

BIGSSS-LIVES Winter School on Life Course

March 12-18, 2018

The [LIVES](#) Life Course Winter School is a one-week intensive program on life course research. Two interdisciplinary workshops (drawing from sociology, social psychology, life-span psychology, social demography, social policy) take place in small groups of 6 to 8 students. Three to four experts will lead each of these research workshops, with the aim of preparing collaborative articles through a process of learning by doing.

In 2018, the Winter School is jointly organized together with the Bremen International Graduate School in Social Sciences (BIGSSS), taking place in Bremen. Since 2015, BIGSSS has successfully organized intense courses with varying research foci from one of its [thematic fields](#). The aim of the BIGSSS summer (winter) school program is to support young social scientists by opening a cross-border dialogue on theoretical questions and methodological approaches to current matters of social science research.

The Winter School Program

Our joint winter school on life course studies has a specific design that differs from most of the other academic events of this kind: internationally renowned experts will lead two thematically different courses, with the aim of preparing collaborative articles through learning by doing. In a nutshell, the seven-day class represents all stages of a research process, heading towards a joint publication as a medium-term follow-up:

1. Firstly, based on the descriptions of the topical foci on the website, work groups of 6-8 participants plus faculty jointly investigate and define the topic of the workshop in more precise terms by reading pertinent papers selected by the organizers.
2. On this basis, the second step aims at a deepened discussion of possible hypotheses that will - or will not - structure the work with the available data.
3. The third day ('lab day') is dedicated to working 'hands-on'. Data and measurements are presented, worked with and discussed in the two workshops. In a joint session, preliminary results are made available to both work groups.
4. After having scrutinized data, the concrete topics of the research project/paper are defined. These topics flow into the essential research questions the publication/s will tackle.
5. The last two days are dedicated to working on the initial drafts of the collaborative articles plus finally agreeing upon a work-plan for the two groups on how to complete manuscripts in the immediate aftermath of the workshop.

Workshops

Workshop 1: Social networks, social participation and life transitions: a life course perspective

with Eric Widmer (Geneva University), Karin Wall (University of Lisbon), Rita Gouveia (University of Lisbon) and Marie Baeriswyl (Geneva University)

This workshop will explore the interplay between life transitions and changes in personal networks and social participation (for example to various kinds of associations). The pluralization of life courses that has characterized the experience of currently young adult cohorts has also affected those who are now retired or close to retirement. The occurrence and the timing of a variety of life transitions have increased in recent decades, making the family life cycle and traditional work-family arrangements less predictable and standardized than it once was.

This diversity of life trajectories has created additional challenges and contradictions in social networks and social participation. Individuals may have to adjust their personal relationships and social participations to their new life situation without having anticipated the need to do so. Additionally, members of their personal networks may also experience life transitions, which may have an effect on their relationships. In other words, social networks and social participations may be strongly interrelated with the way in which life transitions are experienced.

A focus on the transition to retirement will be proposed by the instructors, as such transition is expected to be associated with a major shift in personal networks and social participation, which still need to be better understood. Participants are invited to propose other life transitions to be considered.

The workshop aims to advance the empirical study of social networks and social participation in a life course perspective using novel longitudinal datasets made available by the LIVES program or other international datasets, such the Share data. Advanced multivariate quantitative methods will be used. The workshop readings, discussion and data analysis will provide a context for designing two to three papers that will be formulated during the workshop.

Workshop 2: How do values and political orientations develop across the life-span?

with Klaus Boehnke (Jacobs University), Regina Arant (Jacobs University), Maria Pavlova (University of Vechta) and Clemens Lechner (GESIS, Mannheim; *tbc*)

This workshop will explore the life-span development of value preferences and political orientations. Is it really the case that people's value preferences are more or less stable once people have become of age? Is the old folk wisdom really true that people become politically ever more conservative, the older they get? How does early-life political activism affect later-life psychosocial well-being? These are the three main questions addressed in the workshop.

The most influential political science value change theory, the approach developed by Ronald Inglehart in the 1970s, assumes that value preferences are acquired during the early years of life and depend—in their preference patterns—on the degree of need fulfillment during those years. If lower-level needs, as conceptualized in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, remain unfulfilled during those years, people will cherish what they lacked and will accentuate survival values. If basic needs are by and large fulfilled during these years, people will rather cherish self-expression values. Intrapersonal development is rarely addressed by researchers with an interest in value change. To fill this gap is the focal aim of the workshop. Does the value stability assumption really pertain? And how does it relate to the mentioned folk wisdom that political orientations are said to become ever more conservative across the life-span?

A further question addressed will be the one what effects political activism has on the later-life development of value preferences and political orientations. And how does political activism affect psychosocial well-being and happiness during people's later lives. It has been suggested that activism and volunteering affect mental health positively. At the same time it has been proposed that a good mental health is an indispensable prerequisite for political activism and volunteering. Can one shed more light on the causal direction of effects? This question will be addressed in the workshop as well.

The workshop aims to advance the empirical study of value change across the life-span using longitudinal (panel) datasets made available by the workshop leader or other international datasets, like the SOEP data set. The core data set will be coming from a study of some 200 early-age peace movement activists, who have been surveyed during their adolescent years in the mid-1980s and have then been followed every 3 ½ years in altogether 10 waves of data gathering. Latent growth modelling approaches will be used, as will be approaches from the tool-kit of repeated-measures ANOVA. The workshop readings, discussion and data analysis will provide a context for drafting two to three papers that will be formulated during the workshop.

Terms and Conditions

The LIVES winter school is targeted at Early Stage Researchers, i.e. graduating PhD students and PhD students who recently have graduated. Experienced MA students are also welcome. We encourage applications from all countries but may only consider candidates with a social science background working on questions related to one of the two workshops.

There is a 480 € program fee, covering accommodation, all academic events and leisure activities. Breakfast, lunch and snacks will be provided for all accepted participants of the winter school. Lodging at a hotel near the venue for the duration of the course is included for all accepted participants. Travel cost reimbursement can not be granted.

Participants will be asked to present proof of an international health-, accident-, and liability insurance that covers their stay in Germany for the duration of the winter school.

The winter school will start on March 12th, at 1.30 pm (pick up at Hotel 7Things). Therefore, we recommend that you arrive in Bremen on Monday, March 12th, at noon the latest. The program will finish on Sunday, March 18, at 4.00 pm. Please make sure to consider this when booking your train/flight home.

Application

1. Please apply by sending an e-mail including **the following documents** (Arial 12 pt, 1,5 lines spacing) to BIGSSS' Admissions and Administration Officer, HristinaGvozdenovic (life-course@bigsss-bremen.de): a letter of motivation (max. 2 pages), a CV including publications and academic/research experience (max. 3 pages) and a proposal of your current project, e.g. your MA thesis, an upcoming publication or your PhD thesis (max. 5 pages).
2. Please indicate the workshop you are interested in. During the winter school **you will be assigned to one workshop only**. All accepted participants stay with their group (except for joint activities).
3. The **application period** is open until **January 21, 2018**. Incomplete, **incorrect** and late **applications will not be considered**.
4. Please [send](#) your application in **one composite pdf**.