ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Non-Technical Summary

A 1000 word (maximum) summary of the main research results, in non-technical language, should be provided below. The summary might be used by ESRC to publicise the research. It should cover the aims and objectives of the project, main research results and significant academic achievements, dissemination activities and potential or actual impacts on policy and practice.

The aims and objectives of the project

1. To provide a complete and accurate data set which identifies the zygosity of the twins on the NCDS and the BCS70
2. To use the data held on the twins in the NCDS and BCS70 to consider the relative importance of nature, nurture and peer effects in childhood on adult outcomes such as education, employment and earnings
3. To identify the relative importance of nature, nurture and peer effects on each adult outcome across the two cohorts and within the cohorts across time in order to assess whether there are differences between cohorts over time and over age within cohorts.

Main research results

The project was largely split into two pieces: The first was the collection of data from the twins of the National Child Development Study and the British Cohort Study 1970. This involved the designing of a survey instrument (questionnaire), the identification of the twins on the cohort studies, the distribution and collection of the questionnaire and the documentation and creation of the data set on twin zygosity. This process has produced a data set which will be made publicly available which identifies correctly the zygosity of the twins, that is whether they are identical or not. This data is available for 242 twins (121 twin pairs) on the National Child Development Study and 202 twins (101 twin pairs) on the British Cohort Study.

The second was the analysis using this data on the relative importance of nature, nurture and peer effects on educational achievement. For the most comparable measure of educational achievement on the two cohort studies, that of educational qualifications held at 33/34, the new twin zygosity data was used to consider role played in educational success of nature, nurture and peer relations. Peer relations were measured at age 10/11 based on two comparable questions of whether the child was in the top stream at school and if the child took part in sports and other organised activities outside of school. The results suggest that the nurture (or common environment) effects were the strongest impact on educational achievement, whilst nature (heritability) was often not an important effect and peer effects were basically...
non existent. No significant differences were found within cohorts or across cohorts suggesting that there was no relationship between the relative importance of nature, nurture and peer effects by age. The results highlight the importance of a good family background for educational success.

**Significant academic achievements**

This project is the first project undertaken exclusively by the P.I. Denise Hawkes. The award of the grant is in itself a significant academic achievement for this young researcher as is its successful completion. The process has taught the researcher much about the research process and herself which are valuable skills for her future research career.

**Dissemination activities**

The work from this project has been presented at one international conference and two domestic seminars. Further presentations are planned for this summer (2010).

In addition to formal presentations the P.I. has been very active in promoting this project and this has been aided by the use of the ESRC mini-web site for the project. This mini-website has raised the awareness of the project with other researchers, both academic and non-academic. The P.I. has had many enquires about the project and predicts many will access the data once it is deposited at the Data Archive. To ensure all are aware that the data is available an announcement to the cohort users is planned in the KOHORT magazine and an announcement will also be made on the ESRC mini web site for the project.

**Potential or actual impacts on policy and practice**

The strong nurture effects on education found in this project have the potential to have very large impacts on policy and practice. At this time of limited government resources and economic uncertainty there will be need for academic evidence to suggest the importance of policies aimed at promoting social mobility. These results could provide evidence of the need to provide additional support to those from disadvantaged background, such as Sure Start and additional funds for their education. Secondly the availability of these data will make it possible for other researchers to explore these issues using the cohort data.