



**Growing Up**  
**in Ireland**  
National Longitudinal  
Study of Children

# *Growing Up in Ireland*

National Longitudinal Study of Children

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**Book of Abstracts**



# Paper presentations

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## Keynote Address

### Navigating the transition to adulthood: The role of structure and agency

#### Keynote speaker

#### Professor Ingrid Schoon

(University College London Institute of Education)

#### Stratocaster A&B

The transition to independent adulthood is a crucial phase of the life course, a make-or-break situation for young people, which critically impacts on adult social status attainment and developmental prospects throughout adulthood, setting the scene for future functioning and adjustment. It is shaped by prior experiences in the family and school context, current conditions, and anticipation of the future. It thus takes good quality longitudinal data to comprehensively examine the factors and processes that facilitate a successful transition, in particular for young people exposed to socio-economic hardship.

In this paper I will ask to what extent are young people able to steer the course of their lives despite the constraining forces of social structure? I will introduce a socio-ecological model of agency, examining the interplay between a developing individual and a changing social context. The socio-ecological approach is embedded within life course theory and enables us to investigate how objective socio-economic conditions affect individual thinking, feeling and behavior, and how different aspects of agency might shape the selection of distinct transition pathways, which can be understood as ecological niches. It specifies the interplay between structure and agency, differentiating between independent, cumulative

and compensatory processes, i.e. the refinement and calibration of agency in response to changing circumstances. For the presentation I will draw on data collected in England and Ireland, and discuss in what circumstances agency can compensate for socio-economic adversity in the transition to adulthood.

#### Biographical note:

Ingrid Schoon is Professor of Human Development and Social Policy at University College, Institute of Education and holds a Research Professorship at the Social Science Centre (WZB) in Berlin. She is currently President of the Society for Longitudinal and Lifecourse Studies. Her research focuses on the study of risk and resilience, asking 1) to what extent and how do social conditions, in particular socio-economic adversity, affect individual thinking, feeling and behaviour; 2) to what extent and in what circumstances can individuals succeed against the odds and steer their own life course?; and 3) what can be done to improve the life chances of the most vulnerable? Her research is guided by a social ecological-developmental approach, mapping human development over time and in context using longitudinal data, such as the British Cohort Data. She has published widely, including a monograph on 'Risk and Resilience' (2006), co-edited books on 'Transitions from School to Work: Globalisation, Individualisation, and Patterns of Diversity' (2009) with Rainer K. Silbereisen, 'Gender differences in aspirations and attainment: A longitudinal perspective' (2014) with Jacquelynne Eccles, and 'Young People's Development and the Great Recession: Uncertain Transitions and Precarious Futures' (2017) with John Bynner - all published by Cambridge University Press.

## Session A: Stratocaster A & B

### The impact of chronic bullying on risk of depression among young adolescents

Elizabeth Doyle (TCD)

#### Session A, Stratocaster A&B

**Context:** The “Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures” framework emphasises the importance of preventing bullying and protecting mental health. This study examined how experience of bullying impacts risk of depression.

**Methods:** Data collected from the child cohort was used to create a variable containing four groups of children; chronically bullied (children who reported being bullied in both primary and secondary school), recently bullied (secondary school only), previously bullied (primary school only) and no reported experience of bullying. This variable and predictors of depression were used in a logistic regression to predict high or low risk of depression among children aged 13 years. Results of the short mood and feelings questionnaire were used to estimate risk.

**Results:** The model was statistically significant and explained 8.5% (Nagelkerke R) of the variance. Those chronically bullied were over seven times more likely to be at risk for depression while those recently bullied were over three times more likely compared to students with no reported experience of bullying. Those previously bullied were 1.61 times more likely to be at risk. The longitudinal data from *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) show that, while all three groups displayed elevated levels of distress, those chronically bullied had the highest risk.

**Conclusions:** Though bullying experiences typically decrease with age, these results show the severe outcome of chronic bullying. Teachers and parents should be aware of any history and addressing bullying to protect mental health should continue to be a priority for child centred policies. While the prevalence may be low, persistent bullying can have a detrimental effect on children.

### The relationship between emerging self-concept and adolescent psychotic experiences

Colm Healy (RCSI), Helen Coughlan (RCSI)  
James Williams (ERSI), Mary Clarke (RCSI)  
Ian Kelleher (RCSI)  
Mary Cannon (RCSI, Beaumont Hospital, TCD)

#### Session A, Stratocaster A&B

**Background:** Psychotic experiences (PEs) are commonly reported in adolescence and have been associated with a myriad of negative outcomes. Reducing the incidence of PEs is an important goal for preventative psychiatry. To-date, few targets for intervention have been identified. One potential psychosocial target is self-concept; a faculty which emerges in childhood. We investigated: 1) the relationship between self-concept and PEs; and 2) if changes in self-concept, between childhood and adolescence, were associated with changes in the odds of PEs.

**Method:** Using Wave-1 (n=8658) and Wave-2 (n=7423) data from the child-cohort of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study we investigated the relationship between self-concept and PEs. Using a stratified analysis (low, average and high self-concept in childhood), we investigated the relationship between changes in self-concept, between wave-1 and wave-2, and change in the odds of PEs. PEs were measured using the Adolescent Psychotic Symptoms Screener. Self-concept was measured using the Piers Harris-II.

**Results:** PEs were reported by 13% of adolescents. Very low childhood and adolescent self-concept was associated with an increased likelihood of PEs (Wave-1:OR:3.10, CI:2.05-4.68; and Wave-2:OR:6.62, CI:4.65-9.42), while high self-concept was associated with a decreased likelihood of PEs (Wave-1:OR:0.75, CI:0.59-0.95; and Wave-2:OR:0.35, CI:0.25-0.49). Stratified analysis strongly indicated that as self-concept improved the likelihood of PEs reduced, while worsening self-concept increases the likelihood of PEs.

**Discussion:** There is a strong relationship between self-concept and PEs. Self-concept may be a useful target for preventative psychiatry. Broad-spectrum interventions targeting self-concept in childhood may help to reduce the incidence of PEs in adolescence.

## Session B: Stratocaster C

### Decision-making about higher education: Choosing an institution

Emer Smyth (ESRI)  
Daráine Murphy (ESRI)

#### Session B, Stratocaster C

**Context:** There is now a large body of research on the factors influencing young people's decision-making regarding whether to go on to higher education or not. In comparison, much less attention has been paid to how young people decide upon the specific institution they wish to attend. This paper contributes to existing research by examining the relative importance of different factors in the choice of institution and the extent to which these processes vary by social background.

**Methods:** The paper draws on data collected from 17 year olds in the GUI child cohort. These young people were asked about their plans upon leaving school and the factors influencing their choices. Higher education (HE) has become the dominant post-school pathway among school leavers in Ireland so the specific course and institution have potentially become key dimensions of differentiation in young people's trajectories.

**Results:** The type of course provided and the reputation of the institution emerge as the most important factors in young people's choice of HE institution. Greater variation is evident in the relative importance of: the ability to remain living in the parental home; whether their friends are likely to attend the institution; the encouragement of their teacher or guidance counsellor; and parental encouragement to attend the institution. The paper analyses whether the relative importance of these factors varies significantly by social background, using a rich set of measures including parental social class, education and family income. Results are not yet available as the AMF data have just been released.

### Measurements of cognition at age 17 years: verbal fluency versus traditional vocabulary

Aisling Murray (ESRI)

#### Session B, Stratocaster C

**Background:** At 17/18 years, participants in the GUI Child Cohort completed three short measures of cognitive ability. One was a traditional written vocabulary test. Another simply asked participants to name as many animals as they could in one minute. This analysis compared the two indicators with each other and with other cross-sectional and longitudinal measures of ability.

**Method:** For the vocabulary test, participants were given 20 target words and asked to choose the word closest in meaning to it from five possibilities. They had four minutes to attempt the test. For the semantic fluency test, participants were asked to call out the names of many animals as possible in one minute. There was one point awarded for each different animal named. The cognitive tests were administered as part of the home visit. Information on Junior Certificate results was recorded from the participants during the interview.

**Results:** Initial analysis indicated a mean score on the verbal fluency test of just over 21 animals in one minute. The mean score on the vocabulary test was just under nine items correct. Both measures exhibited a normal distribution. Scores on the two tests were moderately correlated with each other ( $r=.32$ ). Both were also significantly correlated with a score based on grades in Junior Cert. Maths, English and Science. Longitudinally, both tests showed significant correlations with reading and maths ability as measured at age 9 years and 13 years. However, the coefficients for the vocabulary measure tended to be stronger, especially for the earlier reading measures.

## Session C: Alhambra

### Maternal health behaviours of non-Irish nationals during pregnancy and the effect of acculturation

Rachel Palmer (DIT, TCD)  
Richard Layte (ESRI, TCD)  
John Kearney (DIT)

#### Session C, Alhambra

**Context:** Maternal health behaviours in pregnancy can influence pregnancy outcomes. Despite efforts internationally to encourage positive maternal health behaviours, women often fail to comply with pregnancy guidelines. International studies show differences in maternal health behaviours between nationalities and the potential effect of acculturation. Limited Irish data exists on the maternal health behaviours of non-Irish nationals during pregnancy or the effect of acculturation.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional analysis of the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) infant cohort wave one, a cohort of 11,134 primary caregivers, interviewed when their study infant was 9 months of age.

**Results:** Non-nationals were 52.8% ( $P = <0.001$ ) less likely to consume alcohol during pregnancy, 37.3% ( $P = <0.001$ ) less likely to smoke during pregnancy and had poorer folic acid compliance compared to nationals. Acculturation was associated with increased alcohol consumption during pregnancy, rising from 7.8% among those living in Ireland for  $\leq 5$  years to 23.0% among those living in Ireland for  $\geq 11$  years, and improved folic acid compliance among those who moved to Ireland.

**Conclusions:** Differences in maternal health behaviours during pregnancy were observed between Irish and non-Irish nationals. Acculturation had a significant effect on maternal health behaviours during pregnancy, with increased duration of residency in Ireland being associated with increased prevalence of alcohol consumption and improved folic acid compliance. To avoid the adoption of negative maternal health behaviours, Ireland must first invest in improving the behaviours of Irish nationals so that positive rather than negative behaviours are adopted by those who move to Ireland.

### The impact of prescription drug co-payments on healthcare utilisation and health

Gretta Mohan (ESRI, TCD)  
Anne Nolan (ESRI, TCD)

#### Session C, Alhambra

**Context:** Co-payments for prescription drugs are a common feature of many healthcare systems, although often with exemptions for vulnerable population groups (OECD, 2016). Internationally, there is some evidence that prescription drug co-payments delay necessary care, increase use of other forms of healthcare and lead to poorer health (Chandra et al., 2010, Gaynor et al., 2007, Tamblyn et al., 2001). In October 2010, prescription drug co-payments were introduced for the first time for medical cardholders in Ireland, initially at a cost of €0.50 per item, before increasing to €1.50 per item in January 2013, €2.50 per item in December 2013, before falling to €2 in January 2018.

**Methods:** The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of this policy change on healthcare utilisation and health among medical cardholder children and their families in Ireland. Using data from both the Infant and Child Cohorts of *Growing up in Ireland* (GUI), and a difference-in-difference research design, we will estimate the impact of the introduction (and increase) of these co-payments on a variety of indicators of healthcare utilisation (GP visits, ED visits, hospital nights) and health (parental mental health, household financial situation).

**Conclusion:** This research will have direct implications for policy. In the context of discussions around the design and implementation of universal healthcare in Ireland, the results of this research will be important in terms of assessing the 'offsetting' effects of prescription drug co-payments on other aspects of healthcare utilisation and health among children and their families in Ireland.

## Session E: Stratocaster C

### A latent growth curve model of the relationship between computer usage and academic performance

Desmond O'Mahony (ESRI)

#### Session E, Stratocaster C

**Context:** Increased use of computers at home and school is current government policy in Ireland (Digital Strategy for Schools, 2017). Along with a continued growth of computer ownership and increasingly available broadband connections, Ireland has seen a greater number of children using computers and accessing the internet from a young age (Eurostat, 2005). This paper will conduct a longitudinal exploration of the link between children's home computer use and their academic performance in the areas of reading and mathematics.

**Methods:** Linked data from the Child Cohort of the *Growing Up in Ireland* Survey at nine-years (N = 8,568), thirteen years (n = 7,525), and when available, 17 years (n = 6,450) will be used for this study (ESRI, 2010). Latent Growth Curve (LGC) modelling will be used to explore longitudinal changes in computer usage and the associated relationship that this has with academic performance from childhood into early adulthood.

**Results:** Previous research using the 9 year old GUI cohort (Casey, Layte, Lyons, & Silles, 2012) revealed that engagement with computers through internet surfing for fun had a positive and significant relationship reading and mathematics performance at age 9:  $\beta = 0.16$   $p < .05$ , and  $\beta$

$= 0.05$   $p < .01$ . Whereas use of instant messaging showed a negative relationship with reading  $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $p < .05$ . The current study aims to extend this finding using LGC to account for inter wave attrition as well as non-linear changes over time in both computer usage and in academic performance (Musu-Gillette, Wigfield, Harring, & Eccles, 2015).

**Conclusions:** The findings of this research will add to the body of knowledge on how computers can be best used to promote beneficial academic outcomes.

### Screen time versus screen type: The impact of screen engagement on cognitive development

Chloé Beatty (University of Limerick)

Suzanne M. Egan (University of Limerick)

#### Session E, Stratocaster C

**Context:** While much is known about the effects of screen time on child development, less research has focused on the effect that various types of screen engagement (such as playing computer games or watching TV) are having. The research aims to address this gap by assessing the extent of young Irish children's engagement with various screen activities, and whether these types of engagements have differing impacts on their cognitive development.

**Methods:** The study is a cross-sectional design using the GUI Wave 3 Infant Cohort dataset to investigate the effects of screen time variables on the vocabulary development and problem-solving skills of Irish 5 year olds, as measured by the British Ability Scales.

**Results:** The results indicated that both amount of screen time and type of screen time engagement had a significant impact on the children's cognitive scores, with regression analyses showing cognitive scores continuously decreasing the longer the child is exposed to a screen. However, these results vary in severity based on what type of screen activity the child was mostly engaged with. For example, children who mostly played video games had the lowest vocabulary development scores across all time brackets, even after controlling for parental and environmental factors.

**Conclusion:** The implications of the findings may be of interest to Governmental bodies during policy making for young children's screen use, while also contributing to the discourse on what aspects of screen-time use may be detrimental or beneficial for the healthy development of children in this age bracket.

## Session E: Stratocaster C

### Streets ahead: Outdoor play in young Irish children

Suzanne M. Egan (University of Limerick)

Jennifer Pope (University of Limerick)

#### Session E, Stratocaster C

**Context:** The importance of outdoor play for child development has been well-documented internationally. The aim of the current research is to explore levels of outdoor play in young Irish children (aged 5 and aged 7/8), particularly focusing on the impact of outdoor play on child development and the factors that support, or act as barriers, to outdoor play.

**Methods:** Data were drawn from Waves 3 and 4 of the Infant Cohort of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study. The primary caregiver was asked to indicate how often their child engages in various types of outdoor activities (e.g., climbing trees, playing chasing, riding a bike). They also provided information related to a range of other measures such as their education level, neighbourhood safety, and their child's physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development.

**Results:** Findings indicated that the majority of Irish children in this age group engage in daily outdoor play and most have access to outdoor play equipment such as a bicycle or scooter. Levels of outdoor play had a small but significant impact on socio-emotional development scores, particularly related to pro-social behaviour and problems with peers. However, levels of outdoor play are affected by parents' perceptions of neighbourhood safety.

**Conclusions:** The results are considered from an ecological systems perspective. An understanding of the extent and types of outdoor play engaged in by young Irish children, and the impacts of and barriers to outdoor play, may have implications for parents, preschools, schools, and policy makers.

## Session F: Alhambra

### Precursors to self-regulation in early childhood: Examining socioeconomic differences in Ireland and Canada

Ailbhe Booth (UCD), Orla Doyle (UCD)

Eilis Hennessy (UCD)

#### Session F, Alhambra

**Context:** Self-regulation is a critical developmental ability predictive of important life outcomes across the lifespan. Research demonstrates the importance of early environmental factors in predicting self-regulation, however, little is known about how such factors interact with family socio-economic status (SES). This study examines socioeconomic differences in predictors of self-regulation, including characteristics of the child and early home environment, and the emergence of self-regulation problems.

**Methods:** Data from two nationally representative cohort studies from Ireland (*Growing Up in Ireland*, Infant Cohort) and Canada (National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, Early Child Development Cohorts) (n = 8,454 and 12,168, respectively) were analysed using OLS regression models including interaction terms to test for SES differences in associations between the early home environment (parenting, depression, siblings), child characteristics (gender, temperament, cognitive ability), and self-regulation.

**Results:** Low SES children in both Ireland and Canada had significantly more self-regulation problems than their higher SES counterparts at 4-5 years of age. Interaction effects for SES were only found in the Irish sample, whereby lower SES children with siblings and those with poorer verbal ability had more self-regulation problems. No significant interactions were observed in the Canadian sample.

**Conclusions:** Although self-regulation problems varied by socioeconomic group, the characteristics of the child and early home environment that influenced the development of self-regulation largely did not. This suggests that the factors influencing early self-regulation may be universal in nature. These results contribute to international commentary on self-regulation and the potential for early intervention to reduce socioeconomic gaps.

## Session F: Alhambra

### Exploring the effect of the home learning environment and parental involvement on cognitive development in early childhood

Clara Hoyne (University of Limerick)

Suzanne M. Egan (University of Limerick)

#### Session F, Alhambra

**Context:** A good quality home environment with involved parents who engage in a variety of home learning activities, demonstrate positive outcomes for cognitive development in early childhood. The aim of this research was to examine these effects in Irish children.

**Method:** Data from 3-year olds and 5-year olds in the infant cohort of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study were used. The primary caregiver questionnaire data measured variables in the home learning environment and maternal and paternal factors. Language and reasoning outcomes were measured using the British Ability Scale (BAS) Naming Vocabulary and Picture Similarities scales.

**Results:** The results indicated that the home learning environment at age 3 had a significant impact on both measures of development, even after other factors were controlled for. There was a slightly greater impact on Naming Vocabulary than Picture Similarity scores. At age 5 the effects were not as strong though still significant. Maternal factors contributed more to the regression models than paternal factors. The number of books in the home consistently emerged in the regression models as an important element of the home learning environment.

**Conclusion:** This study suggests that the vocabulary dimension of the British Ability Scale may be more susceptible to change from the home learning environment than non-verbal reasoning. Educating new parents on the importance of their role, encouraging parents to read with their infants and get involved in a variety of home learning activities could have significant benefits for child development. A quality home learning environment is critical for later development and success in life.

### The prevalence of speech and language difficulties at ages 3 and 5 and attendance at Speech and Language therapy services

Aileen Wright (University of Limerick)

Michelle O'Donoghue (University of Limerick)

#### Session F, Alhambra

**Context:** Prevalence data informs resource planning in the health and education services. The objective of this study was to report prevalence and persistence of speech and language difficulties (SLD) in children at ages 3 and 5, as well as attendance at Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) services, using data from the *Growing Up in Ireland* study.

**Methods:** Data regarding demographics, presence of SLD and access to SLT services was extracted from the infant cohort at ages 9 months, 3 years and 5 years. Persistence of difficulties across waves 2 and 3 and attendance at SLT services was examined using descriptive analysis.

**Results:** Prevalence of SLD was 19.2% at age 3 and 16.5% at age 5. Fifty-five percent of children identified with difficulties at age 3 no longer presented with SLD at age 5. Only 49% of children with SLD at age 5 had been identified with difficulties at age 3. Forty-two percent of children identified with SLD at age 5 had not received SLT services.

**Conclusions:** SLT services are often focused on early identification and intervention. However these figures show that half of the children presenting with SLD at age 5 had not been identified at age 3, while a majority of children identified at age 3 had resolved their difficulties by age 5. Implications for service delivery are discussed in light of the governments' new project to bring SLT into schools and pre-schools.

## Session G: Stratocaster A&B

### Cross-cohort comparisons of socio-emotional well-being: Ireland, Scotland and New Zealand

**James Williams** (Former Principal Investigator, *Growing up in Ireland*, Economic and Social Research Institute)

**Paul Bradshaw** (Principal Investigator, Growing up in Scotland and Research Director, ScotCen Social Research, Edinburgh)

**Patty Doran** (University of Manchester)

**Susan Morton** (Principal Investigator, Growing Up in New Zealand, University of Auckland)

#### Session G, Stratocaster A&B

Numerous factors have been linked to children's socio-emotional and behavioural well-being including maternal health and depression (e.g. Eamon and Zuehl (2001)); family structure McLanahan (1997); behavioural characteristics of the family and parents and characteristics of the children themselves (Watson et al., 2014). Research in this area is extremely valuable in advancing our understanding of risk and protective factors and the development of appropriate interventions to improve the emotional wellbeing of all children.

Drawing on preliminary findings from Growing Up Healthy in Families Across the Globe<sup>1</sup> this presentation provides an initial comparative analysis of variations in five-year-old's socio-emotional outcomes (using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) with some key indicators of vulnerability. Analysis is based on the *Growing Up in Ireland*, Growing Up in Scotland and Growing Up in New Zealand longitudinal child cohort studies. The broad framework for measuring vulnerability draws on reports prepared in the Growing Up in New Zealand study (Growing Up in New Zealand, Vulnerability Reports 1 and 2).

<sup>1</sup>*Growing Up Healthy in Families Across the Globe* study is based in Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand and aims to investigate the potential for harmonised analysis across five longitudinal studies, viz. *Growing Up in New Zealand*; *Te hoe nuku roa – Best outcomes for Maori*; *Pacific Island Families Study*; *Growing Up in Scotland* and *Growing Up in Ireland*.

### The impact of early life stress on the persistence of psychotic like experiences in adolescence

**Daráine Murphy** (ESRI)

**Colm Healy** (RCSI)

**Mary Cannon** (RCSI, Beaumont Hospital, TCD)

#### Session G, Stratocaster A&B

**Background:** Psychotic experiences (PEs) are commonly reported in childhood and adolescence (prevalence in adolescence: 7.5%) and have been associated with poorer psychiatric outcomes. Individuals who report persistent PEs are at an even greater risk of psychiatric conditions, yet little is known about risk factors which distinguish those with persistent experiences from those whose experiences are transient.

**Method:** This study will use data from waves 1-3 (ages 9, 13 and 17 N=6039) of the Child Cohort from the *Growing Up in Ireland* study. Thirteen different Early Life Stressors were measured at age 9 and age 13. PE were measured using the Adolescent Psychotic Symptoms Screener at age 13 and age 17. We aim to investigate the differences in the number of, and specific ELS reported by those with persistent PEs from those with transient PEs. Furthermore, we aim to determine if persistent PEs elevate the risk of psychopathology in individuals who have experience early life stress.

**Results & Conclusions:** 9% of individuals reported transient PEs at 13 years of age, 8% reported transient PE at 17 years of age and 2.9% reported Persistent PEs at both waves. Individuals who experienced early life stress were more likely to report persistent PEs. Furthermore, individuals who reported experiencing early life stress with persistent PEs were found to be at an elevated risk of psychopathology in comparison to individuals with transient PLEs with early life stress.

## Session G: Stratocaster A&B

### Mediating factors in the relationship between childhood stressful life events and child, adolescent and persistent psychopathology: A national longitudinal cohort study

Niamh Dhondt (RCSI), Colm Healy (RCSI)  
Mary Clarke (RCSI)  
Mary Cannon (RCSI, Beaumont Hospital, TCD)

#### Session G, Stratocaster A&B

**Background:** Stressful life events are a well-established risk factor for psychopathology, but the mechanisms of why some people go on to develop psychopathology and why some do not, despite similar risk profiles, are poorly understood. Our aim was to investigate mechanisms that may explain this disparity in psychopathology between those who experience a similar number of stressful life events.

**Methods:** We used data from the age 9 (n=8658) and 13 (n=7423) waves of the child cohort of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study. We undertook mediation analysis using KHB path decomposition of the relationship between stressful life events at age 9 and psychopathology (internalizing and externalizing problems) at ages 9, 13 and persistently. Candidate mediators were self-concept, parent-child relationship, and hobbies at 9 and 13, and peer attachment at 13.

**Results:** Stressful life events were reported by 25.32% of age 9 participants. Stressful life events were associated with child and adolescent internalising and externalizing problems. In the multi-variate pathway decomposition, the significant mediators were parent-child conflict and self-concept. These accounted for 40.13% and 11.66% of the persistent externalising problems (indirect-OR:1.60, CI:1.38-1.86) and 14.73% and 4.97% of the persistent internalising problems respectively (indirect-OR:1.43, CI:1.27-1.61).

**Conclusions:** Self-concept and parent-child conflict explain half the relationship between stressful experiences and externalising problems in childhood and adolescence, and almost a fifth of the relationship with internalising problems. These provide targets for interventions to prevent adolescent psychopathology.

### Exposure to adverse home experiences and children's social competencies in peer relations

Sarah-Rose Whelan (TCD)  
Nicola Dalrymple (TCD)  
Lorraine Swords (TCD)

#### Session G, Stratocaster A&B

**Context:** The present study investigates the effects of early adverse home experiences on children's social and interpersonal competencies within the peer group. Adverse home experiences were defined as those involving parental conflict or separation, mental illness, drug or alcohol abuse, or a parent in prison.

**Method:** Data relating to children's social functioning (as assessed by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire), social self-concept (as assessed by the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale), and early experiences of adverse home conditions were gathered from the nine-year and thirteen-year waves of *Growing Up in Ireland* and subjected to the SPSS Process macro for mediation analysis.

**Results & Conclusions:** Results indicated how more exposure to early home adversity was associated with greater peer relationship difficulties and less prosocial skills at age nine and age thirteen years. These variables in turn were all significantly related to children's poorer social self-concept in early adolescence. Results are discussed in terms of future research efforts to explore the processes that might explain how difficult family circumstances can negatively impact upon a child's social skills, peer relations, and social self-concept.

## Session H: Stratocaster C

### Partnership dissolution after childbirth in Ireland: On the importance of pregnancy intentions

Thorsten Schneider (University of Leipzig)

#### Session H, Stratocaster C

Several theories frame childbirth as an event that can reduce partnership quality, generate work-family conflicts, intensify financial pressures, and increase separation risk. Commitment theory, for instance, states that if childbirth results from a deliberate decision, couples cope better with stressful situations, whereas unplanned pregnancies lead to increased conflict. The present study tests theories of separation in relation to pregnancy intentions on data from the study *Growing Up in Ireland*.

Transition rate models of parental separation nine months to five years after childbirth show higher risks of separation after pregnancies described as “somewhat” or “much too early” and even higher risks after “unwanted” pregnancies. These risk differences are partly due to socio-demographic and economic factors, which are not a consequence of the pregnancy but existed before it. Even after taking numerous details of the situation before the pregnancy into account, individuals with a planned pregnancy still have greater partnership stability, which is in line with commitment theory. Work on childbirth as a critical life-course event has argued that negative changes in relationship quality should increase relationship instability. There was hardly any support for this hypothesis. In addition, there was no support for the idea that problems faced by the mother in pursuing her career increase the risk of separation. These findings are inconsistent with the idea of birth as a critical event in the life course. In line with the family stress model, separation in Ireland is strongly related to financial pressures.

### Mothers' employment and the cost of childcare in Ireland

Helen Russell (ESRI)

Frances McGinnity (ESRI)

Seamus McGuinness (ESRI)

#### Session H, Stratocaster C

**Context:** The role of care for children is key to understanding gender differences in the labour market (England, 2005). The cost of childcare is frequently invoked as a barrier to maternal employment, but studies quantifying this effect are less common. OECD figures suggest that the costs of formal care for pre-school children in Ireland is amongst the highest recorded.

**Methods:** This study draws on three waves of the infant cohort of the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) Survey, to investigate childcare costs for children up to the age of five and how these costs influence their mothers' employment. We first describe the nature of childcare costs examining which families are paying the most on an hourly and weekly basis and as a proportion of household income. Secondly, using an instrumental variables approach and corrections to take account of selection, we examine whether higher levels of weekly childcare costs at wave 2 (age 3) is associated with reduced paid work hours at age 5.

**Results & Conclusion:** We find that on average families spent 12% of disposable income on the childcare for one child at age 3. This rises to 16% for lone parent families. We find that higher childcare costs are associated with a reduction in the paid hours subsequently worked by mothers. For example a 10% increase in costs is associated with 30 minutes less paid employment per week. While the effect is modest, it indicates that childcare costs act as a disincentive to the paid employment of mothers in Ireland, which has implications for both gender differences in employment and child poverty.

## Session H: Stratocaster C

### Large family, poor family? A comparative profile of children's material resources in the modern large family & implications for social policy

Megan Curran (UCD)

#### Session H, Stratocaster C

**Background:** Historically, large family size was a defining feature of a child's risk of material disadvantage. Countries with similar welfare state approaches, such as Ireland, the UK, and US, targeted social assistance accordingly, establishing cash programmes like child allowances to support families with multiple children. Demographic changes shifted poverty-related policy away from larger, two-parent households to smaller, lone-parent ones, but large families have not disappeared. Indeed, roughly one-quarter of children in the US (27%) and UK (25%) grow up in families with 4 or more siblings, and in Ireland, over one-third (37%) do. Missing the continued significant presence of large family size, and its effect on the spread and dilution of household resources, means researchers and policymakers alike may be missing a key influencer of children's economic security.

**Methods:** Using a child-centered measure of family size (sibling size), rather than women's fertility, this paper demonstrates that the proportion of children who live in large families has been long undercounted – and is misunderstood in terms of how they currently fare (the gap is one structured heavily by socio-economic status). A sample of children in middle childhood (11-13 years old) in census microdata (2014 US Current Population Survey) and child surveys (2011 UK Millennium Cohort and 2013 *Growing Up in Ireland*) are used to analyse the connections between socio-economic characteristics, income, poverty, and large family size.

**Results/Findings:** Part of a larger doctoral project, this presentation will focus on the findings of the first two waves of analysis: the social and income profiles of large families in Ireland, the UK and US, preliminary poverty findings, and policy implications.

**Impact/Outcomes:** This research revives interest in family size as a source of potential disparity among

children, and identifies cross-national family and social policy implications that follow a shift in how we measure family size.

### Psychological resilience during the Irish recession: Evidence from the *Growing Up in Ireland* study

Lee-Ann Burke (UCC)

#### Session H, Stratocaster C

**Context:** Extensive evidence points towards increased levels of poor psychological health during periods of economic depression. The GUI data provides an excellent opportunity to present Irish evidence of this relationship before, during and after the Great Recession both for children and their caregivers using the SDQ and the CESD-8 instruments present therein.

**Methods:** Firstly, we analyse the various psychological health trajectories before, during and after the recession, providing us with a description of those most likely to stay in good psychological health (as defined as 'normal' on the SDQ or 'not depressed' using the CESD-8) over the period. Secondly, econometric evidence of this is presented using probit and ordered probit panel data methods.

**Results:** Initial results currently show that although the (mainly female) primary care givers report higher levels of depression throughout the period, the persistence of depression is higher for (mainly male) secondary care givers. In addition, we can report high levels of statistical significance in the income proxy variables such as the ability to make ends meet and type of housing occupancy. The child's SDQ score is statistically significant for female caregivers.

**Conclusions:** Although the instruments measuring psychological health for children and adults are different, it is useful to compare the two groups using a variety of household variables that are naturally common to both groups. We can also see the significant influence on the child of the PCG psychological health and vice versa.

## Session I: Alhambra

### Physical activity parenting and implications for future interventions

Rhoda Sohun (University of Limerick)

Ciarán MacDonncha (University of Limerick)

Ann MacPhail (University of Limerick)

#### Session I, Alhambra

**Context:** Physical activity (PA) parenting research has increased over the past two decades. Findings from the Irish Sports Monitor (2017) recognise the important role that parents play in encouraging children to be more active, especially in relation to mothers encouraging and facilitating their children to participate in sport. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of PA parenting practices to children's PA and to make recommendations for future interventions.

**Methods:** A qualitative sample of 117 families were included in the study. Parents and children were interviewed using a multi method participatory approach and families were stratified by socio-economic status. The data was thematically coded to specific PA parenting domains as proposed by Masse et al., (2017) which were as follows: neglect/control, autonomy support, and structure.

**Results:** PA parenting practices of encouragement, involvement and facilitation were positively associated with structured sport activities. Co-participation was positively associated with children's unstructured PA. Mothers and fathers differ in their PA roles. Fathers from higher socioeconomic groups indicate the importance of facilitating PA for boys as a preventive effect against future health risk behaviours. Parents who modelled an active lifestyle adopted PA parenting practices that promote child PA.

**Conclusions:** This study identifies how Irish parents engage in PA parenting practices and complements the international knowledge base on how parents influence children's PA behaviour. Improving parents' knowledge of the variety of PA parenting practices they can adopt maybe a first step for effective PA parenting interventions

### Tracking the physical activity levels of the *Growing Up in Ireland* child cohort over eight years

Eoin McNamara (ESRI)

#### Session I, Alhambra

**Introduction:** Late adolescence is marked by a combination of health risks, including reduced levels of physical activity and increased prevalence of overweight. These issues are strongly associated with the risk of early development of many non-communicable diseases. This study aims to identify trends in physical activity in a large cohort of Irish children over 8 years of follow-up; identifying factors associated with reduced physical activity.

**Methods:** Longitudinal self-report physical activity data was gathered from the *Growing Up in Ireland* Child Cohort (n=6,039), a nationally representative group, at ages 9, 13 and 17 years. Total MET-minutes per week were estimated for all participants at all ages, and change in physical activity levels between wave 1 and wave 3 was calculated. Trends in overweight and obesity were also measured via repeated body mass index (BMI) measurements. Interactions between changing physical activity levels and BMI status were explored via linear regression, controlling for key socio-demographic covariates.

**Results:** Physical activity levels decreased from 1582 ( $\pm 570$ ) MET-minutes/week at age 9 to 1017 ( $\pm 597$ ) MET-minutes/week at age 13, a significant reduction for both males and females. PA levels fell further to 998 ( $\pm 612$ ) MET-minutes/week at age 17, significantly decreasing for females only. More than 20% of children were either overweight or obese, with rates increasing significantly with age for males but not females. Baseline physical activity and BMI levels were identified as predictors of physical activity decline in adolescence.

**Conclusion:** As expected physical activity levels in the *Growing Up in Ireland* Child Cohort decrease throughout adolescence. This is a complex issue, influenced by a wide range of factors. The trend can be partly explained by both initial physical activity levels and baseline BMI status, highlighting the need for interventions before adolescence.

## Session I: Alhambra

### Cross-generational trajectories in weight gain in Ireland

Mark McGovern (Queen's University)

Slawa Rokicki (UCD)

#### Session I, Alhambra

**Context:** Childhood obesity is a complex health issue with significant long-term health effects. Overweight and obese children are more likely to be obese as adults and to develop noncommunicable disease such as diabetes. However, there is relatively little evidence regarding how changes in parental weight influence changes in children's weight. Opportunities to compare objective anthropometric measurements longitudinally across generations are rare.

**Methods:** Using data from both infant and child cohorts of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study, we examine whether youth growth trajectories are associated with changes in weight status exhibited by their parents. We stratify our analyses according to baseline parental weight category, separately taking into consideration the sex composition of child and parent pairs. We employ a fixed effects regression approach which accounts for all time-invariant characteristics of families.

**Results:** In the infant cohort, the BMI category of parents at baseline predicts the change in a child's weight for age in future waves. The change in both mother's and father's weight is associated with children's weight trajectories, and is strongest for father-son pairs. However, once we adjust for unmeasured confounders this relationship is attenuated.

**Conclusions:** While BMI status across generations is strongly associated at baseline, weight gain and weight loss over time among children and parents are less clearly related. Parental weight gain can occur without any corresponding change in child weight.

### Childhood personality, psychological traits and weight status over time

Emer Scott (UCD)

#### Session I, Alhambra

**Objective:** To investigate the relationship between psychological traits and childhood obesity/overweight, and propensity to transition between weight categories over time. **Background:** Childhood obesity is a major public health concern. Psychological factors have been associated with overweight/obesity in adolescents and adults. However, there is less evidence regarding their role in childhood overweight/obesity. There is also uncertainty about the direction of these relationships, and whether psychological factors can predict weight change over time.

**Methods:** Secondary data analysis was conducted using the *Growing Up in Ireland* Child Cohort. Logistic regressions estimated the probability of being overweight and/or obese at age 13 and transitioning between weight categories, based on psychological characteristics measured at age nine. Predictor variables measured self-concept, temperament and psychological strengths and difficulties. Early life, family and socioeconomic circumstances were controlled for. Average marginal effects were calculated for all models.

**Results:** Happiness & satisfaction, sociability and shyness appeared to have small protective effects against obesity. They were also associated, along with activity, with a slightly reduced probability of transitioning into higher weight categories, while peer-relationship problems appeared to increase the risk. Emotional problems reduced the probability of transitioning out of obesity/overweight. However, in all cases the effect sizes were small and outcomes were more strongly associated with weight status at age nine and family factors such as parental obesity and education level. Family health behaviours appear to be particularly important in transitioning out of obesity/overweight.

**Conclusions:** There is limited evidence of a relationship between child psychological traits and weight status at age 13. Although some associations were found with subsequent obesity and transition between weight categories, the effects were not large and family factors were more important. Further research is needed to determine whether psychological factors become more important predictors of weight status and weight transitions in older adolescents with more autonomy over their health behaviours.



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