

Nils Petter Gleditsch: A Lifetime Achiever

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Abstract

The Lewis Fry Richardson Lifetime Achievement Award is a triennial prize to honour scholars who have made exemplary contributions to the scientific study of militarized conflict. This essay presents the third winner of the award – Nils Petter Gleditsch – and commemorates on his scholarly achievements over the last four decades.

Keywords: Peace, Conflict, Award

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INTRODUCTION

Nils Petter Gleditsch is the third winner of the Lewis Fry Richardson Lifetime Achievement Award. The prize is awarded triennially to distinguished scholars who have pursued innovative avenues of research in the tradition of the eminent British meteorologist and peace researcher Lewis F. Richardson. The Award is co-sponsored by the ECPR's Standing Groups on Analytical Politics and Public Choice, International Relations, and Political Geography, and was presented at the 6th Pan-European International Relations Conference in Turin in September 2007. This essay commemorates the event and provides an overview of the many compelling reasons to give Gleditsch this award.

One can hardly imagine a more worthy winner of a prize bearing Richardson's name than Nils Petter Gleditsch. Richardson was a true idealist, and had strong normative views on politics, and especially on arms races. However, his scientific study of conflict and militarism was not guided by a desire to prove his convictions right but to uncover facts, and thereby help others reach better decisions. Richardson's main contributions are the creation of the scientific study of war and his mathematical models of arms races.

[Key quote 1 about here]

Gleditsch's work is similar to Richardson's in many respects. He has a solid normative foundation in the peace movement; he is firmly committed to the collection of

data; and he exerts an unyielding dedication to research on war and peace. Less well known, for both these great men, is their fascination with the measurement of international borders. However, whereas Lewis Fry Richardson lacked a proper research community, and much of his innovative research was lost for decades, Gleditsch has made a huge effort to ensure that the scientific study of armed conflict will remain vibrant after his retirement.

Despite his indisputable academic credentials, Nils Petter never obtained a doctoral degree. In fact, in 1970, he was one of three initiators of a campaign that aimed to persuade young scholars never to pursue a Norwegian doctoral degree (Forskere ved Institutt for Fredsforskning, 1970). According to campaign supporters, the doctoral degree was little more than an empty ritual reinforcing academic snobbishness; doctoral students were too old and too few, the work was an individualist and conservative exercise, and it often represented the end of a researcher's academic production, rather than the beginning. The campaign received much attention and support, and many of its supporters kept their promise never to submit a dissertation. Interestingly, the campaign did little to hamper their careers; all three initiators and many of the other signatories later became full professors. Nils Petter holds that many of the original eleven stated objections to the doctoral degree are still valid. Nevertheless, following the extensive reforms in the system for doctoral training in Norway, he now strongly encourages his students to pursue the degree.

Throughout his career, Gleditsch has worked within the field of peace research, with the persistent aim of producing knowledge that may ultimately relieve people from the sufferings of war. His success in doing so, however, is due to his persistent

commitment to high research standards. These can be summarised as the following ideals: transparency, empirical foundation, academic diversity, team building, and the publication and dissemination of results. Gleditsch's 'lifetime achievement' is not only that he has succeeded in fulfilling these ideals in his own research, but that he has succeeded in transmitting them to a wide audience. Indeed, his all-encompassing dedication to these qualities constitutes a recognisable cornerstone of the research environments he has built at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and related institutions.

We are honoured to present Gleditsch's wide-ranging academic production, praise his contribution to the *Journal of Peace Research*, and salute his influence on the peace research community at large.

SCIENTIFIC OUTPUT

Gleditsch's authorship spans several themes, languages, and decades, and it is no easy task to summarise his most important contributions within these few pages. However, some traits are persistent throughout his production. First and foremost, he is an empiricist: one will not find idle theory in his work.¹ Second, his pieces are very often short and to the point. While he has written several books, most of his production consists of articles, and his most cited works are all quite short. Third, his work tends to be relevant to the political issues salient at the time, which partly explains why his production spans such a wide range of issues.

Gleditsch started his career at PRIO as a research assistant, working on a project on non-violent resistance as a means of national defence (Gleditsch, 1965). During the

1970s and early 1980s, Gleditsch was primarily working on issues important in Norwegian public debate, such as nuclear strategy (Gleditsch, 1979), the peace movement and the methods of non-violent protest (Gleditsch *et al.*, 1971), the role of opinion polls in Norwegian politics (Gleditsch *et al.*, 1974), the debate on Norwegian membership of the European Economic Community (Gleditsch and Hellevik, 1973), issues of military intelligence (Gleditsch, 1976), and the hidden agenda of the public service (Gleditsch *et al.*, 1974). A long-time member of the Norwegian Labour Party, his voice was influential and sometimes controversial.

Always committed to disclosure, Gleditsch and co-author Owen Wilkes at one point assembled and published open-source pieces of information on US military intelligence installations in Norway (Wilkes and Gleditsch, 1981). Despite their complete and explicit avoidance of classified information, Gleditsch and Wilkes were tried and sentenced for a violation of national security for publishing the obvious conclusions to be drawn from the various bits of information. The bitter irony of the trial, presciently noted in the introduction to the book, is that any foreign citizen could freely and with impunity collect the very same information (and Soviet intelligence agents certainly had done so long before the book was published). The issue at stake was transparency – how a democratic country like Norway could defend a policy of military information-disclosure considerably less transparent than comparable countries, including the United States.

As the Cold War drew to an end, Gleditsch returned to issues of interest to a wider international audience. In the mid-1980s, he published a set of studies on the ‘peace dividend’ – studies of the likely welfare gains of disarmament (Gleditsch *et al.*, 1984, 1994; Gleditsch *et al.*, 1996). Starting with Gleditsch (1992), he became engaged in

research on the democratic peace. He has since published a series of articles on this issue as well as attracting a large number of articles relating to the more general issue of the liberal peace to the *Journal of Peace Research*, which he has served as editor since 1983.

Reflecting the increased attention to issues of international interest, his international reputation is mainly due to his more recent work. Three articles stand out: ‘Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset’ (Gleditsch *et al.*, 2002), ‘Towards a Democratic Civil Peace?’ (Hegre *et al.*, 2001), and ‘Peace and Democracy: Three Levels of Analysis’ (Gleditsch and Hegre, 1997), which had been cited 97, 87, and 72 times, respectively, by the time he received his award.² The conflict data feature is one of the most cited articles in *JPR*, and also among the most cited in the field of conflict research altogether (ESI Special Topics, 2007). The two latter publications represent complementary efforts to determine the effect of political systems on war behaviour, within and between states. Through careful theory development, innovative research design, and rigorous empirical analysis, these instant classics have helped to establish Gleditsch as a leading authority on the ‘democratic peace’, alongside the 2004 Richardson award winner Erich Weede (Weede, 1984; Schneider, 2005).

Another issue that has figured prominently in Gleditsch’s work relates to aspects of international interaction. A (former) pilot of private aircraft, Gleditsch, one should not be surprised to learn, paid particular attention in many of his earlier works to the influence of airline networks (e.g. Gleditsch, 1967, 1969, 1975, 1977). His contributions also cover interstate interaction more generally, exemplified by his article with J. David Singer (Gleditsch and Singer, 1975), which demonstrates the powerful inverse

relationship between inter-capital distance and the frequency of war – a finding that holds even in the era of globalisation (Buhaug and Gleditsch, 2006).

Gleditsch's academic interest in geography and conflict is not limited to issues of distance, however. In addition to recent publications on such diverse topics as transnational river flows (Toset *et al.*, 2000), international boundaries (Furlong and Gleditsch, 2003) – very much in the spirit of Lewis Fry Richardson – and precious natural resources (Gilmore *et al.*, 2005), Gleditsch has appreciably influenced research on environmental issues in armed conflict. His often-cited 1998 *JPR* article has laid the foundations for subsequent research on conflict and the environment. More recently, his attention has turned to the security aspects of climate change (e.g. Nordås and Gleditsch, 2007). He has edited two books on environmental conflict (Diehl and Gleditsch, 2001; Gleditsch *et al.*, 1997), and is the author of more than a dozen articles and book chapters on the topic. He has also been a member of an expert group on Environment and Conflict Prevention under the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP.

A dedicated positivist, Gleditsch has always adhered to rigorous, systematic methods. Following the tradition of his mentor Johan Galtung, he taught the introductory methods course in the Department of Sociology at the University of Oslo during his term as research fellow. His publications with Tord Høivik (Høivik and Gleditsch, 1970; Gleditsch and Høivik, 1971) focus on the presentation and interpretation of quantitative research – an important aspect of research dissemination that the literature is only slowly picking up today. Throughout his career, Gleditsch has actively encouraged improvement of measurements and research designs suitable for statistical analysis.

CITATION RATE

Nils Petter Gleditsch's impressive publication record has not passed unnoticed. In a recent assessment of the most important contributors to the literature on armed conflict between 1996 and 2006, Gleditsch is ranked as the top European scholar, and seventh overall.³ In the ISI Social Science Citation Index, Gleditsch has no less than 193 entries, including 38 articles, 146 book notes, 5 editorials, 1 letter, 2 reviews, and 1 correction.⁴ The 38 articles have been cited a total of 501 times and the editorials are cited 6 times.⁵

Gleditsch has a keen interest in the citation patterns of the *Journal of Peace Research* (Gleditsch *et al.*, 2003). In Table 1, we document the citation success of his work compared to the work of other researchers. We opted for a quasi-matching strategy, where we compared the citation frequencies of Gleditsch's 38 ISI-indexed articles with all other articles published in the same journal issues. The total number of articles in our sample is 228, spanning the years 1967–2006.

The dependent variable is the number of citations reported by ISI as of 1 September 2007. The independent variables are the number of pages (log-transformed); time since publication (first- and second-order terms in order to capture a non-linear relationship); a dummy variable indicating whether the article was co-authored; a dummy variable indicating whether at least one author is female; a dummy variable indicating whether at least one author has North American affiliation; and a dummy variable indicating whether at least one author is Nils Petter Gleditsch (NPG).⁶

Since the dependent variable is highly skewed to the right, we employ a negative binomial regression model, with variance estimates clustered on each journal issue. The results reported are in the form of incidence rate ratios (IRR), and should be interpreted

as: 'how many more (or fewer) times the given article is cited compared to an otherwise similar article with a value on the variable of interest one-unit smaller'

[Table 1 about here]

Model 1 is the baseline model. The NPG dummy variable added in Model 2 is very strong, indicating that an article written by Gleditsch is nearly three times more frequently cited than an article by his peers. Other interesting findings emerge from the analysis. In Model 1, being a North American author seems not to affect citation rates. Controlling for NPG in Model 2, however, North Americans turn out to be about 60 per cent more frequently cited than other researchers. At least within the 38 journal issues in the sample, Gleditsch's publications strongly raise the comparative performance of European social scientists. Although not statistically significant, the table also indicates that papers co-authored with Gleditsch are more frequently cited than papers by single authors or with other co-authors. This is particularly true for female co-authors. Both of these findings point to a defining principle in Gleditsch's work: the ability to spot and cultivate talent.

[Key quote 2 about here]

Another interesting feature of Gleditsch's authorship is shown in Figure 1. Citation rate is a function of many things, including age and reputation. Most researchers publish their most important work early in their careers, and their citation rate also tends to peak relatively early. Gleditsch is different. If we look at when his citations have arrived, we see that most have come in later years, with no fewer than 88 citations in 2006 alone. An overwhelming majority of these recent citations refer to work published during the last ten years.

One should not be misled into believing that Gleditsch's academic contribution is on the wane by the fact that several of his recent publications appear with the names of his co-authors first. Rather, this reflects Gleditsch's inherent generosity and sincere interest in helping his younger colleagues to move to centre stage.

[Figure 1 about here]

JOURNAL OF PEACE RESEARCH

After a brief period as editor in 1976-77, Gleditsch took charge of the *Journal of Peace Research* beginning with the 1983 volume. *JPR* was founded by Johan Galtung in 1964, and has since been owned by and edited at PRIO. When Gleditsch took over, *JPR* was a somewhat marginal journal. The journal's reputation in the early 1980s was heavily dependent on Galtung's articles from the 1960s and the early 1970s. Over the 25 years of Gleditsch's editorship, the journal has made its way to the core of international relations research. In the last few years, *JPR* has regularly been among the ten most cited journals in both the international relations and political science categories.

[Figure 2 about here]

Gleditsch brought about the resurgence of *JPR* through the same strategies that have guided his other activities: transparency, team-building, and hard work. He instituted the practice of sending all referee reports and the editor's decision letter to all reviewers as well as to the authors. The transparency of decision-making is much appreciated by both reviewers and authors. Although Gleditsch still makes a majority of the editorial decisions concerning *JPR*, he has invested much effort in building and coordinating the *JPR* editorial committee. The committee takes an active part in decision-making since most submissions are read by one of its members, and the associate editors

are given full responsibility for individual articles. Finally, the rise of the *JPR* owes much to Gleditsch's enormous capacity for work. Gleditsch has been willing to invest innumerable hours in guiding authors through revisions to realise their works' full potential, and *JPR* has been rewarded by a string of very influential articles. Young academics and non-native English speakers, in particular, have benefited from Gleditsch's careful editing.

Another indicator of Gleditsch's commitment to transparency is the fact that *JPR* has been an important vehicle in his drive for the publication of replication data sets. Since 1998, authors of *JPR* articles have been required to post online any data they use. These data sets are available from *JPR*'s web site. Gleditsch also initiated, with three other international relations journals, a joint replication statement issued in 2003, which has contributed significantly to moving the whole field forward on this matter.

[Key quote 3 about here]

Partly due to his role as editor of the *JPR*, Gleditsch has had an important influence over the development of peace research in general, and a significant portion of his publications is devoted to the academic field itself. He has been a persistent (and successful) advocate of transparent replication policies in quantitative research (cf. Gleditsch and Metelitz, 2003; Gleditsch *et al.*, 2003), a devil in defence of under-valued details (Gleditsch, 1996), a careful editor (Gleditsch *et al.*, 2002), and a prominent source of peace research history (e.g. Gleditsch, 1990; 2004).

THE PEACE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

When the Richardson award was first established in 2001, Nils Petter Gleditsch served as one of three jury members. This is but one example of the many ways in which he has been a central part of the Peace Research Community for over 40 years. As a student, Gleditsch served, in 1966, as president of the Norwegian Students' Association. He studied under and worked for several of the founding fathers of peace research, among them Johan Galtung, J. David Singer and Rudolph Rummel; he has served as an editor of one of the dominating journals in peace research; served on the editorial boards of a number of additional academic journals; served as director and fund-raiser of PRIO, and been a board member and advisor to several other institutes, most notably COPRI. The latest entry on a long and impressive list of appointments is President of the International Studies Association – which, along with the Richardson award, testifies to Nils Petter Gleditsch's lifelong commitment to peace research.

His role in building a strong peace research community in Norway is second to none. Gleditsch was appointed Professor II in the Sociology/Political Science department at the then University of Trondheim (now NTNU) in 1993, and soon started working with students on his newly established graduate course 'Causes of War'. The first result was the publication of an edited volume, *Det nye sikkerhetsbildet* ['The New Security Picture'] (Gleditsch *et al.*, 1998), and shortly thereafter a series of co-authored articles emerged. More than 40 graduate students in political science, sociology, economics, and history have been officially supervised by him, and many others have benefited from his informal supervision (See Appendix A1). A good number of his MA students have published their theses as articles, either alone (cf. Urdal, 2006; Østby, 2008) or in cooperation with Gleditsch (cf. Ravlo *et al.*, 2003; Sørli *et al.*, 2005). As an advisor, he

has been particularly successful in promoting talented female students, and he has in this way contributed towards bridging the gender gap in academia. This achievement is reflected in the fact that only three of his 16 multi-authored journal articles since 2000 do not include a female co-author.

Considering his explicit emphasis on teaching and supervision, it is noteworthy that he has never held a full-time position at a university. Instead, Gleditsch has remained loyal to PRIO and played an instrumental role in fund-raising (which of course has benefited his former students as much as PRIO). Recently, he played a major role in the establishment of the Centre for the Study of Civil War at PRIO. In all likelihood, none of the authors of this essay would be working at PRIO today had it not been for Nils Petter Gleditsch.

Notes

¹ A common misunderstanding, particularly in his own country, is that Gleditsch is oriented exclusively towards quantitative empirical work. That is not the case, as this review will show.

² Citation statistics as of 1 September 2007.

³ <http://esi-topics.com/armed-conflict/>

⁴ We might say 'Gleditsch *are*' since the SSCI automated Author Recognition system identifies 10 *different* authors named Nils Petter Gleditsch, reflecting the diversity of his production. In addition, Gleditsch is the author of numerous publications not listed in the ISI database.

⁵ As of 1 September 2007.

⁶ In the spirit of Nils Petter Gleditsch, replication data will be available at <http://new.prio.no/CSCW-Datasets/> upon publication,

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Key Quotes:

‘One can hardly imagine a more worthy winner of a prize bearing Richardson’s name than Nils Petter Gleditsch.’

‘...Gleditsch’s publications strongly raise the comparative performance of European social scientists.’

‘Another indicator of Gleditsch’s commitment to transparency is the fact that *JPR* has been an important vehicle in his drive for the publication of replication data sets.’

Table 1. Determinants of Citation Rate

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Age of article	1.003 (0.025)	1.007 (0.023)	1.007 (0.023)	1.009 (0.023)
Age, squared	0.996** (0.002)	0.996* (0.002)	0.996* (0.002)	0.996** (0.002)
# pages (logged)	2.015** (0.553)	1.992** (0.550)	1.976** (0.533)	1.971** (0.543)
Female Author	1.219 (0.458)	1.107 (0.352)	1.095 (0.349)	0.964 (0.318)
North Am. Author	1.127 (0.366)	1.616 (0.501)	1.609 (0.498)	1.589 (0.497)
Co-authored	1.252 (0.335)	0.951 (0.231)	0.908 (0.240)	0.970 (0.229)
NPG		2.866*** (0.732)	2.408*** (0.580)	2.255*** (0.649)
Co-Author X NPG			1.335 (0.613)	
Female X NPG				1.922 (1.094)
Constant	1.174 (0.922)	0.865 (0.709)	0.903 (0.727)	0.949 (0.792)
ln(alpha)	2.721*** (0.461)	2.547*** (0.426)	2.544*** (0.427)	2.531*** (0.430)
Log Likelihood	-579.65	-574.06	-573.95	-573.54
Log Likelihood null model	-594.78	-594.78	-594.78	-594.78
N	228	228	228	228

Figure 1: Number of citations of Gleditsch's work by year, 1971–2007

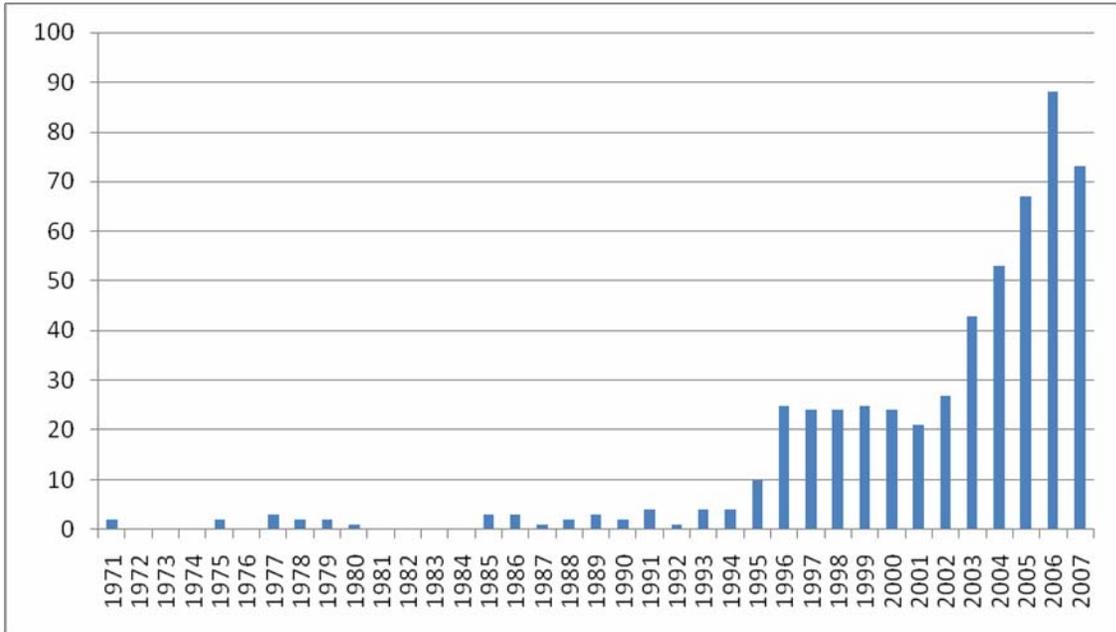
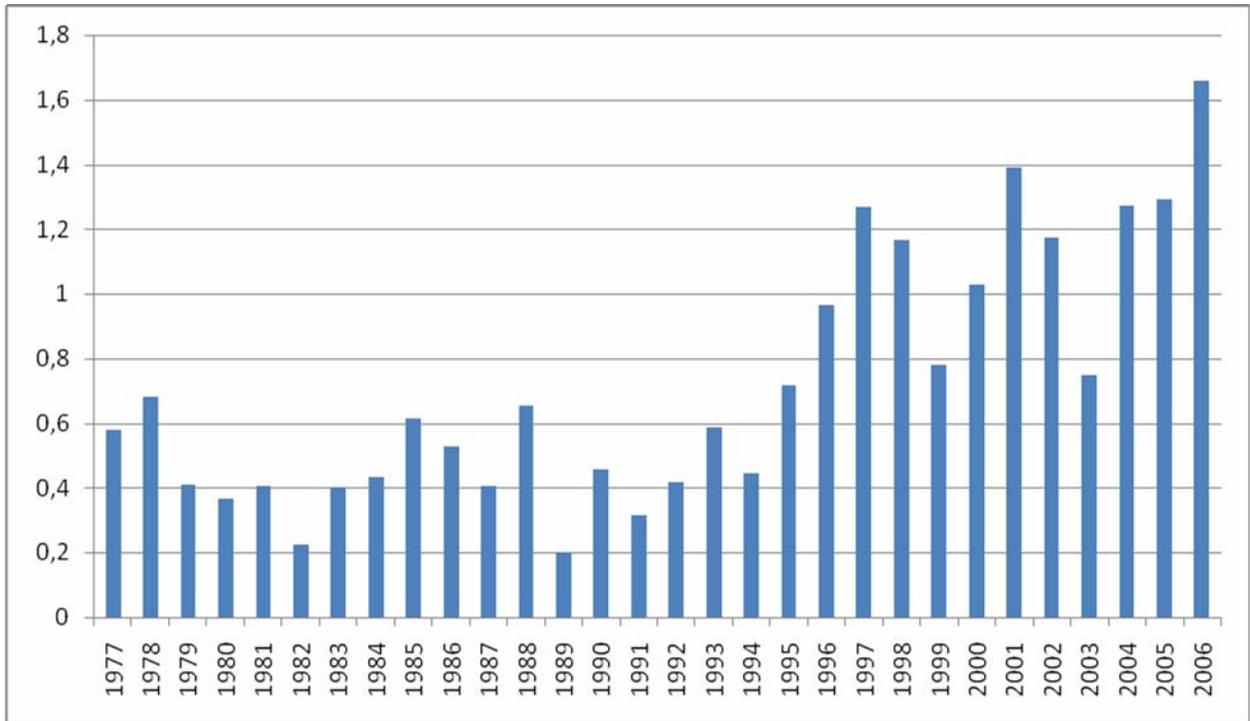


Figure 2: JPR Impact factor by year, 1977–2006



APPENDIX

Table A1. Students of Nils Petter Gleditsch

<i>Masters Students</i>		
Nils Ivar Agøy	Kirsten Hegsvold Andersen	Silje Arnekleiv
Magne Barth	Inger Guro Bendiksen	Helga Malmin Binningsbø
Halvard Buhaug	Arne Magnus Christensen	Lene Siljeholm Christiansen
Tanja Ellingsen	Rune Flessen	Tor Egil Førland
Ranveig Gissing	Kathrine Gylthe	Arne Halvorsen
Håvard Hegre	Ragnhild Hustad	Astrid Høiskar
Monika Jakobsen	Trine Kleveland	Arild Kroken
Tove Grete Lie	Kristen Nordhaug	Ragnhild Nordås
Christin Mørup Ormhaug	Hilde Ravlo	Kristen Ringdal
Siri Camilla Aas Rustad	Trude Saltnes	Anita Schjølset
Anny Skarstein	Katja H-W Skjølberg	Reidar Sliper
Roger Sjørdahl	Mirjam Sørli	Ole Magnus Theisen
Gunnar Thomassen	Anja Thoresen	Asbjørn Torvanger
Hans Petter Wollebæk Toset	Trygve Ulset	Henrik Urdal
Tarjei Vaa	Lars Wilhelmsen	Hilde Henriksen Waage
Gudrun Østby	Toril Aalberg	Morten Aasland
<i>PhD Students</i>		
Nils Ivar Agøy	Helga Malmin Binningsbø	Marit Brochmann
Halvard Buhaug	Tanja Ellingsen	Katja H-W Skjølberg
Henrik Urdal	Hilde Henriksen Waage	
<i>“Adopted” students</i>		
Håvard Hegre	Päivi Lujala	Ragnhild Nordås
Håvard Strand		