format of this workshop, bringing together international leading academics from a variety of disciplines and non-academic stakeholders concerned with prenatal sex selection against females, including women's groups, medical professionals, Department of Health representatives, policy makers and ethicists stimulated discussions and cross-disciplinary understanding of the causes and implications of prenatal sex selection against females. S. Dubuc also briefly recalled the indirect evidence of prenatal sex-selection in the UK given by a significant and increasing bias in the sex-ratio at birth to mothers born in India over the period 1990-2005 (Dubuc and Coleman, 2007) and explained that trends in sex-selection in the UK in the most recent years are not clear due to small numbers requesting additional monitoring. A presentation of the film 'From the beginning', produced by Jeena International, a UK-based women's organisation, provided a lively illustration of the experiences and/or perceptions of gender preference and sex-selection practice from a variety of individuals as well as religious and other community leaders, within British communities where son preference is acknowledged. The film helped touching upon the role of context and engaging the discussions during the day, on the complexities of and responses to prenatal sex-selection against females.

Following these introductory contributions, the workshop

was organised into 3 sessions and a panel discussion: the morning sessions presented and discussed evidences of son preference and sex-selection from a variety of geographical contexts, favouring a comparative perspective, to grasp the commonalities of son preference. These context specific presentations opened with a paper from Prof. Maya Unnithan (University of Sussex) on 'Son preference, sex selection and women's agency in Northwest India.'. It was followed by a presentation on 'Masculinization of birth in Caucasian and Eastern Europe' by Dr. Christophe Guilmo (CEPED, Paris; with Dr. Geraldine Duthe), further discussed by Dr Arjan Gonjca (LSE), and presentations by Prof. Naila Kabeer (LSE) on 'Diverging stories of 'missing women' in South Asia: is son preference weakening in Bangladesh?', by Dr. Mel Channon (Oxford University), on 'The Manifestation of Son Preference in Pakistan, 1990-2013', and by Dr. Stuart Basten (Oxford University, with Dr. Georgia Verropoulou, Piraeus University) on the 'Loopholes in the Chinese Family Planning Restrictions and Preferences for a Second-born Male: New Evidence from Sex Ratios in Hong Kong'.

The afternoon session discussed how to interpret quantitative evidence of sex-selection and evidence of son preference in the British Asian Diaspora (Sylvie Dubuc). The medical, ethical and policy implications of sex-selection were replaced within the broader bio-ethical and policy debate on prenatal sex-selection in the UK developed over the previous decade, in link with the development of sperm sorting technology allowing pre-conception sex-selection by Prof Tim Baldwin. Finally, linking morning and afternoon presentations, Dr. Agomini Ganguli Mitra discussed policy intervention, notably in the Indian context, from a bio-ethical perspective and argues for the development of a global social justice ethical framework to apprehend sex-selection against female.

The workshop featured inspiring debates which culminated with a panel discussion largely focussing on the implications of and policy responses to prenatal sex-selection. The panel discussion was organised in the fashion of a round table , inclusive of the audience, to enhance spontaneous exchanges between the participants.

The problem of the link between sex-selection and abortion where sex-selection has been identified as a key argument by anti-abortion bodies was an issue raised at several occasions during the day. Prof. Heather Widow argues that it is consistent to support reproductive choices for women when at the same time wanting to address issue of gender inequality and therefore oppose sex-selection, but it is difficult to communicate. Recalling that various techniques from pre-conception, pre-implantation to post-natal methods of sex-

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selection against females exist (and for instance post-natal selection is well documented) is important to help disentangling sex-selection and abortion debates.

An animated discussion on the need to ban sex-selective abortion followed. Views diverged on the symbolic role of a law banning sex-selection. The problematic implementation of a law regulating sex-selective abortion, when knowing how challenging it is for practitioners to be able to identify the genuine motivations of women seeking abortion may have and the adverse effects of such law were discussed, including the need for a better awareness of how prohibition set at national level translates at the local level.

The challenges in communicating quantitative demo-

graphic research results especially in the UK context were discussed. Participants shared the view that sex-selection should not be ignored but there is also a need to better understand women's agency beyond quantitative evidence. Fostering the dialogue between stakeholders and the necessity to involve the communities in discussions on son preference and sex-selection were shared views. How communities can be properly consulted on such an unspoken issue and more democratically involved in discussions remains to be thought through. The need to tackle the underlying causes of son preference was further discussed.

In the context of amendments to the Serious Crime Bill (Feb 2015), proposing to explicitly prohibit sex selective abortions in the UK, the workshop was timely in contributing to informing shaping the ongoing debate.

Dr Alan Holmans, CBE

We are sorry to announce that Alan Holmans died peacefully on the 27th March, 2015 at the age of eighty. Alan was particularly well known by both academics and practitioners as THE economic statistician who provided the projections of housing demand and need which support subsidy and land allocation decisions with respect to new housing supply. This was however only a small part of a very distinguished career - both in the civil service and as an academic - mainly in the context of housing policy.

Alan did both his first degree and his PhD at Oxford before going to the University of Glasgow as a lecturer in political economy. Soon however he joined the Treasury as an Economic Advisor and then moved on to the Ministry of Housing for a thirty year career in the civil service. He completed that career as Chief Housing Economist at the Department of Environment (now DCLG) advising on all aspects of housing policy and finance.

But when civil service rules meant that he had to leave on his 60th birthday in 1994 Alan was nowhere near ready to give up work. So he began a second twenty year career at the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research at the University of Cambridge. He retired from the Centre at least twice but was actually still working with them a week before he died.

The strand of work for which Alan is best known is his regular projections of demand and need for housing especially in England (but also Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), which have formed the basis for estimates of the total new housing requirement as well as of the land and finance needed to achieve these totals.

Alan published the first forecast in the very first issue of *Social Trends* in 1970 but his far more detailed analysis in the 1977 Housing Policy Review formed the basis for all future forecasts. These regular outputs - whenever new household projections were published - together with a great deal of related analysis on investment requirements, suitable subsidy regimes and implications for land use planning formed a core element of his work both at the Department of Environment and at CCHPR.

Another part of Alan's work which is if anything is growing in importance is his contribution to the history of housing through *Housing Policy in Britain* published in 1987, his seminal compilation *Abstract of Historical Statistics of British Housing* published in 2005 and, in 2012, a *History of Household Projections*. These together with the Technical Volumes of the 1977 *Housing Policy Review* provide an immensely rich set of source documents evidencing the way that housing and housing policy have developed.

Detailing Alan's work in this way perhaps misses out Alan's gentle personality; his continued support for housing research and to those working in the field - especially younger colleagues; his dry sense of humour; his interests in cricket and racing; his love of single malts and all the other attributes which made him a joy to work with and a pleasure to have as a friend. We will miss him greatly but his work will stand as an everlasting memorial to him and the integrity he brought to everything throughout his life.

Christine Whitehead

Spotlight on Research:

Alina Pelikh, University of Liverpool

I am a first year PhD student in Demography. I began working on my thesis in October 2014 under the supervision of Professor Hill Kulu at the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Liverpool. I hold a BSc and MSc in Economics from the Moscow State University (Russia), as well as an MSc in Demography from the University of Rostock (Germany). Before coming to the UK to conduct my PhD research I graduated from the European Doctoral School of Demography (EDSD).

My thesis focuses on the transition to adulthood in Britain and decision-making at an early stage of the life course under different settings. I first got interested in the concept of the transition to adulthood after I moved to Germany to begin my Master programme and experienced a completely different approach to education and independent living compared to what I have seen in Russia. And so as each society develops its own normative timetables for accepted stages of life careers, my interest in a deeper understanding of institutional and cultural differences in the lives of young people across the Europe emerged.

From a scientific point of view the differences in the transition to adulthood across countries are considered to be driven by welfare policies and cultural background. However, globalisation, rising opportunities and labour market competition have contributed to more complex pathways in this stage of life for individuals across different countries. Young people now stay in education longer, postpone entry into the labour force and delay parenthood across Europe. Although discussions about the 'stretching' of youth are not new – indeed they have been ongoing since the 1960s – whether a new 'model' of the transition to adulthood has appeared remains an open question.

Previous research outlined three Western European patterns of becoming a young adult: the 'Mediterranean' pattern with prolonged stay in the parental home and a strong link between marriage and building an own household; the 'French and Northern European' case with leaving parental home after com-

pleting compulsory education and delayed family formation; and the 'British' case with entry into jobs and adult responsibilities straight after leaving full-time education and heterogeneous family formation trajectories.

The British pattern in contrast to those in continental Europe can be described as an 'accelerated' transition to adulthood. The strategic shift to a neoliberal welfare regime under Margaret Thatcher's government and the subsequent housing crisis led to an increase in socioeconomic inequalities and to the diversification of living arrangements. At the same time in recent decades

young people have gained the opportunity to benefit from globalisation by finding their own unique way to cope with the increased uncertainty. The British media, though, usually only focuses on the image of 'frustrated', 'lost' or 'disconnected' generation when it comes to young people.

Therefore, I hope my project will improve our understanding of pathways to adulthood of British young adults and the evolution of these trajectories over time. I would like to move beyond the 'one life-event-at-a-time' approach and adopt a holistic life course view by analysing changes in a number of interrelated life domains of individuals; their employment and education, partnership and family, housing and residential careers. The

study will also contribute to the debate about the de-standardisation vs re-standardisation of the early life course in the British context. The project is not limited by the investigation of changes that occurred across several birth cohorts, but also takes into account the socioeconomic and ethnic background of young people. In order to answer my research questions I will apply techniques of sequence analysis and multistate modelling to the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) and Understanding Society (UoS).

This research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). If you are interested in further details of my project or want to share your ideas please feel free to contact me at alina.pelikh@liverpool.ac.uk



5 Minutes With... Dr Jakub Bijak



Congratulations on winning the Allianz European Demographer Award! What does it mean to you?

Thank you! For me the award was a wonderful surprise. I see it as an appreciation of some of the less traditional areas of demographic enquiry, where most of my work concentrates. It certainly adds colour to the already vivid life of an academic demographer.

Can you introduce yourself and your background?

I am a born and bred Varsovian. I got both my MSc and PhD from Warsaw School of Economics (WSE). Formally I am an economist specialising in statistical demography and quantitative methods, and informally a committed Bayesian. I am married to Kasia, a credit risk expert who now also works in academia; and we have a four-year

old son. Before coming to the UK six years ago, Kasia and I lived and worked mostly in Poland; we also spent two years in the Netherlands, where I had a job at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

Who is your academic hero? Who inspired you?

My hero is the late Professor Jerzy Zdzisław Holzer. I was lucky to take his course in introductory demography at the WSE, and was completely hooked on population sciences. Holzer was not only the great master who introduced the Polish demography to the European mainstream, but also deeply cared about Africa, which he became passionate about after his UN work in Ghana, Ethiopia, Tanzania and several other countries, back in the 1970s. Above all, he was a great humanist and a wonderful teacher. He had an unforgettable very deep, almost theatrical voice, and told his students many superb demographic anecdotes.

What would your plan B have been if you hadn't been a demographer?

I would like to think I could have been a theoretical mathematician, but this would require setting the clock back by some 20 years. In reality, I would have probably ended in the civil service. After my spell at the UN, I think there are some great career opportunities out there for someone keen to working in the public sphere.

What are you currently working on?

We are finishing a piece of work on evaluating the uncertainty of different models for forecasting UK migration, which was commissioned by the Migration Advisory Committee. We hope to have the results out before the summer.

What has been your most satisfying experience with regard to your work?

At a general level, the most satisfying experience has been to be able to meet and work with many fascinating people – including my teachers, colleagues and students – in Southampton, The Hague, Warsaw, and elsewhere. As for specifics, the most fulfilling was the ICTY experience – from reconstructing the population consequences of the Yugoslav conflicts, to testifying as a demographic expert in a war crimes trial.

Do you have any advice for young academics starting out in this field?

Do not be afraid of doing something less usual, as long as you are convinced that it needs to be done, and what you do remains scientifically sound. Besides, invest in solid training in methods – this really pays off.

Is there any work currently going on, which really excites you?

The epistemology of complex demographic models: how to build the simulations so that they can tell us something useful that we did not know before, and how to look at the uncertainty of their results. This is just the beginning of the road, which may well lead nowhere, but this makes it all the more fascinating.

And finally, have you got any plans for the summer?

Demography aside, we are planning family holidays in Brecon Beacons. We also hope to have some time off after the Joint Statistical Meetings in Seattle, which both Kasia and I are planning to attend. I am really looking forward to the summer!

The Continuing Importance of Inequalities in Health and Mortality Analyses

Report by Arjan Gjonça

This workshop was organised by Population Studies (LSE) and European Health, Morbidity and Mortality Working Group (EAPS) in collaboration with the British Society for Population Studies at London School of Economics and Political Sciences. The workshop took place from 15-17 September 2014. Demographers, epidemiologists and other scholars from different countries and continents participated in the workshop with well over 50 people in total.

The opening address, by Jon Anson, was on the importance and *"persistence of inequalities in health and mortality"*. Among other issues Jon spoke about the fact that inequalities in mortality have not just persisted, but also widened over the years. He went on to address the deterministic pattern of these inequalities in both their biological and socio-economic aspects. In his talk he also considered the reasons behind this increased gap in mortality.

The second session of the workshop was dedicated to the general topic of inequalities in health. Mike Murphy and Martin Bobak, presented work on *"National-level and individual-level inequalities in self-reported adult health"*, analysing the differences in self-reported health across Europe including some former Soviet Union countries. Their work supports the finding that within countries inequalities in SRH exist for a number of socio-economic indicators, in particular income and education. They concluded by suggesting that demographic variables such as gender and age need to be included more centrally in the analysis of inequalities in health. Jan Saarela and Fjalur Finnäs from Finland addressed the *"premature death among different ethno-linguistic groups in working-aged men in Finland"*. They analysed the striking difference in mortality between the Finnish speakers and the Swedish ones, with the latest having a lower premature adult mortality at community level. They hypothesise that a possible explanation might be the lower level of social integration amongst Finnish speakers at the community level. Anne Herm, Jon Anson and Michel Poulain addressed the relationship between *"living arrangement and mortality risks"*. In particular they focused on married and cohabitating couples as well as private versus collective living. The main question they addressed was to what extent the probability of dying varies by living arrangement, controlling for the effects of sex, age and education. They found that even when controlling for socio-economic variables living arrangements still retain their explanatory power. The last presentation in this session was Peter Congdon whose talk addressed *"the variability of disability free life expectancy in small areas in London"*.

The third session of the workshop addressed the general topic of ageing and Inequalities in health and mortality. Govert Bijwaard, Hans van Kippersluis, and Justus Veenman examined a very important question in the literature of education and

health: *"how important is the cognitive ability in determining differences in health and mortality?"* Using cohort data collected since 1952 they addressed two important research questions: (i) what is the relative impact of education and childhood abilities on health outcome in later life, and (ii) how much of the association between health and education is explained by these cognitive abilities. Their results show that even after controlling for cognitive abilities, and many more variables, education in itself amounts for a large difference in life expectancy (almost 4 years in their analysis). Another paper presented by Masataka Nakagawa (co-authored by Kayo Suzuki, Katsunori Kondo) addressed the topic of *"the socioeconomic inequality, community cohesion, and health status among the urban elderly in Japan"*. Using a multilevel analysis on a subsample of the Japan Gerontological evaluation study, they confirm that controlling for individual-level demographic and socio-economic variables, income inequality increases the likelihood of reporting poor health. They also revealed that community cohesion was strongly affecting the relationship between income inequality and health. The third paper in this session was presented by Sarah Read on *"Socioeconomic position and subjective well-being among older people in Europe"*, co-authored with Emily Grundy and Else Foverskov. They used a systematic literature review to evaluate whether there are similar inequalities in indicators of subjective health and wellbeing at old age in European context. The results of this systematic review supported the finding that lower education and poorer socio-economic position were associated with poorer subjective health. Overall the general conclusion of the discussion was that social influences are of significant importance for later life subjective wellbeing.

The fourth session of the workshop included papers on *"geospatial inequalities in health and mortality"*. The first paper was presented by Nubia Yaneth Ruiz on the *"Differential mortality in the urban territory of main cities in Colombia"*. Their results revealed a stunning difference in mortality in urban areas based on socio-spatial and socio-economic segregation. Most importantly, the differences in life expectancy at birth were driven by differences in income levels of different groups living in these urban areas. The second paper in this session was presented by Laura Murianni (co-authored by A. Solipaca and R. Cialesi) on *"Measuring health inequalities in the Italian Regions through concentration index method"*. At macro level using a composite index of social inequality among the Italian regions the paper found a positive socioeconomic gradient in the distribution of health. The most disadvantaged people lived in the South regions where the macro concentration index has the lower values, with the opposite in the north. The results at micro level were similar with higher socio-economic status people reporting a better health. The last paper of the session was presented Nandita Saikia and co-authored by V. Shkolnikov, D. Jasilionis and Chandrasekha on *"trends and sub-national disparities in neonatal mortality in India from 1981 to 2011"*. The paper showed clear disparities in neonatal mortality rate in India be-

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tween urban and rural sub populations and between different states.

Ross Macmillan opened the fifth session on *“health care provision and inequality”* with a very interesting paper on *Neoliberalism and life expectancy: a study in the political-economy of population health*. This paper co-authored with Keiti Kondi, and Adrian De Arriba Rodriguez tests an important hypothesis that neoliberalism policies implemented extensively in the developed and developing countries are detrimental for population health. The authors concluded that population health in general is actually positively associated with increased neoliberalism, and that this relationship is very strong in poor economic context. The other paper of this session was presented by Olena Nizalova and Yuliia Sheron on *“relative effectiveness of government vs. private health expenditures in reducing avoidable mortality in OECD countries”*. Using avoidable mortality as a measure of performance in health care systems this paper investigated the relative effectiveness of government versus private spending in health care in OECD countries. The authors found that higher private health spending has significant negative effects on avoidable mortality, while public health expenditures are positively associated with avoidable mortality. The last paper was given by Sanzida Akhter on *“Health care seeking behaviour of women with maternal morbidity in Dhaka, Bangladesh”*. Akhter analysed the health care seeking behaviour of mothers of lower income and higher income household in Dhaka with regards to their reproductive health needs pre and post-delivery. The main finding of the paper was that the socio-economic status of women, as well as socio-economic characteristics of the household, were strongly correlated with health care seeking behaviour.

The sixth session, dedicated to *“health Inequalities in Africa”*, opened with a very interesting paper by Géraldine Duthé, Valérie Delaunay, Laëticia Douillot, Gilles Pison, presented by Duthé on *“Long term effects of reproductive history on female mortality in rural Senegal”*. The paper looked at the relationship between fertility and mortality in a region where there is a lack of data. The paper examined the long term effects of reproductive history on female mortality in three rural localities in Senegal. Using cohort data over a period of 30 years or more the authors found that past reproductive history impacted mortality at older ages. They found that higher fertility was associated with a lower mortality risk. They suggested that the underlying causes might be more social than biological, with having a son appearing to be more protective. The second paper looked at *“inequalities in health, morbidity and mortality in Accra”* from different methodological approaches, presented by John R. Weeks and Allan G. Hill. The authors concluded that inequalities in health in Accra do not track the inequalities in mortality in the expected ways and hypothesise that policy responses to health inequalities do not always have the anticipated results. The last paper in this session was given by Iulia Rautu on *“assessing risk inequalities for mosquito-borne disease in children, by using latent class analysis”*.

The last session of the second day was on *“Inequality in Health and Mortality in Eastern Europe”*. They were four papers in this session covering a large number of East European countries. The

first paper was given by Katalin Kovács on *“Material deprivation and health within and outside of the European Union”*; the second paper by Semyonova and Sabgayda addressed the *Mortality in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine in 2000-2011 in the context of socio-economic changes*; Martina Štípková continued with a paper on *“Variation in the educational gap in birth weight in the Czech Republic”*, and finally A. Lamin presented a paper on *“Compensation of excess mortality of the poorest population strata: historical experience of Russia”*. All papers in this session detailed the mortality changes taking place in Eastern Europe in historical terms but also the recent upturn trend of improvements in life expectancy at birth.

The last day of the workshop started with a session on *“Causes of Death and Inequality”*. The first paper, by Lili Abuladze, addressed the *“Differences in life expectancy from preventable and treatable causes of death between Estonian native and foreign origin population in 2008-2011”*. Using data from census and death registry the author concluded that the main differences come due to preventable causes of death and are focused mainly in the early adulthood. The second paper by TP Sabgayda, VG Semyonova addressed the *“deterministic pattern of cardiovascular mortality in Russia”*. This session ended with a discussion by Arjan Gjonça on the *“Diverse routes” of epidemiological transition? - Revisiting the theory of epidemiological transition”*. By analysing historical and recent data on causes of death for developed and developing countries Gjonça hypothesised that while the theory is still relevant for developing countries there are two main aspects of cause of death mortality that should be reflected in it. One is the case of double burden of disease and the other is the reversal transition which has been seen in regions such as Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The last session of the Workshop included three papers on diverse topic of inequalities. The first paper was presented by Patrick Deboosere titled *“Decomposing the differences in life expectancy between men and women in Belgium to improve our understanding of the past and future evolution in mortality”*. The author addressed the misrepresentation of differences in life expectancy between men and women as a biological by-product and not as a socio-economic by product or behavioural one. The second paper was given by Hernan Manzelli on *“Education Attainment and Adult Mortality Differentials in Argentina”*. The results showed a clear gradient in education and mortality association. The research also found that the trend in inequality in mortality by education is coming down in the recent years. The last paper of the workshop was an interesting one by Emmanuelle Cambois, Clémentine Garrouste, and Ariane Pailhé entitled *“To what extent do gender differentials in occupational careers contribute to sex health differences in France?”* The main research question addressed by the authors was whether female and male specific career trajectories might contribute to an overall female health disadvantage in later life. The analysis showed that exit from the labour force and downward careers which are more frequent among women are indeed responsible for poorer health of women in later life.

The workshop ended with a panel discussion on the future of inequalities in health with guest speakers from UCL, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, Prof. Martin Bobak and Prof. Eric Brunner.

European Human Evolution and Behaviour Conference

29th April-1st April 2015, Helsinki

Report by Paula Sheppard, LSHTM

The 9th annual European Human Evolution and Behaviour (EHBEA) conference was held in Helsinki this year. This conference welcomes delegates from all over the world – 26 countries this time – to disseminate their research on a wide range of topics relating to variation in human behaviour with particular interest in that concerned with acquiring mates and having babies. Thus so, it attracts academics and students from disciplines in both the social and biological sciences, including demography, psychology, anthropology, primatology, and behavioural ecology.

Although Finland treated us to incessant icy sleet rather than joyous spring blossom, the conference and the networking receptions were warm and welcoming. The talks were of particularly high calibre this year and the plenaries covered a scintillating array of topics, including a fascinating insight into our past by Wil Roebroeks titled “The peopling of Pleistocene Europe – with or without fire?”, and another addressing a more contemporary debate from this year’s New Investigator Award winner, Gert Stulp, who talked about “Evolutionary adaptations and unexplored assumptions: questioning the mismatched stone-aged mind”. Other session topics included “The human family and maturation”, “Prosociality and cognition”, and “Cooperation and risk-taking”.



Helsinki Circus opening the conference



Conference venue – University of Helsinki

I presented the findings of my paper about the influence of grandparental investment on child health in rural Guatemala and received some very useful feedback from interested delegates. In short, I used measures of direct grandparental support on child height (in a highly resource-stressed population) and found evidence for the strongest positive influence of paternal grandmothers; an unusual finding given the literature that usually finds maternal grandmothers to be most beneficial for child survival and other health outcomes.

The conference proceedings were punctuated by entertaining acrobatic input from the Helsinki Circus who opened the conference with a choreography of Finnish snow deer (see photo). Throughout, we also had other circus members fortifying the poster session and the conference dinner with excellent and humorous interpretations of evolutionary theory.

I am indebted to BSPS for generously contributing £250 towards my travel and accommodation in Finland (not a cheap destination!), without which I would not have been able to attend.

The 2016 EHBEA conference will be held in London at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, next Easter – we hope to see many BSPS members there!

Population Association of America Conference Report

30 April-2 May 2015, San Diego

Report by Matthew Wallace, University of Liverpool

This year the Population Association of America (PAA) conference was hosted in San Diego, CA at the Hilton Hotel on the bay front, 30 April – 2 May 2015. I learnt back in late December 2014 that my two applications to present had been accepted for posters, having previously discovered their presentation fate a month earlier. Feeling an air of redemption (not quite to Shawshank standards), I begin to plan for the conference. The poster boards at PAA are huge (four feet high and eight feet wide) but because of the cost of printing this size, and the logistics of taking an eight foot poster tube on several flights, I opt for A0. I tell myself that others will do the same and besides, everyone says that it's the quality that matters not the size...

After a seamless flight from Manchester to Philadelphia, I get my first experience of U.S. customs and immigration. I spend some time trying to explain the concept of a 'Postgraduate Researcher' (nothing new there at home or abroad!), but the combination of this, along with my youthful air arouses suspicion. Eventually, I'm deemed suitable for entry to the U.S. and make my connecting flight to San Diego. I arrive late evening having not slept on the flight and get some much required shut-eye. Incidentally, I watched 'Inherent Vice' on the first flight over, it's an awful film and you'll never get those hours back... I praise the performance of Joaquin Phoenix but the story is uninteresting and convoluted [*Wait, this isn't a film review piece? OK*].

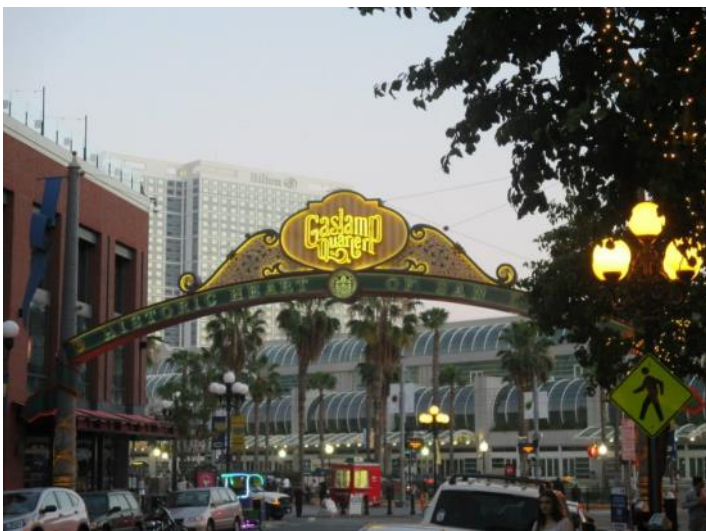
I'm priced out of staying at the Hilton so I opt for the Wyndham hotel approx. a 40 minute walk along the harbour front. The customer service was great, the rooms were spacious and the views spectacular, I give it four



stars out of five [*Wait, this isn't a hotel review piece? OK*]. Walking along the waterfront to PAA each morning was great; the temperature was still cool and it was both peaceful and picturesque. For those who haven't been to San Diego, I can certainly recommend it. Whether you take a short drive up to Mission Bay, go to Balboa Park and the Zoo, the bay front and Seaport Village or stick to the city centre and frequent the Gaslamp Quarter (save this for late evenings), it's all good fun [*I did go to the conference, I promise.*]

The overall impression I got from PAA was a very professional, efficient conference (even if I did initially bemoan the lack of complimentary beverages, because that's how we all judge the standard of a conference...right? *Admit it.*) It was interesting to see the sessions at PAA take a different format to other conferences I have attended where presenters are followed by a discussant who sums up the papers and provides critical individual feedback. Time-permitting, the audience can then ask questions. For the first time I also experienced one of my papers being cited by a researcher during a presentation, which was a nice confidence boost. The paper was on health disparities of non-migrants, migrants and return migrants in China.

Most of the sessions that stood out for me were, not surprisingly, related to my own topic (migrant health and mortality). These included 'Health Disparities among U.S. Hispanic and Immigrant Populations', 'Migration and Mental Health', 'Social Disparities in Health' and 'Health Behaviours, Health and Mortality'. In the latter, the paper presented by Tobias Vogt (on behalf on an MPIDR team) on a potential future second life expectancy crossover (driven by more favourable smoking habits in West Germans and increasingly less favourable smoking habits in East Ger-



Continued from previous page...

mans) in Germany was a particularly sound, captivating piece of research. I also enjoyed Neil Cummins' presentation in 'Healthy and Mortality at Older Ages' on the increasing lifespans of the European Elite (800- 1800) which he attributed, to some extent to declines in violent deaths, but for the most part to positive changes in individual behaviour.

However, the surprise package for me (which was also a first for PAA), was 'Visualising Demographic Data'. Presentations were generally concerned with the impact and distribution (both publicly and academically) of research and the ability of visualisation to make results more accessible to a diverse range of audiences. Some addressed specific research areas such as integration. The use of infographics was heralded, be that either (attempting to) designing them yourself or outsourcing the work (cash-permitting) to others. I think, as a perennial user of Excel to design often uninspiring charts and tables, this was a bit of an eye-opener as to what we as academics can aspire to produce. The session was very well-attended. I'm sure similarly-themed sessions will be a permanent fixture at PAA for years to come.

Finally, my poster session was on late Friday morning. My posters sat side-by-side and I had considerable interest from both passers-by and those who had come specifically to discuss my research. I think the level of traffic was helped by the poster session running over lunch. The first of the two posters is: Wallace, M., Kulu, H. (2014). Low immigrant mortality in England and Wales: a data artefact? *Social Science & Medicine*. 120: 100-109. Here, I find that low migrant mortality persists after accounting for potential errors in the registration of the entry and exit dates of migrants. The second of the two, 'The Mortality of Descendants of Migrants in England and Wales: Does low mortality exist beyond the first-generation?' shows that low mortality persists in some descendants but there is substantial variation by ethnicity. If you would like a copy of either paper, email me at m.wallace@liv.ac.uk and I will gladly oblige.

I am grateful to the British Society for Population Studies for supporting my participation in this conference. I was able to build upon my current knowledge of research in my field, as well as satisfy some curiosities on topics of interest in unrelated fields. Additionally, I was able to engage with a new group of researchers outside of the U.K. and European academic circles.

BSPS COUNCIL

At the BSPS AGM in September, four members of Council will have completed their 4-year terms and will not be eligible for immediate re-election to Council. Jim Newman (ONS), Hill Kulu (Liverpool), Rebecca Sear (LSHTM) and Gemma Quarendon (Hampshire CC) have been nominated to fill the vacancies, which nominations will be put to the vote at the 2015 AGM. BSPS members may nominate further candidates for these vacancies, but should be aware that this will mean a ballot must be conducted in advance of the AGM. As of September, Tony Champion will have completed his two-year term as President and, as is usual, the current Vice-President Jane Falkingham will be nominated for the Presidency. Piers Elias (Edge Analytics) has been nominated as the next Vice-President from September 2015. Again, further nominations may be made, but would also require a ballot to be conducted in advance of the AGM.

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