Although the author claims at the beginning of Chapter 4 that there is nothing unique about the methods used to collect data for longitudinal research, in fact there are some issues that make a difference and are discussed later in the chapter. In longitudinal research, data are collected on each variable for at least two periods, and this is one important distinction to cross-sectional data collection. Bias in sampling, which can be amplified by repetition in repeated cross-sectional design, is another example that Menard mentions (p. 37).

The author then discusses six more aspects that need to be taken into account when doing longitudinal research. When talking about the issue of changes in measurement over time he points out the danger of possibly destroying the utility of some data if other studies clearly discredit the hypothesis on which the research project is based. Although it may become meaningless to continue the research (hypotheses, variables, and measurements can, alternately, be shifted), it would mean that the two parts (before and after the shift) may not be comparable.

Menard's next comments focus on the attrition rate. To keep it low, it is crucial to maintain contact with the research subjects. Various ways in which to deal with this include contacting parents, schools, post offices, and so on, and Menard illustrates this approach using some practical examples. He also provides some basic instructions on how to handle missing data (p. 46) and discusses the advantages of using a control group to control for bias that may be connected with the repeated measurement and panel conditioning (p. 51). While I found that interesting, I felt a lack of detailed explanations when he was dealing with the issues of respondent recall and costs of longitudinal research.

Different methods and how they apply to differently combined numbers of cases and numbers of periods are discussed in Chapter 5, which provides a broad overview of analytical methods for longitudinal analysis. This chapter does not demonstrate in detail how to use each method. Instead, Menard focuses on the different types of research questions that may be addressed by longitudinal research and the different methods that may be used to answer them. He makes a distinction between and among various aspects, including a description of change versus causal analysis; qualitative versus quantitative analysis; and short-term versus long-term analysis. In the conclusion, Menard provides a very clear and lucid list of basic guidelines (p. 78), explaining when to use cross-sectional and in what situations to prefer longitudinal design.

The book is written in a clear style and includes concrete examples to help readers grasp the discussed themes. The content is well organised, based on detailed knowledge of the field, and supplemented with a comprehensive list of references, including descriptions of the methods of analysis that are accompanied by citations to sources that cover the given topics in more detail. What the book is missing is a list (overview) of the longitudinal surveys that are mentioned in the text, along with some of the basic characteristics of each, and a link to a Web page; this would have been useful for those readers who want to become more familiar with this field.

Josef Basl

Paul Starr: *Freedom's Power: The True Force of Liberalism*
New York 2007: Basic Books, 276 pp.

The Liberals Strike Back

Now the liberals are coming back in America. With the failures of the Bush administration, the victory for the Democrats in the 2006 Congressional elections, and the prospect of regime change in the 2008 Presidential elections, they are returning from exile

in the land of political silence and making their voiced heard again.

Their challenge is formidable. The American far right – a coalition of the rich, the Republican leadership, and assertive intellectuals – came seriously to power with Bush the younger and created a political machine of organisational strength and ideological coherence that is not going to let itself be dismissed without a battle. The ideological wing of that coalition has been crucial. In Europe we sometimes think that 'the neo-cons' have moved massively into positions of power, but they did no such thing. There is only a handful of them in important positions in the administration. Their job has instead been to provide ideological cover from the background, and they have done that so well and aggressively that the very word 'liberal' all but disappeared from political discourse, except as a term of abuse.

If the American left, such as it is, is to regain power it will not be enough to win an election. They must also reclaim the ideological initiative and explain why they should be trusted to rule and what they intend to make of America.

In *Freedom's Power*, Paul Starr – an eminent professor of sociology and public affairs at Princeton University and the editor of *American Prospect* – offers what amounts to a liberal manifesto. He sees liberalism as the great American, and British, tradition and he works his way through to 'a liberal project for our time'. He does that historically, tracing the roots of liberalism to the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688 and the American Revolution a century later. Out of those revolutions came the double idea of citizens' rights and rule of law, an idea that translates into an active but also a constrained state. With time, liberalism would embrace democracy and inclusive rights, but the core ideas have remained the same. Citizens, now all citizens, have rights. Upholding and protecting those rights rests on active government. Active government, however, is also dangerous to citizens and must therefore be held under control by legal and constitutional constraints.

That's the simple liberal vision, but some further assumptions follow. First, by having their rights honoured, people are likely to become good and productive citizens. Liberalism, therefore, is good for the economy and for progress more broadly. Second, by constraining state power, the state gains loyalty and legitimacy and can thereby act with strength. It is paradoxically constrained power that makes for strength. Liberalism is the stuff of a strong nation, also in international affairs.

These are exceedingly optimistic assumptions, but, says Starr, the evidence is in their favour. Liberalism works and its agenda is to put this magic to work again to counter the misery a misguided right has brought on America.

Ideologically, the liberal project could be argued along one of two lines. Liberals could put citizens first and sell liberalism for its ability to give everyone security, to promote equality, to eradicate poverty, and so on. In this case the strong state and nation would be the instrument for social goals.

Or it could make the strength of the state the ultimate promise, in which case the honouring of citizens' rights and the promotion of well-being and equality becomes more a means towards the purpose of state power.

In America, with its vast and growing economic inequality, its exploited middle class, and its persistent poverty, one might think the first alternative the most attractive one. But Professor Starr falters on the second line of argument. What he thinks may light a fire in the liberal soul is less the inclination to do good for middle class citizens and those in need than the desire for American power. His liberal project is in the end feeble as far as practical policies go: