Welfare to work, welfare dynamics and uncertainty

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Contents

Declaration of original work

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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Abstract

The publications in this thesis combine economic and social research in three principal areas: (a) the evaluation of welfare activation programs; (b) the study of welfare dynamics and (c) the study of intergenerational changes in labour market transitions.

Activation programs, such as job search initiatives, have come to define public policy in the last three decades. The aim of bringing together the three research areas is to reflect on activation in light of empirical evidence of increasingly fragmented personal biographies. This fragmentation, itself associated with more diverse labour market opportunities, choices and experiences, challenges notions of universal programmatic solutions to unemployment and social need.

Welfare activation signalled not only the emergence of a new social and economic policy paradigm, but also a resurgence of an understanding of human behaviour as innately deviant, yet also deeply rational. This understanding assumed that providing welfare had unintended behavioural consequences, as individuals, in a rather calculated manner, *chose* to become 'welfare dependent'. Such behaviour threatened to undermine or negate public policy. In the view of public authorities and the academic community, this called for new behaviourist interventions, which, in welfare policy, resulted in the increased conditionality of welfare payments.

In sociology, the debate about the rationality of human behaviour ensued in the shadow of an emerging sociology of risk (Beck 1992, Giddens 1998). Intellectual debate about the relationship between societal structure and individual agency (Archer 2003) questioned the extent to which an individual can have agency (is 'free') to negotiate structural obstacles. The answer to this empirical question affects our comprehension of the scope for welfare activation, as the latter builds on personal capabilities that can only be assumed to the extent that agency is empirically validated and practically facilitated (Sen 1985).

With respect to activation policy, the publications in this thesis review the impact of activation policies in the United Kingdom and the USA. The objective of that research is to determine the effectiveness of the new, activating social policy in increasing employment and reducing welfare receipts. The studies find often small, but typically statistically significant impacts of welfare activation programs in the US and the UK. They also highlight variations in impacts between populations and effects of local environmental factors, such as unemployment rates.

With respect to the study of social dynamics, the publications' objective is to ascertain the extent to which welfare dependency is a fixed state rather than in flux, and to understand the

perceptions and welfare experiences of a particularly marginalised group of people who (need to) rely on welfare: substance users. The studies find that people churn between welfare statuses; substance users display an optimistic determination to return to work.

On intergenerational change in labour market transitions, the studies' objective is to examine how transitions from education in work have changed in the last half century. They also seek empirically to assess the validity of the thesis of risk society theory of escalating uncertainty. The emerging evidence supports the uncertainty thesis; the evidence shows that achieving job aspirations has become more difficult.

The findings' relevance to constructing an 'enabling' welfare system, which incorporates labour market activation as a positive, rights-based facilitator, is discussed in a concluding section on future research directions.

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1. Contextual statement

1.1. Aims underpinning the publications

The publications submitted as part of this thesis evaluate labour market activation policies in the United States (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK), and explore concurrent social change during the period from the mid and late 1990s to the early 2010s. Significant societal shifts occurred during that period as social and economic policy adjusted from an essentially Keynesian position and a demand side orientation to monetarist or supply-side economics focused on stimulating investment and growth through consumption (e.g. via tax cuts) rather than (via subsidising) production (Minsky 2008).

Emerging labour market activation policies exemplifying this shift assumed a new understanding of human behaviour that was based on economic rational expectations. The lack of forthright recognition of economic rationality in human behaviour, in the view of the proponents of this new political and economic agenda, undermined conventional Keynesian demand management policies. It was argued that this rationality sometimes had unexpected and undesirable outcomes, such as crime (Becker 1968) or welfare dependency (Mead 1986). Activation promised to provide tools to channel the behaviour of those receiving welfare into politically desirable directions through support (e.g. job search assistance), incentives (e.g. in-work benefits, such a Tax Credit), but also the threat of sanctions (e.g. suspension of social security benefits in cases of non-compliance with prescribed activities).

Activation policy also re-conceptualised the role of the state and, specifically, the role of welfare policy. Social need and political expediency had encouraged nation states to provide social welfare since about the mid-19th century. In recent decades, however, governments have increasingly found it difficult to sustain economic growth, ever more fearing a spectre of 'welfare dependency' as an unintended, yet rational, outcome of the provision of a welfare safety net (Gough 1979). As these tensions threatened to undermine internal political legitimacy (Hirsch and Roth 1986; Jessop 2002), Western democracies scaled back their liberal democratic projects and turned towards directing and sanctioning their citizens' behaviours (Dean 2000, Lessenich 2006). 'Activating' welfare policy now aims to steer those who are not financially self-sufficient and draw state benefits towards paid work (Lodemel and Trickey 2000). The receipt of income-maintenance payments is made conditional on participation in activation programs, whilst non-compliance is typically sanctioned through the suspension of welfare payments.

In sociology, the debate about the nature of human behaviour ensued in the shadow of an emerging sociology of risk and uncertainty (Beck 1992, Giddens 1998, Lupton 1999) and a

deepening debate about the relationship between societal structure and individual agency (Archer 2003, King 2010). One aspect of the debate that is specifically relevant to the current exploration has been the question of the extent to which an individual is capable of building his or her life proactively ('reflectively', according to Giddens) as opposed to reactively ('reflexively', in Beck's terminology); and the extent to which, in doing so, the individual has agency (is 'free') to negotiate structural obstacles.[1] The answer to this question affects our comprehension of the scope for welfare activation, which requires personal capabilities that can only be assumed to the extent that agency is empirically validated and practically facilitated (Sen 1985).

The publications included here connect the field of public policy, which is largely rooted in economic thinking, and the field of sociology through research conducted in three areas: (a) the review and evaluation of welfare activation policies; (b) the study of welfare dynamics using secondary data and in-depth case studies, and (c) the study of intergenerational changes in labour market transitions. The thesis thus brings together empirical sociological enquiries into the nature of societal change and economic impact studies of activation policy that is embedded in these social processes.

With respect to (a), the research examines the effectiveness of measures designed to activate marginalized groups in the USA and the UK, focussing on single parent families. This also includes some methodological explorations, applying, as far as the author can determine, for the first time, meta-analysis to the evaluation of welfare policy. The principal objective of this research is to assess the effectiveness of the activating social policy.

For (b), secondary data are analysed with a view to exploring the persistence of social marginalisation (poverty and material deprivation) and, by adding in-depth qualitative interviewing, the specific challenges of assisting one particularly marginalised population, substance users, transitioning from welfare into work.

As regards (c), the sociological explorations study intergenerational changes in order to understand behavioural and attitudinal change over time. The primary objective here is to empirically assess the validity of the thesis of risk society theory that life course transitions have become more uncertain and that current generations experience more differentiated trajectories than previous generations did. This is done, typically, with reference to changes in the labour market in the UK. However, the studies also inspect expected and actual school leaving ages, and partnership formation. This work combines quantitative and qualitative research methods, including matched parent-child interviews.

[1] In some instances, the capacity to negotiate structural obstacles resurfaces as unintended consequences of public policy, such as the rise in property prices in the vicinity of desirable schools as resourceful parents move into school catchment areas in order to increase their children's chance of admission (Nellis and Glen 2011).

The three sets of investigations are closely related. Welfare activation is a response to concerns about the risk that recipients of state benefits get locked into 'life on welfare'. In devising interventions to counter this risk, activation assumes that individuals (typically, jobseekers) understand, project and are capable of (successfully) constructing career pathways. Street-level bureaucrats who implement and enforce activation programs function as motivators, providing support and advice, and applying the threat of sanctions in the event of program participants' non-compliance. This concept of human capability assumes a linearity and predictability of career trajectories.

The sociological explorations of welfare dynamics and intergenerational change test the assumption of people becoming locked into welfare (and, thus, into life outside the labour market) and also the assumption of the predictability of career trajectories. They show the boundaries and limits of both: on the one hand, people churn between welfare statuses; on the other hand, (young) people are increasingly diverted from their intended career paths and also (are forced to) adjust other aspects of their life courses.

The contextualisation of the contributions assembled here commences with a review and meta-analysis of relevant policy evaluations (Items 1 and 2). This is followed by a discussion of studies drawing on secondary data analyses to explore the social conditions of marginalized or at-risk populations (Items 3 and 4). The commentary concludes with a presentation of the empirical sociological contributions on risk, social change and labour markets (Items 5 to 7).

The thesis includes references to some critical sociological and economic concepts. These are briefly outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Sociological and economic concepts

Keynesianism/Keynesian economics

Keynesianism (or Keynesian economics) refers to the economic theories proposed by the British economist John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s (Keynes 2007, Skidelsky 2009). Unlike his peers in classical economics, Keynes doubted national economies' capability to adjust to crisis quasi automatically and thus to restore full employment through a downward adjustment of wages. He argued that employment would not be created while demand for goods and services remained low (as a result of depressed consumer spending and declining earnings). During economic crisis, when consumer spending, business investment, and exports of goods and services are all depressed, Keynes believed, governments should increase spending in order to stimulate economic activity.

Economic rationalism

Economic rationalist approaches attempt to explain economics as outcomes of rational decision-making (or: choices) and behaviours. This rationality is an expression of individuals' self-interest in maximising their happiness and the pleasure they gain from the choices they make. Rational choice theory has also been applied to social phenomena (Becker 1976; Coleman 1990). It has however also been criticised for relying on unrealistic assumptions of complete information, unconstrained choice and a human capacity to correctly identify and choose the most 'rational' of available options, while failing to adequately account for social norms and collective action (Eriksson 2011; Kahnemann, Slovic and Tversky 1982).

Sociology of risk

The sociology of risk describes a strand on modern sociological theory that seeks to understand society and social phenomena from a perspective of increasing diversity (e.g. individualisation) and transgression or abandoning of old social, cultural and environmental boundaries (e.g. globalisation, detraditionalisation) (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994; Beck 1999). The two coincide with (and may indeed contribute to) an equally growing unpredictability of the outcomes of societal changes, social relations and trajectories. There is no single agreed definition of risk sociology, and proponents have applied (and sometimes integrated) concepts of risk with, for instance, Foucauldian notions of governance; cultural theories of environmentalism, technology and ecology; or sociological enquiries into thrill seeking (Zinn 2004).

Capability approach

The capability (sometimes also: capabilities) approach is both a welfare economic and philosophical construct that has been proposed to assess individual well-being and the institutions and social (welfare) arrangements that (may) make this wellbeing possible. While the idea and concept can arguably be traced back to early students of social change, in its modern form, the capability approach has been developed most prominently by Amartya Sen (1980). In refining the capability approach, Sen seeks to break away from welfare economics' undercurrent of utilitarianism and to incorporate non-utilitarian principles for the development of indicators of well-being (Robeyns 2011).

2. Review of field of knowledge, and links between publications

2.1. Background

In the mid-1990s, the publication of the OECD Jobs Study (1994, 1995) announced the quest for activation in welfare policy on a global scale. Originally commissioned by the European Council of Ministers and reviewing labour markets and labour market policies in the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia as well as a range of European countries, the OECD concluded that structural, essentially deregulatory policy reforms were needed to help stagnant European economies to return to growth.

The review's recommendations included strengthening active labour market policies to help jobseekers into work (notably through targeted job and job search training) in lieu of passive programs that helped jobseekers manage their unemployment (notably through social security payments) or bridged periods of unemployment with typically off-the-job training programs. It also proposed that governments reform unemployment and related benefit systems "such that societies' fundamental equity goals are achieved in ways that impinge far less on the efficient functioning of labour markets" (OECD 1996, p. 6). In subsequent years, active labour market policy became increasingly tied to the use of incentives (e.g. attendance and retention bonuses, in-work tax credits) and disincentives, including sanctions for non-compliance with active job search conditions linked to the receipt of '*passive*' welfare benefits. This conditionality now constitutes the foundation of welfare *activation*.

The OECD's positions on the underpinnings of '*efficiently functioning*', that is, growth-stimulating labour market policy has been widely criticised (e.g. Dostal 2004) and the organisation itself retracted or revised some of its original recommendations in a subsequent progress review (OECD 2006). Irrespective of these corrections, the OECD's study had already become a widely accepted guide for active and activating labour market policy in Europe. It was particularly well received in political circles in the UK. The original Jobs Study had held up the UK as exemplar because of its *flexible* labour market following industrial relations reforms and resultant de-unionisation of large sections of the economy in the 1980s.

Although largely formulated in the abstract and lacking concrete validations of the effectiveness of active labour market policies, UK policymakers read the Jobs Study as confirming the efficacy of the country's labour market reforms. Subsequent OECD reviews that incorporated early policy evaluations (e.g. Fay 1996; Martin 1998) further strengthened this belief (Cebulla 2005).

Quantitative social security data analysis and social policy evaluation gained momentum in the UK of the 1990s as the then Conservative government sought an empirical (ex-post) validation for means-testing the receipt of Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) after six rather than the

traditional 12 months of receipt (e.g. Bottomley, McKay and Walker 1997). JSA was introduced in 1996 as the new unified social security benefit for working age but unemployed or inactive adults following the merger of income support assistance and unemployment benefits. Means-testing benefit receipt sooner was thought to help to trigger earlier job seeking through the prospect of benefit reduction. The trend towards greater scrutiny of public policy continued after the arrival of 'New Labour' in government in 1997, which, more so than its predecessor, stressed the importance of evidence-based policy making.

The most robust empirical evidence of the impact of active and activating labour market[2] policy at the time, however, had not been assembled in the UK, but in the USA. There the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1981 had authorised states to require the unemployed or economically inactive to participate in mandatory job search, training and work experience programs in exchange for welfare payments (Wiseman 2000). Rather than applying a federally dictated, uniform approach, states were allowed to experiment with their own models of intervention in exchange for a commitment to evaluate their initiatives. In the early years following the Act, innovative welfare activation measures remained the exception rather than the rule (Gueron and Pauly 1991). But experimentation picked up in the mid- to late-1980s, and the emerging evidence was noted outside the US, also raising interest in the UK in learning from the US experience.

As case study evidence on the effectiveness (e.g. Hasluck 2000) of welfare activation (now also often interchangeably referred to as *welfare to work*) began to emerge, Lodemel and Trickey (2000) and Evans (2001) provided the first thoroughly comparative, if still largely case study-based review of European and US approaches to activation. Lodemel and Trickey (2000) profiled the political evolution of welfare to work programs in Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, the UK and the USA, and focused on the analysis of policy reform and welfare institutional structures. Evans (2001) examined local *welfare to work* initiatives in New York City, the Paris suburb of St Denis, Hamburg and Amsterdam to write an account of the evolution of welfare reforms and the localised effects rich in detail and context. Contrasting local "policy maps" and "claimant reservoirs" in his four case study locations, Evans used aggregate statistics and evidence of impact to derive recommendations for welfare to work policy practice in Great Britain. He found marked differences in activation policies:

> "the Dutch…invest the most in social and work rehabilitation on those with the greatest distance from the labour market. US practice is moving to cope with the reality of long-term, hard-to-serve populations who are increasingly seen as legitimate recipients of cash help and services. German work reintegration programs are now being refocused on the unemployed with long-term illness and other barriers to work." (Evans 2001, p. 60)

Evans concluded that welfare to work policy ought to be "dynamic" and "should not fixate on a

[2] In the context of activation, *welfare* and *labour market* activation are used interchangeably in this submission.

single transition at a given point of time" (ibid.). The evidence available to Evans did not permit robust conclusions as to the effectiveness of welfare to work interventions themselves, although it led him to suspect that, ultimately, the impact of welfare activation on the employment, self-sufficiency and financial wellbeing of former welfare recipients was rather limited.

At the same time as Lodemel and Trickey (2000), and Evans (2001) conducted their respective studies, the research team of Walker (as chief investigator), Ashford, Cebulla and Greenberg, based at Loughborough University, England, and the University of Maryland Baltimore County, USA, was assembling a new and innovative database containing *all* experimental US American and Canadian welfare to work program impact evaluations known at the time. Applying random assignment designs, these program evaluations measured impacts based on the most robust method available to policy evaluation (Card, Ibarrarán and Villa 2011). The researchers used these data to estimate the combined impact of the North American programs, controlling for variations in program content, population and locational characteristics. The research provided the first quantitative impact assessment of some of the most developed welfare to work programs in post-industrial welfare states. It showed that welfare to work programs increased earnings and reduced welfare receipt, if only by small amounts and with decreasing effect over time. Financial incentives were found to have been most effective.

2.2. Reviews of policy and meta-analyses (items 1, 2)

The study by Walker, Cebulla, Ashford and Greenberg, published in 2005 as Cebulla et al. (2005) brought together a historical account of the political evolution of activation policy in the UK, alongside a review of existing evaluative evidence of UK interventions (**included as item No. 1**, **Cebulla 2005**). Its main focus, however, was the meta-analysis of US and Canadian welfare to work evaluation conducted between the early 1980s and late 1990s. In total, this initial meta-analysis estimated the aggregate impact of 24 mandatory US programs directed at persons in receipt of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the then main public cash assistance program for one and, sometimes, two parent families in the United States. The programs had favoured varying approaches to encouraging welfare to work transitions, typically emphasising work placement over training, or training over work placement. Some programs focused on basic education, others on vocational training. Some programs mandated participation in typically short job search activities; others required course participation extending over several weeks. All programs also applied sanctions for non-compliance; however, the extent to which sanctions were in fact applied varied, and this variation was also recorded as part of the meta-analysis. The diversity of programs was captured in the database that was constructed for the study. The meta-analysis estimated the typical impact of the mandatory programs on the earnings of the participants and on changes in the share of AFDC recipients amongst them, finding them positive but modest in scale, declining after about three years, and highly variable across populations.

Other main findings from this study, many of which were confirmed in subsequent studies, were that client mix, that is, the characteristics of program participants, and the economic and social conditions in the program sites, were statistically significantly associated with overall program impacts. In particular, belonging to the white majority population, and low area unemployment (and hence, high local demand for labour), but also high area poverty rates increased program impacts. Finally, the meta-analysis demonstrated that even seemingly basic job search-based programs came at a price. More ambitious programs that provided positive net benefit costs *to society* (including the program participant) often yielded lower net benefits *to government* because of higher upfront and recurrent investment costs. The most effective, but also most costly programs were those offering financial incentives to the take-up of paid work.

The findings were further confirmed in Greenberg, Cebulla and Bouchet (2005, **included as Cebulla and Greenberg, 2006, item No. 2)**. This study was commissioned by the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as an extension to the original data collection and meta-analysis. It extended the welfare to work database to include experimental evaluations for four more mandatory and seven new voluntary programs, and updated impact records for evaluations already in the database. The seven voluntary programs included two conducted in Canada, which were excluded from the study as it focused on the US. One further US study was also excluded because its evaluation had encountered technical problems, which adversely affected the reliability of its findings.

The latest database also included new impact measures, namely records of changes in the behaviour and emotions of children whose parents took part in welfare to work programs. Only seven of the 35 evaluated programs recorded child outcomes, which were generally found to be small and highly variable. The five voluntary US programs proved too few to allow the robust estimation of impacts at the time.

While both meta-analyses reported on US evaluations, the first study in particular emphasised its relevance to UK welfare reform policy, which drew heavily on the US experience. A number of *New Deal* welfare to work programs had already been initiated in the UK. The two largest of these were the (mandatory) New Deal for Young People (NDYP), which sought to connect unemployed people under the age of 25 with paid work, and the (voluntary) New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP), targeting workless one-person households with children. In addition, all jobseekers claiming welfare benefits for six or more months were required to attend mandatory Work-Focused Interviews (WFI) designed to monitor and enforce the job search activities of unemployed people. Other innovations included in-work tax credits, which, also inspired by policy developments in the US, were introduced in the UK as part of a drive to 'make work pay'.

Cebulla, Flore and Greenberg (2008) subsequently systematically reviewed and assessed the

effectiveness of welfare reform programs directed at lone parents in the UK based on the combined, available research evidence. Although comparisons were occasionally hampered by evaluations having estimated impacts on different populations (e.g. parents of children of different ages), the review found consistent and compatible evidence of the effectiveness of the main welfare activation approaches, that is, the NDLP and WFI (including so-called Review Meetings, conducted six months after the initial WFI), and the in-work Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC). UK evaluations typically examined program impacts in terms of (sustained) employment and benefit exit. As in the case of the US evaluation meta-analysis, this review found impacts varying across participants and, ultimately, decreasing with time. Variations of note included greater impacts for *stock* than *flow*, that is, for people already in receipt of social security (sometimes for some considerable time) before entering the relevant schemes under investigation; and for parents with very young children. Overall the NDLP impacts on benefit exits (estimated to have been between 20 and 25 per cent) were much higher than reported for the US evaluations included in the meta-analysis. The difference may have partly been explained by the fact that, in the UK, the program was voluntary. This made it likely to attract individuals who were more motivated to (re)enter the labour market and who were possibly also more work-ready. Employment impacts, however, were much lower especially when more stringent definitions of *sustained* exit from benefit and *sustained* entry to work are adopted, thus discounting temporary movements between statuses ('churning'). Such estimates suggested that, over a two year observation period, the NDLP increased the employment rate among participants by about 4 percentage points (to about 59 per cent) when compared to non-participant lone parents with otherwise similar characteristics.

Around the time of the publication of these studies, various other authors added and diversified the evidence on the effectiveness of welfare reform programs in the UK and the USA. Hasluck and Green (2007) reviewed the then available evidence on 'what works' in terms of welfare to work interventions in the UK for participants in the mandatory New Deal for Young People (NDYP) and New Deal for Long-Term Unemployed People (ND25plus), and the voluntary New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) and New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP), as well as various other special groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, older people, partners of benefit recipients). Their largely qualitative assessment noted the diversity and the dynamics of the client groups, which made a 'one size fits all' model unlikely to succeed. The authors pointed to the importance of motivated and skilled personal advisers working with client groups, without distractions caused by key performance targets. Cyclical and geographical variations in the potential of program success were also noted.

Stafford et al. (2007) drew together evidence from the long-term evaluation of the UK New Deal for Disabled People, which encouraged people in receipt of incapacity-related social security benefits to engage with Job Brokers to return to the labour market. The evaluation was conducted between July 2001 and November 2006. The authors concluded that, although the take-up of NDDP was generally low (about 3 per cent of the eligible population), the

program increased employment and decreased social security benefit receipt amongst participants. It was also found to be a cost-effective program.

The mandatory UK New Deal for Young People (NDYP), which targeted people aged 18 to 24 who had been claiming social security benefit for six or more months, was found to lead to more and earlier benefit exits, but not necessarily to increased employment (Beale, Bloss and Thomas 2008). Further analysis by McVicar and Podivinsky (2010) showed that the NDYP worked better in areas of lower unemployment, thus echoing findings reported in Cebulla et al. (2005) for the USA with respect to the importance of area characteristics.

Also employing meta-analysis, Kluve (2010) and Card, Kluve and Weber (2010) reviewed evaluations of 137 active labour market policies in 19 European countries, including training programs, wage subsidies to private firms and start up grants, and direct employment programs in the public sector. Other programs were designed to increase job search efficiency (e.g. via counselling and job search assistance) and involved sanctions in case of noncompliance. Their study found that wage subsidies, and services and sanctions were most effective in increasing employment among participants.

The field of welfare to work initiatives and their evaluations continues to expand at considerable speed, generating a wealth of new, specialist and detailed evidence. These have addressed, to name but a few, the cost-benefits of welfare to work programs (Greenberg, Deitch and Hamilton 2009)[3], the impact of benefit exhaustion on welfare participation (Filges et al. 2013)[4] and the effects on the earnings of US welfare to work program participants using direct compared with temporary-hire job placements (Autor, Houseman and Kerr 2012)[5]. At the same time, public policy interest has shifted from managing pre- to developing post-employment support, and the advancement and retention of previously unemployed people in the labour market (e.g. UK: Morris et al. 2003, Sianesi 2011, Hendra et al. 2011; USA: Tessler et al. 2014, AUS: Chigavazira, Bowman and Scutella 2013).

In the UK, the post-employment research agenda was initially supported by a review commissioned by the UK Government Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in collaboration with the Centre for Management and Policy Studies in the Cabinet Office. The resultant report by Kellard et al. (2001), co-authored by Cebulla, collected and summarised the available global evidence of post-employment support programs for former welfare recipients. It obtained information about programs from a range of countries, but predominantly the United States and Canada, with additional illustrations provided from case studies within

[3] Impacts vary with program contents, including use of time limits, and the type of cost-benefit measures that is employed (i.e. participant, government budget or social/whole society perspective).
[4] Drawing on program data from the US, Canada and European countries, the authors find that jobseekers intensified their job search as they approached the point at which their benefits were going to be stopped.
[5] Autor et al. (2012) found that the use of temporary-hire job placement had no effect on earnings, whereas the use of direct placements raised earnings for those in the upper tail of the earnings distribution.

Europe, New Zealand and Australia. Whilst the study was able to profile post-employment initiatives, the research also showed that robust evaluative evidence as to their effectiveness and impact was largely missing. Evaluation evidence only allowed the conclusion that earnings supplements and employer subsidies appeared effective in retaining recently unemployed people in paid work. Measures such as employer-provided child care, transport assistance, job coaching and financial assistance appeared to have some positive effect, but the analytical evidence was far from robust.

2.3. Secondary data analyses of specific groups (items 3, 4)

Meta-analysis and robust evaluation methods, such as random assignment, are 'data hungry', that is, they rely on large case numbers for analysis. In turn, this requires high upfront investment in evaluation (which is not always available); and a sometimes considerable wait for a sufficient volume of independently collected data to emerge. Bridging this gap, social statistics and general survey data have been used to explore the social and economic conditions and dynamics of 'welfare populations'. Survey data are often more readily available and, although they may not describe or match exactly the contexts of specific policy interventions, they can lend themselves to modelling these and to providing generic insights into the social processes that provide a rationale for policy and shape its outcomes.

Early critical studies were undertaken by economists, most notably, in the UK, Paul Gregg and Jonathan Wadsworth whose analyses of social and labour market polarization (Gregg and Wadsworth 1994) and, later, child poverty (Gregg, Harkness and Machin 1999) added significant impetus to economic and social research studying social dynamics, analysing data from the UK Labour Force Survey covering the period between 1975 and 1993. As new panel survey data became available, longitudinal analyses of the dynamics of income, employment and benefit status became more prevalent in national and comparative international studies (e.g. Hills 1996, Bane and Ellwood 1994, Duncan et al. 1994, Buhr 1995, Headey, Marks and Wooden 2005).

The launch of the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) survey in 1994 helped to generate comparative research of income, deprivation and labour market dynamics using a dataset standardised across European Community member states. One collaboration coming together to use these then new data produced a comparative study of the welfare dynamics of special interest groups in Austria, Germany, Greece, Portugal and the United Kingdom (Apospori and Millar 2003). The study focused specifically on the experiences of young people, lone parents, retirees, and sick or disabled people, and included the study by **Adelman and Cebulla (2003, item No. 3)** on the UK.

Adelman and Cebulla (2003) analysed ECHP data for 1995 and 1996, the two years for which a consolidated dataset was available at the time. The study examined the stock of, and flow into

and out of poverty and material (that is, mainly consumer good) deprivation for the four population groups. It found particularly high rates of material deprivation prevailing in the UK compared to the other four countries. Poverty rates were particularly high for lone mothers, followed by people with disability. Making the link between poverty and deprivation research, and welfare to work reform programs, the book chapter concluded that "Britain's social security is cost-efficient, achieving redistribution of market incomes with limited tax and benefit resources, but has limited effectiveness in reducing poverty. This must be considered alongside policies to promote employment." (ibid, p. 163)

The growing interest in special social groups and their activation from welfare to work contributed to a plethora of research and associated publications reporting on the effectiveness, or otherwise, of welfare reform programs as well as a number of sometimes exploratory cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of the welfare dynamics of previously under-researched populations. Cebulla, Heaver, Smith and Sutton (2004) and **Cebulla, Smith and Sutton (2004; item No. 4)** were the product of social research commissioned by the UK Department for Work and Pensions designed to explore the relationship between drug and/or alcohol use and employment status. Uniquely at the time, the study also included in-depth qualitative work with Class A drug users (heroin, amphetamines, methadone etc.) exploring work histories, ambitions and barriers to work. The study highlighted both the desire of many drug users to return to the labour market, but also their often overly optimistic assessment of their capabilities. Respondents frequently failed to take into account prospective employers' potential reluctance to employ rehabilitating substance users. Many also underestimated the extent to which continued participation in substance treatment programs meant that any work arrangements had to be flexible. Those who acknowledged the need for special workplace arrangements typically assumed that employers would not hesitate to provide them, allowing the employee to stop and leave work briefly, but possibly repeatedly, during a working day in order to receive treatment.

At the time, research into the labour market aspirations of substance users was only just emerging; in the UK this was the first major study of its kind. Since then, research in this field has expanded considerably. For example, Storti et al. (2011) explore the interaction between economic conditions and drug treatment entry. They find that as economic conditions improve, more substance users access treatment, apparently in expectation of better employment chances post treatment.

2.4. Sociological explorations (items 5, 6, 7)

The growth in welfare activation policy in Europe and beyond reflects shifts in public thinking and perceptions of the role of and scope for (effective) public policy. It is also based on a specific set of assumptions of human behaviour in the labour market.

The evolution of welfare to work policy was initially closely tied to the rise of supply-side economics in the 1980s in the USA and specifically inspired by the California Work Experience Program (CWEP), a work-for-benefits (or 'workfare') program instigated by the then Governor of California, Ronald Reagan (Wiseman 2001). Under Reagan's subsequent US presidency, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1981, as already briefly noted earlier, paved the way for more and farther reaching welfare to work programs, including mandatory job search and job training, and participation in the renamed Community Work Experience Program. The theory of supply side economics that the Reagan administration favoured asserted that the added labour supply to the economy attributable to welfare to work programs would generate economic growth without causing inflation as the increase in the number of earners would be counterbalanced by a decrease in wages. Activation thus became acceptable to public policy both politically and economically. In the UK, a parallel view espoused by two influential economists, Layard and Philpott (1991), was that activating long-term unemployed people into work would have no adverse displacement effects on the short-term unemployed as the greater supply of labour would generate greater demand for labour as a result of greater aggregate earnings and consumer spending.

This paradigmatic shift in public economics was accompanied by a similarly paradigmatic shift in the perception of the nature (rather than origins) of long-term worklessness and persistent poverty, and an increasing acceptability of holding marginalised populations responsible for their exclusion from the labour market (Golding and Middleton 1982). In the UK, this shift was again strongly shaped by the opinions from the US, centred initially on the 'underclass' hypothesis. Authors such as Charles Murray (1984) and, in particular, Lawrence Mead (1986) argued that public welfare had created perverse incentives that encouraged prolonged welfare dependency. Mead was most prominent in blaming the non-working poor for lacking a work ethic and called for workfare measures to force people off welfare into work. Although their theories and, in particular, their concept of an underclass were contested (e.g. Morris 1994), both authors were highly influential in the UK policy debate at the time (e.g. Murray 1996). Growing evidence of the churning of welfare recipients, made possible by the greater availability of longitudinal survey and administrative data, helped to dispel some of the myths of a static underclass (Walker and Ashworth 1994, Leisering and Walker 1998). However, concurrent evidence of a growing number of workless households in the UK during the 1990s, and of marginalised populations cycling between no-pay and low-pay have helped to sustain public images of the undeserving poor (Van Ooorschot 2000, Orton and Rowlingson 2007).

An alternative, theory driven approach to understanding the emergence of new forms of short- and long-term disadvantage opened up with the arrival of the new sociology of risk. The sociology of risk explores the changing social reality of the late modern experience and has specifically focussed on 'manufactured risks', that is, those created by society and through social processes. An early focus of the enquiry into 'risk society' was the seeming contradiction between a diminishing control over environmental risks and the damage associated with

them, on the one hand, and greater technological and technical knowledge and capabilities, on the other (Beck 1992).

The sociology of risk has drawn on a range of historical and extra-disciplinary sources (e.g. cultural, social historical, psychometric, cp. Douglas and Wildavski 1982, Ewald 1986, Slovic 2000), and has absorbed and been absorbed into an assemblage of theoretical perspectives (O'Malley 2000, McGoey 2012). The sociology of risk may not represent a complete body of scientific social theory, but it has proven to be a practical conceptual tool for understanding present day society and social change. Moreover, as some of the work included in the thesis demonstrates, the insights provided by risk sociology have been shown to be empirically testable.

Proponents of the theory, notably Beck and Giddens (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1994; Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994), have tended to disagree on some of the detail of social and societal risk, and on the processes by which they are managed. Most, including Beck and Giddens, nonetheless have shared the view that, to navigate these new social risks, it had become increasingly important for social beings to build their own personal biographies, that is, their lives, in a changing and more challenging, unpredictable social and economic environment. Opinions and interpretations of risk theory differ as to the extent to which building personal biographies is a reflexive and, thus, spontaneous (Beck) or reflective and, thus, deliberate and planned (Giddens) act. Both strands of risk theory however agree that, whilst opportunities for and the stresses associated with building one's biography have increased, the scope for actually doing so – and doing so successfully – is circumscribed by deepening social and economic uncertainty. That is, the outcomes of social actions are increasingly unpredictable.

A central claim of risk sociology is that late modern society has abandoned or at least questioned the validity or universality of previously taken for granted institutions (such as marriage or religion) and pathways (such as from school to work). This de-traditionalisation, risk sociology claims, undermines the certainty with which goals can be pursued and plans or ambitions turned into realities. This theoretical assumption has significant implications for public policy. Growing uncertainty also means that an individual's ability to reliably plan his or her life has become more difficult, if not impossible. More than ever, the pursuit of one's plans and ambitions requires frequent corrective action as the individual is pushed off their intended track. Of course, these corrections are themselves subject to uncertainty.

This interpretation of the sociology of risk is arguably at the more 'radical' end of late-modern sociological theory, which includes chaos and complexity theory. Many advocates of risk and uncertainty in social theory are more cautious, arguing that late modern society has retained institutionalised structures that continue to channel its citizens along certain well-trodden paths, albeit with a diminished guarantee of progressive (that is, socially and personally fair and just) outcomes. In the sociology of youth, which is particularly concerned with the

transition from school to work, this has been especially strongly articulated by Furlong and Cartmel (1997) and Roberts (1997).

Three studies included in this submission built on the sociology of risk and explored whether social and economic uncertainty had indeed become a more prevalent lived experience. The publications are **Taylor-Gooby and Cebulla (2010, item No. 5), Nyhagen-Predelli and Cebulla (2011, item No. 6)** and **Tomaszewski and Cebulla (2014, item No. 7)**.

Taylor-Gooby and Cebulla (2010), using analyses of panel and cohort studies in UK, set out to test the validity of the thesis of growing risk and uncertainty in society, focussing specifically on the transition of young people into the labour market and into adulthood. Importantly, the study also contrasted the experiences of different generations of young people. It was the first of its kind explicitly deriving empirically testable hypotheses from the sociology of risk, showing that younger generations of people in the UK indeed faced greater uncertainty in accomplishing career and partnering aspirations when compared to earlier generations. The approach that this study had adopted has since been replicated by other researchers testing a range of related uncertainty hypotheses (cp. Schulenberg and Schoon 2012).

Nyhagen and Cebulla (2011, item No. 6) complemented the quantitative evidence generated and reported in Taylor-Gooby and Cebulla (2010, item No. 5), by drawing on qualitative evidence from matched parent and child in-depth interviews. These interviews explored parents' and children's respective transitions from school to work, and their individual and mutual expectations. Cebulla and Tomaszewski (2013) later integrated the quantitative and qualitative data reported separately in the two original publications into one document highlighting the conceptual and empirical congruence of the evidence.

One central finding from the analyses was that, across generations, young people from different socio-economic backgrounds continued to have very different experiences of labour market transitions. This finding inspired a subsequent analysis of school-to-work transitions of the most recent cohort of young people (**Tomaszewski and Cebulla 2014, item No. 7**). It used a dataset enhanced with additional, restricted-access information about the places of residence of these young people and the deprivation status of those places, using population census derived deprivation indices. Rather than being historically comparative, that study thus focussed on one age cohort, differentiated by the deprivation status of their places of residence. The study found that, even after statistically controlling for the socio-demographic characteristics of a person, young people in socio-economically disadvantaged areas remained at a greater risk of not achieving their career ambitions than young people living elsewhere. Young people from disadvantaged environments typically required more job changes than other young people before they had realised their job aspirations.

This finding lends further support to arguments that seek to refute claims that socio-economically

disadvantaged (young) people in Britain constitute a voluntary underclass of individuals predisposed towards unemployment (Marshall, Roberts and Burgoyne 1996, Hills 2014). To the contrary, the evidence suggests the presence of an ambitious population of young people seeking a footing in the labour market against the odds.

3. Conclusion

3.1. Contributions to Knowledge

The work included in this thesis presents a coherent and successively constructed body of knowledge, building on and complementing prior contributions. As such the publications represent individual building blocks that contribute to a better understanding of the operations of labour markets and labour market policy from both an economic and a sociological perspective. In each of their three areas (welfare activation, welfare dynamics, and intergenerational change in labour market transitions), the studies are embedded in a field of exploration that remains at the heart of public policy in OECD countries. Each has made a significant contribution to the area's knowledge and methodology.

The works' collective contribution to the social and economic study of welfare reform has been to demonstrate the need for understanding variability and diversity in people's behaviour in the context of policies built from assumptions that are based on economic rationalism. This contribution was made at a time when the dominant public discourse threatened to drift towards an uncritical acceptance of often unsubstantiated theories of 'welfare dependency' and the rushed conclusion that activation was the necessary and universally effective response. This volume of work aided the development of an empirically-driven critical debate in the literature.

3.1.1. Welfare to work

The studies of welfare to work interventions demonstrate the potential and the limits of welfare activation, preceding and echoing many concurrent and subsequent studies. Above all, they demonstrate the contextual embeddedness of welfare to work programs, whose impact is dependent on program and participant mixes, and the approaches taken by program implementers. New at the time, these findings have since become part and parcel of our understanding of the operations of these types of welfare interventions.

The knowledge generated by the welfare to work studies discussed here has informed public policy and encouraged additional study. Notably, the variability of impacts and their sensitivity to local differences and differences in the characteristics of program participants encouraged more flexible implementation of, and experimentation within, activation programs in the UK. Subsequent research (e.g. Cebulla, Flore and Greenberg 2008) focussed more closely on programmatic details, illustrating, for instance, the importance of a structured relationship between jobseekers and personal advisors. In turn, this contributed to strengthening the role of work-focused interviews and their reviews. However, as will be noted in the final section,

public policy has often used the evidence from the studies presented here (and others) selectively, contributing to partial and sometimes detrimental intervention outcomes.

Methodologically, the studies have demonstrated the potential for meta-analysis to assess multiple and diverse evidence in a clear and structured manner. It also highlighted the benefits of shared, comparable approaches and (high) standards of evaluation. Meta-analysis has continued to grow in profile and topical coverage (facilitated by research fora, such as the Campbell Collaboration), and continues to demonstrate its benefits in aggregating research evidence in a comparable fashion in order to inform the evidence base in policy making and state-of-the-art research.

The findings reported in the welfare to work evaluations, as already noted earlier, were subsequently largely corroborated by other studies. This applies to policy evaluations in the UK (Hendra et al. 2015; Watts et al. 2014) and the USA (Greenberg, Deitch and Hamilton 2009; Heinrich et al 2013), but also beyond (e.g. Heyer et al. 2012; Martin 2015). More recently, new and more detailed and probing analyses have identified unintended, potentially adverse consequences of welfare activation policies (e.g. Snarr 2013; Nichols and Rothstein 2015).

3.1.2. Sociological data excursions (welfare dynamics and intergenerational change)

The growth in interest in economic evaluation of welfare activation alongside the expansive application of welfare interventions was, as noted earlier, accompanied by an expanding secondary data analysis of welfare flows. The analysis of welfare dynamics added a critical corrective to what had threatened to become a political discourse dominated by an unreflective focus on a perhaps imagined, but certainly poorly-defined social underclass concept. Especially in international comparative study, this research has been able to demonstrate the interconnectedness between welfare policy and its outcomes on the one hand, and socio-cultural structures and individual agency on the other (as demonstrated in Apospori and Millar 2003).

The expansion of welfare activation policies also stimulated debate in sociological and political science circles (Lister 2001, Berry 2014, Wiggan 2015). The notion of welfare activation was itself strongly influenced by the Third Way discussions promoted, amongst others, by Giddens (1998). Sociologists and social policy experts have since taken on the task of critically reviewing the operations and outcomes of welfare activation, in particular its capacity to overcome the risk of (permanent) low income or poverty (e.g. Taylor-Gooby, Gumy and Otto 2015; Allen 2014; Newman 2011).

The sociological studies in this submission approach the interface between welfare activation and human behaviour through the sociological 'risk' framework. Starting from a theoretical perspective and using youth transitions and the labour market as their platforms for analysis, the resultant studies provided empirical mixed-method evidence to validate risk sociology's

assumptions with respect to uncertainty. Specifically, the studies demonstrated the fluidity of many welfare transitions and the growth of uncertainty in social life, the socially inequitable nature of this uncertainty and the differential pressure this places on (young) people as they seek to build their biographies. The findings from these studies have critical implications for understanding individual agency and the social and economic context of behaviour, and for policy making.

First, they demonstrate a progressive disconnect between intentions and aspirations on the one hand, and outcomes over time and across generations on the other. Whereas previous studies had explored recent historical periods (e.g. Schmelzer 2009), the research underlying Taylor-Gooby and Cebulla (2010, item No. 5) presented firm evidence of steadily increasing job entry uncertainty for young people for a longer period going back to the middle of the last century. It was able to do so because it used three UK cohort and panel data sources and thus aligned very different social and economic times. Moreover, unlike others, the study explored uncertainty not only in the labour market, but also with respect to school leaving and marriage intentions, thus covering three potentially life shaping episodes and instances of decision-taking on the path from youth to adulthood. Seen in this light, early studies of the role of aspirations in, for instance, shaping educational outcomes (e.g. Goodman and Gregg 2010; Homel and Ryan 2014; also Gorard, See and Davies 2012) are now being complemented with more nuanced analyses of the very complex processes through which aspirations are realised or indeed frustrated (e.g. McKnight 2015).

Second, they present an alternative to the argument that that social disadvantage is the result of lack of personal engagement, that is, biographical 'construction work', although they also accept that further work with better data is needed to understand more fully the casual relationship between active biography construction and passive biographical drifting. Building on Taylor-Goody and Cebulla (2010, item No. 5), and Nyhagen-Predelli and Cebulla (2011, item No. 6), the unique contribution of Tomaszewski and Cebulla (2014, item No. 7) is to assemble and analyse longitudinal, small-area data specifically to investigate and compare the job entry behaviours and challenges of young people. This study complements a rich body of hitherto predominantly qualitative or cross-sectional quantitative youth research, and longitudinal studies that explore neighbourhood effects across all populations. The study quantified the number of job changes that young people undertook to achieve their aspirations. It thus demonstrated the investment that young people make towards developing their work profiles and careers, and the particular 'effort' required by some of them who live in socially disadvantaged areas.

Similarly, Cebulla, Smith and Sutton (2004, item No. 4) brought into focus how substance users, a typically socially marginalised group, strive to construct their lives and may benefit in their efforts from social, including government, supports. Importantly, however, the study also indicated that some personal ambitions may be misguided, perhaps based on imperfect information or overly optimistic assumptions, or both. Cebulla, Smith and Sutton (2004, item No. 4) remains one of the few studies of its type, and is widely cited in the UK and internationally (e.g. Bauld et al. 2010,

Bauld et al. 2012; Simonson 2010, Storti et al. 2011, Duffy and Baldwin 2013, Research Works 2009).

Third, as the studies support theories regarding increased social uncertainty, their findings also have implications for active and activating labour market policy. Greater uncertainty suggests that successful labour market attachment and integration may be more difficult, or may take longer, to achieve. In particular the qualitative investigations reported in Nyhagen-Predelli and Cebulla (2011, item No. 6) demonstrate how young people in contemporary Britain 'experiment' with the labour market, testing options and refining choices and preferences experientially. This is not a universal phenomenon, but concentrated among those from less disadvantaged, 'middle class' backgrounds and (growing up in households with) less pre-determined notions of career paths. With young persons' job aspirations found to be increasingly out of sync with anticipated labour market developments (Mann et al 2013), a policy-practical implication of the collection of research presented here is that such experimentation should arguably be encouraged prior to (or as part of) any formal labour market entry (cp. Mann, Stanley and Archer 2014). Such an approach could build on past experience that demonstrated the benefit of short-term work placements on developing employment choices, employability and actual employment prospects (Wilton 2012, McCulloch 2013, Ainsworth et al. 2012, Pallais 2013).

Fourth, the evidence from the submitted papers has further policy-practical implications for the learning and education that young people experience. Many adjustments in labour market behaviour, and failure to meet initial aspirations, are the result of shifting labour markets where traditionally aspired-to jobs are becoming rare. For young people making the transition to work, especially where they may have grown up in traditional and now typically declining industrial zones, the adaptation to new economic realities is practically and cognitively challenging. These adaptations require not only the acquisition of (new and novel) work-related skills, but also an ability to understand and operate within shifting economic spaces. This in turn needs career planning that goes beyond help with writing CVs or conducting effective job search, and encompasses the development of enabling social and cultural capital as well as economic capital (of relevance here, Breen, van de Werfhorst and Meier Jaeger (2014) discuss how risk orientations affect early higher education and career decisions).

The importance of providing these opportunities early if they are to have a timely (and desired) effect has been demonstrated for young people in various contexts; Cebulla and Tomaszewski (2009) show it in relation to risky behaviours (smoking, vandalism, shop lifting); Chetty, Hendren and Katz (2015) show it with regard to the effects on child development of moving into 'better' neighbourhoods; and Heckman (2011) discusses it in the context of long-term economic inequality (but also see the critical reflection on 'early year interventions' policy as preoccupied with shaping a future workforce rather than strengthening contemporary citizenship in Lister (2003)).

3.2. Problems encountered

The rationale for research and evaluation is to make for a better policy. At the time most of the research reported here was undertaken, the topics were new and the data available to explore them limited. Evaluation was an emerging science, and remained an add-on to the implementation of and experimentation with policy, rather than an integral part of policy development and refinement. Little has changed in that respect, and little may change in the future as long as scientific and political cycles operate at different speeds and, sometimes, in different directions. Although we now have a much improved understanding of evaluation as a technique, evaluation continues to be used to accommodate rather than inform and shape policy. The result is often a set of imperfect conditions for assessing policy effectiveness and estimating impacts, and for profiling better policy practice. In many respects, the challenge remains to reaffirm and strengthen evaluation within the realm of policy design and implementation.

3.2.1. Selective application of research findings – an example

This is not only a challenge for evaluation practice, which needs to develop better tools for greater responsiveness to policy demands for fast reporting (e.g. Hargreaves 2014). It is also a challenge for policy and policymakers. The potential for improving the value of evaluation to policy remains adversely impacted by prevailing conceptual and ideological agendas, and the political (election) cycle. This has been well illustrated by the way in which welfare activation has evolved in the UK in light of, and despite, the accumulation of impact evidence.

The welfare activation research presented here demonstrates the role of demand-side factors in determining the effectiveness of welfare to work programs, as highlighted by the effects of poverty and unemployment rates on program impacts. In a public policy environment that is almost exclusively supply side oriented, as it is in the UK, knowledge about demand-side influences on welfare policy is barely utilised. The introduction of the Flexible New Deal (FND) in 2009 and in place until 2011 is a case in point. It should have explicitly provided an opportunity for a more locally responsive form of delivery of welfare activation. Instead, its primary objectives became the greater use of voluntary and private sector organisations in the delivery of job search and job placement supports. In addition, the FND provided an opportunity for more customised service provision as it integrated the New Deal for Young People (NDYP), New Deal for 25 Plus (ND25+), the New deal 50 Plus and Employment Zones (as well as the two minor New Deal programs for musicians and the self-employed (Morgan 2009). The FND thus changed the service modes, but remained firmly focussed on the supply side, that is, activating the jobseeker. The FND proved to have had only marginal effects on social security exit and employment entry outcomes of participants, and was considered by some as a step back from past achievement (Adams et al. 2011; Davies 2013).

3.2.2. Data – a different problem encountered

As research, such as the evaluations and transition studies reported here, is becoming more concerned with programmatic details, specific populations and stages in the life course, the need for better data becomes ever more apparent. The small impacts of welfare to work programs were often only measurable because the large size of underlying data sets allowed their detection. Some of the quantitative transition studies struggled with confirming results as statistically significant, because survey sample sizes were too small for this purpose.

'Big data' and greater use of administrative data, as well as larger social survey samples (as now achieved with the UK Household Longitudinal Study 'Understanding Society') may help to address these challenges in the future.

3.3. Future directions

In this final section, I shall outline in very broad strokes two possible future directions that my research may take. In both instances, the objective is to build on and use a cross-disciplinary approach of sociological and economic thinking in welfare activation policy and evaluation. The two examples below are presented as instances of sociology contributing to economics. But the cases can also be read to demonstrate instances of economics contributing to sociology, providing the latter with a research platform for testing its theoretical claims.

3.3.1. Bringing (more) contemporary sociology to economic analysis

Sociological thinking has been somewhat sidelined in public policy evaluation, which has instead been dominated by economic rationalism. One repercussion of this exclusion from mainstream policy analysis has been to limit the discipline's empirical data platform for experimentation, theory testing and analysis. Whilst the reservoir of societal data has grown impressively in recent decades, greater appreciation of the sociological dimensions of public policy could have resulted in still more efforts to generate data, and use them for policy ends. Some of the research submitted in support of this thesis demonstrates the important role that empirical analysis plays in testing sociological assumptions (e.g. Taylor-Gooby and Cebulla 2011; also, although not included here: Cebulla 2007).

The present discussion commenced in the first section by briefly juxtaposing the theoretical concepts of Beck and Giddens, and their respective understanding of individual social behaviours, posing the question as to the extent to which the social individual has agency to negotiate structural obstacles.

This question remains essential for understanding the scope for welfare activation beyond the Job Centre environment, where guidance, direction and coercion are most pertinent, but outside of

which the message of activation risks fading as jobseekers exit to a different social reality. The mixed evidence from welfare to work evaluations underlines the need for continued exploration of the multiplicity of influences, enabling and constraining, that shape welfare behaviours.

Giddens's and Beck's are only two (of several) contested concepts from which to approach the question of agency. Although this cannot be the place to explore the large volume of alternatives, two may briefly be mentioned.

First is the concept of morphogenesis developed by Margaret Archer (1995, 2010), which has recently experienced a resurgence of interest. Understanding and exploring social structures as manifested in the form of social relations rather than as rules (Porpora 2013), Archer's own qualitative empirical work illustrates the anchoring of behaviours in different forms of reflexivity (Archer 2007). Archer notes the "good deal of work" (2007, p. 191) that goes into maintaining these reflexivities in everyday life, even where it implies "'staying put'" (ibid), that is, maintaining the status quo and justifying this immobility to and for oneself. When welfare activation fails, it could be as a result of this "internal conversation" (King 2010, p. 257).

A second, more quantitatively rooted concept is that of iso-work, that is, the discovery in time use study that, when all paid and unpaid activities are summed, men and women have very similar work time totals (Gershuny and Fisher 2014; Burda, Hamermesh and Weil 2013). Significantly, this appears to have consistently been the case for (at least) the last five decades, - and across most advanced industrial and post-industrial countries. What has shifted between genders is the balance between paid and unpaid work time. In general, men are proportionately shifting their work time away from paid work towards unpaid (domestic or community) work, and women from unpaid towards paid work. But there are marked social differences, as in particular higher educated women have reduced the amount of time spent doing core domestic work (cooking, clearing and washing up) almost everywhere, presumably reflecting time constraints due to work obligations and the ability to afford machinery (or labour) to take over core domestic tasks as income from work rise.

According to Gershuny and Fisher (2014), in Liberal Market countries, which include the US and the UK, lesser educated women have been much less able to reduce their time spent on core domestic tasks. This may reflect their weaker economic status, but possibly also their mode of reflexivity as explored in Archer (2007). Three economists, Burda, Hamermesh and Weil (2013), also studying time diary data, conclude that neo-classical economic models fail to explain the observed 'iso-work' phenomenon, but social norms are shown to be consistent with it.

These are just two illustrations of how sociological thinking has the potential to enrich the understanding of labour markets and, in particular, the scope and limits of welfare activation. A future direction of my own work to date may be to explore the extent to which these concepts can help understanding of how labour market participation decisions are formulated and how these

decisions interact with welfare activation programs.

3.3.2. Developing the capability approach

The second agenda returns to a more implicit focus on policy practice. Critical social policy has for some time recognised the enabling function of the welfare state; an insight that resonated with European bureaucracies as they sought to preserve welfare safety nets at the same time as they deregulated labour markets and enforced welfare activation (Viebrock and Clasen 2009). More recently, however, public discourse has been comparatively silent on the enabling role of welfare. Instead the discourse is reverting to paternalistic arguments about social norms and individual responsibility (Jones, Pickett and Whitehead 2011) and, where the message goes unheard, behavioural correction (Dolan et al. 2012). Just as described some ten years ago by Dingeldey (2005), discourse today tends towards "an increasing influence of the state on the individual's living conduct" (Dingeldey 2005, p.2). This tendency, however, stands in stark contrast to the personal capability approach to welfare and wellbeing advocated by Amartya Sen (1985).

Building on Sen's original thinking, Bovin and Orton (2009) examined the rationale and implications for a capability approach in welfare activation. They argued that a prerequisite for a capability approach were "sufficient resources, individual abilities to them use, non-discriminatory social values and legislative provisions and available opportunities for valuable social and professional integration" (Bovin and Orton 2009, p. 567). Participants in active labour market policies should "be allowed to refuse activation strategies with which they strongly disagree, at a bearable cost…, and they should also be able to negotiate and influence the content of such activation programmes" (ibid, p. 568).

Arguably, Bovin and Orton's model is far removed from current policy reality. After a decade of political and intellectual discourse about 'rights and responsibilities' as the pillars of welfare activation (Dwyer 2000), policy appears to be leaning firmly towards responsibility at the expense of rights (Dean 2007). In everyday welfare case management, unemployment is linked "to psychological deficit, and so to authorise the extension of state—and state-contracted—surveillance to psychological characteristics" (Friedli and Stearn 2015, p. 40). Economic policy research continues to identify evidence in support of coercive approaches to welfare activation, such as "tougher caseworkers" whose clients were found to be more likely to gain employment (Huber, Lechner and Mellace 2014), without, as the authors themselves admit, understanding the link, nor, presumably, knowing the long-term effect. Altmann et al. (2015) found that presenting unemployed people with dim scenarios of possible consequences of unemployment for life satisfaction, health and personal relationships, enhances job search, if only for those threatened by long-term unemployment.

It is unclear to what extent research and daily practice that stress negative or coercive approaches contribute to nurturing capability and are genuinely promoting capacity building rather than

degenerating to a cycle of manipulation (White 2013; but see also: Hansen and Jespersen 2013). Equipping people with the tools that enable them to build their lives in an emancipatory way may require more than coercion. For instance, Kassenboehmer and Schatz (2014) found that people experiencing unemployment typically underestimated their chances of reemployment, which led to reduced job search. Here information and positive guidance can send positive motivating, not threatening or coercive messages.

There are opportunities – just as there is a need - for sociology to check reflectively the nature, meaning and social and societal implications of behavioural economics, which is increasingly encroaching on welfare policy. A future project in the study welfare reform may be to assemble the enabling messages and to translate them for use in a policy practice that is pro-actively capability building.

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5. Publications

Item 1:

Cebulla, A. (2005) Looking Over the Fence: Findings from UK and US Programme Reviews. In: Cebulla, A, K. Ashworth, D. Greenberg and R. Walker, Welfare-to-Work. New Labour and the US Experience. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 116-138. (Item 1)

The cover of the book, in which this chapter appeared, and the book's content page are also reproduced and precede the chapter for additional context.

Statement on initiation, conduct and direction of conjoint research

The research contained in this publication was initiated, conducted and directed by Andreas Cebulla. Andreas Cebulla drafted the manuscript. Karl Ashworth, David Greenberg, Robert Walker and Andreas Cebulla had jointly drawn up the program of research to which this publication contributed.

Contextual Note

The book, in which this chapter was published, summarises the findings of a 2-year research project that reviewed the political context of welfare to work programs in the UK in the 1990s. The research also collected and analysed empirical evidence of the effectiveness of welfare to work interventions from the US and Canada (where the majority of evaluation evidence originated at the time).

Welfare-to-Work

New Labour and the U.S. Experience

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Contents

Chapter 7

Looking Over the Fence: Findings from UK and US Programme Reviews

Andreas Cebulla

Introduction

This chapter reviews some of the evaluation evidence pertaining to labour market programmes that was not covered in the meta-analysis. Evidence from our meta-analysis reported in earlier chapters has suggested that programmes, which aim to place participants into jobs quickly, are more effective than programmes, which place greater emphasis on training and the development of human resources. Here, the evolution of training and job placement programmes in place in the UK prior to the New Deal is charted and the key lessons from their evaluations are discussed. Systematic review evidence from US job training programmes is also presented.

Although past evaluations of UK training and placement programmes and more recent evaluations of the New Deal are not immediately comparable because of differences in the timing and location of these programmes and pilot programmes as well as because of variations in their target populations, most studies convey similar conclusions and policy message. Yet, comparisons with recent US evaluations and, in particular, meta-evaluations also suggest a continued need for the greater disaggregating of impact measurements, which would improve our understanding of the key features that determine effective welfare-to-work policy.

The chapter also takes a broader view at the macro-economic or national economic impact of active labour market programmes, drawing on a small number of empirical studies from the US and the UK. In the US in the 1990s, the question whether policy changes *or* changes in the macro-economic climate played the larger role in shrinking the welfare caseload pre-occupied many academic and policy analysts, who developed different econometric models to explore the interactions between local or regional workfare programmes and macro-economic, national change. In the UK, there has been much less focus on this topic. To-date, there has been just one attempt to estimate the impact of the New Deal on the overall decline in unemployment among New Deal target groups. At the same time, it is clear that knowing how active labour market policies perform under changing economic conditions is essential to designing adaptable flexible programmes that retain their effectiveness as social and economic contexts change.

How Effective are Training Programmes?

The introduction of the New Deal in the UK was, to a large extent, driven by disillusionment with conventional job training and retraining programmes, which had been at the core of UK labour market policy in previous decades (cp. Chapter 3). Whereas training or retraining the jobless appeared appropriate at a time when jobseekers were a homogenous group of young unemployed people or unskilled and semi-skilled workers recently made redundant, changes in the structure of unemployment and the composition of the group of unemployed called the wisdom of human capital approaches to labour market policy into question. As unemployment continued to rise, the prevailing perception among policy analysts and policymakers was that, as a measure to improve employment prospects of the unemployed, skills training did not work, and the 'negative evidence' that emerged from training programme evaluations in the early 1980s appeared to confirm this view. At the same time, alternative evidence from both the US and, at a smaller scale, the UK suggested that active labour market policies, which placed a greater onus on the unemployed person's responsibility to obtain work and relied less on training, but more on job placements, would be promising alternatives, which could replace the outdated and largely ineffective system of passive labour market measures.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) played an important role in reinforcing this perception. The findings of its Job Study (1994), to which national governments, including UK civil servants[1], contributed, were well received among UK policy makers, analysts and politician. It appeared to confirm the benefits of policies pursued by the Conservative government at the time and also matched the policy agenda of the in-coming Labour government. Later updates of the Job Study reiterated this point. Flexible working time, the easing of employment law, and the removal of 'employment security provisions that inhibit the expansion of employment in the private sector' (OECD, 1996, p. 15) were central tenets of the organisation's agenda of active labour market policies. It recommended that unemployment and related welfare benefits be reduced 'where they can be considered overly generous' (OECD, 1996, p. 25); that job search be enforced and that net incomes in work be increased through tax or benefit changes.

[1] The OECD Job Study brought together individual country reports submitted by national experts, who often were government civil servants, and often represented 'official' interpretations of fact and events. Making this point is not disputing *per se* the validity of the claims made in these national reports, as they may form a (self-) critical basis for cross-national comparisons. However, the method of compilation and their subsequent presentation entail the risk of self-fulfilling prophecy and self-referential circularity of argument, as was, in fact, apparent in the UK. The parts of the OECD study that pertained to Britain, in particular its praise for the UK efforts to reform labour market policy, were derived from material that more frequently resembled opinions or anecdote than evidence. The study was used, in turn, as justification for continuing the country's welfare-to-work reform programme (cp. Chapter 3).

The OECD report was critical of training programmes, although perhaps less so than was often assumed, particularly in government circles. In coming to its conclusions, the study drew a distinction between different types of job training schemes. It argued that evidence from the US shown that whilst 'large-scale training programmes in a class-room setting…have been particularly unsuccessful' (OECD, 1994, p. 27), some of the targeted training (and employment) programmes appeared to been fairly effective. Nonetheless, in its general conclusions, the study argued against more training schemes and, instead, pointed out that 'evaluations show that targeted measures of job-search assistance and counselling, as pioneered by the United Kingdom with its re-start interviews, back-to-work plans and job clubs, have a consistently positive impact on employment and earnings of participants' (ibid, p. 27). As a result of such evidence, the OECD came to advocate the integration of public employment services, including job placements, and the administration of unemployment benefits, again highlighting the UK as one country that was already taking steps towards achieving a more integrated system.

Not all reports that emerged from the offices of the OECD in the mid-1990s were as critical of training programmes for the unemployed as the Job Study had been. In 1996, a more nuanced review of active labour market measures reported that the most effective training programmes were well targeted and took place in small groups (Fay, 1996). This report built on evaluations of the UK Employment Training and Employment Action programmes (see 7.2) and the US JTPA-II-A programme.[2] Looking in more detail at training programmes, the study's author remarked that much of the effectiveness of training programme-based active labour market measures, in fact, depended on the quality of the training provided. Training and retraining jobseekers should, therefore, neither be summarily dismissed nor should they 'be used as a solution to large-scale unemployment' (Fay, 1996, p.18). They were unlikely to be effective means for combating high unemployment, but might still assist jobseekers' re-entry into local labour market through services customised to jobseekers' and employers' skill needs.

However, some analysts, including Fay, were concerned that the effectiveness of training programmes was undermined because they reduced or delayed job search activities among jobseekers who participated in them. As non-employment extended with the duration of the training programmes, this, in turn, adversely affected participants' re-employment.

Moreover, some programmes were felt to provide disincentives to search for a job even after this ended because they allowed participants to re-qualify for certain types of social security benefits after completing the training programme, entitlement for which they would otherwise have had exhausted. In such instances, training programmes risked failing to move trainees 'from welfare-to-work' by eliminating job search altogether.

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[2] Job Training and Partnership Act Title II retraining programme, directed at adult economically disadvantaged people, including recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

The effectiveness of labour market programmes, particularly training programmes that, in the UK, can extend over several months, if not years, is difficult to assess. Labour market initiative with long lead-in and support times also require long follow-up periods. This does usually not occur. Moreover, even training programmes of short duration are not necessarily expected to lead to instant result and require long periods of observation before showing effects. In the absence of *long-term* evaluation data of training programmes, a review or critique of training or retraining programmes, therefore, ought to be guarded (Meager with Evans, 1997). Training programmes can only be expected to show effects in the medium-term or long-term, but participants of programmes are hardly ever tracked over sufficient time to provide a robust assessment of the programmes' effectiveness.

Only recently have more long-term monitoring and survey data that are designed to track programme participants become available in the UK. In addition, labour market analyses seeking to investigate long-term trends can increasingly draw on secondary data, that is, data not specifically collected with a view to monitoring or evaluating the performance of training programmes. These data can typically be extracted from surveys, which were concerned not with training issues or labour market policy, but nevertheless collect relevant information. Such surveys include national panel and some birth cohort studies conducted in European countries, including the UK, as well as the US.

A recent review of labour market programme evaluations in Germany, Sweden, Denmark and The Netherlands assembled evaluation evidence from a series of studies using panel studies and other, more focussed longitudinal studies of labour market programmes (Rabe, 2000). Its review of the evidence contradicts the cautious note of Meager and Evans (1997) as it concluded that training programmes might not pay off even in the long term. It would appear that the increased employment probability that is undeniably derived from the increase in human capital due to participation in training programmes, typically does not compensate for the adverse effect of delayed job search. This is particularly likely if training courses are of long duration (12 months or more). One seemingly counter-intuitive reason for this may be that employers use participation in training programmes for jobseekers as a screening criterion to rule out rather than rule in job applicants if labour supply is sufficient (Rabe, 2000).

Labour Market Programmes in the UK

Studies in the UK have echoed some of the international research findings and have concluded that small-scale and well-targeted training programmes work best and that immediate placements in work prove most effective (Robinson, 2000). In this section, the findings from evaluations of some of the most prominent UK active labour market programmes of the 1990s (and indeed late 1980s) are reviewed. Prior to the New Deal, these programmes were critical in shaping the perception of policy analysts, policy makers and economic researchers concerning the need for a reform of labour market policy. Table 7.1 summarizes the key features of these programmes.

The aim of this review is not to provide a comprehensive account of all training and job search programmes implemented in the UK during or just before the 1990s. This would require a book in itself. The focus will instead be on some of the larger and more prominent national and national pilot programmes, which were immediate predecessors to the present-day New Deal programme or programmes and which have been independently evaluated.[3]

A brief history The UK's first national, mandatory 'activation' programme was Restart (Table 7.1). Introduced in the mid-1980s, its aim was to enforce active job search among claimants of active benefits by requiring them to attend interviews in social security offices to determine their need for job search activities and, in later meetings, to monitor these and to provide job search counselling. Although evaluations found that the programme was only moderately successful and were unclear as to which components of the programme (counselling, job-search assistance or the threat of benefit sanctions in case of non-compliance) proved most effective, the nature of the intervention nonetheless served as a model for future active labour market initiatives in the UK. Since Restart, advice and the monitoring of the job-search activities of benefit claimants have become core elements of most labour market programmes and have repeatedly been shown to be cost-effective means of reducing the claimant count and assisting jobseekers back into work.[4] Restart interviews were retained when Jobseekers Allowance replaced insurance-based income support and unemployment benefit in 1996, and claimants were called for interviews after 13 and 26 weeks of unemployment. In several of the New Deal programmes, restart interviews were replaced by the 'Gateway' interviews, while long-term claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance not participating in any of the New Deal programmes continue to be required to attend mandatory Restart advisory interviews after six and 12 months of unemployment. The interviews are followed by six-week programmes of 'intensive jobmatching', which involve increased and regular contact with JobCentre advisors.

Programmes that followed Restart were attempts at refining existing programmes; to design programmes for specific target groups, such as the young unemployed or lone parents; or to extract and retain elements of larger programmes, while parent programmes were discontinued. Some of these programmes have survived the introduction of the New Deal, while others became redundant as the New Deal offered similar and, sometimes, more comprehensive support of similar nature.

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[3] Programmes targeted at special needs groups, such as Access to Work, which aims to help disabled workers, cannot be reviewed here. Other special targeted interventions that are not reviewed here include Job Review Workshops, which is targeted at unemployed individuals with professional, executive or managerial backgrounds, and *progress2work*, which is aimed at drug users.

[4] It is important to note that reducing the claimant count and assisting jobseekers into work are different programme outcome. It is apparent that many claimants were removed or removed themselves from the claimants register under the threat of sanction without ever attending a Restart or similar support programme.

Initially, however, programmes designed to train the unemployed went through phases of repeated modification. Employment Training (ET) and Employment Action (EA) were introduced in 1988 and 1991 respectively, providing on-the-job (ET) and off-the-job (EA) training for all long-term unemployed aged 18-50 and short-term unemployed young people (18-24). ET had itself replaced the New Job Training, which offered up to six months of work experience or training mainly to job seekers aged 18 to 25 years. Both ET and EA were merged into Training for Work (TfW) in 1993.

TfW no longer required participants to pursue a course leading to a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or equivalent, although most participants continued to do so (Sproston, 1999). In contrast, TfW emphasized assessment and guidance over direction and required that Action or Participation Plans be developed for each programme participant. The reason for doing away with the requirement for participants to pursue a qualification was largely to allow the programme deliverers, local Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), greater flexibility in their training design. But TfW was also an attempt to move programme participants closer to the labour market. Unlike its predecessors, it allowed participants to enter a contract of employment with their placement providers. Regular wages, thus, replaced state-funded training allowances, while employers were offered subsidies to help with recruitment and the cost of training.

Simultaneous with TfW, the Community Action (CA) programme offered part-time work experience with voluntary and (local) community organisations, alongside job search assistance, for those individuals who had been unemployed for 12 or more months and preferred this option to TfW. In 1998, the TfW was replaced with Work-based Training (later: Learning) for Adults (WBTA/WBLA) programme. Two years prior to that, a new mandatory active labour market measure, Project Work (PW), had been introduced, absorbing the Workstart programme. At the same time, CA was wound up.

PW, albeit run only as a pilot scheme in a small number of local authorities, provided long-term unemployed people with 13 weeks of intensive job search training followed, where appropriate, by a 13-week mandatory work placement. A change in government and the introduction of the New Deal prevented a possible[5] national roll-out of PW, which was eventually itself wound up in 1998. However, Project Work's 13-week intensive job search component presented an important model for the structure and content of the New Deal Gateway that essentially replaced it.

[5] Possible, but not necessarily probable or indeed inevitable roll-out, because the previous Conservative Government had been concerned about the cost implications of PW's mandatory work placement element.

Table 7.1 UK Labour market programmes 1993-2000

Programme	Content	Participation/Target group	Period
Restart Interviews	Job counselling interviews after each 6 months of unemployment. 2-week Restart Course in job search skills after 24 month of Restart interviews..	Mandatory. Unemployed for 6 or more months.	1986- continuing
Employment Training	Off-the-job training and work placements (up to 1 year, later extended to up to 2 years).	Voluntary.	1988-1993
Employment Action	Placements with voluntary organisations (on average 6 months).	Voluntary.	1991-1993
Training for Work (replacing ET and EA)	Individual Action Plan or Participation Plan. Off-the-job training, employer placement, or project placement, or a combination of these.	Voluntary. 18-60 year olds unemployed for 6 or more months.	1993-1998
Community Action (CA)	Part-time work experiences on projects on benefit to the local community; job search assistance.	Voluntary. Unemployed for 12 months or more.	1993-1996
1-2-1	Up to six interviews with Job centre advisor as part of guided job search activity.	Mandatory. 18-24 year old unemployed 12 or more months. From April 1997, 2 or more years unemployed.	1994-1998 (replaced by Jobfinder Plus)

Table 7.1 continued

Programme	Content	Participation/Target group	Period
Work-Based Learning for Adults (replacing Work-Based Training for Adults, which in turn had replaced TfW)	Job-focussed and occupational training, self-employment support. Unemployed 6-12 months: up to 6 weeks training. Unemployed 12 months+: up to 12 months training.	Voluntary. 25-63 year old unemployed (6 months +).	1998-1999 (Work-Based Training for Adults) 1999 – continuing
WorkTrials	Up to 3 weeks of no-commitment placement with employer. Jobseekers continue to receive benefits, expenses.	Voluntary. 18 years of age or over. Unemployed for at least 6 months.	1993- continuing
Jobclubs	Job search, job preparation and presentation training; located in disadvantaged areas and town centres.	Voluntary; could last several months (no time limit). Jobseekers out of work for six or more months.	Piloted 1984; expansion and consolidation from 1986; continuing
Job Interview Guarantee	Interview with employer arranged by Employment Service for jobseeker.	Voluntary.	1989 –1999
Workstart	Employer subsidy of £60 per week (first six months) and £30 per week (second six months) for recruiting long-term unemployed.	Voluntary. Piloted in six areas between June 1993 and Mar 1996.	1993 – 1996 (absorbed into Project Work)
Project Work	13 weeks of intensive job search followed by 13 weeks of work placement.	Mandatory pilot scheme. 18-50 year old long-term unemployed (2 or more years).	1996-1998
New Deal for Young People (18-24 years)	Job search advice and monitoring with view to placing participants in paid job. Secondary Options.	Mandatory. 18-24 year old unemployed for six or more months.	1998 – continuing

Table 7.2 Employment impacts by UK labour market programmes (in percentage points difference between programme and comparison/control group)

Programme (author/s)	Evaluation Method	Evaluation Year	Observation Period	Employment Impact
Restart (White and Lakey, 1992)	Random control group/ experimental design	1989-90	1 year[1]	+ 1.8pp
			1.5 year	+ 4.2pp
Employment Training (Payne et al., 1996)	Matched comparison	1993	1 year[1]	+ 3 pp
			3 year[1]	+ 22pp
Employment Action (Payne et al., 1996)	Matched comparison	1993	1 year[1]	- 1pp
			3 year[1]	+ 4pp
Work Trial (White et al., 1997)	Matched comparison	1994/95	0.5 year	+ 34pp
Jobclub (White et al., 1997)	Matched comparison	1995	0.5 year	+ 6pp
Job Interview Guarantee (White et al., 1997)	Matched comparison	1995	0.5 year	+ 11pp
Training for Work (Payne et al., 1999)	Matched comparison	1996-97	1 year[1]	-/-
			2 years[1]	+6pp
			3 years[1]	+12pp
			4 years[1]	+14pp
1-2-1 (Boutall and Knight, 1998)	Random assignment across sample of 15 ES offices	May 1996 – March 1997	0.5 years (after Restart interview)	+6pp

Table 7.2 continued

Programme (author/s)	Evaluation Method	Evaluation Year	Observation Period	Employment Impact
Project Work (Bryson et al., 1998) [2]	Matched area comparison	1996/97	50 weeks[1]	+ 4.3pp
Work-based Learning for Adults (Anderson et a., 2003)	Propensity score matching	2003	12-15 months	SJFT[4] -/- LOT[4] 7pp BET[4] -/-
New Deal for Long-Term Unemployed Pilots (Lissenburgh, 2001)	Propensity score matching	Dec 1998-Feb 1999	4-6 months 10-12 months 16-18 months 22-24 months	+11.7pp +11.8pp +4.5pp +2.9pp
New Deal for Young People[3] (Riley and Young, 2000, p.32, Table 2.5)	Difference-in-difference (econometric modelling)	1999 (quarter 1) 2000 (quarter 1)	April 1998 – April 1999 April 1998 – April 2000	+ 13,000 + 16,000

Note: Evaluation Year refers to the start or sampling period of the evaluation. Observation Period is the period over which impacts were measured. Employment Impact (in percentage points, pp), is the difference between the employment change (in %) experienced by programme participants and by non-participants over the given period. No difference is indicated by -/-.

[1] From start of prior (qualifying) spell of unemployment; otherwise from entry to programme.

[2] This estimate for calculated for only one of the pilot areas (Medway/Maidstone).

[3] Benchmark groups for Difference-in-Difference approach: 25-29 and 30-49 year old unemployed. Impacts exclude government supported trainees; in 000s.

[4] SJFT – Short Job Focussed Training, LOT – Longer Occupational Training, BET – Basic Employability Training

Apart from WBTA/WBLA, just two active labour market programmes of the 1990s survive to the present day, while another (1-2-1) was again replaced by a new programme of essentially similar content (Jobfinder Plus[6]). One of the two surviving programmes is the Work Trials programme, which offers up to three weeks of work placements with employers, without committing the jobseeker or the employer to enter into a contractual employment arrangement after the placement. The other programme consists of Jobclubs, which offer walk-in facilities around the country with access to job search and job preparation training, tools and technology.

Programme Evaluations

The training, placement and job search programmes described in the previous section have been subject to evaluations of their effects on the number or proportion of programme participants taking up paid work. In this section, findings from these evaluations are reported and compared, focussing on employment (Table 7.2). The choice of impact indicator in this section is very much driven by their use in the evaluations. Most evaluations – and all of the schemes included in this comparison – measure and report programme impacts on the employment of participants. Some, but not all, also include estimates of the programmes' effects on participants' receipt of social security benefits. One study also tried to measure impacts on incomes and, unusual for this type of analysis, workplace productivity (Anderson et al., 2003).

Even when limiting estimated programme impacts to those on employment, it is important to acknowledge some of the caveats. This is because the evaluations used variable definitions of the outcome 'employment', which could include any employment, full-time or full-time equivalent employment, self-employment, subsidized or unsubsidized employment, etc.. Unfortunately, some studies are insufficiently clear about the definitions they used and it was not possible to standardize the employment impact indicator. Moreover, the studies varied in the length of the evaluation periods that they used. Five of the twelve programmes listed in Table 7.2 considered the observation period of the evaluation to commence with the start of the spell of unemployment that qualified programme participants for programme entry. This invariably increases the window of observation, although the persons observed might not have been on the programme for all of that time. Other evaluations viewed the observation window as the one starting with entry onto a programme. Allowance should be made for such cases, which would be expected to show less evidence of impact.

Finally, the job training and placement programmes operated in different locations, under variable social and economic conditions, and targeted somewhat

[6] Jobfinder Plus provides mandatory job-focussed interviews for unemployed people aged 25 or over who have been out of work for 18 or more months. A similar service is provided for the same target group by the New Deal for Unemployed People (ND25+). Jobfinder Plus is often perceived as a tool for facilitating the transition onto ND25+; it is not available to individuals already participating in ND25+.

different client groups. Bar conducting another meta-analysis, which is not the objective here, it is impossible to control for these variations, which naturally affects their success. The transferability of evaluation results from one location to another, or from one time (and economic climate) to another, from one client group to another, therefore, cannot be assumed.

The programmes brought together in this review have been evaluated using a range of evaluation techniques, which included random designs (random assignment design), propensity score matching, matched comparison, including matched area comparisons, and econometric modelling based on a difference-in-difference approach. These are among the most stringent evaluation methods available, although none can be said to be entirely infallible and not subject to technically or methodological error. In fact, at least one of the studies, the evaluation of Project Work, encountered substantial problems in the course of the evaluation as a result of low response rates in the follow-up survey of programme participants and gaps and inconsistencies in the administrative data used to assess programme impacts (Bryson et al., 1988). The findings from this study should, therefore, be treated with caution, although they are included in this review.

Bearing these caveats in mind, the following general conclusions can be drawn from comparing the job training and placement programme evaluations in Table 7.3:

- In most instances, employment impacts have been fairly small, but positive. Only the Employment Action (EA) programme, evaluated in 1993, showed a negative impact in the first year, when proportionately fewer programme participants entered employment than non-participants in the control areas. However, this negative impact was reversed after three years when four percentage points more programme participants than non-participants entered employment.
- A small number of programmes were found to have performed rather well. The Employment Training (ET), Work Trial (WT), Job Interview Guarantee (JIG), Training for Work (TfW) programmes all achieved a 'double-digit' employment impact, although in the case of ET and TfW this was not achieved until three years into the observation period. WT and JIG, in contrast, reported these high impacts after just six months.
- Programmes, for which repeated impact measurements are available, apparently improved over time. Thus, the impact of ET increased from three percentage points in Year 1 to 22 percentage points in Year 3. The impact of Restart increased from under two percentage points to just over four percentage points in the relative short interval between the first 12 and 18 months of the evaluation period. The Employment Action (EA) programme also recorded an employment impact of four percentage points after three years, following a negative impact in its first year. TfW's impacts also increased, especially between its second (6pp) and third year (12pp).

- The impacts of training programmes were monitored for longer periods than those of job counselling and advice services, and, over these periods, recorded among the highest impacts.
- Only one of the evaluated programmes sought to increase the employability of participants through 'preparation for work' in the voluntary sector rather than the private sector (Employment Action, EA). Compared to other employer-focussed programmes, in particular its 'twin' Employment Training, EA had much smaller employment impacts.
- More recent evaluation evidence from the WBLA programme appears to contradict some earlier evidence by suggesting that longer, intensive occupational training may be more effective than short job-focussed training, which may last up to six weeks, and also more effective than training in basic employment skills, which typically lasts up to 26 weeks.
- Finally, after one year of monitoring participants, the employment impact of the New Deal for the Long-term Unemployed was broadly similar to that of previous employment placement and activation programmes. The five percentage point increase in employment rates among participants in this programme was higher than that achieved by Restart after the same period (1.8 percentage points), but slightly lower than that achieved by Jobclubs (six percentage points), which have features that are also included in the New Deal. No comparable data are available from Riley and Young's evaluation (2000) of the New Deal for Young People, although their calculations increase in employment among young people of 13,000 to 16,000 as a result of the New Deal. This would be equivalent to an extra 0.5 per cent of young people in employment in the year 2000.

The evaluation findings listed above support the key arguments that have accompanied the transition, in recent years, towards more active labour market policy. As discussed earlier, these arguments include that work placements should receive greater emphasis than training schemes. However, on the basis of above evidence, it would be wrong to dismiss training programmes categorically as ineffective and incapable of helping people to move into employment. Training programmes have, in fact, been able to improve the employment prospects of participants, but they tend to take comparatively more time to achieve placements and do so for fewer people.

A similar point has been made with respect to the UK New Deal for Young People. The Voluntary Sector Option and Environment Task Force component of this programme have proved less effective in ensuring that participants progress into unsubsidized employment outside the New Deal than has the Employment Option (comprising of subsidized work) (Bonjour et al., 2001). Moreover, the intensive job search Gateway component, which is similar in approach to Jobclubs and the Job Interview Guarantee programme, has been effective in channelling job seekers into work (Blundell et al., 2001; Dorsett, 2001).

Because job training programmes take longer to implement, operate and achieve their outcomes, they are more costly than most job-focussed programmes. Evidence reported by Fay and Rabe suggests that costs can be reduced and effectiveness increased by fine-tuning these programmes and delivering them as short specialist courses. However, in the UK, the evaluation of Work-Based Learning for Adults suggested that, by contrast, longer occupational training courses could be relatively more successful than shorter work place-focussed or employability courses. In the light of this somewhat contradictory evidence, more and more detailed research will be required to ascertain the best approach to providing effective training programmes.

US Training Programmes

The finding from UK evaluation that job search and placement programmes produce better outcomes than job training programmes, of course, resonates with the US experience and the findings of the meta-analysis reported in the previous chapters. While several studies have reflected on the effectiveness of training programmes in the US, the findings of just three are reported here. These three are of interest because of their comparative nature and the conclusions they draw from their analyses.

The earliest of the three studies was prepared and published in the late 1990s by Heckman, LaLonde and Smith (Heckman et al., 1999). Although primarily a theoretical review of the methodology of labour market policy evaluation, Heckman et al. also summarize the evaluation findings of prominent US labour market programmes. Relying above all on evaluations and impact estimations of the National JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act) programme (implemented between 1983 and 1998) and the National Supported Work (NSW) Demonstration (1975-1978), the authors found little evidence to suggest that training programmes helped to raise the earnings of programme participants. However, there were exceptions, such as JTPA, which proved to be highly effective programmes, albeit mainly for women:

> Indeed, for economically disadvantaged adult women residing in the US, a case can be made that these programs consistently have been a productive social investment, whose returns are larger than those from schooling. For other groups this conclusion clearly does not hold (Heckman et al., 1999, p.2054).

The authors found the same to be true for their review of some 20 employment and training programmes, which had been evaluated using social experiments.[7]

[7] The discussion by Heckman et al. (1999) of social experiments covered many evaluations also included in our meta-analysis, such as GAIN, Minnesota MFIP and San Diego SWIM (see Chapter 4), as well as others, which did not meet out selection criteria, such as Maine TOPS, Food Stamps Employment & Training Programme. Our meta-analysis was concerned with AFDC programmes only and, for this reason, excluded the Food Stamps

Heckman et al. again stress the effectiveness of such programmes for adult women, but also point out that, while job search assistance 'appears to be the most cost-effective service [...], more expensive WE (work experience, AC) and training programs result in larger absolute earnings gains' (Heckman et al., 1999, p. 2055). They come to the same conclusion for adult males, arguing that 'the evidence suggests that programs that offer training can raise the earnings of economically disadvantaged adult males, but programs that focus on JSA (job search activity, AC) or WE appear to be ineffective or sometimes worse' (Heckman, et al., 1999, pp. 2055-56).

In most instances, low-skilled participants appeared least likely to benefit from welfare-to-work programmes, although some programmes produced larger than average gains. Perhaps counter-intuitively, given the relative effectiveness of training measures just noted, the programmes most likely to help the least skilled were programmes, which included work experience as an important part of their services, rather than emphasising training. In summary, therefore, Heckman et al's review showed that training programmes were able to improve the earnings and employment potential, in particular, of adult women, but work experience was more effective for low-skilled jobseekers.

In the mid-1990s, the second of the three studies highlighted here was published. This review of experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations of training programmes was produced by Rob Fisher (Fisher, 1995) and was more comprehensive, in terms of the number of evaluations that were covered, than the one produced by Heckman and his colleagues. In total, Fisher reviewed 65 voluntary and mandatory programmes implemented between 1973 and 1993, including programmes, which used a mix of human capital development and job search techniques, recording and comparing their impacts over four consecutive quarters. For most programmes, Fisher found that the reported impacts were small, yet typically statistically significant. By the fourth quarter, participants in these training programmes had experienced, on average, a three-percentage point increase in their employment rate (33 per cent among the experimental groups, 30 per cent among the control groups). At the same time, the proportion of programme participants who were in receipt of AFDC was 71 per cent compared to 73 per cent of the control groups.

Among the diverse range of programmes he examines, Fisher noted that, over the four-quarter period, job search interventions showed early positive impacts on employment, whereas basic education programs initially showed negative effects, although these impacts gradually increased, as did those for vocational training and on-the-job training programmes. Fisher's conclusions, in fact, echoed those of the international comparative studies reported earlier in this chapter, which suggested that while training programmes – almost inevitably – have negative impacts in the short term, in the longer term they are capable of producing positive outcomes.

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programmes. Maine's Training Opportunities in the Private Sector (TOPS) programme was omitted because it was open only to applicants rather than mandatory for all AFDC recipients.

Whereas Fisher's study was based on a comparison of evaluations, more recently, Greenberg et al. (2003) undertook a meta-analysis of training programmes, most of which combined a mix of on-the-job training and classroom-based vocational or skills training with job search, remedial education, or subsidized employment in private and public sectors. The authors sought to identify the type of training that offered the best employment prospects from programme participants, although they were not concerned to determine whether training programmes were more effective than work-placements or work-first approaches. Their synthesis included 31 evaluations of 15 voluntary training programmes, which were operated in the US between 1964 and 1988. The earliest programme in their sample was launched with the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA), a national programme, which was aimed at disadvantaged adults and youth and was implemented between 1962-1973. The most recent was the national training programme initiated under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), a national programme, which commenced in 1983 and was run until 1998 when it was replaced by a similar programme. The evaluations covered both national and regional programmes and used a range of evaluation methods, not just random assignment techniques.

Focussing on the earnings impact of training programmes, Greenberg et al.'s analyses found significant differences between the impacts for men, women and young people. In general, training programmes appeared to work best for adult women, but the effectiveness of these programmes in improving the earnings of adult men was at best small. However, even for adult women, the size of the impacts was modest. Classroom-based skills training appeared to have been most effective, except for basic education. Numerous variations in effectiveness among different participant groups and in different socio-economic conditions were apparent.

Yet, the study's most crucial finding was that, despite more than 30 years of implementing and experimenting with different types of training programmes, there was, in fact, no evidence that these programmes had become more effective over time. In spite of a long history of effort, it appeared that the implementation of training programmes had yet to be perfected or that training programmes were destined to produce limited returns. Importantly, more capital-intensive programmes were not necessarily more effective either, although there was some evidence that young people benefited more from more expensive programmes.

Another Perspective: Focus on Costs

All three studies, therefore, agree that US training programmes have had positive impacts, but primarily for women, and that frequently these impacts have been small. The limited return that training programmes offer is a major concern of many critics of active labour market policy in the US and, increasingly, also in the UK. Given their small returns, Heckman (1998) has criticized US training programmes for the low-skilled jobseekers for being, in his view, unreasonably costly. His main argument rests on an analysis of changes in earnings inequality in

the US, the reduction of which he perceives as a key performance indicator of social and economic policy.

Heckman points out that, between 1979 and 1989, the real earnings of male high-school drop-outs and high-school graduates declined by 13 per cent and four per cent respectively, and estimated that some $426 billion in 1989 dollars would be required in human capital investment in order to restore the earnings of these males to their real levels in 1979. Reversing the widening earnings gap would require an additional $1,152 billion in 1989 dollars. The costs would rise even further, if this were attempted for female high-school drop-outs and graduates.

He contrasts these estimates with a review of 13 training programme evaluations, which he concludes have shown only small impacts. Since even mandatory programmes 'produce little long-term gain' (Heckman, 1998, p. 112), Heckman argues that further investment in such programmes, in particular where they primarily attempt to assist low-skilled individuals, is economically unwarranted. Instead, it would be economically more efficient to invest in the post-school training of higher-skilled workers, and he recommends that training should focus on this group of workers and that 'the tax system [should be used] to transfer resources to the less-skilled through wage subsidies …' (Heckman, 1998, p.116).

From an economic point of view, Heckman's suggestion is intuitive and appears to offer an answer to the protracted problem of efficiency in resource allocation in social and economic policy. In fact, within the New Deal for Young People, subsidized employment, the first of the four Options, has proven comparatively more successful in guiding young people into unsubsidized work than any of the other Options (Bonjour et al., 2001). The evidence for the US also suggests that subsidies have a positive impact on employment rates (Katz, 1996; cited in White and Knight, 2002). However, Heckman's scheme is not without flaws. It appears to overlook the social implications and the likely social costs of what is proposed. Abandoning to the training of those with fewer skills will almost inevitably reduce social and occupational mobility. In turn, this is likely to lead to a further segmentation of the labour market, causing itself inefficiencies in the demand and supply of labour.

National Impact Analyses of Welfare-to-Work Programmes

Heckman's reflections on the cost efficiency of job training programmes lead naturally to a recurrent issue among observers of welfare-to-work programmes, namely, the contribution of welfare-to-work programmes to the decline in welfare caseloads in the US. One issue within the US debate about the benefits and costs of welfare-to-work programmes has been the question whether it was national economic forces, rather than the programmes that caused the recorded decline in welfare caseloads.

Leaving aside descriptive studies, which have merely – and rather simplistically – mapped changes in caseloads and asserted that these changes are

attributable to expenditure on welfare-to-work programmes or the extent to which programmes used sanctions (e.g. Rector and Youssef, 1999), three studies stand out that have used more complex econometrical modelling exercizes to determine the interaction between caseloads on the one hand and welfare reform programmes and macro-economic change on the other. The three have produced different results.

The first study, conducted by the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA), reviewed caseload changes between January 1993 and January 1997, when the number of claimants of AFDC declined by 20 per cent or 2.75m (CEA, 1997). The CEA estimated that about 40 per cent of the decline was due to falling unemployment associated with economic expansion and that 31 per cent of the decline resulted from the introduction of statewide welfare reform waivers, which led to the introduction of welfare-to-work programmes across the US. The remaining quarter of the decline was estimated to have been due to other, unspecified factors. Among others, this study controlled for different types of waivers granted to the states, the substantial increase in the generosity of the Earned Income Tax Credit, and the industrial composition of US States' economy. In addition, the model included state-specific time trend variables designed to control for fixed effects.

In 1999, the CEA updated its analysis, this time covering the period from 1996 to 1998, during which the national caseload fell by one third (CEA, 1999). The slightly revised econometric model estimated that 35 per cent to 45 per cent of caseload decline between 1996 and 1998 was due to the effect of the *time-limited* TANF, which had replaced AFDC by that time, and that eight per cent to ten per cent of the decline had been due to general economic improvements and the associated decline in unemployment.[8]

Over time, therefore, the CEA evidence suggested an increased relative effectiveness of welfare reforms over that of macro-economic factors, although the modifications undertaken to the model in the second analysis make a direct comparison impossible. The impact of model specifications on the results of econometric analysis was the main issue raised by Figlio and Ziliak (1999) in their review of the caseload literature in the US. The authors had previously estimated that improved economic conditions had accounted for nearly two-thirds of the decline in caseloads, while welfare reforms were found to have had no significant impact (Ziliak et al., 1997). This point was reiterated in their attempt at reconciling different estimating methods.

Unlike CEA, which used the absolute number of AFDC recipients as the basis for their analysis, Figlio and Ziliak used AFDC caseloads *per capita* as their dependent variable. Moreover, Ziliak et al's original model differed substantially

[8] The study also sought to account for the effect of the minimum wage and for changes in the level of cash benefits granted by states. The minimum wage, which was increased during this phase, was estimated to have accounted for between ten and 16 per cent of the decline in caseloads, while lower cash benefits were calculated to have accounted for between one and five per cent of the decline.

from the CEA's as well as from those used in other studies – for example, Blank (1998) or Moffitt (1987) – in two other respects. First, it used monthly rather than annual state-level caseload data, which gave the model a greater dynamic. Second, the authors included a number of time lags in their model. These variables were used to estimate and control for state dependence, business cycles and the lag in implementing welfare waivers. Figlio and Ziliak concluded that caseloads were slow to respond to changes in unemployment rates, but that macro-economic change ultimately accounted for 75 per cent of the decline in AFDC recipient rates between 1993 and 1996. Welfare reform, on the other hand, was estimated to have had a negative impact, retarding the decline in caseloads by 2.5 per cent.

There have so far been no comparable attempts to measure the macro-economic impact of welfare-to-work programmes in the UK, although the National Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER), commissioned by the Employment Service (reported in NAO, 2002), estimated the New Deal for Young People's (NDYP) net contribution to youth employment and to (reduced) unemployment among young people. It concluded that due to the NDYP in its first two years of operation until March 2000, more than 20,000 young people left unemployment sooner than they otherwise would have. After taking account of the dynamics of youth labour market flows into and out of unemployment, youth unemployment was estimated to have fallen by 35,000 and youth employment had risen by 15,000 as a result of the New Deal (see also Table 7.2).[9] According to the ONS Labour Force Survey, between summer 1998 and summer 2000, employment among 18 to 24 year olds increased by approximately 39,000, from 3,308m to 3,3,47m. NISER's estimate suggests that about 40 per cent of this increase in youth employment was due to the New Deal for Young People.

Conclusion

A view widely held among policymakers, policy analysts and politicians in the UK in the mid- and late-1990s was that training programmes were failing to help their participants obtain employment. In this chapter, it was argued that this view only partially reflected evaluation evidence. However, much of this evidence was still being gathered and several important studies only emerged towards the end of that decade. In the end, the evidence suggested that training programmes did not always fail or prove ineffective when compared to work placement or job counselling services, and were, in fact, able to help participants into paid work. However, they typically took longer to achieve a similar level of effectiveness as work placement programmes. Analysts have argued that whether a training programme succeeded or not frequently depended on the quality of training that was provided, and its intensity. Short courses appeared to work better than long

[9] Allowing for secondary effects of increased job search activity and increased job placement of long-term unemployed youth, NISER estimated that employment among people outside the NDYP target group of 18-24 year olds had increased by about 10,000.

courses, which reduced participants' attachment to the labour market while they were undergoing training. But there is little systematic analysis of the differential effectiveness of different types of training courses. Moreover, a recent evaluation of Work-Based Training for Adults also found positive impacts for longer training courses.

The advantage of programmes that focus work placement rather than training (e.g. *Work-First* programmes) has been their greater flexibility and lower costs. Training programmes are more costly to operate, in particular when managed by public sector bodies, which must pay for premises and training staff (see Chapter 1 for New Deal costs). Work placement programmes transfer these costs to employees, albeit at the risk of low-skilled, low-income individuals not receiving any or much training at all.

Work-First programmes also transfer the decision as to who to train and what skills to train them in to the employer. Whereas this could conceivable raise issues of social equity and social justice, Heckman (1998) has argued that *not* training the low skilled would make economic sense. In the long term, however, this strategy could undermine economic as well as social objectives, particularly if it was to curtail improvements in national productivity through a better-qualified workforce (Haskel and Pereira, 2002).

Finally, the extent to which welfare-to-work programmes have produced net benefits to national economies remains disputed in the US, while there have been few attempt to estimate these benefits in the UK. For the US, the findings of the meta-analysis presented in this book suggest a positive impact of welfare-to-work programmes on caseloads (Chapter 4). However, this impact appears to be small. Moreover, the meta-analysis has shown that impacts diminish over time (Chapter 6). Thus, the measurement of the size of an intervention's impact on welfare caseloads may, ultimately, depend on how long after participants have entered a programme that measurement of the programme impact takes place.

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Item 2:

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Statement on initiation, conduct and direction of conjoint research

The research contained in this publication was conceptualized and conducted jointly by Andreas Cebulla and David Greenberg. It had been initiated by David Greenberg as a follow-up to the research presented in item 1. Andreas Cebulla drafted the manuscript. David Greenberg coordinated the conduct of the statistical analyses, with additional research assistance provided by Stacey Bouchet.

Technical Note

The research described in this article used meta-analysis to synthesise and compare the findings from a range of evaluation studies of welfare to work programs implemented in the USA and in Canada. Meta-analysis is a statistical method of aggregating and estimating the significance of (variations in) impact measurements (Hunter and Schmidt 2004, Lipsey and Wilson 2001). It has been widely used in medical research to compare findings from multiple medical trials and experiments, and to obtain an estimate of the 'true' effect of an intervention on an observed outcome. Its application has become more frequent in policy evaluations that compare multiple impact estimates. By pooling the results from across a range of empirical studies, meta-analysis increases aggregate sample sizes, which creates more robust impact estimates. In addition, meta-analysis can be used to study factors that may influence or are otherwise associated with observed variations in the size of impacts. This is achieved by regressing (independent) explanatory variables on (dependent) impact variables derived from different studies.

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The Effects of Welfare-to-work Programs in the United States: Findings from a Meta-analysis[1]

Andreas Cebulla and *David Greenberg*

Zusammenfassung:

Die Debatte über die Reform des Wohlfahrtsstaates in Deutschland zieht häufig Evaluationen von US-amerikanischen "welfare-to-work"-Programmen heran, um die Argumente für mehr Aktivierung und die Reorganisation wohlfahrtsstaatlicher Strukturen zu beleuchten. Dies ist problematisch, da die dargestellten Beispiele von US-Programmen häufig unvollständig sind. Dieser Artikel fasst die Ergebnisse einer Metaanalyse von 79 US-amerikanischen „welfare-to-work"-Programmen zusammen und stellt eine robuste Einschätzung ihrer Wirksamkeit dar, insbesondere deren Einfluss auf die Anzahl der Sozialleistungsempfänger, die Höhe der Leistungsaufwendung sowie Beschäftigung und Einkommen der Leistungsempfänger. Schlussfolgerungen für das Reformprogramm Deutschlands werden gezogen.

Abstract

The debate about welfare reform in Germany often draws on evaluation evidence from US welfare-to-work programs to argue the case for activation and the organizational re-structuring of the welfare state. This is problematic as the evidence from US welfare-to-work programs is often incomplete. This article summarises findings from a meta-analysis of 79 US welfare-to-work program evaluations, presenting a robust assessment of their effectiveness, specifically their impacts on welfare caseloads and expenditures, and on the employment and the earnings of welfare recipients.

1. Introduction

In 2001, *Wolfgang Ochel* inquired whether welfare-to-work in the United States could become a model for a new welfare program in Germany. While *Ochel's* analysis focused on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which the US uses to supplement the earnings of low-income households, he also reviewed the welfare-to-work program in the US state of Wisconsin as a case study of a new approach to welfare that appeared to be very successful in reducing benefit caseloads and helping welfare recipients make the transition into work. *Ochel* concluded that Germany might benefit from adopting Wisconsin's policy of 'activation', which requires welfare recipients to actively seek paid work or face the loss of benefits, a policy that has become the cornerstone of welfare reform programs across the United States.

Although Wisconsin's welfare-to-work programs was highly publicised, catching the attention of policymakers and welfare analysts both inside and outside the US, most other US states also experimented with welfare reform during the 1990s and other welfare-to-work programs have also made headlines, most notably those in Riverside, California, and Portland, Oregon (see *Greenberg* et al., 2005a). Contributions to the welfare reform debate in Germany, and elsewhere, continue to draw on evaluation evidence from US programs to assess the local case for welfare reform, specifically, the role of activation and the organizational re-structuring of the welfare state (*Klammer/Tillmann,* 2002; *Klammer/Leiber,* 2004; *Sinn* et al., 2002). The report by the Hartz Commission, which set the agenda for recent modifications to the German welfare system, cited international policy and practice to support its arguments for these changes (BMWA, 2002).

Drawing on international evidence to assess the likely benefits of reform policies in a country is inherently difficult because one cannot assume that a policy is immediately transferable from one political system and policy context to another. As used in Germany, the evidence that has been drawn upon to support a case for reform may also be problematic. For example, the evidence from US welfare-to-work programs has often been incomplete or biased because it was based on a small number of possibly unrepresentative case studies. Indeed, contributions to the debate about welfare reform policy in Germany continue to draw rather selectively on the US experience, all too often referencing only the case of welfare reform in Wisconsin, and thereby overlooking the diversity of US reform programs and of the socio-economic contexts in which they took place (e.g. *Allmendinger* et al., 2005; *Koch* et al., 2005). Moreover, the information available about the effectiveness of welfare-to-work reform programs in the US has itself been criticised for being insufficient, in particular, by failing to indicate the long-term effects of welfare-to-work programs and how specific program features influence program effects on welfare receipts and earnings (*Ochel,* 2004).

This article aims to help fill some of these gaps by summarising findings from comprehensive and methodologically rigorous

[1] We thank the two anonymous referees for important commentaries.

evaluations of US welfare-to-work programs. The analysis presented here offers new insights into the effectiveness of US welfare-to-work programs. US welfare-to-work programs are probably the most vigorously evaluated reform programs in any country, both in terms of their numbers and the time periods over which they have typically been evaluated. Moreover, most of the evaluations have been based on classical random assignment experimental evaluation designs. However, the wealth of information that is available from these evaluations needs to be brought together and analyzed systematically. We use meta-analysis, which is described in a little more detail below, to do this.

US welfare-to-work programs provide various combinations of vocational training, remedial education, "work experience" positions at government or non-profit agencies, aid in job search, financial incentives to find jobs, and time limits on the receipt of benefits. Initially, most of them sought to reduce the number of recipients of the major US cash transfer program for low-income lone parents – Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).[2] Although two-parent households that received AFDC were also assigned to welfare-to-work programs, these families comprise less than 10 percent of the AFDC population.

Thus, historically, the major target group for US welfare-to-work programs was much narrower than those who would be targeted by welfare-to-work programs applied to German social security programs. However, in recent years, welfare-to-work initiatives have been increasingly incorporated into US programs that serve groups other than lone parents (e.g. the disabled and the unemployed). Nonetheless, the preponderance of evaluation evidence on US welfare-to-work programs that is based on an experimental design pertains to AFDC households, and it is these evaluations that are the focus of this article.

2. Evaluation, Meta-analysis and Data

Random assignment evaluations of welfare-to-work programs for AFDC recipients began in the early 1980s and peaked in the 1990s. For purposes of these evaluations random assignment was used to assign eligible AFDC recipients to either a program group or a control group. Those assigned to the control group could continue to receive previously existing services, but were excluded from the new scheme that was being assessed. Program effects, which are often referred to as "impacts", are measured as differences between the program and the control groups in various outcomes. Most of the evaluations estimated the effects of welfare-to-work programs on the following four outcomes, which are also the focus of our study:

- the receipt of welfare,
- the amount of AFDC benefits received,
- employment status, and
- earnings.

Meta-analysis provides a set of statistical tools that allow one to determine whether the variation among impact estimates from evaluations of welfare-to-work programs is statistically significant and, if it is, to examine the sources of this variation through regression analysis. Although we provide some information about the techniques we use, there is not the space here for an in-depth introduction to meta-analysis. However, good descriptions can be found in *Hedges* (1984), *Rosenthal* (1991), *Cooper/Hedges* (1994) and *Lipsey/Wilson* (2001). Details about the analytical approach taken in this study can be obtained from *Cebulla* et al. (2005) and *Greenberg* et al. (2005b).

The main objective of our study is to explore the factors that best explain differences in impacts among individual welfare-to-work programs. The factors that we explored are (a) variations in the services received, (b) differences in the characteristics of those who participated in each program, and (c) variations in the socio-economic environments in which the programs operated.

The analysis is based on data extracted from the published evaluation reports and official sources and entered into a database for analysis. For purposes of the analysis discussed in this article, we converted the monetary amounts we used to year 2000 US dollars. The database records published and, in some instances, unpublished impact estimates from all the random assignment evaluations of welfare-to-work programs for AFDC recipients that were conducted in the US by the end of 2000. As indicated by *Table 1,* most of the evaluations were of mandatory welfare-to-work programs – that is, programs that required AFDC recipients to participate or face sanctions that would reduce or eliminate their benefits for a specific period of time – and it is these evaluations that provide the focus of this article.[3] The voluntary programs typically offered more expensive services and were more costly to run than mandatory programs. Moreover, more of the persons assigned to the program group actually received services. They were, therefore, substantially different in their content from mandatory programs, which was one reason for their exclusion from our analyses. They also tended to lead to greater increases in participants' earnings and greater decreases in their AFDC receipt. The principal reason for their exclusion, however, was the high risk of pre-selection bias among participants of voluntary programs, which reduced their comparability with mandatory programs (cp. *Heckman/Smith,* 1999).

Impact estimates from evaluations of mandatory welfare-to-work programs are typically available for several consecutive years and/or calendar quarters (for more details about the construction of the database, see *Cebulla* et al., 2005). Some of the evaluations were conducted at more than one site and some of these sites experimented with more than one type of welfare-to-work program. Moreover, sometimes one-parent and two-parent AFDC participants were separately evaluated. Counting impact estimates for each different program, each different site, and one- and two-parent families separately, the database contains impact estimates for 79 mandatory welfare-to-work interventions. Beside estimates of impacts, the database contains information about the characteristics of the program and control groups, the type of services that were provided, and the characteristics of the sites at which the programs operated.[4]

3. U.S. Welfare-to-work Programs, Participants and Environments

The evaluated mandatory welfare-to-work reform programs in our database changed the structure and the type of welfare service provided AFDC recipients, although members of control groups sometimes received similar services. Their singularly greatest contribution was to increase participation in job search activities. In a typical mandatory welfare-to-work program in our database, nearly a third (31percent) of all the individuals assigned to the program group participated in job search activities at one point during their time on welfare, as compared to only 10 percent of the controls.[5] Thus, the average program increased participation in job search by 21 percentage points.

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[2] As a result of legislation passed in 1996, AFDC was replaced by the Transition Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Because the evaluations of most of the welfare-to-work programs we examine in this article were implemented prior to TANF replacing AFDC, we use the AFDC acronym throughout our discussion.

[3] Wisconsin's Self-Sufficiency First/Pay for Performance Program, which is listed as a mandatory program in Table 2, was excluded from the analysis because the evaluation of this program was subject to serious technical problems.

[4] A public use copy of the database can be obtained from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) of the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

[5] Mandatory US welfare reform programs reached far less than all welfare recipients. In some instances, this was because welfare recipients had moved off benefits before they could participate in the program. Sometimes, welfare recipients were exempt from par-

Table 1

U.S. Welfare-to-work Evaluation Included in the Database

Program Title	*Short Program Name*	*Evaluator / Author*	*Mid-point of Random Assignment*
Mandatory			
Greater Avenues for Independence Program	GAIN (California)	MDRC	1989
Job Search and Work Experience in Cook County	Cook County	MDRC	1985
Community Work Experience Demonstrations	West Virginia	MDRC	1983
WORK Program	Arkansas	MDRC	1983
Employment Initiatives	Baltimore	MDRC	1983
Saturation Work Initiative Model	SWIM (San Diego)	MDRC	1985
Employment Services Program	Virginia	MDRC	1984
Project Independence (Florida's JOBS Program)	Florida	MDRC	1991
Jobs First	Connecticut	MDRC	1996
The Family Transition Program	FTP (Florida)	MDRC	1994
The Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN Evaluation	Los Angeles	MDRC	1996
The San Diego Job Search and Work Experience Demonstration	San Diego	MDRC	1983
National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies	NEWWS	MDRC	1993
Minnesota Family Investment Program	MFIP	MDRC	1994
Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project.	Vermont	MDRC	1995
Teenage Parent Demonstration	Teenage Parents	Mathematica Policy Research (MPR)	1988
Wisconsin Welfare Employment Experiment	Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin	1988
Ohio Transitions to Independence Demonstration	Ohio	Abt Associates	1990
The Indiana Welfare Reform Program	Indiana	Abt Associates	1995
Saturation Work Program.	Philadelphia	PA Department of Public Welfare	1986
To Strengthen Michigan Families	TSMF (Michigan)	Abt Associates	1993
A Better Chance	ABC (Delaware)	Abt Associates	1996
Virginia Independence Program	VIEW	MPR	1996
Family Investment Program	FIP (Iowa)	MPR	1994
Personal Responsibility and Employment Program	PREP (Colorado)	The Centers of the University of Colorado	1995
Self-Sufficiency First / Pay for Performance Program	SSF / PFP (Wisconsin)	Institute for Research on Poverty, University of WI	1995
California Work Pays Demonstration Program (financial incentive only)	CWPDP	UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research	1993
Child Assistance Program	CAP (New York)	Abt Associates	1989
Voluntary			
Supported Work	SW	MDRC	1976
Homemaker Health Aide	HHA	Abt Associates	1984
Training Opportunities in the Private Sector Program	TOPS (Maine)	MDRC	1984
New Jersey Grant Diversion Project	NJGD	MDRC	1985
New York State Comprehensive Employment Opportunities Support Centers Program	CEOSC	Abt	1989

The programs' contributions to other activities, in particular human resource development activities, were considerably smaller. On average, they increased participation in basic education by just seven percentage points (to 16.5 percent) and in vocational training and work experience by less than three percentage points (to 20 percent and 6 percent, respectively). Indeed, some individual programs with a work-first emphasis actually had a negative impact on participation in these activities. The mandatory nature of the welfare-to-work programs is exemplified by the six percentage point average increase in the sanction rate that resulted from them.

The characteristics of participants in the mandatory welfare-to-work programs in our database reflect the focus of these programs on lone parents. Thus, in a typical evaluated intervention, over 90 per cent of the participants were female, the average age of family heads in the target population was 31 and about a quarter of the participants was under 25. A typical family had

ticipation – for instance, if they had very young children or lived in remote areas. Program administrators also sometimes failed to enforce participation requirements, especially in the case of the earlier welfare-to-work programs.

about two children and around half the families had at least one child less than six years of age. On average, 36 percent of the program target population was black, 41 percent was white, and 17 percent was Hispanic. Just over half of the family heads in the target population of a typical evaluated intervention had obtained a high school degree or diploma, which in the US is usually obtained after 12 years of schooling, and this varied little across the evaluated intervention. Finally, slightly less than half the family heads had been employed during the year before random assignment, with some variation among the interventions.

Although the characteristics of the program sites, which usually pertain to the county or metropolitan area in which the welfare-to-work programs in our database were implemented, varied across the interventions, on average, they only differed from those for the nation as a whole with respect to the size of the local manufacturing sector and the prevailing poverty rates, and even these differences were not great. Thus, in general, the sites at which the evaluated programs were located appear roughly representative of the US as a whole.

At the site of a typical intervention, the annual change in manufacturing employment, which serves as an indicator of the availability of jobs, was just over one percent and was negative in many of the sites. Manufacturing employment accounted for 13 percent of total employment at the sites on average. Nationally, manufacturing employment slightly declined (by –0.01 percent) and, when averaged between 1982 and 2000, manufacturing employment accounted for about 9 percent of employment.

Poverty rates, which are indicative of a range of factors reflecting both individual characteristics (e.g. lone parenthood and educational attainment) and site characteristics (job availability, commercial investment, and racial composition), averaged 14.6 percent, which was slightly higher than the national average of 13.6 percent. Thus, the average poverty rate indicates a slightly higher level of disadvantage in the program areas than in the US as a whole, while the change in manufacturing employment suggests slightly more buoyant labour markets.

Other program area indicators, including unemployment rates (the program site average was 6.4 percent) and annual median household income (the program site average was $40,237 in year 2000 dollars), were almost identical to the US national figures during 1982 to 2000. However, to the extent that AFDC recipients were concentrated in poor and economically weak neighbourhoods within metropolitan areas or counties, as is frequently the case, these figures disguise the full extent of their relative disadvantage.

4. Program Inpats

To what extent did mandatory US welfare-to-work programs affect the AFDC benefits, employment and earnings of those assigned to them? To answer this question, we analyzed our four impacts measures (earnings, employment, AFDC receipt and AFDC amount) at four points in time, namely the 3rd, 7th, 11th, and 15th calendar quarters after random assignment. Our analysis is based on weighted averages of the impact estimates available for these four quarters, with the weights, as recommended by the meta-analysis literature (see, for example, *Cooper/Hedges* 1994 or *Lipsey/Wilson* 2001), the inverse of the variance of the impact estimates.[6] The analysis suggests that program impacts were typically modest in magnitude, although, on average, positive:[7]

- *Earnings* among program group members rose by an average of about 10 percent compared to controls, adding $74 during the 3rd quarter after random assignment, on average, and $115 during the 15th quarter, on average.
- Around a third of control group members were employed in each quarter. Welfare-to-work programs appeared to increase *employment* among program group members by about three percentage points, on average.
- A typical evaluated welfare-to-work program reduced the *amount of AFDC payments* received by those assigned to the program by $38 in the 3rd quarter after random assignment and by $75 in the 15th quarter. As the total average amount received by control group members during this period declined from $1,033 to under $460,[8] this is equivalent to a reduction of four percent and 16 percent, respectively.
- The evaluated programs reduced the *rate of AFDC receipt* by 1.5 percentage points, on average, in the 3rd quarter and by 4.4 percentage points, on average, in the 15th quarter. During this period, the percentage of controls receiving AFDC payments declined from nearly 81 percent to 41 percent.

Further analysis indicates that a typical mandatory welfare-to-work program had a positive effect on all four impact measures for five to seven years after random assignment, although the impacts began to fade after two or three years (see *Greenberg* et al., 2004, and *Greenberg* et al., 2005b, for details).

5. Determinants of Program Impacts

Although overall impacts of welfare-to-work programs may have been modest, they varied substantially between programs and program sites, and some programs, notably those at Riverside (California) and Portland (Oregon), have become widely known for achieving impacts that substantially exceeded the average (*Greenberg* et al., 2005). But what accounts for this variation in impacts?

To establish which program, participant or environmental factors affected program impacts positively or negatively, we conducted a weighted regression analysis in which the four impact measures served as dependent variables and, as prescribed by the meta-analysis literature, the inverse of the variance of the impact estimates were used as weights (see footnote 6). The explanatory variables in the regressions were the measures of program, target population, and sites characteristics discussed earlier, with program impacts on the receipt of services measured as differences between program group and control group participation rates. Because only a limited number of impact estimates were available, it was necessary to restrict the number of explanatory variables. However, particular emphasis is given to capturing the characteristics of the intervention as completely as possible because policy makers have considerable control over the design of welfare-to-work programs but little control over most contextual factors at the program sites. Therefore, they would presumably be more interested in how the former affects program impacts than the latter.

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6 The reason for weighting by the inverse of the variance of the impact estimates is that estimates of the impacts were obtained by using samples from the evaluated programs' target populations and are, therefore, subject to sampling error. The variance of an estimated impact, which typically becomes smaller as sample size increases, indicates the size of the sampling error. By using the inverse of the variance of the impact estimates as weights, estimates that are obtained from larger samples, and, hence, more reliable, contribute more to the average than estimates that are less reliable.

7 In each evaluation, impacts were measured across *all* members of the program and control groups who were randomly assigned. Thus, individuals who moved off AFDC altogether in the course of the evaluation period remained included in the impact analysis, as did persons who did not work at all during the evaluation period and members of the program group who did not actively participate in any of the services provided by the evaluated programs.

8 Although a person's AFDC receipts may decline over time as her financial and employment circumstances change, this large drop in average AFDC receipts between the 3rd and the 15th quarter was mainly due to control group members moving off the AFDC rolls without the aid of the evaluated interventions but remaining in the follow-up sample.

Although we conducted this analysis for the same four calendar quarters as those for which we computed the mean impacts discussed in Section 4, for reasons of space, we focus our reporting here to quarter 7, which is the one for which we have the largest number of impact estimates.[9] However, except when otherwise noted, the main results hold for all four quarters. The weighted regression estimates for the 7th quarter are presented in *Table 2*. We treat all four impacts measures in these regressions as positive values if the impact was in the intended direction. Thus, positive earnings and employment impacts indicate that an evaluated program improved labour market outcomes, while positive impacts on AFDC receipt and payment amounts imply reductions in the AFDC rolls and AFDC payments. By reporting all four impacts as positive values, their regression coefficients have the same sign if an explanatory variable affects the different impact measures in the anticipated direction. We first report the effects of program design characteristics on the impacts and then move on to the effects of the participant and site characteristics.

Table 2

Regression Models of the Impacts of Welfare-to-work Programs on four Outcomes in Quarter 7

(Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Earnings	% employed	Amount of AFDC	% receiving AFDC
Constant	–5.523 (141.25)	–5.193* (3.08)	–177.367*** (58.87)	–1.755 (3.08)
Intervention impact on % sanctioned	6.337*** (1.92)	0.180*** (0.04)	5.842*** (0.83)	0.181*** (0.05)
Intervention impact on % participated in job search	1.711** (0.85)	0.068*** (0.02)	1.093*** (0.39)	0.026 (0.02)
Intervention impact on % participated in basic education	–1.873 (1.24)	–0.014 (0.03)	–0.947 (0.64)	–0.095*** (0.03)
Intervention impact on % participated in vocational education	1.579 (2.88)	–0.047 (0.07)	4.303*** (1.28)	0.131* (0.07)
Intervention impact on % participated in work experience	–2.763 (2.74)	–0.037 (0.05)	–4.835*** (1.30)	–0.157*** (0.06)
Intervention included financial incentive = 1	–44.170* (23.06)	–0.097 (0.56)	–111.666*** (9.80)	–5.527*** (0.63)
Intervention included time limit = 1	27.207 (31.26)	1.368 (0.83)	64.701*** (13.10)	3.301*** (0.81)
Number of years since 1982	–1.452 (4.22)	0.051 (0.10)	–4.144* (2.17)	–0.249** (0.10)
Two-parent family target group = 1	38.581 (39.22)	–2.146*** (0.80)	4.649 (23.10)	–3.722*** (0.88)
Average age of target group	5.413 (4.04)	0.247*** (0.09)	5.065*** (1.82)	0.159 (0.10)
% of target group with recent employment	–1.041 (0.87)	–0.014 (0.02)	–0.483 (0.36)	–0.021 (0.02)
Annual % change in local manufacturing employment	7.693** (3.15)	0.129* (0.07)	6.925*** (1.54)	0.202*** (0.07)
Poverty rate	–4.774** (2.26)	–0.129** (0.05)		
Maximum AFDC payment for a family of 3			0.175*** (0.03)	0.00** (0.00)
Adjusted *R*-squared	0.239	0.221	0.407	0.447
Number of observations	79	76	71	75

***significant at the 1-percent level; **significant at the 5-percent level; *significant at the 10-percent level.

5.1 The Effects of Program Characteristics

The regression analysis highlights the differential effects on impacts of human resource development measures, which emphasize training and education, and the so-called work-first approach, which stresses job search activities and moving welfare recipients into paid work as rapidly as possible, while minimising participation in job training, basic education and work experience. It also indicates that increased sanctioning, which has been a key feature of many mandatory activation programs in the US, especially those taking the work-first approach, contributed to greater program impacts.

As shown in *Table 2,* an increase in the use of *sanctions* and in participation in *job search,* which occurred in most of the evaluated welfare-to-work programs, had a strong positive effect on impacts across the four indicators. For example, a one percentage point increase in sanctions contributed $6.34 to a program participant's earnings, on average and a one percentage point increase in participation in job search contributed $1.71, on average. Similar pattern are observable for the other three impacts. Crucially, the positive effect of job search on program impacts persisted throughout the observation periods. However, the positive effect of sanctions decreased and became statistically non-significant in later quarters 11 and 15.

By contrast, training measures, which include *basic education, vocational education,* and *work experience,* did not have a statistically significant effect on program impacts on employment and earnings. Although they do usually have a significant effect on program impacts on the receipt of AFDC and AFDC

[9] The regression estimates for all four quarters are available in *Greenberg* et al., 2005b, which is available at http: // www.irp.wisc.edu / publications / dps / pdfs / dp131205.pdf.

payments, the signs of these coefficients are often negative, perhaps implying that participation in these activities tends to hold some individuals on the AFDC rolls longer than would otherwise be the case. The preponderance of negative signs on the coefficients on the basic education and work experience indicates that, if anything, increases in participation in these activities tends to decrease the impacts of welfare-to-work programs. There is some evidence in *Table 2* that increasing participation in vocational education has a positive effect on some of the impact measures. However, the coefficients are often negative in other quarters and are not robust to other regression specifications (results not shown). We conclude that the overall evidence provides little support for making vocational education a major component of welfare-to-work programs.

About one-third of the mandatory interventions tested *financial incentives.* These typically increased the earnings disregards in computing AFDC benefits and, on average, paid about $250 to a single mother with two children during her 13th month in a full-time job. Financial incentives exerted a negative influence on impacts on the receipt of AFDC and on the amount of AFDC received. This finding is unsurprising given the design of these incentives. What is surprising is that the financial incentive coefficients are negative in sign and (marginally) statistically significant in the earnings regression. This may be the result of the increased earnings disregards reducing the work effort of some employed AFDC recipients who, because of the financial incentives, are still able to maintain their overall level of income even when working fewer hours (cp. *Blank* et al., 2000)[10]. The objective of financial incentives is, of course, to encourage employment and thereby increase earnings, but they do not appear to do so.

Time limits, which were tested by about one-in-six of the evaluated welfare-to-work interventions, had a positive effect on impacts, increasing employment and earnings and reducing the prevalence of AFDC receipt and the amount of AFDC payments. However, in the 7th quarter after random assignment, this effect is statistically significant only for the latter two indicators, although the impact on employment is statistically significant in the 11th and 15th quarters.

The purpose of the variable measuring the *number of years since 1982*[11] is to determine whether newer programs were more successful than older ones because policy makers had learned from past experiences. Unfortunately, a clear conclusion cannot be drawn from the regressions appearing in *Table 2.* When statistically significant, the coefficients on this variable are negative, implying that welfare-to-work programs have become less effective over time, but in other regressions for other time periods, which are not shown in *Table 2,* the coefficient is often positive.

Welfare-to-work programs also appeared to be less effective with respect to serving *two-parent families* than serving one-parent families, who made up the majority of the target population. This was certainly the case with respect to employment and AFDC receipt impacts, the two regressions in which the coefficients are statistically significant.

5.2 Effects of Participant Characteristics

Characteristics of the target group have a statistically significant effect on the impacts in only two instances. The impacts on the employment rate of AFDC recipients and on the amount of AFDC they received both increased with the *average age* of the target group. Note again that an increase in the impact on the amount of AFDC payments means that payment amounts fall. The consistently negative signs of the regression coefficients on *;recent employment experience* (where 'recent' is defined as during the year prior to random assignment) suggest that, if anything, welfare-to-work programs are more successful in helping individuals without recent work experience into employment, because those with recent work experience are able to find jobs on their own. However, none of the coefficients on this variable are statistically significant. Nonetheless, further analysis that we conducted also suggested that welfare-to-work programs are more effective in serving relatively more disadvantaged caseloads – for example, long-term (rather than short-term) AFDC beneficiaries and persons already receiving AFDC (rather than new applicants for benefits).

5.3 Effects of Site Characteristics

Unlike the personal characteristics of program participants, the characteristics of the locations in which welfare-to-work programs took place had a strong and consistent effect on program impacts. Programs implemented in areas enjoying *annual increases in manufacturing employment* typically achieved greater impacts than areas with static or declining manufacturing employment. Insofar as manufacturing growth is an indicator of an expanding local economy, welfare-to-work programs seem to work better in more buoyant economies.

A region's *poverty rate,* on the other hand, exerted a significant, adverse effect on program impacts on earnings and the employment rate. A high poverty rate implies both the unavailability of jobs at the places and times the evaluated interventions operated and the poor quality of those jobs that were available. In the US, a high poverty rate is also indicative of a population that has a relatively high proportion of non-whites and is less likely to have a high school degree. The negative coefficients suggest that the impacts of welfare-to-work programs on earnings and employment are lower when there are fewer jobs available, those that are available are unattractive, and the population at the program site is more disadvantaged.

We included a variable in the AFDC payment and receipt regressions that measured the *maximum payment of AFDC* for which a single mother with two children and no earnings was eligible in order to assess the effect of the generosity of welfare provisions on program impacts. As indicated in *Table 2,* this variable has a positive, statistically significant effect on both the amount of AFDC received and the proportion of program participants participating in AFDC. The finding for the second of these impact measures is contrary to our initial expectation. We had expected AFDC generosity to be negatively associated with program impacts on the size of the AFDC rolls, both because program break-even levels are higher under more generous programs and because welfare recipients may be more hesitant to leave the rolls when benefits are more generous. However, the positive coefficient on the receipt of AFDC in *Table 2* does not occur in the 3rd and 15th quarters (although it does in the 11th) and is not robust to alternative regression specifications (results not shown).

6. Conclusions

Several conclusions of relevance to policy-making emerge from our analysis.

First, the meta-analysis suggests that although the impacts of a typical welfare-to-work program remain positive for five to seven years, they are extremely modest. By themselves they do little to reduce the size of welfare rolls or improve the lives of most persons assigned to them and must, therefore, be coupled with other policies to be fully effective. Second, the meta-analysis clearly supports the focus of welfare-to-work programs on

[10] More successful programs that also offered financial incentives, such as Canada's Self-Sufficiency Program, required participants to work full-time before they benefited from the incentives. This reduced, if not eliminated, the risk of participants cutting back their hours worked. Because we examine US programs that are mandatory, the Canadian program, which was voluntary, is not included in our analysis.

[11] The oldest of the evaluated programs included in the analysis, the San Diego Job Search and Work Experience Demonstration, began in 1982.

job search. Activities that emphasize human capital development appear less effective than job search activities coupled with sanctioning when individuals refuse to participate. They are also much more costly to provide. Third, although the introduction of time limits seems to have increased program impacts, financial incentives appear to have perverse effects, decreasing program impacts on AFDC participation and payment and failing to increase employment and earnings impacts. Nonetheless, they do succeed in increasing the incomes of the working poor. Still, if financial incentives fail to increase work effort, safeguards or modified incentives may be required, such as tying financial incentives to engaging in full-time work. Fourth, welfare-to-work programs are more likely to be effective in locations that are enjoying job-growth and in which poverty rates are low. Thus, it may make sense to allocate additional resources to welfare-to-work programs when and where labour market conditions are favourable. Special measures and the judicious application and implementation of welfare-to-work programs may be called for when and where the opposite conditions prevail.

Because of their modest effect, welfare-to-work programs must go hand in hand with macro-economic and fiscal measures designed to stimulate domestic demand, international competitiveness and job creation. In addition, reforms ought to allow regional and local experimentation in the nature of their provisions. The meta-analysis has shown that different program features have different effects, and there is unlikely to be a "one-fits-all" model of a welfare-to-work program. Those designing welfare-to-work programs should explicitly acknowledge their limits, as well as their potential, in the right economic environment. There is unlikely to be a solution to sustained welfare caseloads without a suitable mix of welfare policy innovations and micro-and macro-economic changes, just as, in fact, occurred in the US in the 1990s (Stiglitz, 2003).

If recent economic thinking (*Layard* et al., 1996; *Boeri* et al., nd.) is correct, then a focus on re-integrating long-term unemployed into the labour market would stimulate overall job growth, rather than merely lead to employment substitution, as some have suggested. However, the focus of labour market policy would also need to shift from simple reintegration to reintegration-*and*-retention in employment, that is, to ensuring that job and earnings conditions and household income are sufficiently rewarding to encourage formerly unemployed persons to stay with their new jobs and not revert to welfare dependency. This is, indeed, a key concern of the latest wave welfare-to-work program reforms in the United Kingdom, as well as the US (*Kellard* et al., 2002; *Bloom* et al., 2002).

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Statement on initiation, conduct and direction of conjoint research

The research contained in this publication was conducted and directed by Andreas Cebulla. The research was part of a wider comparative study that had been initialized by a consortium of European researchers, including the book editors, Eleni Apospori and Jane Millar. Andreas Cebulla coordinated and managed the UK part of the research, and drafted the manuscript jointly with Laura Adelman. Laura Adelman also assisted with the conduct of the statistical analyses.

The Dynamics of Social Exclusion in Europe

Comparing Austria, Germany, Greece, Portugal and the UK

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Contents

7. The dynamics of poverty and deprivation in the UK

Laura Adelman and Andreas Cebulla

INTRODUCTION

Welfare in the United Kingdom is based on the premise of minimum state provision. The public sector-provided social safety-net serves as a last resort, whilst the state role is seen as being to enable citizens to retain and improve per personal welfare through work (Bennett and Walker, 1998). Social security is generally low-value and financed largely through national taxation. This approach sets the welfare regime of the UK apart from corporate welfare systems such as in Austria and Germany which combine active labour market policies with comparatively high social security protection (Standing, 2000). It is also unlike the system of 'Latin Rim' countries (Leibfried, 1992), such as Greece and Portugal, as it provides universal coverage although this universality is achieved at the expense of residual low benefit level.

Welfare spending in the UK has remained fairly stable during the last three decades amounting to between 21 per cent and 25 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (Hills, 1998). However the demand for welfare service and social security increased, often cyclically, as a result of demographic and economic changes, such as population ageing, growth in lone parenthood and unemployment, and the opening of entitlement to newly eligible social groups (Walker and Howard 2000). In the light of rising caseloads, in particular amongst groups such as lone parents, policy makers became concerned about potentially rising costs but also about the threat of welfare dependency. In response, key social security provisions in the country were curtailed. Some of the service and benefit reductions had a direct impact upon risk groups. Entitlement to lncome Support and Housing Benefit amongst young adult under the age of 25 were either removed altogether or substantially reduced. One-parent benefit and a premium in Income Support, both payable to lone parents, were abolished. Sick or disabled people were subjected to more stringent ability-to-work tests, while the abolition of the earnings link to pensions eventually led to a steady erosion of the value of the state pension. All groups, with the exception of the retired, have also been targets for welfare-to-work programmes (see Trickey and Walker, 2000).

Between 1979 and 1998/9, the rate of income poverty (measured as below 50 per cent of mean household income) rose from 8 per cent to 24 per cent of families (DSS, 1999). The 'Breadline Britain' survey, undertaken in 1985, 1990 and again in 1999, furthermore revealed an increase in deprivation of 'socially-perceived necessities', such as food and clothes, and social interaction with friends and family (Gordon et al., 2000). While the 1985 survey estimated that 14 per cent of households were living in deprivation, by 1999 this had increased to 24 per cent.

Although valuable in their own right, until the 1990s, poverty and deprivation indicators were typically point-in-time measurements. They did not, and could not, track people's experiences over

time in order to explore changes in poverty and deprivation as they affected the same group or groups of people. Panel studies have made longitudinal measurements feasible. In the UK, the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) was established in 1991, running annual surveys tracking the same individuals and therefore allowing detailed analysis of changes over time in the UK in the 1990s. The introduction of the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) also in 1991 allows researchers today to investigate social and economic developments across European Community countries and thus to compare income poverty and deprivation risks across borders.

This chapter examines the extent of income poverty and deprivation amongst risk groups in the UK between 1995 and 1996, presenting, in tum, evidence for young adults, lone mothers, sick or disabled people and the retired. The aim is also to describe movements into and out of poverty and deprivation, and the characteristics of people in these groups most likely to change their poverty or deprivation status from one year to the other. The impact of poverty on the social relations of risk groups is also explored. The findings highlighted the frequent independent effect of life-cycle and risk transitions on the risk of poverty and deprivation.

In comparison to the other countries in this study, the dynamic analysis revealed high levels of deprivation of consumer durables and of household and personal necessities, that is, consumer or private goods. Housing deprivation and deprivation of housing amenities, deprivation mainly concerning public goods, were comparatively low. In fact, low rates of housing and housing amenity deprivation in the UK prevented their detailed analyses owing to small numbers.

The risk groups accounted for variable proportions of the total house- hold or individual population in the UK. Young adults and retired people were by far the largest groups, each accounting for 32 per cent of UK households in 1995, and 21 per cent and 26 per cent of the country's adult population (Table 7.1). Lone mothers, with at least one child under the age of 16 or in full-time education, constituted 6 per cent of households and 3 per cent of the adult population. Sick or disabled people also made up a small risk group, totalling 6 per cent of British households and 5 per cent of the adult population.

Table 7.1 Size of risk groups, UK, ECHP, 1995

Risk group	**% of households**	**% of adult population**
Young adults	32	21
Lone mothers	6	3
Sick or disabled people	6	5
Retired people	32	26

Note: All ECHP tables are based on weighted sample, see Chapter 1.

YOUNG ADULTS

The transition from youth to adulthood involves a series of fundamental changes in the lifestyles of young people. Young adults leave the parent al home and learn to live independently. As compulsory education comes to an end, young people choose between entering the labour market, continuing in further and higher education, or inactivity. Early labour market experiences are typically unstable, subject to frequent changes in employment, a high risk of unemployment and fluctuating earnings (Endean, 1998). Instability in early working life, in particular extended periods of unemployment, adversely affect young people's employment prospects in later life (Gregg, 1999).

Income Poverty

Between 1995 and 1996, 14per cent of young adults were in income poverty in both years (Table 7.2). Whilst 6 per cent of young people became poor from one year to the next, a further 6 per cent ceased to be poor. These poverty rates for young adults differed little from the poverty rates for the all-adult population.

However, these figures masked the greater frequency of movement into and out of income poverty amongst young people. On the one hand, proportionately more young adults (8 per cent) than all adults (6 per cent) not poor in 1995 were likely to have become poor in the following year. On the other hand, young adults were also proportionately more likely to have left a state of income poverty between 1995 and 1996: 28 per cent did, compared to 23 per cent of all adults.

The risk of becoming poor from one year to the other was significantly higher amongst young adults who were unemployed, economically inactive or participating in education or training than amongst young adults in full- time employment. Young adults living alone, with or without children, were also at an increased risk of poverty compared to young people who, during the two years, continued living with their parents. However, the judicious choice of a partner, and the absence of children in a partnered household, also reduced the risk of income poverty. In essence, young adults' risk of becoming poor was most effectively reduced by their living in employed households, particularly if the young adults themselves were also in work.

Educational achievement also reduced the risk of entering poverty, at least up to the level of second-stage secondary education. Third-level education did not reduce the risk for young adults, although it did for all adults. The economic benefits of third-level education in terms of reducing poverty risks might thus not come to fruition until later in adult life. In fact, educational achievement played no role in determining young adults' chances of leaving a state of significant poverty from one year to the other. Employment status of the young adult and their household, however, were influential factors. Unemployment and economic inactivity reduced a young adult's chance of escaping poverty, whilst sharing a household with others who were in work made it more likely that he or she was able to move out of poverty from one year to the next.

Table 7.2 Income poverty dynamics: young adults, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

Poverty dynamics:	**Young adults (%)**	**All adults (16+) (%)**
Transitions		
Persistence rate	72	77
Exit rate	28	23
Entrance rate	8	6
Avoidance rate	92	94
Turnover		
Remained in poverty	14	15
Exited poverty	6	4
Entered poverty	6	5
Never in poverty	74	76
Base (unweighted)	1113	6645

Notes:

1 'Never', in this and subsequent tables, refers to the observation period; that is, never poor/deprived over the two years covered.

Young adults: 0 missing values; all adults: two missing values.

Deprivation

Like income poverty rates, the rates of deprivation for young adults and the all-adult population were rather similar (Table 7.3). Focusing on necessities, 12 per cent of young adults and 11 per cent of all adults were deprived in both 1995 and 1996. As in the case of income poverty dynamics, young adults again experienced higher rates of exit from deprivation than all adults if they were already deprived in 1995 (39 per cent, compared to 36 per cent). Likewise, they were more likely to become deprived from one year to the next (8 per cent of young adults, compared to 6 per cent of all adults). Achieving second-stage secondary level education significantly reduced the risk of young adults encountering deprivation, although higher, third-level education did not.

Table 7.3 Deprivation (necessities) dynamics: young adults, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

Deprivation dynamics	**Young adults (%)**	**All adults (16+) (%)**
Transitions		
Persistence rate	61	64
Exit rate	39	36
Entrance rate	8	6
Avoidance rate	92	94
Turnover		
Remained in deprivation	12	11
Exited deprivation	7	6
Entered deprivation	6	5
Never in deprivation	75	78
Base (unweighted)	1045	6645

Note: Young adults, 68 missing values; all adults, two missing cases.

In fact there was a close correspondence between the risk of becoming deprived and the risk of becoming poor amongst young adults, in that the risk of being in poverty markedly increased the risk of moving into deprivation. While 33 per cent of poor young adult experienced material deprivation from one year to the next, only 26 per cent of all poor adults did (data not shown in table). Likewise, 29 per cent of young adults who became poor from 1995 to 1996 also experienced deprivation, compared to a national average for all adults who moved into poverty from 1995 to 1996 of 23 per cent.

However, for young adults not affected by poverty in either year, deprivation was less permanent than for all adults. A total of 64 per cent of non-poor young adults escaped deprivation from one year to the next, compared to 54 per cent of all non-poor adults. Only 3 per cent of both young and all adults not poor in 1995 became deprived of necessities by 1996.

Many young people also experienced deprivation of durables (data not shown), although the rates of deprivation were lower than in the case of deprivation of necessities. Of young adults, 17 per cent were deprived of durables in 1995 or 1996 (or in both years), which compared with 10 per cent of all adults. There was little difference in the rates at which young adults and adults in general were able to escape durable deprivation. Some 56 per cent of young adults overcame a state of deprivation of durables between 1995 and 1996, as did 54 per cent of all adults. However, young adults were twice as likely to become deprived between 1995 and 1996, albeit that only a small minority was affected: 4 per cent of young adults not deprived of durables in 1995 experienced deprivation in 1996, com- pared to 2 per cent of the entire adult population.

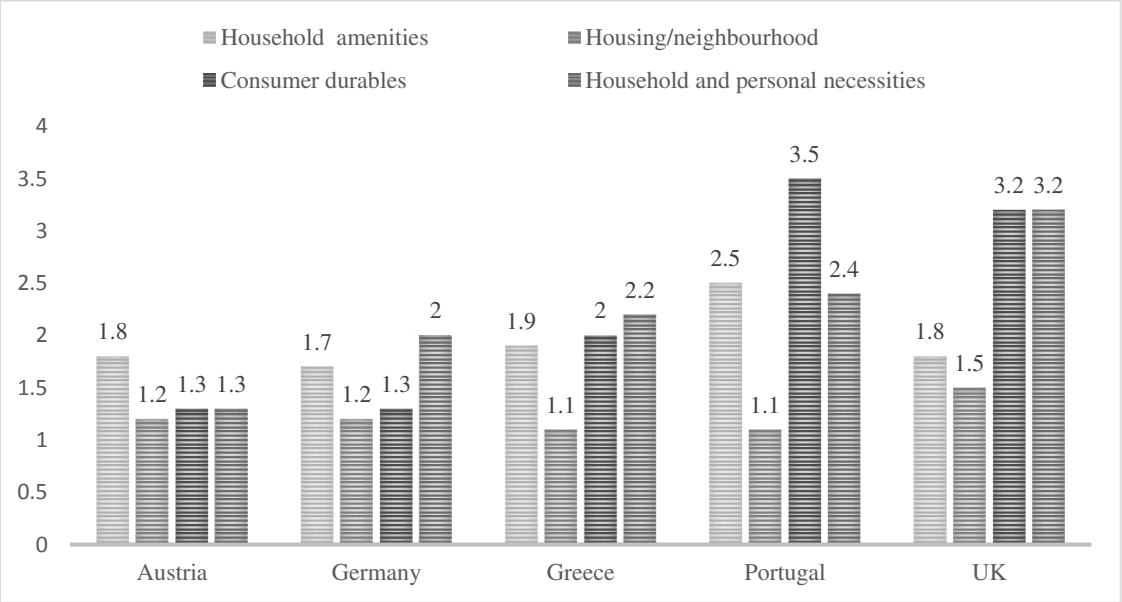
Income Poverty and Deprivation in International Comparison

Young people suffered a particularly high risk of deprivation if they were poor. In fact, this risk was considerably higher in the UK than in the other countries, despite the fact that poverty rates amongst young people were lowest in the UK (Barnes et al., 2002). Young people, whose income kept them

below the poverty line, were more than three times (3.2) as likely also to experience deprivation of private goods, that is, durables and necessities, as young adults whose income was above the poverty line (Figure 7.1). The odds of being poor and deprived over not being poor or deprived in the UK were by far the highest amongst the five countries in this comparison. The gap was particularly wide between the UK and the two examples of corporate welfare states, Austria and Germany. In these two countries, poor young people were only 1.3 times as likely to experience deprivation of consumer durable as young people who were not poor. Likewise, in Austria, they were 1.3 times as likely to experience deprivation of household necessities, whereas in Germany they were twice as likely to do so. The odds of poor young people also being deprived of consumer durables or household and personal necessities were somewhat higher in Greece and Portugal, but still lower than in the UK, except for consumer durables in Portugal (3.5).

Poor young people in the UK also experienced a higher added risk of housing and neighbourhood deprivation than poor young people elsewhere but the gap in the odds between the UK and the other countries was much reduced. In the case of deprivation of housing amenities, the additional risk of deprivation amongst poor young people in the UK (1.8) was the second lowest, together with Austria. The risk was lower only in Germany (1.7), but higher in Greece (1 .9) and Portugal (2.5).

Figure 7.1 Odds of deprivation among poor young adults, UK, ECHP, 1995-6



LONE PARENTS

The high poverty rate of lone parents in the UK has been widely documented (Millar, 1989; Bradhaw and Millar, 1991). However, lone parents suffer not only from an increased risk of poverty but also from longer period of poverty. Between 1991 and 1994, for instance, 42 per cent of lone parent were in the bottom three deciles of the income distribution in all four years, compared to the population average of just 13 per cent (DSS, 2000a).

This section analyses the experiences of income poverty and deprivation encountered by individuals in lone mother households and compares them to the experiences of individuals in

partnered mother households. For ease, these individuals are simply described as 'lone mothers' and 'partnered mothers'. Owing to small sample sizes, only those who remained in lone mother and partnered mother households with dependent children in 1995 and 1996 were included in the analysis.

Income Poverty

As many as 63 per cent of lone mothers experienced income poverty in both 1995 and 1996 (Table 7.4, turnover). This was more than five times the rate of persistent poverty amongst partnered mothers (12 per cent). Over 70 per cent of lone mothers were poor in 1995 or 1996, compared to 16 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively, of partnered mothers; 9 per cent of lone mothers left a state of income poverty from 1995 to 1996, compared to 5 per cent of partnered mothers, while 7 per cent became poor from one year to the next, compared to 4 per cent of partnered mothers.

Table 7.4 Income poverty dynamics: mothers with dependent children, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

Poverty dynamics:	**Lone mothers (%)**	**Partnered mothers (%)**
Transitions		
Persistence rate	88	73
Exit rate	12	27
Entrance rate	23	5
Avoidance rate	77	95
Turnover		
Remained in poverty	63	12
Exited poverty	9	5
Entered poverty	7	4
Never in poverty	22	79
Base (unweighted)	449	3625

Note: Analysis includes mothers and other household members

These figures for movements into and out of poverty, however, gave a mistaken impression of generally greater mobility amongst lone mothers than partnered mothers. In fact, rates of transition showed that lone mothers were less likely to exit from poverty, but more likely to enter it. Lone mothers who had not been in poverty in 1995 were also four times more likely than partnered mothers to become poor between 1995 and 1996: 23 per cent of lone mothers not poor in 1995 experienced poverty a year later, compared to 5 per cent of partnered mothers. Moreover, just 12 per cent of lone parents, who had been poor in 1995, left this state of poverty in 1996. This compared to 27 per cent of partnered mothers.

This discrepancy in findings reflects different base lines. The larger pro- portion of lone mothers (72 per cent) who were already poor in 1995 com- pared to partnered mothers (17 per cent) increased the risk of income poverty exit (turnover), as a proportion of the total population, despite a lower poverty exit rate (transition). Likewise, the comparatively smaller pool of lone mothers who

were not already poor in 1995 reduced the poverty entry risk (turnover) relative to that of partnered mothers, despite a much higher entry rate (transition).

The key factor reducing the risk of income poverty amongst mothers was employment. Maintaining employment during both 1995 and 1996 approximately halved the chances of lone and partnered mothers encountering poverty from one year to the next. Thus, whereas 23 per cent of all lone mothers who were not poor in 1995 had become poor in the following year, this was the case for 'only' 11 per cent of working lone mothers. Likewise, whereas 5 per cent of all partnered mothers moved into poverty between 1995 and 1996, only 3 per cent of working partnered mothers did.

Lone mothers who had been educated to below second-stage secondary level were at greatest risk of poverty. Low levels of education increased the risk of becoming poor amongst lone mothers from the average of 23 per cent to 35 per cent. Likewise, the risk increased for partnered mothers from 5 per cent to 10 per cent. Lone mothers, therefore, were still more than three times as likely to become poor than partnered mothers, even if both reported low levels of educational achievement. Lone mothers were less likely to move into poverty if they were divorced: 14 per cent of lone mothers that were divorced moved into poverty.

Deprivation

Lone mothers were severely and adversely affected by the lack of consumer durables, and household and personal necessities. Lone mothers were over five times more likely than partnered mothers to be continuously deprived of durables (16 per cent compared to 3 per cent) (Table 7.5). With 7 per cent of lone parents experiencing deprivation of durable goods in 1996, but not 1995, the risk of becoming deprived was also considerably higher for lone mothers than for partnered mothers (1 per cent). The latter finding was confirmed by the transition rates. They showed that, whilst 11 per cent of non-deprived lone mothers experienced deprivation of consumer durables from one year to the other, only 1 per cent of partnered mothers did. Yet again, the larger pool of already deprived lone mothers in the sample gave the incorrect impression of greater deprivation mobility amongst this group, when in fact just 52 per cent of deprived lone mothers overcame deprivation of durables between the years, compared to 61 per cent of partnered mothers.

Table 7.5 Deprivation of durables dynamics: mothers with dependent children, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

Deprivation of durables	**Lone mothers (%)**	**Partnered mothers (%)**
Transitions		
Persistence rate	48	39
Exit rate	52	61
Entrance rate	11	1
Avoidance rate	89	99
Turnover		
Remained in deprivation	16	3
Exited deprivation	18	4
Entered deprivation	7	1
Never in deprivation	59	92
Base (unweighted)	449	3625

Note: Analysis includes mothers and other household members

Likewise, as a proportion of the total population, more lone mothers escaped deprivation from 1995 to 1996 (18 per cent) than partnered mother (4 per cent).

A similar pattern emerged with respect to deprivation of household and personal necessities (Table 7.6). However a much larger proportion of lone mothers were deprived of these items in one or both year than of consumer durables. In addition, considerably more lone mothers were deprived of necessities than partnered mothers. Over two-fifth (44 per cent) of lone mothers were deprived of necessities continuously over the two years, whilst 12 per cent became deprived and 11 per cent overcame deprivation. These figure compared to 8, 4 and 7 per cent of partnered mothers respectively.

Once again, the transition rates gave a more refined picture. Not only did they reveal that lone mothers deprived in 1995 were in fact le likely to exit from necessity deprivation than partnered mother already deprived in 1995 (20 per cent, compared with 45 per cent) they all showed that lone mothers not deprived in 1995 were less likely to avoid becoming deprived than partnered mother (73 per cent of lone mother, compared to 95 per cent of partnered mothers). Moreover, in comparison to deprivation of consumer durables, lone mothers were at a substantially greater risk of entering and of failing to evade deprivation of necessities.

Table 7.6 Deprivation of necessities dynamics: mothers with dependent children, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

Deprivation of necessities	**Lone mothers (%)**	**Partnered mothers (%)**
Transitions		
Persistence rate	80	55
Exit rate	20	45
Entrance rate	27	5
Avoidance rate	73	95
Turnover		
Remained in deprivation	44	8
Exited deprivation	11	7
Entered deprivation	12	4
Never in deprivation	33	81
Base (unweighted)	449	3625

Note: Analysis includes mothers and other household members

SICK OR DISABLED PEOPLE

A recent report estimated that about eight million adult in private households in the UK had physical and/or medical impairment in 1996/97 (Craig and Greenslade 1998) including four million adult of working age. Although not directly comparable this figure suggested a marked increase on 1985, when about 6.2 million adults were sick- or disabled (Berthoud et al. 1993). Approximately one-third of sick or disabled people receive one of the two main state benefits payable to people unable to work owing to illness, Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance (DSS 2000b).

According to the ECHP, in the UK approximately 8 per cent of the working-age population were sick or disabled at one point during 1995 and 1996, which is in line with the estimates reported by Craig and Greenslade (1998); 3 per cent were sick or disabled in both 1995 and 1996. Sick or disabled people tended to be older and often lived alone and included a disproportionate number of men (Barnes et al., 2002).

Poverty

Sick or disabled people suffered disproportionate risks in terms of both becoming and remaining in income poverty (Table 7.7). Over two-fifths of the sick or disabled population (44 per cent) experienced income poverty at some point in 1995 or 1996, including 28 per cent of sick or disabled people who were in poverty in both years. Compared to people without impairment (20 per cent in poverty) and the UK's adult population in general (24 per cent), sick or disabled people were about twice as likely to be poor. Moreover, sick or disabled people were more than twice as likely to experience persistent income poverty (28 per cent), that is, poverty in both 1995 and 1996, than people without health problems (12 per cent).

Table 7.7 Income poverty dynamics: sick or disabled people, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

Income dynamic:	**In the life course group at some time (%)**	**Never in the life course group (%)**	**All adults 16+ (%)**
Transition rate			
Persistence rate	82	75	77
Exit rate	[18]	25	23
Entrance rate	[15]	5	6
Avoidance rate	85	95	94
Turnover			
Remained in poverty	28	12	15
Exited poverty	[6]	4	4
Entered poverty	[10]	4	5
Never in poverty	56	81	76
Base (unweighted)	332	3872	6645

Notes: [ ] indicates a cell size of between 10 and 29 unweighted observations.

Transition rates also highlighted the greater risk of becoming poor amongst sick or disabled people. While 15 per cent of non-poor sick or dis- abled people became poor from 1995 to 1996, only 5 per cent of people without health problems did so. Conversely, sick or disabled people who were already in poverty in 1995 were less likely to have overcome poverty by the following year: 18 per cent of sick or disabled people left a state of income poverty between 1995 and 1996, compared to 25 per cent of people in good health and 23 per cent of the total adult population.

Deprivation

In addition to their disproportionate income poverty risks, sick or disabled people in the UK also experienced an increased risk of deprivation. As for the other risk groups, the added risk was particularly striking with respect to deprivation of household durables and necessities.

As many as 22 per cent of sick or disabled adults suffered deprivation of durable household goods in at least one year. This compared to approximately 10 per cent of all adults and adults without health problems (Table 7.8). One in 10 of sick or disabled adults were deprived of essential durable goods in both years, compared to one in 25 of other adults.

Table 7.8 Deprivation of durables dynamics: sick or disabled adults, adults under state retirement age, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

Deprivation of durables	**In the life course group at some time (%)**	**Never in the life course group (%)**	**All adults 16+ (%)**
Transitions			
Persistence rate	56	47	46
Exit rate	[44]	53	54
Entrance rate	[5]	2	2
Avoidance rate	95	98	98
Turnover			
Persistence rate	10	4	4
Exit rate	[7]	4	4
Entrance rate	[5]	2	2
Avoidance rate	78	91	90
Base (unweighted)	332	3867	6645

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. [ ] indicates a cell size of between 10 and 29 unweighted observations.

Sick or disabled people were also often unable to afford household and personal items. Over half (56 per cent) of sick or disabled adults were deprived of household and personal necessities in 1995 or 1996. This was nearly three times the level of adults without health problems, and two- and-a-half times the level of all adults. The high incidence of material disadvantage amongst sick or disabled people again resulted from their lesser ability or lower opportunity to leave a state of deprivation, paired with a greater risk of experiencing deprivation from one year to the next. This was most apparent with respect to necessities. The rate of exit from necessity deprivation (22 per cent) was considerably below that of adults without impairment (40 per cent) or the all-adult population (36 per cent) (Table 7.9). At the same time, rates of entrance into deprivation were markedly higher (19 per cent, compared to 5 per cent for other adults and 6 per cent for the adult average).

Table 7.9 Deprivation of necessities dynamics: sick or disabled adults, adults under state retirement age, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

Deprivation of durables	**In the life course group at some time (%)**	**Never in the life course group (%)**	**All adults 16+ (%)**
Transitions			
Persistence rate	78	60	64
Exit rate	22	40	36
Entrance rate	[19]	5	6
Avoidance rate	91	95	94
Turnover			
Persistence rate	35	9	11
Exit rate	10	6	6
Entrance rate	[11]	4	5
Avoidance rate	44	82	78
Base (unweighted)	332	3867	6645

Notes: [ ] indicates a cell size of between 10 and 29 unweighted observations.

Social Isolation

Sick or disabled people not only experienced a greater than average risk of poverty or deprivation, their sickness or disability appeared also to affect their social networks. For instance, membership of clubs or (community) associations was less common amongst sick or disabled people than amongst people without health problems. During 1995 and 1996, just over one-quarter of the sick or disabled (26 per cent) were members of a club, compared to 36 per cent of able-bodied adults and 37 per cent of the all- adult population (Table 7.10). Half of all sick or disabled were never members of clubs during this time, compared to just over 40 per cent of able-bodied and all adults.

Arguably of greater social and political significance were differences in sick or disabled people's contact with friends, relatives and neighbours when compared to unimpaired people. Sick or disabled people were nearly one-and-a-half times as likely to be excluded from contact with friends or family in 1995 or 1996 (or in both years) (31 per cent) than able-bodied people, or indeed the all-adult population (both 23 per cent). Moreover, sick or disabled people's social relations with friends and relatives appeared adversely affected by impairment: 12 per cent of sick or disabled people were socially isolated from friends and family persistently, that is, in both 1995 and 1996, compared to just 7 per cent of other adults.

Table 7.10 Social isolation dynamics: sick or disabled people, adults under state retirement age, UK, ECH P, 1995-6

Social relations	**In the life course group at some time (%)**	**Never in the life course group (%)**	**All Adults 16+ (%)**
Not a member of a club			
Remained in exclusion	50	42	43
Exited exclusion	13	11	10
Entered exclusion	[11]	11	10
Never in exclusion	26	36	37
Talks to neighbours[1]			
Remained in exclusion	[5]	9	8
Exited exclusion	[8]	7	7
Entered exclusion	[7]	7	7
Never in exclusion	80	77	79
Meets friends/relatives[2]			
Remained in exclusion	12	7	7
Exited exclusion	10	8	8
Entered exclusion	9	8	8
Never in exclusion	70	78	77
Base (unweighted)	332	3872	6645

Notes:
1 Adults only: 'talks to neighbours less than once a week'
2 Adults only: 'meets friends or relatives (not living with the person) at home or elsewhere, less than once a week'
Errors due to rounding; [ ] indicates a cell size of between 10 and 29 unweighted observations.

Sickness or disability however, appeared to have little impact on people's contact with neighbours: 80 per cent of sick or disabled people had regular contact with their neighbours, as did 77 per cent of unimpaired adults and 79 per cent of the total adult population. In other words, about 20 per cent of sick or disabled and 23 per cent of able-bodied people at some point experienced social isolation. Sick or disabled people were therefore markedly more likely to be isolated from friends and relatives than from neighbours. Persistent social isolation from friends and relatives was almost twice the level amongst sick or disabled people as amongst able-bodied people, whereas the reverse was the case for social isolation from neighbours.

RETIRED PEOPLE

Low income and poverty amongst pensioners have been UK policy makers' concern for some time. The country's Basic State Retirement Pension (BSRP) pays a flat-rate £67.50 per week to single persons and £40.80 per week to wives and retired adult dependants (1999/2000), which keeps pensioners' incomes very close to the poverty line. Since pensioners increasingly supplement their state pension with occupational and private pensions, poverty is now concentrated amongst older pensioners who only receive the state pension (Walker et al., 2000).

Income Poverty

Of retired people aged 45 or over, 23 per cent reported incomes below the poverty line in both 1995 and 1996 (Table 7.11). This was more than a third higher than the national poverty rate of 15 per cent, but only about half the level of the official rate of pensioner poverty, which only includes people over the state pension age (40 per cent; DSS, 2000c). Just over one-third of retired people (34 per cent) experienced income poverty in 1995 or 1996, or in both years, compared to 24 per cent of the total adult population.

Table 7.11 Income poverty dynamics: retired people, adults over 45 years, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

Income poverty	**Remained in the life course group (%)**	**Never in the life course group (%)**	**All adults 16+ (%)**
Transitions			
Persistence rate	80	68	77
Exit rate	20	32	23
Entrance rate	9	3	6
Avoidance rate	91	97	94
Turnover			
Remained in poverty	23	7	15
Exited poverty	5	3	4
Entered poverty	6	3	5
Never in poverty	67	87	76
Base (unweighted)	1587	1363	6645

The transition rates revealed that retired people suffered an increased risk of becoming poor and a decreased chance of exiting from a state of income poverty. Only 20 per cent of retired people in poverty in 1995 were no longer poor in 1996, compared to 32 per cent who were never retired (and 23 per cent of the all-adult population). Moreover, 9 per cent of retired people who were not poor in 1995 had become poor by 1996, com- pared to 3 per cent of the non-retired population. Retirement therefore substantially increased the risk of becoming and remaining poor. This was also apparent from turnover and transition statistics for people who retired between 1995 and 1996 (data not

shown). Individuals amongst this group who were not poor in 1995 were nearly twice as likely to experience income poverty in 1996 (11 per cent) than people who retired in both years and had not been poor in 1995 (6 per cent). In fact, the inflow into income poverty amongst people retiring between the years almost doubled the poverty rate amongst this group, from 12 per cent to 22 per cent. Aggregate poverty rates amongst people retired in both years, in contrast, remained largely unchanged (1995: 28 per cent; 1996: 29 per cent).

For the majority of retired people in the UK, pensions were the main source of their income (men: 76 per cent; women: 78 per cent). A further 14 per cent of men and 8 per cent of women received the main part of their income from social transfers other than pensions, while other main income sources were private intergenerational and intra-household transfers (men: 4 per cent; women: 6 per cent) and wages or salaries (men: 5 per cent; women: 4 per cent).

Although pensions in the UK, in particular state pensions, tend to below by international comparison, they nevertheless constituted an important buffer against poverty. Without their public, occupational or private pension incomes, an additional 51 per cent of retired adults would have been in poverty in the UK in 1995. Social transfers other than pensions prevented 19 per cent of retired people from falling below the poverty line.

Deprivation

As for the other three risk groups, income poverty and deprivation often went hand in hand for retired people. Once again the greatest risk was posed by deprivation of basic household and personal necessities: 25 per cent of people who were retired throughout the period were deprived of necessities during this time, compared to a national all-adult average of 11 per cent (Table 7.12). This figure increased to 42 per cent amongst adults over 45 who retired between 1995 and 1996. In other words, a disproportionately large number of people retiring were already deprived (and poor - see above) before they retired. In fact, the incidence of deprivation prior to retirement was considerably higher than the incidence of income poverty (11 per cent) for individuals retiring between 1995 and 1996.

Table 7.12 Deprivation of necessities dynamics: retired adults, adults over 45 years, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

Deprivation of necessities	**Remained in life course group (%)**	**Entered life course group (%)**	**All adults 16+ (%)**
Transitions			
Persistence rate	66	67	64
Exit rate	34	33	36
Entrance rate	7	*	6
Avoidance rate	93	Over 90	94
Turnover			
Remained in deprivation	25	42	11
Exited deprivation	11	*	6
Entered deprivation	12	*	5
Never in deprivation	52	47	78
Base (unweighted)	1527	96	6355

Note: * indicates a cell size of less than 10 unweighted observations.

Persistent or emerging income poverty amongst retired people added to the risk of deprivation of necessities. Whereas 12 per cent of retired people who were poor in both years or became poor in 1996 also became deprived of necessities in 1996, this was true for only 3 per cent of retired people who avoided poverty throughout this period. A similar share of retired people who were poor throughout the period or became poor in the second year were deprived of necessities throughout the period (28 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively).

Social Isolation

Finally, income poverty also had an adverse effect on the social interactions of retired adults. Retired people engaged in activities, such as club member- ship and meeting friends and family and talking to neighbours, to a similar extent to that of the population at large (Table 7.13). In fact, more retired people reported talking to their neighbours (86 per cent) than was the case for the adult population (79 per cent). However, whereas poverty had only a small impact on activities involving clubs and societies, or friends and relatives, it strongly affected interaction with neighbours. Poor retired people were less likely to talk to their neighbours regularly (81 per cent) than were non-poor retirees (88 per cent). In contrast, amongst the all-adult population, the non-poor adults were less likely to be in contact with their neighbours (78 per cent) than poor adults (81 per cent). Although it would only be fair to acknowledge that the level of contact in all four cases remained high, poverty amongst retired people nevertheless exerted a negative effect on contact with neighbours, which did not occur amongst the all-adult population.

Table 7.13 Income poverty and social isolation dynamics (turnover): retired people, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

	Retired adults		**All Adults 16+**	
Social isolation	**Remained in poverty (%)**	**Never in poverty (%)**	**Remained in poverty (%)**	**Never in poverty (%)**
Not a member of a club				
Remained in exclusion	57	37	57	39
Exited exclusion	11	8	11	10
Entered exclusion	[8]	8	8	11
Never in exclusion	24	48	24	41
Talking to neighbours[1]				
Remained in exclusion	[5]	4	5	9
Exited exclusion	[5]	4	5	7
Entered exclusion	[9]	3	9	6
Never in exclusion	81	88	81	78
Meets friends/relatives[2]				
Remained in exclusion	[8]	9	8	8
Exited exclusion	9	7	9	8
Entered exclusion	[9]	3	9	6
Never in exclusion	81	88	81	78
Base (unweighted)	338	1072	891	5156

Notes: 1 Adults only: 'talks to neighbours less than once a week'
2 Adults only: 'meets friends or relatives (not living with the person) at home or elsewhere, less than once a week'
All adults (16+) means all adults 16 years of age and over, including those above state retirement age; [ ] indicates a cell size of between 10 and 29 unweighted observations.

SUMMARY AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This chapter has highlighted the increased risk of income poverty and deprivation, and social isolation that 'risk' and 'life course' groups faced in the UK. Whilst socioeconomic characteristics, such as a person's level of educational achievement or employment status, in many instances contributed to the risk of income poverty and deprivation amongst these groups, the analysis also revealed that life cycle and risk transitions independently added to these risks.

Movements into or out of income poverty were often closely matched by similar movements into or out of deprivation. This association between income poverty and deprivation was particularly true for deprivation of durables, and household and personal necessities. It was universally absent for deprivation of household amenities and of housing, which included features such as the quality of the neighbourhood. For this reason, a discussion of the latter evidence has been omitted from this

chapter. However, the distinction between, on the one hand, consumer durables and household and personal necessities and, on the other hand, housing and housing amenities, was an important one. With few exceptions, household amenities and (quality) housing were 'public goods' provided or regulated by the state sector. In contrast, consumer durables and household and personal necessities were private goods, whose provision or acquisition were largely a matter for individuals to decide. The lack of evidence of deprivation concerning public goods suggested that public provision of goods, by and large, met basic needs and contributed to reducing the risk of deprivation. However, social, social security and economic policy failed to ensure that risk groups enjoyed financial security on a par with that of the adult population at large. In the following, the public policy implications of these findings are discussed for each of the groups.

Young Adults

As this analysis has shown, young adults in the UK experienced similar income poverty and deprivation dynamics to that of the all-adult population, but they were more susceptible to transitions into and out of poverty and deprivation, even over a short period. Those who were living alone or in work-poor households, who had poor educational status and who were unemployed or economically inactive were at greatest risk of poverty and deprivation.

Young adults in the UK, especially those below the age of 25, are excluded from a number of key social security benefits, including Income Support and Housing Benefit. In addition, whilst young people are entitled to means-tested Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), the insurance-based unemployment benefit, contributory Jobseeker's Allowance, excludes young people from eligibility until they have met the minimum contribution requirements, based on earnings, which many - even amongst the adult population - do not. Moreover, even for those in the labour market, especially with few educational or occupational qualifications, steady earnings at a sufficiently high level to protect them from income poverty and deprivation are often only achieved after several years of continuous employment.

Current government policy seeks to improve the standard of national education and encourage young people to stay on at school or college beyond the school leaving age. Through the 'New Deal' policies, the government also looks towards moving unemployed young people directly into work, while retaining supplementary options of human resource development and job skills training. The direct link between income poverty and deprivation for this group suggests that many young adults might be unable to cope with setbacks in their income. Employment policy would benefit from considering ways and means to help young people maintain as well as obtain jobs, and to accelerate improving their earnings potential. Education policy would be well advised to take account of the finding that participation in training or education significantly enhanced the risk of poverty. Although financial incentives as currently piloted under the Educational Maintenance Allowance (a weekly, means-tested allowance paid to students for attendance and achievement in further education) might help to increase participation rates, if the incentives are at too low a level they will fail to address this risk of poverty amongst students and trainees. A long-term view of policy making would aim to improve the material well-being of young adults, by integrating strategies for security and progression in education and work, and from education into work.

Lone Mothers

Lone mothers in the UK faced the highest risk of poverty amongst all four risk and life course groups, and the highest risk amongst the five countries in the comparative study. A high proportion of them relied on social security benefits as their main source of income. Only a minority of lone mother was in employment, which in the UK, typically is low-paid .Together, these substantially increased the risk of income poverty in this group.

The UK government has introduced the New Deal for lone Parent, a voluntary scheme whereby those who wish to work or train can be helped to obtain placements. It is well established that lone parents frequently would like to work, but many have found it difficult to obtain employment offering sufficient pay for their child care needs. The recently introduced Childcare Tax Credit, payable to all parents, is designed to do just that, but it is too early to say where it is meeting its objective of helping lone parents to (re-) enter the labour market.

The government is also promoting 'family-friendly working' at the work- place. This campaign is designed to encourage employers to consider the child care needs of their employees, allow flexible working practice or even provide access to child care facilities. The immediate impact of this campaign is likely to be limited, as it incorporates few direct measures to improve working practices to accommodate the needs of parents.

However, access to child care is not the only barrier to employment that lone mothers face. Many prefer to stay with and look after their children rather than go out to work, especially when the children are young (Ford, 1996). Employment is, therefore, unlikely ever entirely to remove the threat of poverty and deprivation amongst lone parents, and paid work does not guarantee their protection from poverty (Finlayson and Marsh, 1998). Even in countries with high employment rates, a core of poor and deprived lone parents persists, many of whom choose not to work, or simply cannot work, because of their parental commitments (Bradshaw et al., 2000). For these lone parents, improved social security and child support may be the most appropriate tools for helping prevent, or at least reduce, the current high levels of poverty.

Sick or Disabled People

After lone parents, sick or disabled people experienced the highest levels of poverty and deprivation in the UK in 1995 and 1996. Sickness or disability particularly affected social relations, decreasing the contact between sick or disabled people and their friends and family. The findings highlighted the limited personal resources, both material and in terms of social networks, at their disposal. The high incidence of poverty was a measure of the added costs of impairment to sick or disabled people. More longitudinal data would be required to assess the impact of social security on protecting sick or disabled people from long-term poverty and deprivation. Further analysis would also benefit our understanding of the causal linkages between social isolation and sickness or disability, and the impact of the former on the life chances of people with impairment.

Government policy for disabled people centres on the New Deal for Disabled People and stricter tests on Incapacity Benefit claimants' ability to work, which both seek to reduce the number of sick or disabled people receiving state benefit and to increase their number in employment. As for other risk groups, employment might reduce the risk of poverty and deprivation amongst sick or disabled people. It might also help re-balance the relative deficit in social networks of many sick or

disabled people. The depth of disadvantage that this group experiences, however, should warn against expectations of quick solutions and easy remedies, modelled on those in place for less disadvantaged groups. Work will also only ever be a solution for those who are physically and mentally in a position to pursue some kind of employment. The challenge is to ensure that, for those who cannot, the social security that they receive protects them from poverty and deprivation.

Retired People

In international comparison, the experience of poverty placed the UK's retired population between retirees in the two Latin Rim countries, Portugal and Greece, and the two corporate welfare states, Austria and Germany (Table 7.14). However, the UK's retired people suffered a relatively greater risk of deprivation of household and personal necessities, owing to the high chance of deprivation before retirement and the sharp impact of income poverty during retirement on the risk of deprivation. The UK and Greece were the only two countries in which deprivation rates amongst retired people were higher than their poverty rates.

Table 7.14 Income poverty, deprivation and social isolation rates, UK, ECHP, 1995-6

	Poverty rank and (%)	**Necessities deprivation rank and (%)**	**Friends & family exclusion rank[1] and (%)**
Germany	8 (1)	10 (2)	82 (2)
Austria	14 (2)	7 (1)	108 (4)
Britain	28 (3)	36 (4)	106 (3)
Portugal	38 (5)	25 (3)	133 (5)
Greece	33 (4)	44 (5)	73 (1)

Note: [1]Exclusion rate of those who ‘remained in income poverty’ over those ‘never in poverty’.

The average income poverty rate of retired people of 24 per cent in 1995 and 1996 masked considerable variation in income poverty rates between 'younger' and 'older' retired people, that is, people retired who are below or above the retirement age. Poverty and deprivation during retirement often result from low earnings and low insurance contributions during a person's working life, which may ultimately lead to exclusion from pension rights. Small pensions and low supplementary benefits can exacerbate the risk of poverty and deprivation.

The New Deal for the Over 50s offers financial incentives to encourage and help older workers who are unemployed for six months or more to return to employment, including part-time work. The policy seeks to increase income from earnings amongst older people, but should ultimately also increase national insurance contributions and might thus positively affect older people's entitlement to a state pension. However, it is unlikely to redress the gender imbalance of pension provisions in the UK. Moving the over-50s back into frequently low-paid or part-time work, as it does at present, might also do little to increase pension entitlement in the long term.

Those aged between 50 and the retirement age accounted for about a fifth of the retired population in the UK in 1995-6. Income poverty was less severe amongst this group, who were only approximately half as likely to be experiencing incomes below the poverty line (16 per cent) than were adults above the retirement age (28 per cent). Government policy places considerable emphasis

on assisting working-age people approaching retirement in and into work, including legislating for new, third-tier pension pro- visions. However, policy aimed at securing current pensioners' incomes and standard of living has been more haphazard. Suggestions that increases in pensions might once again be linked to wages, rather than prices, as has been the case since 1986, have not been followed up. The replacement of the pension-wages link by the pensions-retail price index link was originally blamed for the relative decline in the value of pensions in recent decades. However, a Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) for pensioners has been introduced, but this only ensures that state pensions equal the current level of Income Support, which is unlikely to greatly reduce pensioners ' risk of poverty. Moreover, the adjustment is not automatic, and pensioners whose state pensions are below Income Support must apply for the increase.

Finally, as this analysis has shown, for many people in these four risk groups access to the labour market is difficult and often completely out of their reach. This is most obvious for retired people, many sick or disabled people, and lone mothers, but also applies to young adults, be they in education or training, or in low-waged entry jobs. But the government's anti-poverty strategy largely rests on increasing the labour market attachment of poor people and benefit recipients in particular. This is important -paid work, and progression in work, may for some or many be the way out of poverty or deprivation -but financial security must remain available at adequate levels to those for whom employment is not the answer. The UK's fiat-rate, residual benefit system rarely succeeds in moving people of any age or households of any composition above the poverty line (Mitchell, 1991; Behrendt, 2000). Moreover, between 15 and 20 per cent of those eligible do not take up their benefit entitlements, lower than in many other European countries (van Oorschot, 1991). Britain's social security system is cost-efficient, achieving redistribution of market incomes with limited tax and benefit resources, but has limited effectiveness in reducing poverty. This must be considered alongside policies to promote employment.

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RESEARCH NOTE

Returning to Normality: Substance Users' Work Histories and Perceptions of Work During and After Recovery

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Summary

New service provisions designed to improve the employment prospects of former substance users will enhance the roles and responsibilities of Drug Action Teams (DATs), Jobcentre Plus offices and other providers and co-ordinators of support services for substance users. This paper discusses the findings of a study of 30 current and former drug and alcohol users, exploring past substance use histories and current employment aspirations. The research informs new policy initiatives designed to assist substance users' entry or return to work. Differences in present perceptions of work-readiness were observed, which reflected users' perceptions of the nature of their addiction. The attribution of blame for the substance dependency to either 'the drug' or the individual's psychology was a critical influence on users' work-readiness assessments. Work was perceived to benefit recovery from substance dependency. The evidence suggests that substance users' return to work might be helped by their staged (re-) introduction to the labour market as well as encouraging the primary labour market to employ (more) recovering substance users. The research highlighted the need for joint working between employment services and DATs to help substance users into work and to support their recovery. It also highlighted the need for mutual understanding and recognition of each collaborator's expertise.

Keywords: Drugs, alcohol, addiction, employment.

Introduction

In the United Kingdom, social work with substance users is a key responsibility of multi-agency Drug Action Teams (DATs). These teams have been set up to co-ordinate local supportive action for substance users in line with the Government's national drug strategy (White Paper, 1998). An underlying principle of this strategy is integration: 'joined-up' services addressing substance users' holistic needs (addiction, housing, education, employment, etc.) in order to enable greater social inclusion, which, in turn, is expected to facilitate support for users' recovery. Traditionally, DATs have focused on drug use and drug users, while Government policy on alcohol use and services for alcohol users is being developed. Notwithstanding this gap in policy, increasingly DATs sign-post services for alcohol users as well as for drug users.

Integration is also a central theme of the UK's welfare reform programme. Spearheaded by the New Deal, new structures are being put into place to promote the integration and re-integration of former substance users into the labour market. Employment services for drug users are being piloted under the *progress2work* (p2w) programme, which is funded and delivered through Jobcentre Plus, while mainstream job centre services (and the New Deal) will provide specialist services for former alcohol users. Key features of these new employment services are: case management to provide assistance in identifying and matching job skills with job opportunities, promotion of and advice on job-seeking, and, when appropriate, to liase between jobseekers and employers. A small number of voluntary and statutory dependency support and treatment services already provide rudimentary employment support, and this is on the increase.

The activities of DATs will increasingly interface with those of *progress2-work* and with employment service providers contracted by Jobcentre Plus. The policy aim will be to co-ordinate activities, such as referral services, and thus to build a new and effective substance user support programme.

The introduction of specialist employment services for substance users arose from the recognition of the particular support and re-integration needs of this group of jobseekers. At the same time, providers of welfare and of employment support services have acknowledged that employment can underpin substance users' recovery and assist in sustaining abstinence. DATs and employment services are thus seen as providing complementary services, whose effective delivery and ability to achieve desired outcomes will depend on the organizations striving to co-ordinate their activities and pool their expertise.

Despite the enhanced profile of employment services for substance users, there is very little systematic knowledge of substance users' perceptions of employment and the implications of these perceptions for employment services. This paper reports on an in-depth study of 30 current and recovering drug and alcohol users. The research explored their past employment experiences, motivation for future employment, self-assessments of their

readiness to return to work, and their views on the function of work during or after recovery from substance dependency.

For simplicity only, we use 'drug users' and 'alcohol users' to describe both current and former problematic users who suffered addiction, unless otherwise specified. We use 'substance users' to describe both drug and alcohol users.

Evidence base

The vulnerability of drug and alcohol users is well documented. Recent evidence in the UK has highlighted drug users' poor educational skills and limited work experience (LDRP, 2002), and their health problems, including mental health problems (Neale, 1998; Klee *et al*., 2002). The physical and mental health problems of alcohol users have also been recorded (Alcohol Concern, 2002), as have deficiencies in personal and interpersonal skills, which limit substance users' capacity to interact with the public (Effective Intervention Unit, 2001). Some substance users, in particular drug users, also have criminal records and together these factors are known to restrict their employment opportunities (New Futures Fund Initiative, 2000).

Providers and evaluators of employment programmes for substance users have stressed the need for close links with the labour market and local employers in order for these programmes to be effective (Lawless and Cox, 2000; Hughes and Westwood, 2001). Service providers also need to understand the varying effects of different substances on users and, accordingly, their specific support needs. However, accounts of substance users' own perception of their ability to pursue paid work remain the exception.

Method

Thirty substance users were interviewed in urban and rural locations in the English Midlands to explore their experiences of and aspirations for employment. The research was part of a larger project commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions, which was designed to inform the work of new specialist employment support services for substance users. The group of substance users included 20 drug users and ten alcohol users, most of whom were undergoing or had completed rehabilitation or detoxification treatment. Respondents were recruited via drug and alcohol support organizations and participation was voluntary.

Participants

Drug users had typically used a number of different drugs, including crack cocaine, ecstasy and cannabis, and most had also taken alcohol. However,

heroin was by far the main drug to which users had become addicted. Three participants were former drug users, without recent relapses, who also no longer used opiate-substitute drugs (e.g. methadone). Five were no longer using heroin, but received treatment involving opiate-substitutes. Twelve individuals were current users, most of whom had relapsed but were looking to break their addiction. All but one attended drug support services.

Alcohol users were more likely to have been addicted only to alcohol, but three of the ten had also used non-prescription drugs. Six individuals had used anti-depressants, including three long-term users. In all cases, alcohol was the main source of users' dependency. Five of this group were former alcohol users, who were now entirely abstinent. The remaining five were current users, including two individuals who had recently relapsed.

The majority of drug and alcohol users were male, and aged between 18 and 49 years (drug users) and 30 to 59 years (alcohol users), respectively. This reflected the national profile of substance users, in so far as heroin users tend to be younger than alcohol users. Three respondents were in waged employment and a further three were undertaking voluntary work. Most of the other participants in this study received what they described as 'sickness benefits', that is, Income Support or Incapacity Benefit.

Dependency

Alcohol users' addiction had emerged over a number of years, sometimes a decade or more. They had typically begun to drink in their early teens or early twenties. Only one alcohol user remarked that he had become aware of his addiction from first use. For all others, there had been no apparent demarcation between 'social drinking', which had been perceived as a controlled leisure activity, and the beginning of alcohol dependency.

In contrast, heroin dependency had occurred instantaneously, often with the first injection of the drug. In most instances, users had started on heroin in their early twenties, although five had first used this drug when aged between 14 and 16. By the time of the interviews, most had been addicted to heroin for between two and nine years, but two had been dependent for 19 years and another for 29 years.

Drug and alcohol users gave similar accounts of the circumstances that led to their addiction, referring above all to personal trauma, such as the death of a parent, difficulties at work, and/or adverse life experiences associated with deprived social environments. However, drug users placed greater emphasis on blaming the drug for their dependency problems. In contrast, alcohol users tended to perceive their dependency as a psychological problem. For many, deep-seated, personal problems explained why they had developed a problematic relationship with alcohol while the majority of users had not.

Employment histories

Substance users' employment histories could be divided into three types. The first group had experienced solid periods of continuous employment, which were sharply curtailed with the onset of substance problems, resulting in long periods of unemployment. This pattern was more prevalent among alcohol users than drug users, as the former were better able to maintain work and hide their addiction than drug users were.

A second group of substance users had been in waged employment for only a few, short periods of their working lives prior to the onset of their addiction. This was most typical for drug users who, in this study, included a 43-year-old female, current heroin user who had been in waged employment for an aggregate total of just two years.

The third group included those who had worked in a string of temporary jobs. Although these sequences were occasionally interrupted by unemployment, this group of substance users had spent the majority of their working lives in work. Temporary employment involved working through agencies and entailed low paid, unskilled labouring, often on a day-to-day basis, typically based in warehouses and factories. Most of these substance users were younger drug users.

The collapse of work

For the users in this study, stopping work altogether was, therefore, not an inevitable and immediate outcome of substance addiction. Alcohol users only lost their jobs when their attendance or punctuality faltered, or their performance at work suffered. Drug users were less likely to have developed a stable work relationship, in part because this group was younger and had fewer educational or vocational qualifications. Drug users, thus, fell largely into the last two employment categories: those with virtually no work histories or those with a history of sequential temporary employment. Indeed, short-term temporary employment suited some drug users as they could finance their addiction, yet move between jobs before employers became aware of their dependency problems.

Some drug users maintained that they were able to keep working as long as they had a reliable and regulated supply of heroin, with some also suggesting that the drug gave them additional stamina. However, other users disputed this on the grounds that, in practice, it was implausible to suggest that users could 'manage' heroin addiction for a sustained period. To do so would not only require a problem-free supply of heroin-on-demand. It would also need extraordinary self-discipline in order for users to budget sufficiently to afford a steady supply, self-regulate the amount used (rather than increase it), and maintain motivation towards employment.

Attitudes and motivation to work

Despite their frequently patchy employment histories, substance users had typically kept or regained a desire to work or return to work. This positive attitude towards work likely reflected the self-selection of interviewees, most of whom were or had been in treatment for their addiction, indicating a desire to overcome their (previously) chaotic lifestyles.

Both groups of substance users, in principle, were positive about waged employment and considered it as a central part of efforts to rebuild daily routines and a patterned life. Drug and alcohol users alike acknowledged the social as well as the material benefits of work. Employment was seen to confer 'normality', provide identity, and might help former users to 'get on with life'. Work filled time and provided new goals, self-esteem and self-respect.

Foremost, work represented a distraction from the physical and emotional symptoms of withdrawal. Access to work and to work colleagues were seen to remove substance users, for a significant part of the day, from an adverse social milieu or from isolation when otherwise they would continue their substance use unchecked. Moreover, work was also perceived as a means to develop daily routines, which would help substance users to pursue social activities *inside* and *outside* the workplace from which they had previously disengaged or felt excluded.

On the whole, drug users were more optimistic about their prospect of (re)gaining employment and also more active in looking for work than alcohol users.

Perceptions of work-readiness

Job aspirations of both drug and alcohol users were often modest and reflected a fairly realistic assessment of their low or deteriorating levels of skills. Drug users typically wanted to take up vocational training or to seek unskilled or semi-skilled manual work (e.g. retail assistant, cleaning, shop security, bar work). Alcohol users tended to aspire to return to the jobs or the types of job they had left as a result of their addiction.

However, drug and alcohol users had different perceptions of their ability to find and retain work. For alcohol users, dependency developed gradually over time, so that they could not pinpoint when they had become addicted. They now felt that overcoming their addiction would be a long-term, if not life-long endeavour, which was likely to involve psychological changes. However, they also believed that 'being in work' could play a positive role in helping them through this process of recovery. In fact, for some, work would be an essential ingredient to their return to a 'normal', regular life pattern. Work conditions, however, would need to match the recovering user's abilities and reflect the stages of their recovery.

In contrast, for drug users, the onset of addiction had been more dramatic and immediate. Drug users tended to perceive heroin addiction more in terms of a medical condition than as a problem of personal psychology. This perception seemed to be underpinned by the fact that, unlike alcohol, heroin is recognized as a highly and universally addictive substance. The perceived prospect of 'being cured' from this condition, in turn, shaped these users' perceptions of their work-readiness. For most addiction was an insurmountable obstacle to users' aspirations for employment and more regular lifestyles. However, users also believed that addiction could be treated (e.g. through detoxification and opiate-substitute treatments), although this might require a number of attempts. Successful recovery through treatment, in some users' view, promised an almost instant ability to return to regular employment.

Overall, drug users were doubtful that a current user could hold down a job. There were conflicting views about whether a recovering addict (e.g. someone on the substitute drug methadone) could work. There was general agreement that, realistically, users needed 'recovery first/work second'.

Services and support

When proposing services needed to help substance users enter or return to employment, both drug and alcohol users stressed the need for more and better resourced substance dependency treatment programmes. Both groups of users called for an inter-agency network of support and, given the high incidence of relapse, they urged for support to remain accessible and seamless for a sustained duration.

Both groups also proposed the provision of sheltered or intermediate employment, though there were subtle distinctions between the alcohol and drug users in this regard. Because alcohol users perceived their recovery as a long-term process involving psychological change, their emphasis was on the need for a very gradual return to the labour market via stress-free or low-stress placements, including part-time or flexible work, in particular in the voluntary sector or the Intermediate Labour Market. This would offer more scope for a step-by-step re-learning of daily routines and essential in-work skills, such as timekeeping, than in an immediate return to the primary labour market.

This gradual approach was not foremost in the drug users' mind. For this group, sheltered employment was a means by which users could demonstrate their reliability and ability to hold down a job. It was seen as a means by which users could launch themselves, as an immediate next step, into the primary labour market.

While both groups remarked on the need to address employers' attitudes towards recovering addicts, the drug users gave this greater emphasis. Drug users asked for employers to be more receptive to recovering users and to appreciate that they had overcome their addiction or were working at

overcoming it. They wanted employers to allow them to continue receiving treatment, if necessary during the working day (including time-off to collect prescription drugs). They appealed against being excluded from employment on the basis of criminal records incurred as a result of lifestyles associated with illegal drug dependency.

Discussion

Substance users in this study agreed that employment can support the recovery from substance dependency, typically by enhancing self-esteem and providing daily routines to structure time and lifestyles. Employment can also help to build new, supportive social networks and help to avoid social milieus, which risk undermining the resolve to give up substance use. Substance users' own assessments of their work-readiness and needs for (re)entering employment were shaped by the type of substance used and users' perceptions of the nature of their addiction.

The findings of this study support the provision of specialist employment support programmes for drug and alcohol users, which places greater emphasis on a gradual return to work than mainstream support programmes do. Alcohol users, in particular, emphasized the benefits of voluntary work and work in the Intermediate Labour Market prior to the return to the primary labour market.

Drug users, by contrast, were more concerned with accessing the primary labour market immediately, possibly via initial sheltered employment. Proponents of this view stressed the importance of sympathetic, non-discriminatory employers and flexible working arrangements, where necessary, to allow them to maintain treatment.

Under current provisions, the employment support needs of alcohol and drug users are expected to be met within the structures of mainstream programmes, above all the New Deal, alongside a number of smaller specialist employment schemes. This provision of support services for substance users through existing mainstream programmes will require support service staff to acquire the appropriate technical and counselling skills for dealing with this group of jobseekers and their special support needs.

Technically, employment service programmes for substance users may be required to make greater and more deliberate use of alternatives to job placements. Most prominently, this might include the considerate selection of opportunities from among the options available under the New Deal for Young People, which include voluntary work or participation in further education for those young unemployed and not immediately placed in unsubsidised employment. Yet, this selection will require a fair understanding on the part of the service provider of the stage of recovery that the (former) substance users are in, and the users' need for continued support in recovery.

In addition, employment services ought not only be concerned with placing substance users in work, but also must take note of a variety of concurrent support needs that many substance users share. These range from counselling and the development of friendship networks or family reconciliation, to help with re-housing in social environments, where recovering users might be less vulnerable to relapse. It was apparent that substance users in this study would like to see employment services, recovery services and DATs closely integrated, to the point of their physical integration in one location. At the service level, integration would involve co-ordinating the assessment of work-readiness and providing emotional and practical support to substance users, as they start their new jobs. It would require a sustained, combined in-work and out-of-work (including social work) support programme to help recovering users to maintain their jobs and to avoid relapse.

For employment to be an effective means of promoting and supporting the recovery from substance dependency, co-ordinating this complex range of activities through joint working between DATs, employment and recovery services will be critical to successful professional practice with drug and alcohol users. It was apparent from the researchers' conversations with staff at drug and alcohol advice centres and Jobcentre Plus that there was mutual recognition of the need to learn from each other and to share expertise, but that formal structures to facilitate this learning had yet to be set into place. These structures ought to be created with some urgency, allowing substance users' support workers to share their expertise, in particular their understanding of the emotional and psychological support needs of substance users and how they might affect former user's return to work, with employment support providers.

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The risk society hypotheses: an empirical test using longitudinal survey data

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This paper seeks to test the influential 'risk society' thesis using quantitative data from the major UK longitudinal surveys. Two hypotheses are derived from the thesis: distanciation (the claim that more recent generations understand and manage their social lives in relation to risk and uncertainty in substantially different ways from those of their parents' generation) and reflexivity (the view that individuals are increasingly aware of their status in a detraditionalised social order and of their responsibility to manage their own life course). Empirical testing shows that greater distanciation and reflexivity can be identified in a comparison of the education, employment and partnership experience of earlier and later cohorts, but that these factors vary substantially for different social groups. Success in planning one's life and attaining the occupational status to which one initially aspired is increasingly associated with greater satisfaction and, with respect to career objectives, repeated change in jobs. But these outcomes are least likely to be available to those from the manual working class, especially those whose aspirations remain within that group. Risk society increasingly offers opportunities to 'write one's own biography', but it is important to be clear that success in doing so is socially structured.

Keywords: distanciation; longitudinal analysis; reflexivity; risk society; uncertainty

1. Risk society and social change

A major theme in recent social theory has been social change. The 'risk society' thesis provides a broad framework for interpreting the impact of change on people's understanding of their social life. The general thesis, as developed by Ulrich Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (Beck 1992, 1999; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002) and by Bonß (1995), Giddens (1994a), Lash (2000), Bauman (1991), Lupton (1999) and others (Beck, Bonß, and Lay 2003), contains a number of different approaches. All share an understanding of current developments as leading to a new, or second, or late, or high or liquid modernity. This development is driven by changes at three levels:

- Changes in institutional structure in relation to employment, marriage and family life set in the context of a globalisation which generates greater diversity in the options open to people in how they live their lives (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Beck, Bonß, and Lay 2003).

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- Change in social consciousness, in particular in relation to social class solidarity, as more fragmented bases for social interests and identity such as gender, faith, region, age group or nation emerge in the transition to post-industrialism (Bauman 1991; Beck 1992; Jessop 2002).
- Changes at the level of ideas, ultimately stemming from the critical rationality of the Enlightenment, which undermine received authority, including that of scientific expertise and of bureaucratic and official structures (Lyotard 1984; Giddens 1994a, 5; Wynne 1996).

One outcome, the thesis claims, is that social life is experienced as more uncertain, because people are faced with greater opportunities for choice in more flexible family and working lives, but at the same time, are aware that they cannot simply and unthinkingly rely on normative frameworks based on received wisdom, authority or tradition to guide them. At the same time, they become more aware that previously established solidarities such as social class are of less value as a basis for social action. This leads to greater individualisation, the process whereby the traditional framework which structures the individual's life course weakens and 'your life becomes in principle a risky venture. A normal life story becomes a (seemingly) elective life, a risk biography, in the sense that everything (or nearly everything) is a matter for decision' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 47).

Since these claims are made at a general level and are vaguely specified, empirical testing encounters obstacles. Most empirical work stemming from this approach has been mainly exploratory and illustrative and confined to relatively small-sample qualitative research (e.g. Denscombe 2001; Hobson-West 2003; Tulloch and Lupton 2003, 6). In this paper, we develop a method for testing some of the core assertions of the thesis using data from the three main UK longitudinal surveys: the National Child Development Survey (NCDS), the British Cohort Study (BCS) and the British Household Panel Study (BHPS). These surveys enable us to analyse the relationships between individual and parental expectations and outcomes in major areas of the life course (school leaving, marriage and employment) over the period between 1958 and 2005 and to examine individual understanding of and response to the way that the life course has developed in succeeding generations. The data cover the period during which the major changes identified by risk society theory are understood to have taken place.

In the next four sections of the paper, we set out hypotheses derived from the theory of risk society, discuss the methodology for testing them, present our analysis and discuss findings.

2. Risk society: hypotheses

The development of risk society is understood in different ways by various writers who lay stress on the decline of social class solidarity and institutional shifts (e.g. Beck 1992; Bonß and Zinn 2003), on cultural shifts (Lupton 1999; Lash 2000) and on attempts to synthesise both levels (Giddens 1999, see Zinn 2008 for an overview). A central feature of all these approaches is the claim that social change is characterised by a declining role for the traditional normative frameworks that constrain and regulate behaviour. This leads to greater uncertainty as individuals become increasingly aware of the range of options open to them in managing the course of their lives and

are confronted by the necessity of making choices outside the guidance of tradition and the support of established frameworks of solidarity.

For some social groups, risk emerges strongly as an immediate aspect of everyday life. They are conscious of their future as more uncertain, compared with their understanding of how previous generations lived. However, interview studies indicate that risk is neither a simple, nor a universal category in the understanding of lived experience; there are 'important differences between countries and between geographical regions in the same city or region' in how risk is understood (Tulloch and Lupton 2003, 133–4, see also Irwin, Simmons, and Walker 1999; Lash 2000). One thoughtful study conceptualises the impact of risk society in terms of a generalised anxiety rather than a concrete awareness of risks (Wilkinson 2001, 4–6). For these reasons, we approach the risk society thesis indirectly by examining hypotheses about the aspects of lived experience that flow from it, rather than tackling the direct issue of whether people explicitly structure their perceptions and responses in terms of risk. The claims about individualisation and the declining influence of traditional structures generate two hypotheses suitable for empirical testing.

First, we hypothesise that detraditionalisation implies an increasing detachment or distancing from traditional life patterns and values typically passed on between generations, in particular within the same family. We refer to this as the *distanciation* hypothesis. It implies a loosening of any relationship (or correlation) between parents' values and aspirations for their children and the child's attitudes, aspirations and behaviours that we would expect to be more advanced in more recent cohorts as compared with earlier cohorts. We would expect distanciation in working life to be more marked among women, due to the rapid changes in employment and in gender roles during the period (Crompton 2006), and also among manual workers, due to the decline in the proportion of manual jobs (Schoon and Parsons 2002). In our research, we examine the relationship between school-leaving and marriage ages and between the kinds of job held by parents and children.

Secondly, the increasing awareness of the limits of traditional normative frameworks and systems of authority in providing guidance on how to live one's life in the context of greater uncertainty may be referred to as *social reflexivity.* At the personal level, reflexivity describes human behaviour that is deliberate, purposeful and, above all, self-aware, informed by a desire for self-determination and self-actualisation (Howard 2007; Lyng 2008). It is, thus, closer to the interpretation of individualised action in post-modernity developed by Giddens (1994b) than Beck's original understanding of reflexivity as the reflex, spontaneous, perhaps knee-jerk reaction to risk in the light of diminishing time, resources and knowledge (e.g. Beck 1992).

Social reflexivity has an impact on the way in which people are able to plan their own lives. In general, the more socially reflexive people become, the better equipped they are to make and follow through choices about their life courses in a risk society. More reflexive citizens will be able to achieve greater consistency in choices in relation to education, employment, personal relationships and marriage, and be more likely to express satisfaction with outcomes and less likely to express regret about the direction their lives have taken.

We hypothesise that such reflexivity will become more marked over time and anticipate differences between generations in these areas. Reflexivity is expected to counter-balance social differentiation, enabling individuals to 'construct their biographies' and re-create the link between aspirations and outcomes that differentiation threatens to sever. It is likely that social reflexivity will be more developed among

better educated and more middle-class people who will have greater opportunities in their lives and be more confident in their judgement and in their access to the resources which will help them make the right choice and follow it through. The available data enable us to examine the relationship between aspirations in relation to school-leaving age, type of job and age of marriage, and outcomes and satisfaction with these areas of the life course.

Risk society theory sets the processes of individualisation and detraditionalisation which lead to distanciation and reflexivity in the context of growing uncertainty in social life. This suggests that the tendencies to weaker intergenerational correlation between parents' expectations for their children and children's own aspirations and behaviour (reflecting distanciation), and greater consistency in life choices and satisfaction with outcomes (reflexivity) will be located within a setting of generally greater uncertainty about how one's life course will develop.

In this paper, we seek to develop empirical analysis of the risk society thesis, operationalised through the two hypotheses. The hypotheses do not assume a reversal of traditional associations or a polarisation of perceptions and behaviours across cohorts. Individualisation is expected to result in greater variance in experiences and attitudes, compatible with the risk society thesis's core claims of growing societal uncertainty, declining predictability of social (risk) events and, importantly, the dissociation of risk events from discrete structural causes.

3. Data and methods

3.1. The shift towards risk society

The risk society literature has been criticised for a lack of clarity in identifying when the shift between the period when modernity was the dominant cultural force and that of the emergence of risk society is understood to have occurred (Rose 1996, 321; Dingwall 1999; Elliott 2002; O'Malley 2004, 179; Mythen 2005). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, 48) refer to the individualisation process 'reaching back to the 1970s and 1980s' and sharpened by 'the precarious conditions of a capitalism without work' in the early 1990s. Giddens characterises risk society as emerging in the 'late twentieth century' (1994a, 5).

In relation to the UK, it is possible to locate the bases of the shift in two kinds of development. On the one hand, the processes of technological change and economic globalisation which led to a growing popular consciousness of economic uncertainty, particularly in relation to employment, can be dated to the 1970s and early 1980s. During this period, the transition from the confident economic growth, low unemployment and stability of the post-war boom to the stagflationary crises that grew more intense during the 1970s (Bacon and Eltis 1978; Gough 1979) took place. Economic management was central to the 1979 election (Butler and Kavanagh 1979) and unemployment became a major political issue in the early 1980s. These shifts were prefigured by the exchange rate crisis of 1967.

At the level of social and family life, the social legislation of the 1960s and 1970s, establishing easier divorce (Divorce Reform Act 1969), enacting greater recognition of sexual difference (Sexual Offences Act 1967) and outlawing racial and sex discrimination (Race Relations Act 1976, Sex Discrimination Act 1975), provides a social complement to the economic changes. The transition to a more individualised society in apprehension of risk and uncertainty in the UK might be roughly dated as taking

place between the end of the 1960s and the 1980s. This period is spanned by material available from the established longitudinal studies.

3.2. The surveys

A brief summary of the data used in the analysis is provided in Appendix 1. Full details of the survey data and methodology for NCDS and BCS are available at the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/), and for the BHPS at the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) UK Longitudinal Studies Centre (http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc//). In practice, a number of problems emerged in using the BCS data due to differences in question wording and the severe attrition of the sample (more than half) between the interviews at age 16 and 26. For these reasons, the material from this survey was used for confirmatory rather than substantive analysis. Differences in questions asked between NCDS and BHPS focused attention on employment as the area in which the best fit across all three surveys could be obtained. Full details of the methods used in comparing data between the surveys are available in the final report of the project to be published shortly (on www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk) and, currently, available from the authors.

3.3. The approach: distanciation, reflexivity and uncertainty

First, we considered *distanciation* and *reflexivity* in a two-stage analysis. In the first stage, we examined distanciation between generations and greater reflexivity among children, compared with their parents, through cross-tabulation. Comparisons were made with same-sex parents to avoid bias due to gendered patterns of behaviour. For distanciation, we used measures of behaviours and outcomes in relation to school leaving and employment. For reflexivity, we compared aspirations and expectations at age 16 with behaviour and satisfaction with outcomes at ages 23–26 in the areas of school leaving, employment (taking into account employment history up to the time of the survey) and marriage.

The material enabled us to compare information on the younger generation when they were 23 to 26 years old with that collected on their parents at the time of the first sweep when their parents were of comparable age and the children less than a year old. We were unable to include marriage in the analysis of distanciation, since the surveys do not include data on parents' age at their first marriage, rendering the intergenerational comparison of aspirations and achieved marriage ages impossible. The reference school-leaving age was fixed at 16. Although the statutory school-leaving age for the parental generation was 15, very few parents actually left school at that age. Setting the age at 16 for both groups makes a viable comparison possible.

Treatment of employment across periods of rapid labour market change presents difficulties in ensuring the equivalence of occupations between the surveys while enabling us to aggregate sufficient numbers into groups for statistical comparison. Our approach was based on the detailed framework of the Registrar-General's Standard Occupational Classification (SOC). We divided all jobs for the relevant periods into three categories: advanced non-manual, non-manual and manual, comparing specific occupations at the level of the four-digit classification to ensure equivalence. Professional, managerial and non-technical jobs were categorised as advanced non-manual, routine office work, clerical and shop assistants as routine non-manual and skilled, semi- and un-skilled manual as manual. We classified occupational status and entry

into the labour market in relation to answers to the question on the main economic activity of the individual so that part-time jobs supplementing the income of someone whose main activity was, for example, being a student were not counted in occupational comparisons.

We also considered the extent to which individual effort has contributed to success (or otherwise) in attaining one's aspiration. This reflects the part played by the endeavours of the individual in achieving reflexivity and is measured in the case of employment by the number of jobs through which the individual had passed before getting the job, which they held at the age of 23.

We finally combined the data on aspirations and outcomes with respect to school-leaving age, first job and marriage to produce an overall measure of *uncertainty* to support analysis of how uncertain the life course has become for different social groups during the period.

In the second stage, we used logistic regression analysis to examine the relationship between distanciation, reflexivity and the social context of uncertainty on the one hand and variables representing the aspirations and behaviours of children, and the socio-demographic characteristics of children and parents for the two generations on the other. This analysis shows how the part played by these different factors in influencing outcomes has changed over time.

3.4. The approach: satisfaction with outcomes

We then used multivariate modelling to examine the contribution of distanciation from the parents' generation and greater reflexivity to satisfaction with outcomes, taking into account other factors, including relationship between children and parents, employment history, parental expectations and socio-demographic factors. Satisfaction is chosen as reflecting both perception of the relation of outcomes to aspirations and also individual orientation to those outcomes. The dependent variable concerns satisfaction with one's job, a major area of one's life and a helpful indicator of more general satisfaction. This analysis seeks to establish the role played by the factors associated with the development of risk society to people's understanding of their life course over time.

4. Analyses and findings

4.1. Distanciation

Our objective in this part of the analysis was to compare school-leaving age and employment status for the parental generation with those of their children at an equivalent stage in the life cycle. We were unable to compare age of marriage between generations due to lack of data, as mentioned earlier.

As expected, the proportion of the survey samples staying on at school beyond age 16 and moving into non-manual employment increased between generations, reflecting shifts in social patterns and in the labour market. When we compare the extent to which children's experience or behaviour matched that of the parents in terms of school career or occupation, the data show an increase in distanciation, but one that is focused on particular groups. In the NCDS sample, children's behaviour matched that of parents. Fifty-seven percent of those whose (same sex) parent had stayed on beyond 16 stayed on themselves and 79% of those whose parents left at 16 also left at 16. By the time of the BHPS (21 or more years later), corresponding figures were 89% and 20%. The BCS data occupied an intermediate position (Table 1).

Table 1. Distanciation match, by schooling of same-sex parent.

Schooling beyond 16 (same-sex parent)	Distanciation match		*N*
	No match	Match	
NCDS 1958–1981			
No	21.5	78.5	7138
Yes	42.8	57.2	2089
All	26.3	73.7	9227
BHPS 1979–2005			
No	79.6	20.4	392
Yes	10.9	89.1	156
All	60.0	40.0	548
BCS70 1970–1996			
No	44.8	55.2	2309
Yes	20.9	79.1	800
All	38.7	61.3	3109

In relation to occupational status, the proportion of children holding advanced non-manual jobs whose parents had also held such jobs barely changed between the two surveys (37% to 39%). For other non-manual jobs, there was a noticeable increase, from 58% to 65%. For manual jobs, the proportion decreased from 57% to 36%, all comparisons being with the occupation of the same-sex parent (Table 2).

When we examined job satisfaction (data not shown here, but available from the authors upon request), the proportion of those whose job status paralleled that of

Table 2. Distanciation match, by SOC of same-sex parent.

SOC (same-sex parent)	Distanciation match		*N*
	No match	Match	
NCDS 1958–1981			
Advanced non-manual	63.5	36.5	1634
Non-manual	41.9	58.1	1701
Manual	43.0	57.0	3765
All	47.4	52.6	7100
BHPS 1979–2005			
Advanced non-manual	61.5	38.5	109
Non-manual	35.5	64.6	110
Manual	64.0	36.0	89
All	52.9	47.1	308
BCS70 1970–1996			
Advanced non-manual	50.2	49.8	1142
Non-manual	70.3	29.7	964
Manual	43.7	56.3	1583
All	52.7	47.3	3689

their parent and who reported that they were satisfied with their employment fell from 52% to 46%, indicating a tendency for mobility to different kinds of job to be associated with greater satisfaction. BCS data on satisfaction with 'how life has worked out so far' fall between the two. The analysis overall showed an increase in distanciation in relation to education, but only in some areas of employment, especially manual work. The risk society analysis receives some initial support but requires modification in relation to the degree of continuity in intergenerational experience of working life within overall shifts in the availability of different kinds of jobs.

4.2. Reflexivity

This section of the analysis considered the relationship between children's and parents' aspirations and outcomes in relation to school-leaving age and employment status and includes some limited material on marriage. Both the intention to leave school and the reality of leaving at that age fell sharply between the two surveys. However, the overall match between intention and outcome also declined from 92% of those included in the NCDS to 85% of the BHPS sample (Table 3). The BCS group scored 82%. It is the group that did not want to leave, but intended to stay on which shows a much stronger link between aspiration and outcome (rising from 81% to 90%). The overall decline in the reflexivity match in this area results from the decline in early leaving.

For occupational position, the reflexivity match again fell. Nearly 60% of those included in the NCDS gained employment equivalent to aspirations, but the proportion fell to 38% for the BHPS (Table 4). The data from the BCS, which used slightly different terms to describe job aspirations, fell in between at 41%. In the earlier survey, the match for advanced non-manual employment (31%) was much lower than that for other non-manual (75%) or manual (83%) jobs. By the time of the BHPS, there was a marked shift. While matches for advanced non-manual work remained

Table 3. Reflexivity match – school-leaving age, by child's preference.

	Reflexivity match		
Wants to leave school at 16	No match	Match	*N*
NCDS 1958–1981			
No	19.0	81.0	2952
Yes	3.1	96.9	5864
All	8.4	91.6	8816
BHPS 1979–2005			
No	10.5	89.5	429
Yes	47.8	52.2	67
All	15.5	84.5	496
BCS70 1970–1996			
No	23.2	76.8	2153
Yes	7.2	92.8	1090
All	17.8	82.2	3243

Table 4. Reflexivity match – current/last job, by child's preference.

Child's expected first job	Reflexivity Match		*N*
	No Match	Match	
NCDS 1958–1981			
Advanced non-manual	69.1	30.9	3326
Other non-manual	25.4	74.6	2893
Manual	17.2	82.8	2251
All	40.4	59.6	8470
BHPS 1979–2005			
Advanced non-manual	69.1	30.9	194
Other non-manual	39.3	60.7	89
Manual	70.0	30.0	70
All	61.8	38.2	353
BCS70 1970–1996[a]			
In a profession	51.5	48.5	1000
In an office	70.1	29.9	538
Skilled trade	87.6	12.4	274
Working with hands	42.7	57.3	302
All	59.6	40.7	2114

[a]BCS70 asked the respondents what he or she expected to be doing in 5 years' time.

equally low (31%), they had fallen somewhat (to 61%) for other non-manual employment and very sharply (to 30%) for manual employment. It is the shift in the relation between expectations and outcomes in relation to manual work that is the most important factor challenging the account of risk society as characterised by greater reflexivity in relation to employment. As we will see below, it not only reflects a global shift away from manual to non-manual employment opportunities. As job satisfaction (as a measure of satisfaction with achieved outcomes) has become more strongly linked to reflexivity matching, the failure of a growing number of those aspiring to manual occupations to attain their expectation has also increased the pool of non-satisfied non-manual employees.

Interestingly, while 61% of those who reported that they were satisfied with their job in the NCDS also reported matches between aspiration and outcome, only 42% of the equivalent group in the BHPS did so. The majority of those satisfied with their employment in 2002–2005 had not obtained the job that they had earlier anticipated, whereas the reverse had been the case some two decades earlier. So far as paid work goes, rather than being associated with a reflexive capacity to manage outcomes in a detraditionalised society, satisfaction in relation to employment is associated with greater uncertainty in the development of the life course.

The evidence on aspirations for age of marriage supports this interpretation. The match rate between expectations about being married by the mid-twenties and outcomes fell from 53% to 46% between the NCDS and the BHPS (Table 5). The most important shift here was among those who did not wish to be married at that stage of their life. This group had a roughly 2:1 chance of making a correct

Table 5. Reflexivity match – marriage age, by child's preference.

	Reflexivity match[a]		
Child wants to marry by 25	No match	Match	*N*
NCDS 1958–1981			
No	33.4	66.6	962
Yes	49.3	50.7	7961
All	47.6	52.4	8923
BHPS 1979–2005			
No	5.0	95.0	161
Yes	92.7	7.3	204
All	54.0	46.0	365
BCS70 1970–1996[b]			
Probably not	32.3	67.7	3895
Possibly yes	53.1	46.9	143
All	33.1	66.9	4038

[a]Whereas NCDS and BHPS asked about marriage intention by age 25, outcome (for NCDS and, for consistency, BHPS) could only be determined for age 23.

[b]For BCS70, aspirations could not be determined directly, but were deduced from contextual information concerning the respondents' desire and reasons for leaving the parental home, and the anticipated timing of such a move.

prediction in the NCDS, but by the later survey, the odds had increased to nearly 20:1. The likelihood of marriage by the mid-twenties has declined much faster than aspirations.

4.3. Uncertainty

Before examining the influence of other factors in a multivariate analysis, we drew together the above discussion in an analysis of choice and uncertainty in the life course. Table 6 shows the proportions who had achieved their aspirations in one, two or three of the areas in the period covered by the survey. It shows a sharp decline from 31% to 13% of the group achieving all three personal objectives. The BCS occupies a middle position at 25%, but this estimate is uncertain, due to the problems with the data discussed earlier. At the other end, the small minority achieving none of their ambitions rose from 2% in the NCDS to 5% in the BHPS. In short, social changes during a relatively short period lead to greater uncertainty in our life courses.

Table 6. Uncertainty (%).

	NCDS 1958–1981	BHPS 1979–2005	BCS70 1970–1996
0	2.2	4.5	4.5
1	20.6	34.4	26.7
2	46.1	47.8	44.2
3	31.1	13.4	24.6
N	7362	291	1616

4.4. Distanciation, reflexivity and uncertainty: multivariate analysis

The analysis so far indicates a number of shifts in social consciousness between generations during recent years, broadly consonant with the risk society hypothesis. It also indicates that the pattern of engagement of socio-demographic factors in contributing to that consciousness is more complex than what some versions, at least of the hypothesis, suggest. We examined this further using logistic regression models.

Logistic regression estimates the odds of an event occurring given certain conditions or, frequently, of a person involved having certain characteristics, compared with the event not occurring or the individual lacking the characteristics. This complicated concept is frequently described, in short-hand, as the 'likelihood' of the event occurring given other conditions. We will adopt this somewhat inaccurate short-hand expression for reasons of convenience. A key objective of our regression analyses was to develop a model that helped to identify and understand the drivers of distanciation, reflexivity matches and uncertainty, using relevant variables represented in both the NCDS and the BHPS and, as far as possible, also the BCS70.

Here, we discuss only regression models dealing with the impact of class, gender and ethnicity, parents' school-leaving age, household-type aspirations and satisfaction with employment on distanciation and reflexivity. These are measured through the relationship between employment of children and their parents and through the match achieved between aspiration and job in each generation. A corresponding analysis of school-leaving age and age at marriage was carried out and is available from the authors. We also examine the relationship between the same factors and social uncertainty, using the proportion of these areas in which aspirations were attained as a summary measure of success in planning one's life and in controlling uncertainties.

The pattern of distanciation in employment between parents and children in the 1950s and 1970s as indicated by the NCDS (Table 7) bears out the above points. It is having a father in manual employment that is most significant, with expectations of a manual job, having moved through several jobs, aspirations that put pay above job interest or other aspects of job quality, a mother in non-manual or manual employment and, to some extent, female gender also playing a part. By the time of the BHPS, comparing the early 1980s generation with their children in the early twenty-first century, the pattern had changed. Far fewer variables in the BHPS data set reach statistical significance because of the smaller number of cases in this panel study. However, the absence of statistical significance should not be read as the absence of effects. Large odd ratios still suggest that marked differences exist between and within variables; notably, these differences are not only often larger but also generally more frequent than in the regression analyses of the NCDS.

Thus, in the BHPS regression analysis, female gender is the strongest predictor and is also statistically significant, if only at the 10% level. Together with having a non-working mother and non-manual father (large effects, but not statistically significant), gender makes a positive difference to distanciation, presumably indicating the success of women from these backgrounds in moving into work, in particular advanced non-manual work. Conversely, a father who did not stay on at school tends to be associated with the likelihood of a low level of distanciation. A greater number of jobs in one's employment experience is now more likely to be associated with a job closer to that of one's parents.

In relation to the match between job outcome and aspiration (Table 8) associated with greater reflexivity in our model, it is again manual (positively) and advanced

Table 7. Regression models: distanciation – job outcome (current or last job).

		NCDS 1958–1981		BHPS 1979–2005	
		Odds	Sig	Odds	Sig
SOC of father	(Advanced non-manual)				
	Non-manual	.67	**	1.51	
	Manual	1.47	***	1.11	
SOC of mother	(Advanced non-manual)				
	Non-manual	1.49	**	.77	
	Manual	.64	**	.29	
	Looking after the home	1.12		2.06	
Stayed at school beyond age 16	(No)				
	Father: yes	1.11		.46	
	Mother: yes	.99		.93	
Gender	(Male)				
	Female	1.12		2.40	*
Household type	(1–2 children aged 16 or younger)				
	Single parent	1.02		.69	
	3+ children aged 16 or younger	1.18	*	.81	
Child's expectations for first job	(Non-manual)				
	Advanced non-manual	.94		.87	
	Manual	1.74	***	.71	
Job pay is important to job choice (child)	(No)				
	Yes	1.21	*	.88	
Quarrelling at home	(No)				
	Yes	.96		.78	
Number of jobs ever had	(1)				
	2	1.14		1.13	
	3	1.08		.62	
	4	1.12		.55	
	5	1.38	*	.54	
Age when had first job	(16 or earlier)				
	17	.71	**	.52	
	18	.75	*	.63	
	19+	.88		.53	
Voluntary work in past year	(No)				
	Yes	.82	*	1.81	
Satisfied with current job?	(No)				
	Yes	.99		.60	

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

Table 8. Regression models: reflexivity – job outcome (current or last job).

		NCDS 1958–1981		BHPS 1979–2005	
		Odds	Sig	Odds	Sig
SOC of father	(Advanced non-manual)				
	Non-manual	0.87		0.81	
	Manual	0.82	*	0.96	
SOC of mother	(Advanced non-manual)				
	Non-manual	1.02		0.98	
	Manual	0.94		1.74	
	Looking after the home	0.88		1.09	
Stayed at school beyond age 16	(No)				
	Father: yes	0.87		1.26	
	Mother: yes	0.98		1.31	
Gender	(Male)				
	Female	1.30	**	0.99	
Ethnicity	(White)				
	Other	0.62		2.10	
Household type	(1–2 children aged 16 or younger)				
	Single parent	1.08		0.73	
	3+ children aged 16 or younger	1.12		1.38	
Child's expectations for first job	(Non-manual)				
	Advanced non-manual	0.36	***	0.27	**
	Manual	1.73	***	0.21	**
Job pay is important to job choice (child)	(No)				
	Yes	1.06		1.77	
Quarrelling at home	(No)				
	Yes	0.89		0.61	
Number of jobs ever had	(1)				
	2	0.85		0.86	
	3	0.82		0.73	
	4	0.66	**	1.87	
	5	0.69	**	0.79	
Age when had first job	(16 or earlier)				
	17	0.87		0.79	
	18	1.15		1.19	
	19+	1.82	***	1.29	
Voluntary work in past year	(No)				
	Yes	1.19	*	1.81	
Satisfied with current job?	(No)				
	Yes	1.00		3.94	**

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

non-manual (but negatively) expectations for one's job and also female gender that are important in the earlier survey. Starting one's first job later is also relevant. Having worked in a greater number of jobs is associated with rather lower reflexivity, as is having a father who is in manual work.

For the later cohort, satisfaction with one's current job is highly significant, indicating that successful planning produces such an outcome. Non-white ethnicity and expectations of a job that is not manual and is broadly non-manual, but not necessarily advanced, play a substantial, if statistically non-significant, role. Pay is relevant, as is having had four jobs, a possible indicator of the extent to which the individual has proactively pursued desired employment which is not followed through in the other measures of the number of jobs. A mother in manual employment and parents who stayed on at school beyond 16 also suggest greater reflexivity. These findings fit with the view that social change places more emphasis on non-manual work and allows more opportunities to women in this area of work, but not necessarily in more advanced non-manual employment.

Quarrelling with parents at the age of 16 is associated with less reflexivity at age 26, possibly indicating the importance of domestic stability or indeed direct family support and guidance during the early phases of career building. Doing voluntary work is also associated with greater reflexivity.

In Table 9, we focus on uncertainty, or more precisely: *reduced* uncertainty, which is measured by success in achieving two or three of the possible expectations included in the survey as against none or one. The areas in which the surveys allow us to compare outcomes with expectations are school-leaving or marriage age and socio-economic job status. The analysis of uncertainty shows that the main statistically significant factors associated with reduced uncertainty in the earlier survey were the desire to leave school early, expectation of a manual job, aspiration for a later marriage, female gender, lack of quarrelling at home and fewer jobs in one's working history.

By the early 2000s, the pattern had changed. The desire to remain in education beyond the age of 16, expectation of routine non-manual work and the wish to delay or, indeed, avoid marriage were most strongly linked to greater predictability, that is, less uncertainty, in the life course. Living in a single-parent household and being female were the other two statistically significant influences on reduced uncertainty. Other statistically not significant yet large positive effects on reducing uncertainty came from having an advanced non-manual working father and a mother in routine manual work or looking after the home, non-white ethnicity, discord in the home and a greater number of job changes. Thus, only gender and marriage intentions had similar effects on uncertainty in both surveys and, thus, generations. In contrast, repeated job changes – possibly an indicator of reflexive effort – combined with earlier labour market entry, and domestic relationships had opposing effects for the two generations. Most remarkable, perhaps, is the greater (if not statistically significant) effect of social background, measured by parental occupations and the significant effect of growing up in a single-parent household. Thus, we see a growing effect of higher occupational – and by implication, social – status on the ability to realise early life preferences. Yet, this coincides with an even stronger statistical effect of one-parent upbringing, typically assumed to indicate a risk of social disadvantage, but here identified as an environment conducive to individualised self-determination of life choices.

This finding reflects a core aspect of the risk society thesis that post-industrialism and detraditionalisation lead to greater flexibility and diversity in the opportunities and developments in people's lives. However, it does not immediately correspond to

Table 9. Regression models: uncertainty – achieving two or three objectives versus none or 1.

		NCDS 1958–1981		BHPS 1979–2005	
		Odds	Sig	Odds	Sig
SOC of father	(Advanced non-manual)				
	Non-manual	0.96		0.49	
	Manual	0.94		0.59	
SOC of mother	(Advanced non-manual)				
	Non-manual	1.09		1.60	
	Manual	1.20		0.58	
	Looking after the home	1.08		1.50	
Gender	(Male)				
	Female	1.64	***	2.12	*
Ethnicity	(White)				
	Other	0.66		3.12	
Household type	(1–2 children aged 16 or younger)				
	Single parent	1.14		53.29	*
	3+ children aged 16 or younger	1.01		1.68	
Child's expectations for first job	(Non-manual)				
	Advanced non-manual	0.27	***	0.20	**
	Manual	1.44	**	0.37	
Child wants to leave school at 16	(No)				
	Yes	3.00	***	0.12	**
Child wants to be married by age 25	(No)				
	Yes	0.61	***	0.04	***
Quarrelling at home	(No)				
	Yes	0.84	*	1.52	
Number of jobs ever had	(1)				
	2	0.69	***	1.01	
	3	0.59	***	0.78	
	4	0.56	***	1.07	
	5	0.51	***	2.17	
Age when had first job	(16 or earlier)				
	17	0.85		0.61	
	18	1.23		2.31	
	19+	1.84	***	2.06	
Voluntary work in past year	(No)				
	Yes	0.90		1.79	

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

the themes of distanciation and reflexivity, demonstrating clearly their continued demarcation by status and class.

Our analysis in an earlier section showed that distanciation applied to staying on at school, notably among those whose parents left at 16, and to manual employment,

but not so clearly in other areas of the labour market. Reflexivity, understood as a capacity to predict successfully the direction of one's life in a more detraditionalised world, emerged among those planning to stay on at school, but has declined sharply in relation to work, especially among those expecting to be manual workers, and marriage. Many people do not anticipate the pace of social change nor are they able to predict major aspects of the course of their life in the more uncertain context of current social developments. For such groups, most particularly manual workers, the idea of an uncertainty society seems more convincing than that of a reflexively managed life course in a risk society.

4.5. Risk society: reflexivity, distanciation and satisfaction

In the next stage of the analysis, we focused on the area of employment because this is where the data were strongest and most readily comparable between the surveys. The key question is how far a transition to risk society, understood in terms of two principal factors identified as elements in social change by the risk society approach (distanciation and reflexivity), influences people's understanding of their social position and their satisfaction with it. Satisfaction is considered because it reflects both perception of and orientation to outcomes. The analysis examined the contribution made to job satisfaction by variables representing distanciation and reflexivity, taking into account the relationship between parents and children (measured by responses to a question about 'quarrelling at home'), the employment history, measured by the number of jobs the interviewee had had and socio-demographic factors for parent and child.

The regression models for the NCDS and the BHPS (Table 10) show rather different patterns. For the earlier cohort, job satisfaction was associated primarily with obtaining an advanced non-manual job, especially with the smallest number of job changes and when entry into the labour market had not been relatively late. Neither distanciation from parent's employment nor reflexivity in terms of attaining employment that matched the aspiration made much difference. Quarrelling at home at age 15 is associated with a decreasing likelihood of job satisfaction in later life. It had, of course, earlier already been shown to have contributed to greater uncertainty (Table 9). The gender of the child, which was so critical to distanciation and reflexivity, has no statistically significant effect on satisfaction with job choice.

The BHPS analysis shows that by the first decade of the twenty-first century, the pattern had changed. The main driver of job satisfaction was no longer solely the occupational status of one's job, but the fact that this job and status matched the person's aspiration, especially if this was an advanced non-manual job. For the generation born in the 1980s, matching expectations was by far the strongest driver of job satisfaction.

Distanciation from parents' employment also plays a role, but this is negative, as were a working mother in a manual occupation, even if, and especially when, she had remained in school beyond the age of 16. Unlike the NCDS, a relatively large number of job changes had a positive effect on satisfaction, as did entering the labour market at 18.

The 1970 BCS does not include a job satisfaction question. An analysis using responses to a more general question on satisfaction, with 'how life has turned out so far' as a dependent variable, shows a pattern similar to that of the NCDS. Satisfaction does not relate to the distanciation or reflexivity measures, but rather to measures of status and parental employment.

Table 10. Regression models: risk society (job satisfaction vs. dissatisfaction).

		NCDS 1958–1981		BHPS 1979–2005	
		Odds	Sig	Odds	Sig
Child's job expectation	(Non-manual)				
	Advanced non-manual	0.75	*	2.96	
	Manual	0.90		1.52	
Match with expectation	First job	0.95		0.99	
	Current/last Job	0.90		5.99	*
SOC of current or last job	(Advanced non-manual)				
	Non-manual	0.67	**	0.30	
	Manual	0.59	***	1.00	
Distanciation match	(No)				
	Yes	1.09		0.34	*
SOC of father	(Advanced non-manual)				
	Non-manual	0.90		0.49	
	Manual	0.98		0.65	
SOC of mother	(Advanced non-manual)				
	Non-manual	1.02		0.76	
	Manual	0.98		0.09	*
	Looking after the home	0.92		0.76	
Stayed at school beyond age 16	(No)				
	Father: yes	0.83		1.30	
	Mother: yes	1.26		0.21	*
Gender	(Male)				
	Female	1.10		1.79	
Household type	(1–2 children aged 16 or younger)				
	Single parent	0.88		0.33	
	3+ children aged 16 or younger	0.94		2.07	
Job pay is important to job choice (child)	(No)				
	Yes	0.98		0.48	
Quarrelling at home	(No)				
	Yes	0.76	**	3.48	
Number of jobs ever had	(1)				
	2	0.84		0.39	
	3	0.79		0.46	
	4	0.66		0.30	
	5	0.54	***	1.60	
Age when had first job	(16 or earlier)				
	17	1.04		0.54	
	18	1.13		1.67	
	19+	0.57	***	0.20	
Voluntary work in past year	(No)				
	Yes	0.98		1.53	

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

This last set of analyses of our cohort data took job satisfaction to indicate the successful completion of a young person's effort to construct his or her early career. It is difficult to account for every single variable's influence on this outcome. As in most analyses, some statistically significant factors are more insightful, their meaning more intuitive and closer to describing the underlying mechanisms of social processes than others. The key is to note the shift in those factors that drove subjectively successful career building in the 1980s and those that drive them in the early 2000s. Few commonalities appear to be shared between the generations. For those born in the late 1950s, a simple model of achievement that stressed status and early outcomes, often following in the parents' footsteps, determined job satisfaction. For those born in the late 1970s/early 1980s, job satisfaction was 'self-determined' by achieving objectives, matching one's own expectations even if – and particularly when – the adult had experienced domestic disagreements during his or her teenage years when aspirations were formed.

5. Findings and conclusion

Throughout the analyses, our research findings indicate substantial social changes bearing on life preferences and choices, the achievement of aspirations and, ultimately, satisfaction with outcomes (here analysed in detail with respect to employment) between the times of the two surveys. These changes lend some support to the risk society thesis. The social world has become less certain, and one's success in steering a course through it now contributes more strongly to one's satisfaction with one's position in life.

More broadly, the analysis reported earlier in this paper indicates considerable complexity in social change and in how people in different social groups respond to it. The risk society analysis only tells half the story. Against the claims of the approach, distanciation has increased but reflexivity has declined for those from manual backgrounds and for those whose life plans included manual employment. The capacity to predict age of marriage has also declined sharply. Transitions into working life, in particular, appear indeed to have become 'choppier' (Vickerstaff 2006, 194), even if they were not necessarily trouble-free in the past. Crucially, they remain structured by class and social background (cf. Cebulla 2007). A key difference, however, is that, increasingly, it is the capacity to achieve aspirations, successfully managed reflexivity, that is important to personal satisfaction, together with distance from parents' occupation status. Achieving advanced non-manual employment plays a role, but one of much less importance.

Women's patterns of employment and roles in family and social life have changed substantially during the period covered by the surveys. The outcomes in relation to distanciation, reflexivity and uncertainty are complex. Women's distanciation has increased dramatically compared with men's. Conversely, the likelihood that women's employment, compared with men's, matched expectations (our key measure of reflexivity) was much higher in the earlier survey than in the later one. Women's overall uncertainty is lower than that of men in both surveys and decreases over time. The intergenerational change in women's lives is greater than that of men during the progress towards risk society, but women are able to plan their lives with greater success in the new and changing social world.

This is a world in which individual proactivity is more important. However, it is also a world in which substantial groups appear relatively unsuccessful in achieving

the goals to which they aspire. The effect of higher status social background of managing one's life's expectations appears to have grown stronger rather than lessened, as some interpretations of the thesis of risk society might suggest – or, indeed, public policy expects. Those from a manual working class background who do not expect to move out of manual employment appear likely to gain least satisfaction from social change, whereas it is the minority of successful aspirants who derive greater satisfaction. But growing up in a single-parent household may, contrary to much public speculation, be helpful for achieving objectives, perhaps by emphasising (the benefits of) self-determination.

If risk society is understood as more than simply an increase in uncertainty in the life course, and as including greater distanciation from the pattern of social assumptions and expectations of one's parents and more reflexivity in the management of one's life, increases in satisfaction tend to be more marked among particular social groups. The risk society approach acknowledges that changing social circumstances may require us to take responsibility for writing our own biographies, but that some of us are likely to enjoy more success in doing so than others. Sometimes, those most successful may also be those who, in the public's (and government's) eye, were least expected to succeed. Structural and socio-demographic factors as well as individual choices continue to exert a strong influence on outcomes. The ability to achieve defined objectives remains shaped by unequal social structures and opportunities, whereas the subjective assessment of outcomes has become much more self-determined than it was in the past when social hierarchy, perceptions and pressures mattered more than personal preferences.

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Appendix 1. The surveys and variables used in the analysis

Table A1. All variables shared between surveys and used in the analysis.

Age of child	0	15–16	23–26
NCDS	1958	1974	1981
BCS	1970	1986	1996
BHPS	1979–1983	1995–1998	2002–2005
Data	School-leaving age	First job	Marriage
Parent's aspiration for child	NCDS: Want child to leave school at 15 BHPS: N/A BCS70: Would like child to leave school (asked at age 16)	NCDS: Hopes for child's first job BHPS: N/A BCS70: N/A	N/A
Parent's own behaviour	School-leaving age (NCDS, BCS70) Age left full-time education the first time (BHPS)	NCDS: Socio-economic status (SEC) BHPS: As above BCS70: SOC	NCDS: Date of present marriage BHPS: Date of first marriage BCS70: Date of present marriage
Child's aspiration	NCDS: Wish to leave school at 15 BHPS: Wants to leave school at 16 BCS70: Wants to leave full-time education at the end of school year (aged 16)	NCDS: Expected or desired first job BHPS: Expected first job BCS70: Reason for wanting to leave home now within 3 years (to find/take up a job)	NCDS: Best age to get married BHPS: At what age want to get married? BCS70: Reason for wanting to leave home now within 3 years (to get married)
Child's outcome	Age left school (all)	SOC of first job (all)	Age at marriage (all)
Child's assessment of outcome	NCDS: Better to have stayed at school or left and worked BHPS: N/A BCS70: N/A	NCDS: Current or last job satisfaction BHPS: As above (BCS70: Satisfaction with life in general)	NCDS: N/A BHPS: Satisfaction with spouse BCS70: N/A
Other: children's views or actions	Wants to work with hands/brain (NCDS, BHPS)	Importance of pay in job choice (NCDS, BHPS)	BHPS: Agreement with statement that 'living together outside marriage is wrong'
Parent–child relationship:	Quarrelling/arguments with parents (NCDS, BHPS), parenting style strict? (BCS70)		
Other	Number of jobs (all)		
	Voting intention at next election (all)		
	Voluntary work (all)		

Further details about the surveys and access to the data are available from the data archive at the following URLs:
NCDS
http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/findingData/ncdsTitles.asp
BHPS
http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/findingData/bhpsTitles.asp
BCS70
http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/findingData/bcsTitles.asp

Table A2. Precise wording of the aspiration questions.

	NCDS	BHPS	BCS70
Leaving school	At what age do you think are you most likely to leave school? 16 17 18 or over Uncertain	Do you want to leave school when you are 16, or do you plan to carry on in education, for instance, in the sixth form or a college? Leave school Go on to the sixth form/ college	Some people your age decide to leave home early, some later, and some never. Are you thinking of leaving home? Now/very soon In the next year In 1–3 years Sometime in the future Uncertain If leaving now or in the foreseeable future, what would be the reason? To find a job To take up a job To get married/live with partner
First job	What would you like to be your first full time job? (open question – subsequently coded)	What job would you like to do when you leave school? Give as many details as possible. (open question – subsequently coded)	Looking ahead 5 years, what do you see yourself doing? Following a profession Working in an office Doing skilled trade Working with my hands Working in the open air At a university/polytechnic Doing something else (what?)
Marriage	What do you think would be the best age to get married? 16 or 17 18 or 19 20 or 21 22–25 26–30 31 or over Uncertain or don't know Don't wish to marry	At what age do you want to get married? If you don't want to get married, then write in zero. (open question)	N/A

Item 6:

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Statement on initiation, conduct and direction of conjoint research

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Perceptions of labour market risks: Shifts and continuities across generations

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Abstract

In the risk society thesis, most notably forwarded by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, the labour market plays a key role in individualization processes. While for previous generations, family and personal networks, and also government institutions, were important in providing access to and mobility within the labour market, cohorts entering the labour market since the 1970s and onwards are perceived to be living in a modern 'risk regime', requiring each individual to make choices and decisions in relation to a market that no longer accommodates employment based on kinship and friendship. Based on data from 58 qualitative interviews with parents and their adult children, this article examines more closely these purported changes. The study's main observation is that important changes towards increased perceived individualization have taken place from one generation to the next. While affirming the disjuncture posited by Beck between a 'collectivized past' and an 'individualized present', this study's empirical evidence from two generations of individuals indicates that the disjuncture is muddier and more complex than previously understood.

Keywords

generations, individualization, labour market, life course, risk perceptions, risk society

Introduction

Grand theories of increasing levels of individualization and risk in modern society have been forwarded most notably by Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991). For Beck, an

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all-pervasive sense of risk has become a ubiquitous feature of life in both public and private domains. Individuals are seen as required to negotiate and plan their own actions and pathways in environments where known and unknown, objective and subjective risks pose potential threats to their sense of identity, belonging and well-being. Beck defines individualization as a process in which 'each person's biography is [being] removed from given determinations and placed in his or her own hands, open and dependent on decisions' (Beck, 1992: 135). Each individual thus becomes responsible for his or her own future life chances, choices and decisions, and the continuous creation and construction of the self can be viewed as an ongoing DIY project (Beck, 2000: 75).

The notion that the individual is solely responsible for his or her life chances and decision-making implies a heightened subjective sense of risk, as possible courses of action are numerous and include options that, if chosen, may have detrimental effects on the life chances and social mobility of the individual. The reverse side of the coin is that individualized responsibility may function in a liberating sense, giving the individual the opportunity to realize personal aspirations, make decisions and take risks that positively affect his or her life chances and social mobility. In this sense, as Tulloch and Lupton (2003: 18–19) emphasize, risk does not necessarily represent danger or loss of control, as it can also provide individuals with opportunities that may enhance or improve their well-being.

Importantly, Beck's argument does not imply full individual autonomy. Although the individual is 'removed from traditional commitments and support relationships', these are exchanged for constraints produced by the labour market and consumerism (Beck, 1992: 131). 'The place of *traditional* ties and social forms (social class, nuclear family) is taken by *secondary* agencies and institutions, which stamp the biography of the individual and makes that person dependent upon fashions, social policy, economic cycles and markets' (Beck, 1992: 131). There is thus an inherent contradiction in the individualization process between an individual's expectation of being able to plan and control his or her life, and the limitations that are placed on this ability by external societal factors.

In relation to the labour market and the sphere of work, Beck posits that increasing individualization will bring along new chances and freedom for individuals to carve out their roles, but 'new trapdoors' may limit opportunities and lead to marginalization and exclusion (Beck, 2000: 53). The bottom line is, according to Beck, that 'risks are shifted from the state and the economy on to the shoulders of individuals', thus underlining a 'new precariousness of work' (Beck, 2000: 53–4). In Beck's account, there is a clear disjuncture within modernity itself between the two phases of a 'collectivized' past and an individualized present, where the first phase, described as a 'Fordist regime', introduced standardization, mass production and full employment (Beck, 2000: 68). Security, certainty and clearly defined boundaries are said to describe life in the Fordist regime, where families and communities were responsible for interpreting 'opportunities, dangers [and] biographical uncertainties' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 4). The risk regime of the second phase of modernity, however, 'firmly rules out, beyond a transition period, any eventual recovery of the old certainties of standardized work [and] standard life histories' (Beck, 2000: 70). Moreover, the burden of interpreting 'opportunities, dangers [and] biographical uncertainties' has shifted from families and communities onto the individual who, by necessity, develops a heightened sense of risk and responsibility.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 4) suggest that only *a comparison of different generations* (birth cohorts) will allow a proper assessment of the increase in demands placed on individuals. Our research, based on interviews with different generations of individuals, allows us to examine new empirical evidence and to ask how clearly the posited disjuncture between a collectivized past and an individualized present can be identified in biographical narratives about labour market entry and participation across these generations. As such, our research can be viewed as a response to the often-presented charge that the risk society thesis lacks empirical verification (Alexander, 1996; De Beer, 2007; Mythen, 2004, 2005; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003; Wilkinson, 2001). Our research also adds to the growing academic literature which underlines that risk perceptions are mediated and differentiated along cultural and social-structural lines (e.g. Abbot et al., 2006; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Mythen, 2005; Vickerstaff, 2006). Cultural theorists argue that perceptions of risk are culturally constructed and mediated, and subject to social learning (Douglas and Wildawsky, 1982; Oltedal et al., 2004). Social theorists highlight how social class, gender, ethnicity and age have a bearing on people's perceptions of and responses to risk – making them, for example, more or less risk-averse (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997, 2007; Lupton, 1999; Mitchell et al., 2001; Mythen, 2005; Tulloch and Lupton, 2003; Wilkinson, 2001). Our research adds important theoretical and empirical nuances to this debate by focusing explicitly on intergenerational shifts and continuities in risk perceptions.

Intergenerational risk perceptions and the labour market

Both Giddens and Beck have placed the emergence of risk society in historical, Western European time in or around the 1950s. At that time social and economic structures began to mutate in ways that would ultimately bring about a reconstituted social order. The new order placed risk at the centre of social functioning; not as risk calculation and assessment (although both are clearly permeating society today), but as uncertainty, which undermines any notion of the calculability of risk probabilities and makes it increasingly difficult for the individual to anticipate (and thus plan) his or her future.

In the risk society thesis, the labour market is seen to have a key role in the production of processes of individualization (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). While the 1950s and 1960s are perceived as a 'traditional' modern society, in the sense that family and personal networks played an important role in access to and mobility within the labour market, the 1970s and onwards are perceived as a modern 'risk regime' which requires each individual to be responsible for his or her own choices in relation to a labour market which no longer accommodates employment based on kinship and friendship (see Beck, 2000). Our intergenerational study of parents and their adult offspring facilitates an examination of these purported changes in terms of entry to and participation in the labour market.

If a radical disjuncture in the social positioning of the individual from the Fordist regime to risk society has indeed occurred, we would expect to find discontinuity between trajectories buttressed by traditional support networks, more typical among the parent generation, and the more individualized biographies emphasizing self-reliance and risk, more typical for the offspring generation. We would also expect a break or

evolution in the typical personalized response mechanisms – reflexivity as reflex or reaction (see our next section) – to be observed between the generations.

Exploring continuities and discontinuities between parents and their offspring also allows us to consider the influence and 'transfer' of perceptions across family generations. There is a wealth of research literature on intergenerational relationships and intergenerational transmission (see Scabini and Marta, 2006 for an overview), but to date there is very little research on the intergenerational transmission of attitudes to risk and uncertainty. A notable exception is that of Dohmen et al. (2006), who used a large-scale, representative survey in Germany and found that there is a strong correlation between parents' willingness to take risks and that of their children. Our qualitative research adds to the knowledge currently being developed around intergenerational relationships and the transmission of attitudes to and perceptions of risk.

Reflexivity as planned reactions or unplanned reflexes

Although Beck and Giddens essentially agree in their understanding of the material foundations of risk society, they offer somewhat different perspectives on the human responses to perceived or experienced social risk. Their disaccord, which centres on the sociological use of a core element of risk theory, that of 'reflexivity', remains useful as an analytical tool that sheds light on the 'true' nature of our ability to cope with perceived risk. For Giddens, reflexivity signifies the self-aware assessment of behavioural options and the ability to reconcile internal and external demands and influences in order to maintain a coherent personal narrative, if necessary by self-correcting earlier decisions 'on reflection' of their appropriateness (Giddens, 1991). Beck, in contrast, certainly in his earlier writings (Beck, 1992), understood reflexivity as a *spontaneous* reaction to unforeseen threats, opportunities and situations that presented choices and required decisions. Unlike Giddens, who perceived reflexivity as purposeful (re-)actions to events (and as responsive to context), the early Beck perceived reflexivity as very much unplanned – a *reflex* rather than an act of reflecting. Whereas Giddens' notion of reflexivity assumes an individual's ability to know, judge and weigh options before taking decisions, in Beck's use of the term, decision-making may be ad hoc and preceding judgement and the weighing of options. For the theory and practice of individualization, these opposing interpretations of 'reflexivity' have correspondingly opposing effects, as one all but rules out long-term strategic behaviours whereas the other retains them at its core. One implies a 'structured randomness' of behaviour, where behaviour is shaped by new institutions of control that have replaced traditional (kinship) ties; the other proclaims scope for planned and learned behaviour. Re-flex and re-action thus represent different response modes to the uncertain events and outcomes in a society that increasingly manufactures its own risks. As behavioural concepts, they are useful tools for exploring possible experiential divides between generations.

Research methodology

We conducted 58 in-depth interviews for our study of intergenerational perceptions and experiences of risk in relation to labour market entry and participation. The interviews

were with 29 pairs of parents and their adult children of the same sex (i.e. mothers and daughters, fathers and sons). Gender differences in risk perceptions and experiences are well documented (Gustafson, 1998). Moreover, the gender disparities in the nature and extent of change in career structures and opportunities over the last 50 years (see Scott, 1994) may be expected to impact on intergenerational perceptions of career planning and risk. Our interviews therefore involved same-sex intergenerational pairs rather than mixed pairs (16 female pairs and 13 male pairs). In addition to an emphasis on gender balance, the recruitment of interviewees also considered their socioeconomic backgrounds. We thought it essential that one of each pair had either changed jobs or been made redundant or experienced unemployment in the last two years, as such events are likely to trigger important decision-making processes.

Our sample consisted of 29 parent generation individuals aged 38–80, with most (20) aged in their sixties and seventies, and 29 offspring generation individuals aged 17–53, with most (26) aged in their twenties, thirties and forties. The age profiles can be mapped onto the 1950s break line that Giddens and Beck have suggested as indicative of the turning point in the emergence of risk society: roughly half of the parent generation had typically completed their education and started work before or not long into the 1950s, while the other half did so either in the latter half of the 1950s, in the 1960s, or the early 1970s. Members of the offspring generation, on the other hand, typically started this process either in the late 1970s, in the 1980s, or the early 1990s.

Mirroring the socioeconomic changes of the latter half of the 20th century, the educational and occupational profiles of the parent and the offspring generations differed markedly. Among the 29 individuals in the parent generation, five had a university degree and two had attended college. A majority of them (22) had left school between the ages of 14 and 16. Of the 29 individuals in the offspring generation, seven had a university degree while two had attended university without achieving a degree, and eight had attended college. Fewer than half (12) had left school between the ages of 15 and 18. There is thus evidence of some upward social mobility in educational terms from one generation to the next. In terms of class background (perceived as occupational status), a majority (18) of the parent generation were from the working classes (non-managerial/non-professional, skilled or unskilled; see Roberts, 2001: 28–9), while five were from the middle classes and six had worked themselves up from working to middle class through their employment career. There was some evidence of upward social mobility from one generation to the next in terms of occupational status achievement. A majority (16) of the offspring generation belonged to the middle classes, while 10 were from working classes and three worked themselves up from working to middle class through their employment career. Many in the offspring generation are also in their early careers and thus have time to achieve more upward mobility.

In sum, a majority of the parent generation were from the working classes and had only completed compulsory education, while a majority of the offspring generation were from the middle classes and roughly half of them had received education beyond compulsory schooling. The interviews were conducted in 2005, and most of the participants lived in the English Midlands. With the exception of one pair, the interviewees were all white. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the participants.

The interviews were conducted through what can be loosely described as a narrative biographical method (Heinz and Krüger, 2001; Riessman, 1993; Roberts, 2002) to explore participants' careers over their life course, with a focus on decision-making. This involved asking participants to 'map out' their entire employment history and subsequently focusing on key moments in their career and decision-making related to those events. We used biographical narratives of career histories and career transitions as an anchor to explore changes in risk perceptions across generations. We did not attempt to *predict* or *determine* the extent of influence and transfer of risk perceptions across family generations, but to examine and discuss whether, and the extent to which, the biographical narratives revealed the possibility of such influence and transfer in the context of entry to and participation in the labour market.

In contrast to a more direct approach to the study of risk perceptions, the narrative biographical approach enabled us to 'de-centre' the question of risk in the interview context and to apply a more indirect approach without an a priori construction of risk and uncertainty. Empirical research on risk perceptions is often based on the assumption that risk *is* a significant dimension of people's worldviews and everyday lives, rather than asking whether this is actually so (see Henwood et al., 2008). An alternative view is that people construct and perceive risks in different ways, and attribute different meanings, values and intensities to risks. In a study of the role of risk in everyday life, Tulloch and Lupton (2003: 19) found that their research participants viewed risk as 'biographical, or different for each individual', and that 'risk is the product of a way of seeing rather than an objective fact'. In our own research interviews, we sought to talk explicitly about risk-related events such as applying for or changing jobs, or being made redundant, without immediately using the term 'risk'. Participants were informed that the research was about careers and decision-making, and in this sense a framework for invoking a discussion of risk was offered. The interviews included questions about trust in employers and support networks, level of knowledge about future options, and consequences (financial and otherwise) when plans do not work out. Importantly, the intergenerational approach allowed us to examine similarities and differences across generations. Although such similarities and differences *can* be due to variations over the life course, the presence of quite broad age bands within both the parent and offspring generation mitigates the impact of life course position. Moreover, a study of parents and offspring is useful because it reduces the impact of variations in external factors; parents and their children are, for example, likely to have similar religious and cultural backgrounds.

Risk and decision-making

In the next section we present and discuss the biographical accounts of the parent generation, before turning to those of their children, whom we collectively refer to as the offspring generation. Our immediate concern is with grasping the quintessential characteristics of the individual generations' account and their rooting in the respective historical context. Our next concern is to match parents to their children and to make linkages across generations. We explore circumstances that generate matching and non-matching experiences and, importantly, accounts of these experiences. As will become apparent, while

we witnessed both stability and change across generations, it is not only experiences but also their framing or interpretation that frequently separated the generations. This said, in the presentation and discussion of difference and separateness it is important not to lose sight of the, often considerable, overlap between the experiences and accounts of both generations. Both during the interviews and at the analysis stage, when reading stories of the two groups of participants, it became apparent that participants from both generations anchored their accounts in different forms of reflexivity that left room for both mediated reaction and immediate reflex.

Some of our participants mainly presented themselves as planners and active decision-makers. They were individualistic in their outlook, and typically aware of different options available to them in terms of labour market participation. They presented narratives suffused with notions of choice, planning, individual control, action and decision-making. We call them *planners.*

A second group of participants mainly presented themselves as people forced by circumstances beyond their control as they entered the labour market or experienced changes in their labour market participation, such as redundancy, unemployment, or changing employer. Whenever possible, people in this group 'played it safe' by relying on what family and friends had done before them – they went into traditional labour market trajectories. They valued a secure income over alternative opportunities and possible instability (we call them *safe-players*). The narratives from this group were often suffused with notions of tradition, limited opportunities and choice, and financial need.

A third and final group of participants mainly presented themselves as highly flexible individuals, or as people who were 'going with the flow' or 'taking one day at a time'. Narratives from this group are characterized by a combination of predetermined objectives and potential or actual deviations from these, experimentation with perceived options and opportunities, flexibility and a general lack of worrying about the future (our short-hand for this group is *surfers*). People in this group may 'surf' when opportunities arise, but might also skip 'a good surf' without much regret. They are very flexible in their outlook, and do not worry much. They are aware of different options but do not necessarily think it is worthwhile to pursue them.

In most of the biographical stories, either the 'planner', the 'safe-player' or the 'surfer' narratives were predominant. In some, however, a more mixed self-presentation and understanding came to the fore, either as a constant complexity or as a marked change over time resulting from life changes or transitions (we revisit this issue later).

Our sample consists of individuals with an attachment to the labour market, which might itself propagate the value placed on labour market participation. The research participants portrayed themselves as having a strong work ethic, including a commitment to provide for the family and a deep hesitation, even resentment, towards becoming dependent on the welfare state, and the notion that it was important to avoid idleness. As such, a strong Protestant work ethic and attitude towards life (Weber, 2001) shone through the biographical narratives. What differed between individuals and between generations, however, were the ways in which individuals entered the labour market, how they made decisions about changes in their employment and their more general perceptions of risk and control in relation to paid work.

Generational pathways to the labour market: The parent generation

Typically, members of the parent generation presented narratives in which forces beyond their own control were decisive in relation to their first entry into the labour market. By and large, they were 'safe-players': 18 of the 29 parent narratives mainly displayed 'safe-player' attitudes and experiences. Seven individuals in the parent generation mainly presented 'surfer' identities, while four perceived themselves as a 'planner'. While three of the 'planners' among the parents had left school early, one undertook a four-year university degree and became a teacher. All but two of the 'safe-players' had left school early, while the 'surfers' in the parent generation displayed a more mixed picture of both early school-leavers and individuals achieving higher education.

Options and choices in terms of educational and employment opportunities were often quite limited for the parent generation. Many families from a manual or working-class background, who formed the majority of participants from the older generation in our study, were simply not in a position to support their children through further education beyond compulsory schooling, and for some families it was necessary to send children to work in order to obtain much needed additional income to support family needs. Ingrid (aged 67) was a typical representative of her generation. She remembered having three options when she left school at the age of 15: shop, factory or office work. Her father would not let her work in a factory, and said she would be working 'all hours' at a shop, so office work was presented as the best option. Her mother took her to find an office job at a company where her brother was already employed, and she got a job there without being interviewed for it. Ingrid was expected to contribute for her board at the family home. Her mother also helped Ingrid to change jobs later on, by contacting someone she knew who then offered Ingrid a job. 'So I just went along, they weren't advertising', said Ingrid, who thought that it would be difficult to obtain a job in the same informal way today. Ingrid often wishes she had become a nurse, but reflects that she has had limited opportunities and choices.

James (77) was another typical representative of the parent generation. The oldest of 10 children, he left school at the age of 14, and recalled that he had three choices when he was 15: iron works, upholstery or the railway. James made a conscious decision to go for what he perceived as the least risky employer, namely the railway, which was the biggest employer in the area. Moreover, his father, who already worked for the railway, helped him get a job by arranging an interview. James worked on the railway all his life.

Many of the 'safe-players' reminisced about previous times when it was possible to obtain 'a job for life' upon entering the labour market. To them, a job for life presented something positive, as secure, long-term jobs enabled people to worry less about possible redundancies and unemployment. The interviewees clearly saw the option of having a job for life as something belonging to the past; as something rather unachievable in today's labour market.

Among the parent generation, the narratives were not permeated by any strong sense of risk in relation to entry into the labour market. Although options were in many cases limited, there were no instances where members of the parent generation were left with no choice at all. Furthermore, they were able to rely to a large extent on personal networks

and in a few cases also on institutions like the Labour Exchange if such networks were non-existent, when seeking entry to the labour market. Pathways to employment were thus usually determined by (limited) local opportunities and personal networks consisting of family and friends and their connections to local employers.[1] Our findings complement those of previous research in emphasizing the stability and security offered to young people entering the labour market through the guidance and opportunities provided by significant others such as family members or peers (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007: 8).

Major employers, such as the railway, or the mining and textile industries, gave young people the opportunity to enter the local labour market. Besides class background, options depended on what your local area could offer, as the geographical mobility of individuals was limited due to lack of transport and other factors. Mildred (68), for example, left school at 15, and was presented with only one option as her mother found her a job in a factory where her older sister already worked. As soon as Mildred grew in confidence and experience, however, she realized there were other factories in her area that offered better pay, and she actually found it easy to change jobs: 'Well, jobs were available then. I mean if you didn't like a job today you got another job tomorrow. It was, it was so easy.' There were three big factories in Mildred's local area, and the second job she found was at a factory where her aunt had previously worked. If you were offered a job at one of these factories, 'you'd got a job for life if you wanted it. Nowadays nobody can say that, that they've got a job for life because they haven't', said Mildred. The main driving force for labour market participation among study participants from the parent generation was financial need. Money to pay for housing, food and clothing for the family has been the most important employment outcome for this cohort. In other words, 'playing it safe' was considered the best course of action.

Paul (80) was one of the few individuals in our sample who had relied on institutional assistance to get jobs. He came from a small town and used the Labour Exchange twice to get jobs: the first time when leaving school at 14 years of age and then again a few years later. Paul had limited job opportunities, but in hindsight he felt that the jobs he did have had been his choice, that he had made the right decisions and that he had been in control of his career promotions and progression.

Paul's case highlighted an important gender difference we found typical for this generation: it was primarily the men (and husbands) of the parent generation who felt in control of their decisions, even within the constraints of their local employment markets and the expectations of their own parents and peers. The women (and wives) had fewer options, were more strongly guided by tradition and their parents, and ultimately curtailed in their choices by their partners. The labour market also provided fewer opportunities, especially as these women had rarely benefited from more than the minimum of (compulsory) education. The parent generation in our sample was typically conscious of the structural constraints imposed on their career choices by their social background; that is, their need to secure an income for themselves and for their family. While social conditions forced both men and women to seek 'safe' employment, men, more so than women, described their efforts as seeking these opportunities proactively and portrayed their choices as primarily their own. Even though they presented what Beck describes as 'standard life histories' (Beck, 2000: 70), it is important to note that 'playing it safe' also involves elements of choice, decision-making and control. Although a job for life and job

security were clearly available in the Fordist era, people who entered and participated in the labour market at that time were also actively factoring in such elements in deciding on their course of action. They were acutely aware that choosing differently would increase the risk of instability and insecurity in terms of income.

Although the parent generation conceded that obtaining secure employment had become more difficult and employment itself more precarious for their children than had been the case for themselves, both women and, especially, men of this generation had been alert to the need for secure employment and sought to select employers on that basis. But this appeared easier to them than how they perceived their children's choices today. The parent generation was concerned about not going to work for the 'wrong' employer – someone whose business might go under, for whatever reason. Men appeared particularly sensitive to job insecurity, possibly because they sensed the effects job loss might have on their future role as breadwinners. This generation was aware of risk; that is, the risk of economic failure. But it also felt it was able to control this risk, which was calculable to the extent that the men and women felt able to judge if their (prospective) employer was of the kind that would remain in business for more than the foreseeable future, ideally for the duration of their working lives.

Generational pathways to the labour market: The offspring generation

Clear changes in people's approaches to job seeking and their work orientations had taken place by the time the offspring generation entered the labour market. On the whole, the offspring generation reported less reliance on family, friends and institutions than we found among the parent generation. Predominantly, the offspring generation perceived themselves either as active decision-makers in charge of their careers, as 'going with the flow' and having a flexible attitude towards career opportunities, or as a mixture of these two seemingly contradictory identities. Overall, their biographical narratives were markedly suffused with the notion of individualized choice and responsibility in relation to labour market participation. Although having a wide range of opportunities was to some extent valued positively, many also felt overwhelmed by the (career) choices that they faced. Only eight offspring individuals 'played it safe' by following traditional trajectories that primarily offered job security.

Rebecca (23) was a typical representative of the offspring generation. After completing her university degree she had taken a job and deferred her plans for postgraduate education for a year. She had doubts about going back to university, as she also had ideas for a private business. She was constantly weighing her options: 'Should I, shouldn't I?' She associated her indecision with the fact that she had lots of opportunities and options in terms of what direction to take. Although she appreciated having many options, it made it hard for her to choose a particular direction. Any and all choices would contribute to the making of her biography and self-identity. Rebecca was used to making her own decisions and liked to be in control of what she was doing. Her motive in seeking a job was to stay financially independent from a future husband, to enjoy a high standard of living and to be a valued member of society. She saw herself as having more choices and options than her mother, to whom she made repeated references. The mother, Amelia (62),

had been instructed by her father and cousin to work at a particular company after finishing compulsory schooling. Amelia's options had been further impeded by an early start to her own family and by her husband's expectations for her to be a housewife. Rebecca reflected that she did not want to find herself in a similar position to her mother, and insisted that she would make her own choices despite any objections or resistance from her parents. She was not sure if she was always choosing the right course of action, 'and sometimes it feels really risky, but it will always be something positive', said Rebecca.

Another example of a discontinuity in outlooks between the parent and the offspring generation was that of Isabella (37) and her mother Ingrid (67), whom we described earlier. Similar to Amelia in the above example, Ingrid had experienced limited choice and opportunity in terms of labour market entry and participation. Unlike her daughter Isabella some decades later, Ingrid was comparatively resigned to this fact – if not content with it. Isabella, on the other hand, had been at the same company since leaving school at the age of 18, but had been through numerous job changes and had taken on more and increasingly challenging responsibilities within the company. She was confident, had career aspirations and cared a great deal about her own success. Her biographical narrative was suffused with the notion of individual agency and choice. She saw herself as having made opportunities for herself by taking risks within the company, by pushing herself forward to take on new roles and responsibilities. Her narrative was also contradictory, as she claimed not to think about the future. Yet she had balanced her career risk-taking by obtaining some financial security through home ownership and a private pension. Isabella described herself as sensible in not spending everything she earned. Security was important to her, and she was keenly aware that her job might not be for life: 'Work is something these days that is not a given, it's not a permanent [thing].' Although she cared about the financial security a job could and did give her, her driver for change was 'stimulation and challenge'. Self-satisfaction was thus a deeply rooted motivation in her work. She was also aware of the generational differences between herself and her mother: 'Because everything that I've said has been me, me, me, hasn't it?' Her mother, on the other hand, had always made her decisions with a view to other people around her, including husband and children.

Peter (47), son of Paul (80), whom we met earlier, provided in many respects a contrast to Isabella. While Isabella had worked for the same company but in different and increasingly challenging roles over the years, Peter had been in and out of jobs with various employers. His father Paul had, we recall, found work through the Labour Exchange, while Peter, after obtaining a university degree, found it hard to get a job using the now typical means of newspaper job sections and job centres. He also found it difficult to choose what to do, and sent out applications for a range of different jobs. He had about 50 interviews before being offered his first job in which he stayed for three and a half years. He then changed job within the company and stayed another two and a half years before changing jobs again. He always worried about possible redundancy, and maintained a constant vigilance of the job market, 'just in case'. He described the last two and a half years at the company as a 'high anxiety period', with 'no feeling of job security'. He was eventually made redundant by the company he worked for next, and remained unemployed for a while. From then on, his career involved repeated moves between short, temporary contracts and unemployment.

Despite his financial instability, however, Peter found it more important 'to have the right kind of job' than to receive the added benefits a job can offer (e.g. a company car or financial shares). Although it was important for him to work from an economic point of view, he would also have liked to be able 'to make a difference' through his job. In his current position he enjoyed job security, as he was working for a government agency. Feeling that something was missing, however, and that he needed more inspiration in his work, he was looking for a new job. As a consequence of the instabilities in his employment history, he found it difficult to trust anyone. He was very aware that the economy and market forces affected job seekers, and felt that he had 'been able to make the best decisions that the market has allowed'. He insisted that he had made his own choices and not been influenced by family or friends. In his view he was not to be blamed for the 'bad timing' associated with his entry into the job market and subsequent job changes. Rather, these events had been marked by constraints produced by economic and societal factors. Peter was thus caught between individualized responsibility, so typical of Beck's risk regime, and structural constraints placed on individual agency, or between what Beck calls the placing of each person's biography 'in his or her own hands, open and dependent on decisions' and the constraints produced by the economy, the labour market and consumerism (Beck, 1992: 135, 131).

Among the three examples we have used of individuals from the offspring generation, at 47, Peter was the oldest. Despite his wish to combine a self-fulfilling career with a stable income, he had been unable to construct and develop the career track that Isabella had built for herself, after a period of indecision not dissimilar to Rebecca's current experience. While Peter did his best to obtain both interesting and secure jobs through actively and continuously seeking employment, his labour market participation is marked by periods of temporary and short-term employment, redundancies and unemployment. Similar to Isabella, Peter has an individualistic outlook, in that he sees himself as having been responsible for his own life and for making his own decisions. In Peter's narrative, however, 'market forces' or 'the economy' are depicted as limiting his ability to create a continuous career for himself. In the end, therefore, although Peter accepts his own responsibility, he is also adamant that his options and opportunities have been limited by structural forces over which he has no control.

Narrative shifts and continuities between generations

These brief but representative summaries of the narratives presented by the participants in our study highlight a remarkable shift in the experiences of labour market entry and the approaches with which individuals, faced with rather different choices, initiated their careers. Along with the accounts of these experiences, perceptions of past and present altered from labour market entry as an almost fixed trajectory to – at least for some – a variable, if not flexible development path that tolerated experimenting in options to a previously unknown degree. These accounts were grounded in different and at times novel perceptions of the scope for individual self-determination.

Unlike the parent generation, there was not one singular discourse that dominated among the offspring generation. Rather, the majority of them displayed elements of the 'planner' and 'surfer' narratives. This generation, if anything, appeared to be characterized

by a diversity that occasionally paired with rootlessness. The rootlessness of 'surfers' was both geographical and developmental, marking a lack of fixation on (career) objectives in stark contrast to the purpose-driven accounts of some of their peers (the 'planners'). Julia (30), for example, stated that 'I've just gone along with things and whatever path it's taken me to, I've just gone with it and I'll see what comes out at the end of it.'

In our sample we encountered a self-confidence and assertiveness among the offspring generation that had rarely been recalled by the parent generation. This assertiveness was reflected in accounts of active individual decision-making, driven by aspirations for upward mobility, awareness of choices and options, desire for self-fulfilment in a career and a break from reliance on family and from family tradition. These individuals felt in control, they were planning for the future and ready to take risks to achieve their ambitions. Education played a key role in this, as did awareness of options and opportunities, something that had been denied many of the parent generation.

However, as our findings suggest, career-driven, active decision-making was not the only type of risk discourse among the offspring generation. We also found the offspring generation characterizing their early labour market experiences as often experimental, sometimes confusing and not infrequently resulting in reversions and 'corrections'. Many in the offspring generation predominantly described their experiences as lacking a clear target to aim for, resulting in opportunistic drifting, a 'going with the flow' that grasped opportunities as they appeared – naturally unforeseen – without specific consideration for their effect on or contributions to the construction of careers in the long term. This was not the result of a lack of awareness of alternative options, but of a decision not to make use of them. This behavioural pattern was not exclusive to the offspring generation as also some members of the parent generation had, especially in their earlier careers, opted for this experimental strategy that allowed them to delay decisions about their eventual career destinations, even for several years. However, the presence of 'surfer' narratives increased markedly from one generation to the next.

Among the parent generation, we found a majority of individuals who described their labour market entries as virtually predetermined and their own development path as ultimately beyond their personal control. Not only were choices more limited than today (as acknowledged by this generation), participants from the parent generation also often pointed out that they simply had not been aware of alternative options. Their reliance on family, friends and local institutions (such as the Labour Exchange) in obtaining their first – and later – jobs reflected the absence of known alternatives as much as they perpetuated this limited perspective. But this did not matter much, because at the heart of their labour market choices was financial need, not the satisfaction of personal aspirations. Of course, the emerging postwar middle class of service workers generated new ambitions within a new economic environment, fostered by an expanding, but still exclusionary system of secondary education. For the majority of the parent generation in our sample, however, the primary risk concern was to keep control over everyday life basics such as provision of home and food for family. The future was not and could not be planned, although individuals were worried about it and felt disempowered by their own lack of control. This was the dominant discourse among 18 of the 29 participants from the parent generation. Among the offspring generation, this discourse was dominant among only 8 of the 29 participants. All members of the offspring generation displaying

a 'safe-player' narrative were children of parents who presented similar stories. With few exceptions, the two generations of 'safe-players' shared similar working-class locations and were early school-leavers. Such continuities, however, neither imply a direct nor a wholesale transmission of values and outlooks, as there may be a mix of shared and not shared narrative elements from one generation to the next. Moreover, continuities may be a reflection of shared socioeconomic background (Scabini and Marta, 2006: 85).

In all, our sample contained comparatively few cases (10 pairs, or roughly one-third of the sample) of fundamental cross-generational similarity in risk perception and career decision-making, while a further one-third (10 pairs) displayed a mix of shared and not shared narrative elements, and the final third (9 pairs) consisted of fundamentally dissimilar generational pairs that demonstrated discontinuities in risk perception and career decision-making. In eight of the nine dissimilar pairs the parent member displayed full or mixed 'safe-player' narratives, while none of the children in these pairs narrated similar orientations. Rather, these eight children were either predominantly 'surfers' (5) or 'planners' (3). Such juxtapositions between generations affirm the disjuncture within modernity posited by Beck (1992) between a 'collectivized past' and a present characterized by a heightened and individualized perception of risk. However, our empirical evidence of both cross-generational continuities and discontinuities indicates that the disjuncture is rather muddy and complex.

Just as the detection of continuity or similarity between generations is not synonymous with direct transmission of risk perceptions from one generation to the next, a lack of similarity does not necessarily imply failure of transmission (Scabini and Marta, 2006: 87). It is likely that general societal changes in values, outlooks and practices from one generation to the next have a significant impact on generational changes within families. For example, structural changes in the labour market might facilitate changes in how individuals view opportunities and constraints in relation to their own labour market participation. Along these lines Furlong and Cartmel (2007: 2) argue that social structures continue to be important for individuals' life chances, but because such structures are increasingly obscured, people now perceive the world as more unpredictable and risky than before. Furthermore, even though a lack of similarity can be detected between parents and their offspring in relation to some of the values they attach to labour market participation (earning money vs self-realization), other values that are of importance to labour market attachment (work ethic, socializing with other people) seem to remain constant across generations. As stated earlier, all the participants in our study presented themselves as having a strong work ethic, even though the motivation to take on work seems to have developed from taking on paid work to provide for self and family to taking on paid work to fulfil personal aspirations and enhance personal life quality in combination with securing an income. A broader examination of values and outlooks would present a greater potential for generational transmission but remains outside the remit of our qualitative research.

Conclusion

We have examined how people from different generations narrate their own life history in relation to risk perceptions and decision-making in the context of labour market entry

and participation. Our observation is that important changes have taken place from one generation to the next, from more predetermined trajectories for the parent generation to more individualized, flexible and open-ended trajectories for the offspring generation. Importantly, these changes are gradual and complex, as evidenced by the continuities and discontinuities identified in the biographical narratives of our research participants.

Among the older generation, and especially among those with a working-class background, we found that individuals often used networks consisting of family members and friends, and in a few cases relied on institutional support from public job agencies, in order to obtain entry to the labour market. Many in the parent generation were happy to be in a 'job for life', as this provided a secure income. Money was most often the driving force for the parent generation's participation in the labour market. Although the local employment market and personal networks were important in determining their job opportunities, we found no pervasive sense of risk among members of the parent generation. In the words of one individual, John (74), 'there was always some sort of work'. In a sense it is community and family life, and aspirations in terms of earning your way and not being a burden on society, that take centre stage in the biographical narratives of the parent generation.

Among the offspring generation, however, it is the individual that increasingly takes centre stage in the biographical narratives, supporting Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's view that individualization both *permits* and *demands* active individual involvement (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 4). The new generation has been presented with many more options and opportunities than the older generation, and this in turn has made it more difficult to choose any particular path. The development of self-identity and satisfaction seems to hinge on the ability to make the right choices in an often confusing world. This generation is risk aware, and individuals find themselves in a more or less constant self-doubt where they are unsure whether they are actually making the right choices. Individuals are also actively seeking and taking on risks as they may seize opportunities that come along. Risk awareness, however, does not necessarily imply risk preparedness, and many lament that they have no job security or investments for the future. For this generation, the labour market is constantly changing, and jobs are perceived as more volatile and less secure than in the past. Individualized biographies are being worked on and produced in an environment where the individual is still faced with structural constraints. These are no longer produced by the limits of local employment markets and personal networks of friends and family, but by the global economy, the demands of the labour market and consumerism (Beck, 1992). Under such conditions, social relationships (including those in the labour market) can neither be dictated by others nor calculated in advance (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 151).

At the same time, societal changes towards individualization and less of a reliance on tradition appear to have influenced the ways in which members of the offspring generation have been met with more opportunities and also their increased ability to make individual choices. In some cases offspring have resisted parental influences through individual agency, but in this process they have been aided by societal changes in how we all apply for and obtain work.

What is different for the offspring generation when compared to the parent generation is that their biographies are much more individualized and suffused with notions of agency and risk. Their social context is also more uncertain – not only has planning

(active decision-making) become uncertain of its outcomes, but 'safe-playing' hardly seems a viable alternative in a basically insecure (labour market) environment. Perhaps 'surfing' is the better option, as it is based on a flexible attitude to life and chances where 'the risk of taking a risk' is downplayed. Whereas the parent generation invoked a sense of risk in relation to the possible negative outcome of choosing the 'wrong employer' (and not in choosing between different alternatives), the current generation senses a more fundamental uncertainty – a randomness they feel unable to command – the only certainty is the absence of lasting conditions. Their coping method is self-belief and self-reliance – the repeated utterance of 'I can do it', 'my responsibility', 'my choice', 'my decision'. From this perspective there is hardly any room for structures (they have become invisible or obscured, as posited by Furlong and Cartmel, 2007); individual agency is perceived as everything in a world fraught with insecurity.

The offspring generation appears to have responded to these conditions of uncertainty with both (Beck's) re-flex and (Giddens') re-action. These people leapt at sudden opportunities or carefully planned their next strike. Following its erosion as the dominant behavioural concept, there has not been a wholesale replacement of 'safe-playing' by active planning and development of self-determined careers. Instead, 'surfing', experimenting and 'going with the flow' have emerged alongside active planning and decision-making as a prominent strategy for career construction and identity formation. While some place planning, progression and self-correction at the centre of their identity, others seek identity in more experimental ways through flexibility, adaptability and adjustment. Re-flex as well as re-action become viable alternative options for constructing one's (career) biography in late modern risk society. Neither is a feature unique to risk society. What is new is the framework and context in which re-flex and re-action occur: the modern risk regime with its profound uncertainties.

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Note

1. Cartmel (2004) has found the same to be true today among young people in rural labour markets in Scotland. Grieco (1987) has argued that kinship networks are particularly important for individuals from working-class backgrounds who seek employment.

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Jumping off the track: comparing the experiences of first jobs of young people living in disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Britain

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This paper draws on an analysis of one of the UK's most prominent longitudinal datasets, the British Household Panel Survey. The panel was used to study and track the realisation of job aspirations of young people born in the early 1980s and entering the workforce in the 2000s. The study compared the aspirations of those growing up in socio-economically disadvantaged areas with those growing up in non-disadvantaged areas. The analysis confirmed strong differences in the occupational preferences and choices of young people in these two types of areas. Young people in disadvantaged areas more often sought manual occupations, often following their parents' example. They were also more likely to become unemployed, reflecting economic tertiarisation and decreasing availability of manual jobs in those areas. However, the study also found evidence of young people from disadvantaged areas using repeated changes in jobs to achieve employment in higher-level occupations. The research demonstrated that growing up in disadvantaged areas did not prevent the proactive construction of career biographies per se, but it required overcoming more barriers to do so.

Keywords: career; employment; exclusion; risk; young adulthood

Introduction

The role that neighbourhoods play in shaping a young person's life chances has been a recurring theme of investigation in social science and economics. Much of the research has looked for links between areas and employment- and income-related outcomes for residents, including the receipt of social security benefits (e.g. Bolster et al. 2007; Buck 2001). Where young people were concerned, their school-to-work transitions, job seeking and job gaining have been at the centre of much of this research (cp. Kintrea 2009). Evidence of the effects of location on these outcomes has, however, been mixed if not contradictory. In particular, qualitative and quantitative research methods have tended to produce contrasting results (Lupton 2003; van Ham and Manley 2012). Where identifying indisputable local effects has been difficult with the latter, results from the former frequently provide vivid accounts of neighbourhoods being experienced as physical and conceptual barriers to social interaction and economic inclusion.

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This study is concerned with young people's job aspirations and their capacity to achieve these ambitions, comparing the experiences of young people living in disadvantaged areas and those living elsewhere. Specifically, the objective is to observe how young people in different areas respond to achieving or failing to achieve original job aspirations; whether they appear satisfied with first-job outcomes, especially when their jobs matched aspirations; and how achieving aspirations relates to subsequent job changes. Previous research has paid considerable attention to the experiences of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET; e.g. Yates et al. 2011; Maguire and Rennison 2005). These studies have typically encountered a higher prevalence of NEET in areas 'which have weaker labour markets and which also perform comparatively poorly on other measures of labour market disadvantage' (Sissons and Jones 2012, 16). In contrast to these studies, our focus is on young people who find and take up paid work, and who subsequently risk being overlooked by policy-makers focused on implementing narrowly defined welfare-to-work policy programmes (Birdwell, Grist, and Margo 2011; Roberts 2011).

Our aim is to explore the *association* between place of residence and job outcomes for young people. We focus on describing the emerging patterns of behaviour that appear unique to, or are disproportionately present in, one type of area, but not the other. This research adds a quantitative dimension to much qualitative evidence that has explored the complex, multi-dimensional nature of young people's career development strategies against a background of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage. Previous studies have often focused solely on labour market outcomes at a given point in time or the extent to which outcomes reflect original ambitions. We add to this body of research by also considering the frequency with which jobs are changed before this outcome is achieved, and on the reported level of satisfaction with the outcome.

We present evidence of active engagement in career building, but diverging employment aspirations in disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged areas. Aspirations of young people in both areas frequently followed parents' broadly defined occupations, disproportionately linking aspirations in disadvantaged areas to manual jobs that require less training and lower levels of educational attainment. In contrast, aspirations in non-disadvantaged areas more strongly mirrored the transition of the British economy from a manufacturing-based to a service-oriented economy, reflecting higher learning and skills aspirations.

Young people in disadvantaged areas were at a greater risk of under-accomplishment (measured in terms of job satisfaction) in an increasingly tertiarised economy that provides little room for traditional (in particular male) occupations. However, our study also found evidence of these young people trying hard to 'jump off the track' and realise more ambitious career objectives.

Young people's aspiration in the labour market

Occupational aspirations and employment outcomes of young people have undergone profound changes in recent decades, reflecting shifts in the industrial structures of the UK economy and in the nature, quality and security of employment (Lindsay 2003; Burchell et al. 2002). The decline of the UK's manufacturing base in the post-war period and its accelerated quasi-replacement with service sector employment forced young people to revisit their traditional career aspirations. Manual occupations have gradually become less desirable and less prevalent. However, this transformation of young people's employment

preferences was a gradual process that, in the early period of the transition, resulted in many young people still aspiring to have the kind of occupations that were rapidly disappearing from the local and national economies. Taylor-Gooby and Cebulla (2010) showed that, among the cohort of economically-active 24-year-olds born in the late 1950s, almost 60% had obtained a job broadly in the manual or non-manual occupational category for which they had aspired. A generation later, this had decreased to less than 40%, largely because a growing proportion of these young people failed to obtain the *manual* jobs that they had originally wanted.

The decrease in manufacturing employment and the growth in service sector employment coincided with increasing flexibility in the (youth) labour market as typically full-time, secure and permanent (and male) employment slowly eroded and part-time, residualised and casual (and female) employment expanded (Roberts 1995; Maguire and Maguire 1997). While this progress penetrated all sections of the labour market, young people were particularly affected. As labour market entrants, they lacked the relative security of prior economic and occupational roots, and thus could be more easily moulded into the new flexible work regime. Young people in the UK have seen vocational routes into full-time and long-term employment become scarce and an exception rather than the rule. They may never have taken much to formal apprenticeship-style preparation for work, instead preferring on-the-job training, but this only worked well in buoyant labour markets (Bynner 2001). This buoyancy in industrial employment came to an end in the 1980s. It was replaced by growth in, knowledge industries and in health and social care occupations that often required extended tertiary education (without necessarily being well remunerated), as well as in lower paid personal service and sales occupations that emphasised social skills over training. This trend has continued to the present day (BIS 2012).

Economic shifts of this kind have resulted in a heightened scarcity of jobs for young people, some of whom extend their time in education either seeking higher qualifications or merely 'parking' as they wait for job opportunities to emerge (MacDonald 2011; Jones 2002). These young people, the 'missing middle' (Roberts 2011), follow neither a NEET pathway nor a 'tidy' route from post-compulsory education to full-time employment. Career paths have thus become increasingly fragmented, particularly for young people who have lower levels of educational achievement and who typically also aim for lower (and lower paid) occupations (Fenton and Dermott 2006). Career choices have become burdened with the uncertainty of outcome and a risk of casual, fragmented future work histories (Furlong and Cartmel 2004).

The emotional, psychological and agency effects of this uncertainty on young people and their career aspirations are only slowly becoming apparent. Paradigmatic economic and political changes that stress the responsibility of the individual for their development and the decreasing role of the welfare state have created new tracks of instability. Young people respond to these with 'multiple relocations' (Fergusson et al. 2000) between intended and unintended, yet primarily transitory activities straddling work and education.

The 'experimental drifting' (Nyhagen-Predelli and Cebulla 2011) between work, learning and leisure that is characteristic for such relocations must not be equated with social disorientation, dislocation, or any suggestion of an aspirational or moral decline among young people in a 'Broken Britain' (Cameron 2011; Social Justice Policy Group 2006). Rather, evidence points to young people's job aspirations as being anchored in social realities, which are defined notably by peers and parents, shaping the perceptions and perspectives of young people across social classes (Schoon 2007; McKendrick, Scott,

and Sinclair 2007). Effectively, this translates into a gradient of aspiration and career planning, as young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds more frequently seek to follow their parents or peers into declining industries and occupations (Birdwell, Grist, and Margo 2011).

Neighbourhood influences on aspirations and employment

Economic and social sorting into neighbourhoods creates conditions in which the unequal distribution of aspirations and outcomes are repeated in physical space (Buck 2001). The evidence that living in 'specialised neighbourhoods' (Cheshire 2007) independently generates or contributes to the construction of such gradients (Kintrea 2009) is mixed. Turok et al. (2009) and McKendrick, Scott, and Sinclair (2007) found little to support the claim that young people in disadvantaged specialised neighbourhoods shared fundamentally different aspirations or showed different ambitions for their future from young people elsewhere. However, this is contradicted by Cuthbert and Hatch (2009) whose analysis of survey data and ethnographic enquiry concluded that young people's educational aspirations suffered in areas of close knit social networks with a history of economic decline and a sense of isolation from opportunity.

Furlong, Biggart, and Cartmel (1996) argued that, in so far as neighbourhoods define the opportunity structures of young people, they can suppress young people's aspirations in disadvantaged areas. Initially, deprivation restricts physical, social, economic and emotional resources critical for the development and realisation of aspirations, effectively undermining young people's chances to proactively build their career biography. In this relative uniformity of neighbourhoods, normative values and assumptions are shaped and reinforced. Against this background, young people – and their parents – adopt and adapt aspirations that reflect their understanding of the opportunities and constraints that the lived-in environment imposes on them (Morrison-Gutman and Akerman 2008). Parents thus find it difficult to sustain the aspirations they harbour for their children, while the young people themselves make choices on the basis of what they believe is normatively acceptable, or socially and economically affordable (Power 2007; Ridge 2002). Young people in disadvantaged areas thus develop individual and collective coping strategies that allow them to compensate for the added hurdles that they may experience with respect to accessing human and social capital, and services and work in their area (Green, Shuttleworth, and Lavery 2005; MacDonald et al. 2005).

Our study

This paper illustrates this 'compensating behaviour' of young people as they respond to constraints they experience in realising job aspirations. The research builds on an earlier study that explored job aspirations and early career outcomes among three cohorts of young people across Britain born in the late 1950s, 1970s and the early 1980s (Taylor-Gooby and Cebulla 2010). That study highlighted marked differences in the young people's career aspirations and their chances of achieving these aspirations. Although the study took into account socioeconomic differences in the young people's backgrounds, it did not consider the potential influence of labour markets and neighbourhood characteristics on young people's career orientations and development. This paper extends the evidence by looking at the links between location and the career choices and outcomes of young people born in the 1980s.

This study takes a purposively narrow focus on first-job choices and subsequent job movements and does not examine the experiences of young people who, during the observation period, never entered employment. It thus situates itself in the recent debates in youth research about broadening perspectives to include the lives of the 'ordinary' and the 'middling' youth, and not just those most marginalised (Roberts 2011, 2013; Allen and Ainley 2010). The study analyses the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), which is described in more detail further below. It follows young people from age 15, when they were asked about their job preferences, to age 24, the last year for which data are available. For this period, we record the first '*regular*' job that an individual obtained, that is, a job that was non-seasonal and did not coincide with continued full-time education. We use longitudinal data which permits us to follow the same individuals throughout this period, and to observe their behaviours as recorded annually from age 15 to 24.

Parallel analyses of job preferences, job outcomes and interim job movements were conducted for young people living in disadvantaged areas and in non-disadvantaged areas. Young people were only included in these analyses if they continued living in either a disadvantaged or a non-disadvantaged area throughout the observation period. This included movement within similar types of area, but not across types. Although movement from disadvantaged areas may only exceptionally be motivated by employment (Beatty et al. 2009), relocation to non-disadvantaged areas changes the opportunity structure of those who relocate and, hence, is likely to affect subsequent job choices. The present study sought to accentuate area-specific associations and to avoid confounding effects of location change on analysis.

In an extension to previous research on the realisation of young people's job aspirations, our study was also interested in how young people assessed their career outcomes at that point (using job satisfaction). We further analysed the young people's job outcomes and their job change behaviour. The analyses revealed strong interactions between aspirations, outcomes and job satisfaction.

The data

The BHPS is a large scale, longitudinal and multipurpose study of households with a sample representative of the United Kingdom. First conducted in 1991, the survey has since evolved into a larger survey known as 'Understanding Society'. BHPS follows panel members, gathering information annually. It comprises a number of modules, with data collected at the household level through personal interviews with adult respondents (defined as being 16 or over), and through a self-completion youth questionnaire with children aged 11–15 which was introduced in 1994. The current research used data spanning the years from 1994 to 2007, the last year for which data was available when the study commenced.

Identifying the cohorts

Our empirical analysis centres on comparing young persons' aspirations, recorded at age 15,[1] with actual outcomes achieved several years later, at age 24.[2] In order to achieve a sufficiently large number of cases for analysis, we combined the responses of young people aged 15 from the BHPS Youth Questionnaire data for 1994–1998 (about 150 respondents of a given age completed the Youth Questionnaire each year). Outcomes

were recorded when the same young people had reached age 24 (in 2003–2007). This produced a sample of 777 young people at age 15, but only 414 young people subsequently completed all BHPS interviews spanning the relevant time periods (1994–2003, 1995–2004, etc.). Only participation in all waves (a 'balanced panel') allowed us to accurately record the employment choices and trajectories of young people, but this had the unfortunate effect of reducing case numbers markedly.

The small case numbers inevitably reduced the power of some of our analysis, especially as the total sample population was divided into yet smaller sub-samples of people in disadvantaged and other areas (see below). Reduced power meant that it was not always possible to detect relationships between variables as they might have occurred in the population – either because reduced power limited the number of explanatory variables and covariates that could be used in any single analysis, or because statistical significance of associations was not ascertainable.

In general, we focus our discussions on relationships that were found to be statistically significant. However, we also identify statistically non-significant associations where they are large and apparent, in order to highlight supporting or contradictory patterns. In such instances, the lack of statistical significance is explicitly noted.

Defining the geographical space

We obtained a 'special licence' version of BHPS, which contained the Output Area Classification (OAC) geo-demographics developed by ONS and was based on the 2001 census. These classifications are applied to the whole of the United Kingdom and differentiate neighbourhoods according to a range of criteria, including demographic and socioeconomic indicators, and measures of household composition, housing and employment (Vickers and Rees 2007). The top-level areas are labelled: blue-collar communities (supergroup 1), city living (supergroup 2), countryside (supergroup 3), prospering suburbs (supergroup 4), constrained by circumstances (supergroup 5), typical traits (supergroup 6) and multicultural (supergroup 7). These areas display distinct socioeconomic and socio-demographic characteristics, thus allowing areas of variable economic strength and risk of disadvantage to be identified.

Investigating area differences with large-scale nationally representative data inevitably requires a methodological approximation of what constitutes these areas. In this study, small case numbers also required OAC areas to be aggregated, which we did into two main categories: disadvantaged areas (supergroups 1 and 5), and all other areas (supergroups 2–4, 6 and 7). The combining of these supergroups was based on a careful reading of how they had originally been defined in order to ensure that the clusters of disadvantaged areas were comparable (see Vickers and Rees 2007). Table 1, sourced from ONS,[3] summarises the main features of the two supergroups aggregated for our analysis, which represent disadvantaged areas, highlighting variables of similarity and dissimilarity when these areas are compared to the UK mean. Residents in these two area types are disproportionately unlikely to have higher educational qualifications and are disproportionately likely to be living in public, rented accommodation. The age structure of supergroup 1 resembles that of the UK mean, whereas for supergroup 5 this is only true for the proportion of those aged 45–64. Both areas also include a larger than average proportion of divorced and lone parent households, and a relatively strong presence in routine and semi-routine occupations.

Table 1. Key characteristics of OAC supergroups 1 and 5.

	Supergroup 1	Supergroup 5
	Blue-collar communities	Constrained by opportunity
Variables with proportions *far below* the national average	All flats HE qualifications	Detached housing 2+ car household HE qualification
Variables with proportions close to the national average	Age 25–44 Age 45–64 Age 65+ Agriculture/fishing employment Health and social work employment Provide unpaid care	Age 45–64 No central heating Provide unpaid care Health and social work employment Wholesale/retail trade employment
Variables with proportions *far above* the national average	Terraced housing Rent (public)	All flats Rent (public)

Note: For a variable to be 'far below average' it must have a difference of more than 0.15 below the range-standardised UK mean; to be 'close to the average' it must have a difference of 0.015 either below or above the range-standardised UK mean; to be far above average, it must have a difference of more than 0.15 above the range-standardised UK mean; UK mean set to 0; standardised range from −0.5 to 0.5.
Source: After ONS, National Statistics area classification for Output Areas.

A further supergroup characterised by disproportionately high levels of living in public (and private) rented accommodation was supergroup 7, comprising multicultural communities. We did not include this supergroup with the other two 'disadvantaged areas', primarily because its residents did not share the low proportion of higher educational qualifications typical for the latter. Moreover, we felt that our analysis would not have been able to sufficiently capture and account for complex cultural differences and the specific social and economic challenges faced by the minority ethnic populations born outside the UK.

The aggregation resulted in 536 of the original first-wave sample of 777 young people living in non-disadvantaged and a further 241 living in disadvantaged areas (Table 2). This reduced to 301 and 113 respectively in the balanced panel. The sample sizes of the balanced and unbalanced panels indicate that in non-disadvantaged areas the balanced panel lost some 44% of its original sample members, whereas it lost 53% in disadvantaged areas. Differential panel attrition is not unusual (cp. Uhrig 2008), although it is accentuated by the fact that our balanced panel only included individuals who took part in all waves during the entire observation period. As is convention in these instances, we used longitudinal weights to correct for biases that may have resulted from attrition.

Supergroups are far from homogenous as they 'absorb' sub-areas that can deviate markedly from the aggregate in their key characteristics. Thus, our 'disadvantaged areas' may contain many pockets of wealth, affluence and opportunity, just as the non-disadvantaged areas will contain sub-areas of intense poverty, disadvantage and exclusion. Inevitably, this leads to a levelling of difference at the aggregate level, and to an underestimation of real constraints experienced by those whose characteristics most closely match those sketched by the supergroup label.

Table 2. Sample size by the output area.

Classification supergroups and Aggregations of original supergroups	*N*	%
Blue-collar communities (1)	157	20
City living (2)	18	2
Countryside (3)	110	14
Prospering suburbs (4)	211	27
Constrained by circumstance (5)	84	11
Typical traits (6)	128	16
Multicultural (7)	69	9
Total	777	100
Aggregate supergroups		
Disadvantaged (clusters 1 & 5)	241	31
Non-disadvantaged	536	69
Total	777	100

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Aggregating occupations

A central objective of the study was to record and compare job aspirations with job outcomes. While BHPS records current or past jobs using standard occupational classifications (SOC), young people typically did not articulate their original job aspirations using SOC, but described them in their own words.[4] These aspirations recorded by interviewers were later converted into broader job categories consistent with SOC. For our analysis, additional aggregation was required to allow the matching of aspirations and outcomes, and to deal with small case numbers in the disadvantaged areas.

Jobs were combined into three main categories using the SOC (2000) variable provided in BHPS: *advanced non-manual occupations* (managerial, professional, and associate professional and technical occupations), *other non-manual occupations* (clerical and secretarial jobs, personal and protective services, and sales occupations) and *manual occupations* (craft and related occupations, plant and machine operators and other elementary occupations). As noted earlier, we only recorded jobs if they were the young persons' main economic activity, thus excluding summer jobs or jobs taken to support other activities, such as further education.

Findings

We start with descriptive comparisons of the job aspirations and outcomes of young people living in disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged areas. For greater robustness of results, initial comparisons use the larger cross-sectional data, while the smaller balanced panel is used to examine the experiences of the same group of young people at age 15 and, again, at age 24. We then discuss the findings from the panel analyses, looking specifically at the extent to which young people in the two types of areas achieved their job aspirations at early stages of their employment careers, their reported level of satisfaction with the outcome and the frequency with which jobs had been changed prior to achieving job outcomes.

Table 3. Job aspirations at age 15.

Aggregated supergroups	Advanced non-manual	Non-manual	Manual	*N*
Job aspiration				
Disadvantaged	42	35	23	241
Non-disadvantaged	58	23	19	536
Total	53	27	20	777

A bird's-eye view of job aspirations and outcomes

At age 15, young people from disadvantaged areas were more likely to aspire to lower-occupational employment than young people in other areas (Table 3). Twenty-three per cent of young people in disadvantaged areas aspired to manual occupations, compared with 19% of young people in non-disadvantaged areas. Similarly, a much larger proportion of young people in disadvantaged areas aspired to 'standard level' non-manual occupations (35%) compared with young people elsewhere (23%). Conversely, fewer young people in disadvantaged areas preferred *advanced* non-manual occupations (42%) than was the case in non-disadvantaged areas (58%), although this was still the most common aspiration in both area types.

Turning to early employment outcomes, about one-third (36%) of young adults in disadvantaged areas with regular employment experiences had a manual occupation as their *first job*, compared with about one-quarter (23%) of young adults elsewhere (Table 4). Young adults in both areas were equally likely to have had standard non-manual jobs as their first regular employment (55% and 57%, respectively), but young adults in disadvantaged areas were less likely to have obtained their first employment in advanced non-manual occupations (9% versus 19%). All the differences were statistically significant at a 5% level.

The gap between young people's experiences in the two areas narrowed a little over time. Taking into account subsequent jobs held by age 24, 22% of young adults in disadvantaged areas had advanced non-manual current or most recent jobs,[5] compared with 37% of young people in other areas. The proportion of young adults in disadvantaged areas with their most recent job in a manual occupation decreased to 26% (down from 36%), compared with 21% of young adults elsewhere (down from 23%).[6]

Table 4. Early job outcomes by age 24 (row %, balanced panel).

Aggregated supergroups	Advanced non-manual	Non-manual	Manual	*N*
First job				
Disadvantaged	9	55	36	113
Non-disadvantaged	19	57	23	301
Total	16	57	27	414
Last job				
Disadvantaged	22	52	26	113
Non-disadvantaged	37	42	21	301
Total	33	45	22	414

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 5. Matches between aspirations and occupational outcomes of young people and their parents (row %).

Aggregated supergroups	Match	No match	*N*
Parent's occupation – child occupation (last job)			
Disadvantaged	46	54	113
Non-disadvantaged	45	55	301
Total	45	55	414
Aspiration at age 15 – first-job outcome			
Disadvantaged	43	57	113
Non-disadvantaged	38	62	301
Total	39	61	414
Aspiration at age 15 – last job outcome			
Disadvantaged	48	52	113
Non-disadvantaged	42	58	301
Total	43	56	414

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

For many young people, early employment outcomes broadly reflected the occupation of the young persons' parents. Matching young females to their mothers and young males to their fathers, we found that, by age 24, close to a half of young adults had their current or most recent regular job in the same broad occupational category as their parents had when the young person was aged 15 (Table 5). This was true for both disadvantaged (46%) and non-disadvantaged (45%) areas.

Young people in disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged areas also shared *similar chances* of achieving their original job aspirations early in their careers (Table 5). Forty-three per cent of young people in disadvantaged areas and 38% of young people in non-disadvantaged areas achieved their job aspirations with their first job ('first-job match'). This increased to 48% and 42% respectively, when subsequent job changes were also taken into account ('last job match'). The somewhat lower rate of young people in non-disadvantaged areas achieving their original job aspirations might reflect their higher level ambitions, which require longer learning and training. However, the achievement rates were not significantly different at a conventional 5% confidence level.

Achieving job aspirations did not necessarily mean that these young people were satisfied with their employment. Although 77% of young people in disadvantaged areas and 81% of young people in non-disadvantaged indicated that they were satisfied with their first jobs,[7] these statistics hide marked differences between young people who, by age 24 or earlier, had obtained the job to which they had aspired at age 15 and those young people who had not.

Figure 1 shows the odds of a young person being satisfied rather than dissatisfied with a job, depending on the interaction between area deprivation status and having achieved early aspirations or not.[8] The pattern of association between matching early job aspirations and later job satisfaction was significantly different (at the 5% level) for young people in disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged areas. In non-disadvantaged areas young people who had achieved their job aspirations were more likely to express satisfaction with their job than young people who had not. In contrast, young people in disadvantaged areas who had matched their job aspirations were markedly more likely to

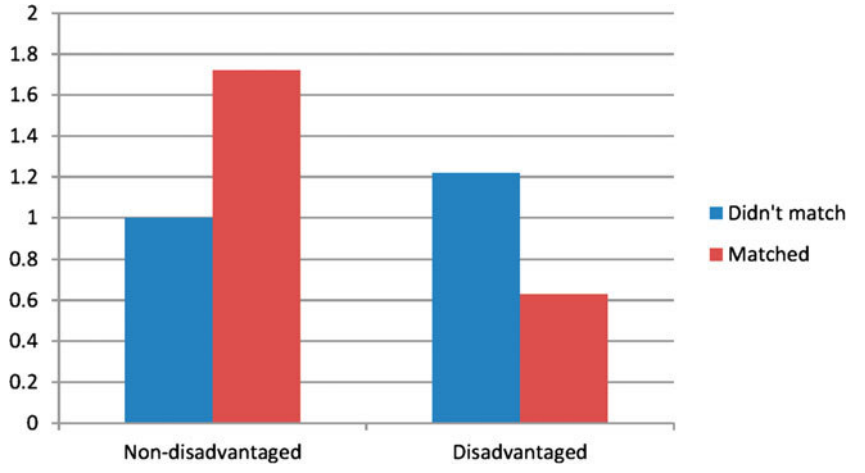

Figure 1. Interactions analysis: Job satisfaction by aspiration-outcome match and area disadvantage status (odds from binary logistic regression).

be dissatisfied with their job. In fact, they were the most dissatisfied among all working young people.

Getting where you want to be: job changes

This job dissatisfaction did not appear to lead to increased job search. Rather, whether a young person sought new and alternative jobs or not depended on sociodemographic, intergenerational and locational factors, and on their occupational aspirations. To better understand the link between job aspirations, labour market outcomes, and subjective job assessments we investigated the number of job changes for young persons in disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged areas up to age of 24, including their first and most recent jobs. Whilst we consider job changes as an indicator of young people's attempts to gain new and arguably more suitable employment, small case numbers did not allow a more detailed differentiation between 'upward' and 'downward' occupational mobility.[9]

Young people typically have shorter job tenures and a comparatively greater number of jobs as they change jobs more frequently than older workers. The prevalence of longer job tenures increases with age, although various other factors, such as industry or region, also affect tenures (Macaulay 2003). In our sample, the young people in both types of areas had held 2.3 jobs on average (only including jobs that young people defined as their main activity) by the time they turned 24.

We used ordinal logistic regression to predict the number of job changes based on a range of sociodemographic, occupational and locational factors (Table 6). With these factors taken into account, it became clear that it was not the aspiration for higher occupations that drove up job changes, but the failure to have achieved one's original job aspirations, whatever they might have been. Young people who had achieved their job aspirations with their first job, recorded fewer jobs overall (odds: 0.57), suggesting a continued influence of original aspirations on young people's career choices. This was independent of the type of job aspiration, which was controlled for in this analysis.

Young women were generally less likely to have changed jobs than young men (odds: 0.56), as were young people who had taken their first job at an older rather than younger

Table 6. Odds ratios from ordinal logistic regression: *number of (proper) jobs ever had*

	Odds ratios	95% confidence interval		$P > \|z\|$
Aspirations (ref: advanced non-man)				
Non-manual	0.99	0.59	1.65	0.963
Manual	0.91	0.51	1.60	0.733
First job match	0.57	0.36	0.90	0.016
Last job match	1.16	0.75	1.81	0.506
Last job (ref: advanced non-man)				
Non-manual	1.11	0.69	1.80	0.662
Manual	0.65	0.34	1.22	0.177
Parent's job match	0.96	0.66	1.41	0.843
Father's job (ref: advanced non-man)				
Non-manual	1.33	0.75	2.38	0.332
Manual	1.19	0.70	1.99	0.522
Mother's job (ref: advanced non-man)				
Non-manual	0.88	0.52	1.48	0.629
Manual	0.66	0.33	1.30	0.226
Father left school before age 16	0.99	0.58	1.68	0.956
Mother left school before age 16	0.72	0.41	1.25	0.238
Female	0.56	0.37	0.85	0.006
Household type (ref: couple with 1–2 children aged 0–15)				
Couple with 3+ children aged 0–15)	0.98	0.45	2.10	0.954
Single parent household	1.27	0.67	2.42	0.467
Quarrels with parents	0.56	0.33	0.94	0.029
Age of first job (ref: 16 or earlier)				
17	0.80	0.37	1.72	0.562
18	0.46	0.21	0.98	0.044
19–20	0.34	0.16	0.74	0.007
21+	0.09	0.04	0.21	0.000
Voluntary job last year	1.42	0.91	2.22	0.118
Lives in disadvantaged area	0.60	0.39	0.94	0.026

Note: Pseudo R^2: 0.088; AIC = 1011.95; BIC = 1114.53.

age (statistically significant odds ranging from 0.46 for those who took their first job at age 17 to 0.09 for those who took their first job at age 21; compared to age 16 or earlier). This likely reflected decreasing opportunities for changing jobs within a shrinking timeframe. The odds of changing jobs were also lower for those who, at age 15, had reported quarrelling a lot with their parents (odds: 0.56). This latter link was found in a number of other analyses not reported here. Unfortunately, the data did not provide sufficient clues as to how this link might have come about.[10]

Living in a disadvantaged area also independently reduced the odds of changing the job by about 0.6. In other words, we see fewer job changes among young people in disadvantaged areas than in non-disadvantaged areas. While this may have reflected a weaker labour market within the reach of young people living in these areas, it also reflected a lower *aggregate* level of occupational aspiration in disadvantaged areas where young people more often aspired to, and settled for, manual or lower non-manual jobs. This was confirmed in an interaction analysis using ordinal logistic regression. It revealed that the odds of young people changing jobs in the two area types varied markedly by

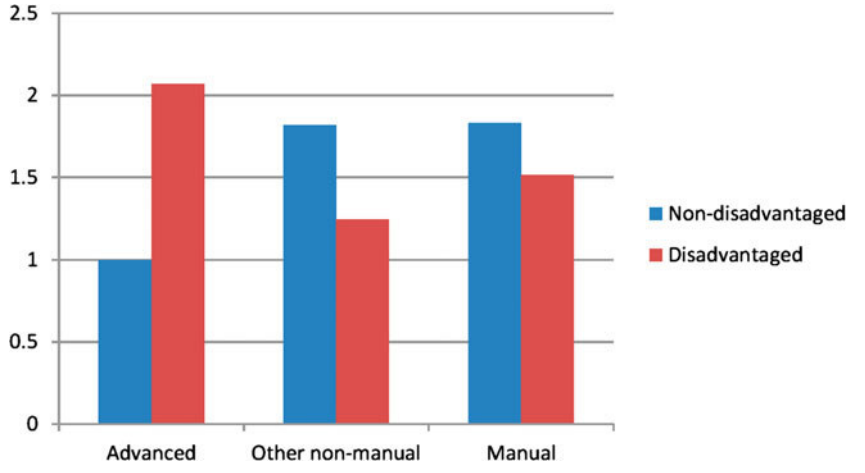

Figure 2. Interaction analysis: number of jobs by type of last job and area disadvantage status (odds from ordinal logistic regression).

aspired occupation (Figure 2).[11] All odds are compared with those of young people in non-disadvantaged areas in advanced non-manual occupations, which is hence set to '1' as shown in the chart.

For young people in non-disadvantaged areas, we find more frequent changes in jobs of lower occupational status. However, this was not the case for young people in disadvantaged areas. Most strikingly, compared with the group of young people in non-disadvantaged areas, young people in disadvantaged areas were twice as likely to have had changed jobs in order to enter or retain the highest occupational category of advanced non-manual jobs. Thus, changing jobs among young people in disadvantaged areas was disproportionately the activity of the small group of those seeking advanced non-manual jobs, that is, 22% of young people in that area (cp. Table 3).

Conclusion

This paper explored young people's job aspirations and their outcomes in two different types of localities in the UK. Its objective was to observe the extent to which job aspirations were met with equivalent outcomes, and how young people in these two area types responded to achieving or failing to achieve their aspirations. Only young people who had had at least one episode of regular employment were investigated. Like recent work by Birdwell, Grist, and Margo (2011), Roberts (2011) and Roberts and MacDonald (2013), this study focussed on young people's more 'ordinary' labour market transitions. These transitions often turn out relatively successful as the young person avoids NEET status, or prolonged or repeated phases of unemployment, and realises long-standing job aspirations. However, this 'working middle' (Allen and Ainley 2012, 16) is a diverse social group experiencing differential economic fortunes whilst growing up in diverse environments. Our study showed that living in a disadvantaged area is one factor associated with how young people conducted and experienced their entry and settled into the labour market.

Even as they were approaching school leaving age, young people in disadvantaged areas typically aspired to lower level occupations than young people in other areas. This

subsequently translated into lower occupational outcomes as a result of a fairly high rate of job aspiration achievement in both area types. An observed association between parental job status and the young persons' occupational aspirations alongside high aspiration achievement rates contributed to inequalities in the actual employment outcomes. It meant that young people in disadvantaged areas entered *first* jobs that were lower in occupational status than those that young people in non-disadvantaged areas had chosen.

By the time the young people had turned 24 years of age, the proportion of those in work who had achieved their original job aspirations had increased, if only slightly, in both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged areas. In other aspects however, the experiences of young people in these two types of areas had diverged. Notably, we saw a marked level of job dissatisfaction among young people in disadvantaged areas who had achieved their original job aspirations. This stood in stark contrast to young people elsewhere. Job dissatisfaction, however, did not lead to a greater job search and increased job changes among those dissatisfied with their first jobs. Most job changes of young people in disadvantaged areas were instead undertaken by those eventually securing advanced non-manual jobs. Edwards and Burkitt (2001) and more recently Roberts (2011) found that young people in lower and middle-ranking occupations tended to lower their expectations and aspirations where they experienced decreasing job quality or diminishing career and promotion prospects. The present study suggests that young people's 'downward correction' of expectations and aspirations in the light of job and career experiences may be particularly prevalent in disadvantaged areas.

Young people in disadvantaged areas who eventually secured advanced non-manual jobs required more job changes than young people in non-disadvantaged areas to obtain these jobs. Statistical analysis highlighted that, while similar factors appeared to be driving job changes in disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged areas, an independent area effect led to divergent experiences in job change efforts and first job match satisfaction.

The combined evidence points to multiple forms of labour market disadvantage, including an increased risk of unemployment and low-status employment. This results in young people in disadvantaged areas developing career paths through more frequent job and economic status changes. Career building for young people in disadvantaged areas who harbour higher occupational aspirations appeared to be a particularly complex and changeable enterprise. But these added challenges also triggered determined reactions among some of these young people as they literally worked towards achieving higher occupational aspirations. A recent study by Tunstall et al. (2012) showed that roughly twice as many job applications were required of applicants in weak labour markets than those in strong ones in order to receive the same number of job interviews. Seen in this light, the findings of the current analysis may yet underestimate the 'effort' that is required from occupationally ambitious young people in disadvantaged areas to achieve their aspirations.

The 2008 financial crisis and subsequent austerity measures caused an increase in UK youth unemployment. Flexible labour market regulations (O'Higgins 2012), and vocational qualifications that have been described as often 'worthless' (Wolf 2011, 70) and unappreciated by employers, have failed young people and an economy that has not been able to absorb and utilise an increasingly better skilled youth labour force (Keep 2012; Allen and Ainley 2010). In this climate, career development is challenging for any young person, but particularly for those in disadvantaged areas where career (and not just job) opportunities tend to be more limited. Nonetheless, a sizeable fraction of young people in disadvantaged areas attempt to 'jump off the track' and to break away from the constraints of intergenerational tradition and structured opportunity. For those with higher

occupational aspirations, repeated job changes appeared to have helped them to succeed in that endeavour. With larger datasets becoming available it may soon be possible to shed more light on the question of whether career construction in advantaged and disadvantaged areas is a case of progressive changes that edge young people closer to achieving their career objectives. Or, it may uncover whether their career construction also involves 'setbacks' and subsequent corrections that motivate repeated job changes, particularly among the 'ordinary' youth in the UK's less privileged localities.

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Notes

1. The survey also included a small number of young people who had not yet reached 15, or just turned 16.
2. The choice of the latter age was partially data-driven as it was the oldest age at which these outcomes could be recorded at the time of the research. However, it is also the age by which a majority of young people would have left full-time education and have had a few years of labour market participation experience.
3. Details downloaded from http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/products/area-classifications/ns-area-classifications/index/cluster-summaries/output-areas/index.html.
4. The question used in the BHPS to record young people's job aspirations was: 'What job would you like to do when you leave school?'
5. These include 'most recent' or 'last' jobs held before a return to education or unemployment for the young people who were not in employment at 24.
6. These figures mask the fact that some young people were out of work at the time when they were last interviewed at age 24; 32% of young people in disadvantaged areas and 14% of young people elsewhere were unemployed or economically inactive at that point, including some young people with previous employment experiences. The statistics underline the added precariousness of early careers for young people in disadvantaged areas, both in terms of the risk of unemployment and in terms of occupational achievement.
7. We class young people as satisfied with their jobs if they rate their satisfaction with 'the actual work itself' at least five on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates extreme dissatisfaction and 7 extreme satisfaction.
8. The odds were estimated using binary logistic regression model. The benchmark for comparisons were young people in non-disadvantaged areas in advanced non-manual occupations (whose odds were set to '1'). The figure shows the 'first job match'; the results for the 'last job match' are similar.
9. Our study lacked detailed information about job contents and relied on pre-defined SOC to measure job changes. It is quite possible that jobs in different occupational categories share similar characteristics, such as job control and task discretion, and wage or earnings levels. A study of occupational mobility would need to take similarities of this kind into account when defining progression in job quality and status.
10. Elsewhere it has been suggested that this 'quarrelling' may express intra-familial and inter-generational distancing typical for a sub-group of young people and their parents (Taylor-Gooby and Cebulla 2010). That intra-familial relations can affect career outcomes has also been found by other research. For instance, Rennison et al. (2005) showed that when parents share their children's career aspirations, the children are less likely to become NEET.
11. All odds are compared with those of young people in non-disadvantaged areas in advanced non-manual occupations, which is hence set to '1' as shown in the chart.

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