

# What's the point of multidisciplinary life course research?

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[www.eui.eu](http://www.eui.eu)





Volume 57

September 2023

ISSN 1040-2608

# Advances in Life Course Research

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Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)  
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CLIC project

## The Comparative Life Course and Inequality Research Centre

The Comparative Life Course and Inequality Research Centre (CLIC) studies how inequalities shape and are shaped over the life course. It is part of the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute.

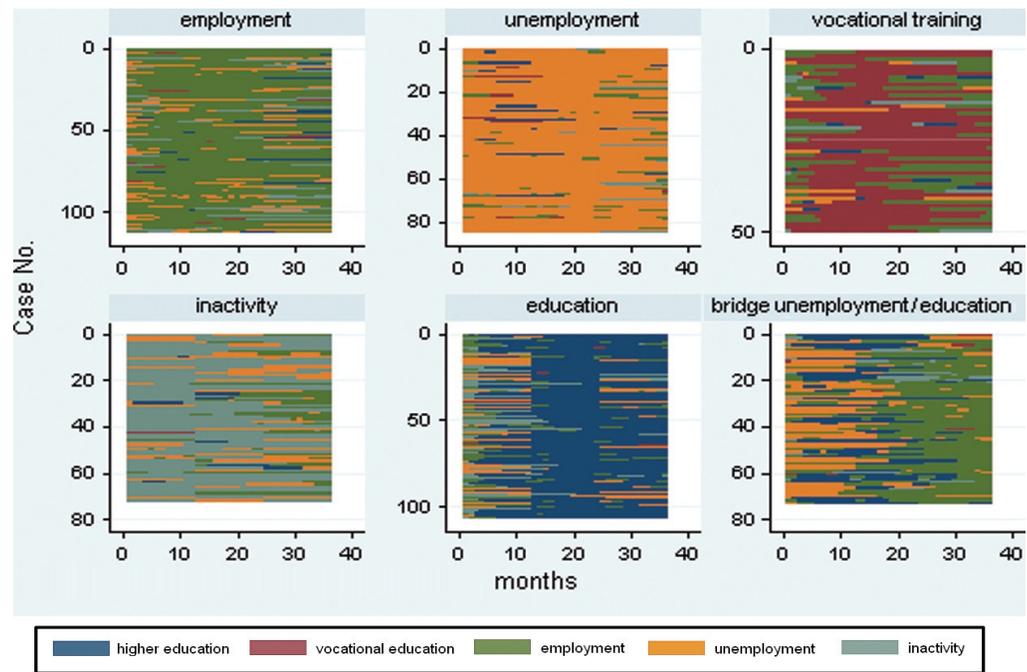
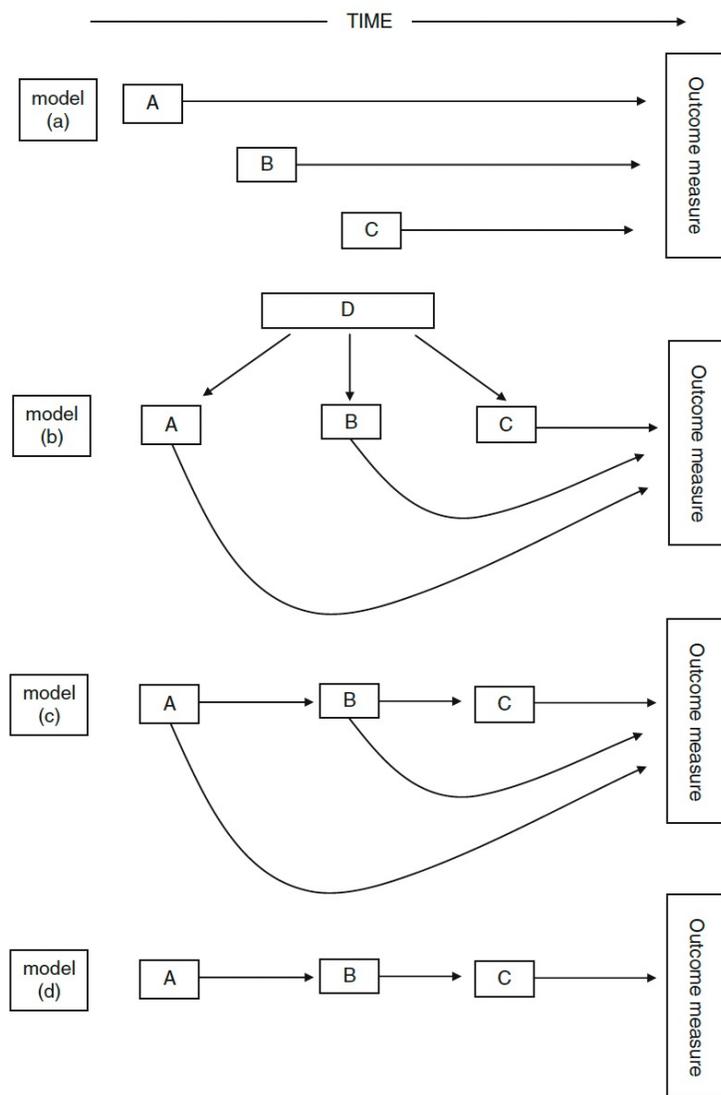
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UPS works in partnership with **FloPS – Florence Population Studies** – a collaboration agreement between the Department of Statistics, Computer Science, Applications "G. Parenti" (DiSIA) of the **University of Florence** and the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the **European University Institute**, for the development of joint research activities about population, life course and social inequalities.



# What is life course research?

- Explicit interest in temporality and development over human lives
- Not just “who we are?” but “how we became who we are?”
- Social and medical scientists have different interests and foci
- Yet common questions about change and development, life course stages, and long-term effects



**Fig. 40.1** Graphical illustrations of various life course models: (a) accumulation of risk with uncorrelated exposures, (b) accumulation of risk with correlated exposures, (c) chain of risk additive model, and (d) chain of risk trigger model (Taken from Kuh et al. 2003)

# What can you benefit from multidisciplinary?

- It is important for an early stage researcher to develop a disciplinary identity, but...
- Ideas, approaches and methods from neighboring disciplines
  - Low hanging fruit, many have built careers on this
- You can benefit from that too



itive advantage in seeing and developing good ideas.<sup>21</sup> People connected to groups beyond their own can expect to find themselves delivering valuable ideas, seeming to be gifted with creativity. This is not creativity born of genius; it is creativity as an import-export business. An idea mundane in one group can be a valuable insight in another. In our age of ready technology, people often make the mistake of thinking that they create value when they have an idea born of sophisticated analysis. That is not true. An idea is as valuable as an audience is willing to credit it with being. An idea is no less valuable to its recipients because there are people elsewhere who do not value it.<sup>22</sup> The certain path to feeling creative is to find a constituency more ignorant than you and poised to benefit from your idea. This is a familiar phenomenon in academic work (e.g., see Stigler [(1982) 1986] on the quick acceptance of his economic analysis of information, or Lamont [1987] on the popularity of Derrida's work in culture markets as different as France and the United States). We specialize by method, theory, and topic. It is impossible to keep up with developments in other specialities. It would be inefficient even if it were possible. So there is a market for the information arbitrage of network entrepreneurs, and the evidence of their work is that valuable new ideas in any one specialty are often a familiar concept in some distant specialty.

**Burt (2004):  
Structural holes and  
good ideas, *Am. J.  
Sociol.* 110(2): 349-99**

