

New Cycles of Disadvantage?

**Report of a conference organised by CASE on behalf of
ESRC for HM Treasury**

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Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion

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Background

This report summarises presentations and discussion at a conference on 'New Cycles of Disadvantage' organised by CASE on behalf of the Economic and Social Research Council for the Treasury and other central government departments. It took place at Stoke Rochford Hall near Grantham on 27-28 November 1997. The organisers are very grateful to all participants for their contributions to the debate summarised here. A list of participants is included as Annex A. References and further reading relating to presentations are listed as Annex B

ESRC decided to hold this conference to help broaden Treasury links with sociologists and social policy specialists. The theme was a revisiting in the light of new evidence of the idea of 'cycles of deprivation' which was the subject of a major initiative (on transmitted deprivation) by the then SSRC and DHSS in the 1970s, following a major speech on the subject by Sir Keith Joseph. He was intrigued by the contrast between an increase in living standards co-existing with the existence of a group of people who were in poverty and underachieving and re-creating itself. The conference was introduced by Professor Michael Rutter, who was involved in the original SSRC/DHSS initiative, including a review of research, *Cycles of Disadvantage: A Review of Research* (Rutter and Madge, 1976).

1. Introductory Lecture: New Cycles of Disadvantage

Professor Sir Michael Rutter

(Professor of Child Psychiatry and Honorary Director of the Medical Research Council Child Psychiatry Unit)

Recent evidence on intergenerational continuities

- 1) There is substantial familial continuity for many problem behaviours (e.g. crime, mild mental retardation). The example used below is anti-social behaviour.
- 2) However, continuity is evident in **areas**, as well as in ethnic and other groups. So continuity should not be seen simply in familial/individual terms.
- 3) There is also substantial **discontinuity across generations**.
- 4) We are dealing with multiple mediating mechanisms.
- 5) Factors responsible for **individual differences** are not necessarily the same as those responsible for differences in the **level** of continuity, i.e. why have crime rates and suicide rates gone up over the last 50 years? We shouldn't assume that the explanations for these two phenomena are the same.

Example: David Farrington's study of inner London boroughs (1996)

	Parent convicted:	Parent not convicted:	Odds Ratio:
% of sons convicted	61	28	4.0

	Mother convicted:	Mother not convicted:	Odds Ratio:
% of fathers convicted	61	23	5.9

	Wife convicted:	Wife not convicted:	Odds Ratio:
% of husbands convicted	83	35	9.3

These links show that there is something other than genetic transmission going on.

Mediating mechanisms for continuities and discontinuities:

- 1) There is good evidence for **genetic influences** on individual differences in anti-social and other behaviour. These are unlikely to operate directly in relation to crime: rather it is probable that they are concerned with risk characteristics such as hyperactivity and impulsivity. During the past twenty years it has also become clear that genetic factors may operate indirectly through influences on nurture: nurture interplay.

- 2) Indirect genetic effects: both as a result of gene-environment **correlation** and through gene-environment **interactions**.
- 3) Environmentally mediated family influences.
- 4) Peer group influences: the importance of environmentally mediated influences outside the family (i.e. peer groups) is growing. Young people with a certain behaviour find and associate with each other. Longitudinal studies suggest that this has causal effects on behaviour.
- 5) School influences. Many studies have not looked at anti-social behaviour. But Michael Rutter's own study did find evidence of the impact of the school environment upon behaviour.
- 6) Area influences in anti-social behaviour. It is difficult to define what this means and to determine if there is any influence outside or separate from family influences. Evidence suggests that there are area influences.

Genetic evidence on heterogeneity of anti-social behaviour

Studies of twins by Silberg and others suggest that genetic and environmental effects on behaviour vary between kinds of behaviour:

- Multiple problematic behaviour: genes dominates
- Pure conduct disorder: environment dominates and genes have little effect.

Studies suggest that conduct problems in childhood and adolescence show very little gene influence. In adulthood, genetic factors come into play when problems persist in adulthood. There are strong continuities but patterns of influences are quite different.

However, the parents passing on genes are the same people responsible for providing the environment in which children grow up, so the two are linked.

Maughan et al (1995) identified a 'high risk group' – a sample of families in which one or both parents had some kind of mental health problem – and a 'community group' – families from the same area as the other group. More children in the high-risk group were exposed to maternal or paternal hostility. Parents with problems create high risk environments.

Ge et al (1996) discussed how parents influence children **and** how far children influence parents – the influence goes both ways.

Anderson et al (1986) studied dyads of mothers with their own and with someone else's child. Two way effects were evident. Children with conduct problems elicited more negative responses from mothers (their own and other people's) but the mothers of children with conduct disorder tended to be more negative than other mothers, even when interacting with a normal child.

Bohman (1995) looked at petty criminality in adult life using data on male adoptees. The researcher identifies 'rearing risk' as adoptive parents display anti-social behaviour, or 'biological risk', showing the following interaction:

No risk factor – 3% criminality

Rearing risk only – 6% criminality

Biological risk only – 12% criminality
Both factors – 40% criminality

Cadoret (1995) looked at the interaction between anti-social personality disorder, biological parents and adverse adoptive home environment. Genetic factors act differently within different environments.

Ethnicity

Smith (1997) shows major differences in imprisonment rates between ethnic groups. Rates for the population of South Asian origin are the same as or below whites, but rates for the black population are much worse than for whites (6.5 times for 17-19 year-olds; 5.5 times for 20-39 year-olds). The differences in the USA are much greater. Black children are much more likely than white children to be raised by single parents or separated parents. Asian children are less likely than whites to be raised by single parents. There are substantial differences in highest qualification gained between first and second-generation immigrants. Non-qualification rates are **falling** for the Caribbean/Indian population, but are **rising** for the Pakistani population.

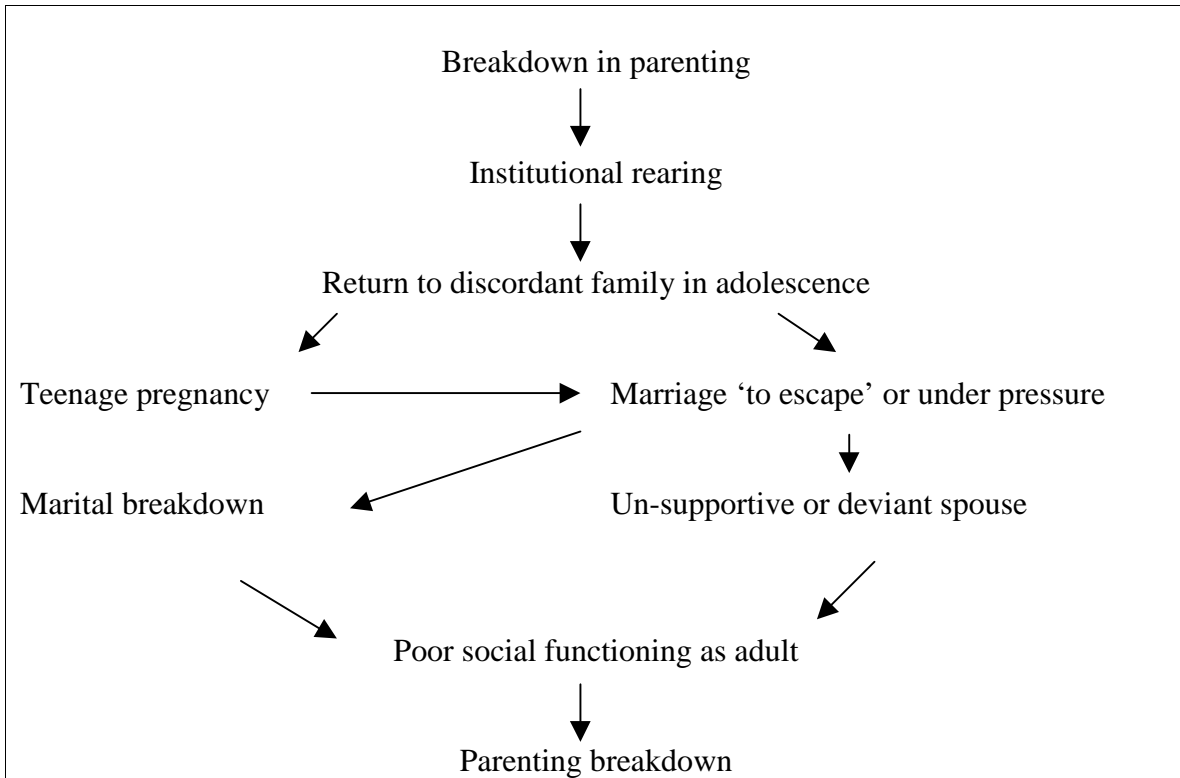
There is now an important proportion of the population with mixed parentage. Modood et al (1997) looked at Caribbean people and the proportion of their partners that are white according to those born in the UK and those born abroad. Of those born in the UK:

- one third of women have white partners
- one half of men have white partners

The proportions are much lower in the Asian community – almost 40% of ‘black’ children have one white parent, but hardly any Asian children have one white parent.

Environmental continuities

Quinton and Rutter (1988) suggest the following framework for the intergenerational transmission of parenting breakdown:



How do continuities and discontinuities come about?

The following figure shows the influences on whether women end up with a deviant partner:

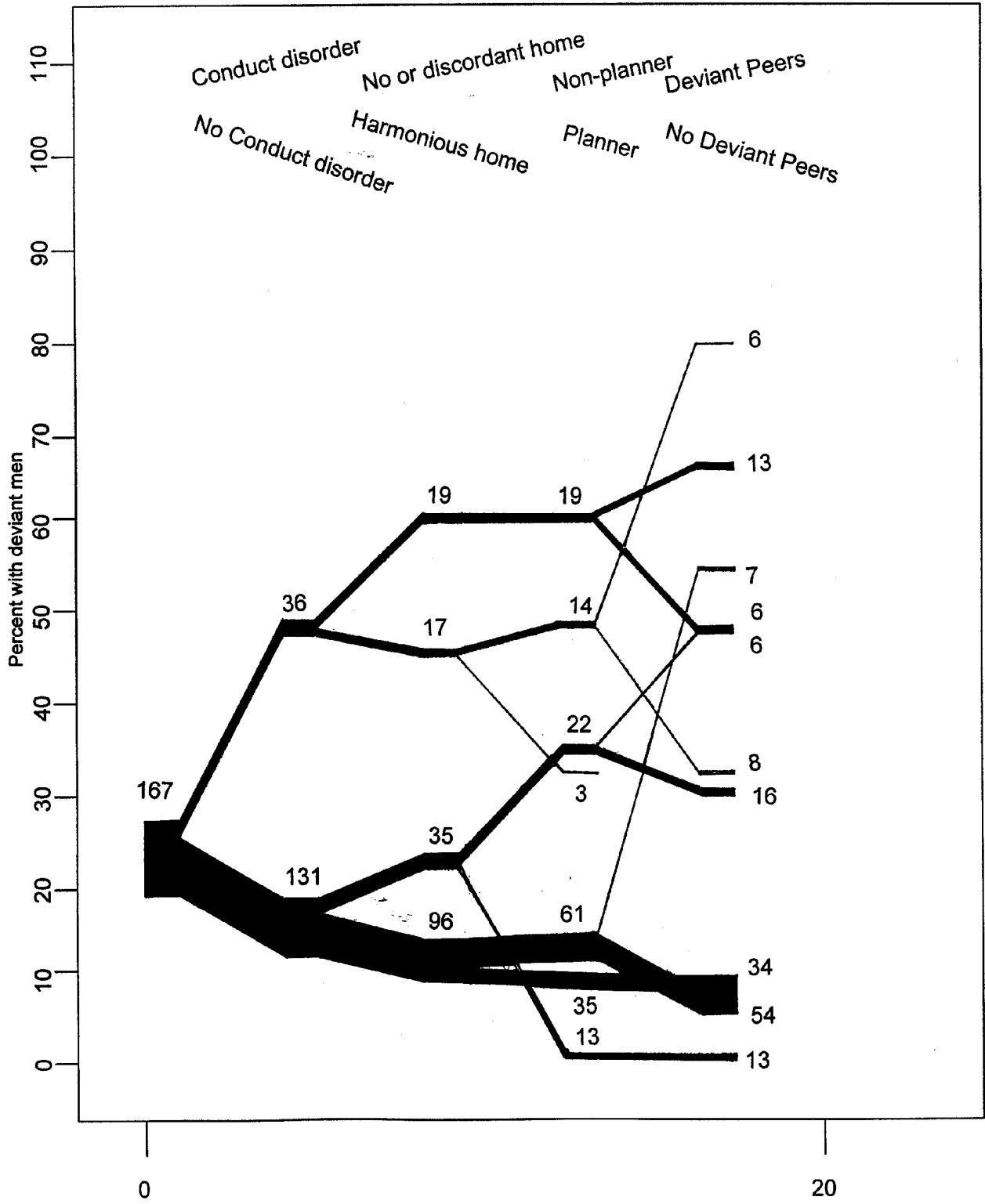
- if they have a conduct disorder then they have a high chance
- if they come from a discordant home in adolescence they have a higher chance
- if they are a 'planner of life' they have less chance
- if they are a 'non-planner' they have a higher chance
- if they have deviant peers then they have a higher chance

As the diagram shows, each of these has a separate effect, controlling for the others, and that different factors interact. Someone is much more likely to be in a deviant peer group if they display deviant behaviour. At each point there are important discontinuities. The proportion of overall variance explained by deviant peers is quite small, but the impact on individuals is high.

Fergusson et al (1992) looked at the chance of offending linked to family change and family discord, finding that **family discord** as more important (but change made family discord more likely).

Rutter et al (1997) looked at the effect of having a non-deviant partner on people who were deviants in childhood. For those with support from a non-deviant partner, delinquency rates **fall** with age (compared to a slow rise for those without such support). As a general implication, major changes follow major changes in environment.

Paths of Women to Deviant Men



Conduct disorder
 No or discordant home
 Non-planner
 Deviant Peers
 No Conduct disorder
 Harmonious home
 Planner
 No Deviant Peers

Dividing paths
 Frequencies given by numbers and line width

Area influences on violence

Sampson et al (1997) looked at the major effect of lack of collective efficacy (reflected in the sense of social cohesion, trust and informal social control) on violence, the most sophisticated study of this kind. They found associations between neighbourhood variations in three factors (themselves linked):

- concentrated disadvantage
- immigrant concentration
- residential instability, and
- violent victimisation
- homicides

There were marked area effects.

Crime and inequalities 1961 – 1989

It is important not to take too simplistic a view of the links between crime and inequalities. Looking at the period 1961-1989, Farrington (1992) shows a marked, steep and continuous rise in the rates of disorder amongst young people. Over the same period income inequalities **fall** between 1964 and 1977 and then rise rapidly in the 1980s (JRF, 1995). Crime rose at the same rate during periods of falling **and** rising inequality. In some ways this is surprising as, for instance, links between inequality and health are stronger.

Discussion

- The issue was raised of whether one influence on crime came from geographical effects, where differences increased earlier than the rise in income inequality. Professor Rutter pointed to rising crime in rural areas as a counter-example, but another academic participant disagreed that the rise in crime has been as great in rural areas as in inner city areas. The gross crime rate measures shown aggregate a number of phenomena. Crime rates measure crude rates of victimisation and rates of offending. The rural urban dichotomy is crude. He cautioned against making inferences from graphs showing no correlation between gross crime rates and increases in inequality. Professor Rutter said that the true explanation remains a puzzle. There is an undeniable increase in crime and, although it has been exaggerated by some methodologies, it is a real increase.

- What distinguishes those who ‘buck the odds’ and what are the characteristics of those who don’t go the way the probabilities suggest they will go? Professor Rutter replied that this is not determined by random variation – positive school experience was important,

not necessarily academic success, but success in sports and positions of responsibility is important for the high-risk group. If you come from a positive background, another positive experience does not make a difference. If you are from a poor background, one good experience could make a difference.

- What policy conclusions should be drawn from the research and where should policy intervene for maximum input? Will the general improvement in the economic climate have less impact than much smaller environmental influences, such as having a good partner? Professor Rutter thought that whatever level of influences there are, something can be done – at school level, community level and family level. It is not helpful to say which is more important, as they interact. Interventions that cut across all will probably be more effective.

- Another participant stressed the importance of the role of institutions, such as schools, workplaces and other agencies dealing with young people. He suggested there was a need for harmony between parental aspirations and a supportive school environment. Many disadvantaged children did succeed in adulthood. He thought that the institutional factor was missing from some of the research. Professor Rutter agreed that schools are important, and that the work environment had not been looked at very much, despite its importance. The workplace has been looked at in studies on physical health. Work is an important influence on peoples' expectations and on anticipations of life. The loss of job has an impact, but so does the anticipation of losing a job.

- To what extent is there consensus behind the findings shown? Professor Rutter said that the broad message was empirically supported, and difficult to argue against, although some were concerned about biological determinism. It should be remembered that genetic factors worked in a probabilistic way, like environmental ones. The evidence was clear – looking at continuities, one has to look outside the family. Also, the answer one gets when looking cross-sectionally is different from effects over time. The reasons for this are puzzling. The challenge for social scientists is to take the anomalies in empirical findings and find the answers for them – however uncomfortable they may be.

- Are there differences between the increases in crime, violent crime and anti-social behaviour? Professor Rutter said that violent crime probably went up more, although there is variation from country to country. There has been some increase in anti-social behaviour, but the evidence is less clear.

Income mobility and poverty dynamics

Professor Stephen Jenkins

(ESRC Research Centre on Microsocial Change, University of Essex)

The presentation continued on the theme of continuities – although rather than looking at intergenerational changes, the Essex researchers have been looking at what happens from one year to the next. The Transmitted Deprivation Programme lacked longitudinal data on incomes (apart from the follow-up to Rowntree's 1950 study led by Professor Tony Atkinson). There are now more longitudinal data available and researchers can use the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) – Britain's panel survey with a nationally representative sample, which started in the autumn of 1991.

The research programme using BHPS addresses the following questions:

- How much income mobility is there in the UK?
- Do the poor remain poor?
- What accounts for the movements at the bottom?

There is a lot of mobility from one year to the next, mostly short distance. The poor do not generally remain **persistently** poor, but there is a lot of 'churning' in and out of poverty.

'Income' was defined as the variable used in most British discussions about household welfare, net household income from the labour market, returns from savings, deducting income taxes and national insurance, and adjusted for household size.

Looking at the data from the first four waves of BHPS, little changed in distribution from a cross sectional point of view. There is cross sectional stability but there is a lot of longitudinal flux. How much income mobility was there? A lot, but only a short distance:

- Only 40% of the population are in the same tenth of the income distribution from one year to the next, but over 70% remain in the same income band, one higher or one lower.
- To discover if inequalities in the cross-section matter, we need to look at the longer-term picture – longitudinal averaging smoothes out transitory variations and reveals 'permanent' income. Inequality falls as incomes from more waves are added in. However, the fall in inequality is not so great. The 'Gini coefficient' inequality measure falls from 30.9 for Wave 1 to 29.4 for Waves 1 and 2 combined, and to 27.8 for the first five waves combined. This 3 percentage point fall in the index from 5 year averaging can be compared with the 10 point rise in the Gini coefficient in the 1980s. It is roughly equivalent to the effect of direct taxation.

The data suggest that income mobility is slightly greater than wage mobility. Income mobility is larger for the elderly – we cannot explain this and the reasons for it are unclear. We would expect the reverse given the nature of income sources of elderly people.

Poverty (low income) dynamics

The low income cut-off is taken as 50% of wave 1 average net income. Few people are persistently poor – 4.3% are 'poor' at **every** wave from 1 to 4. These are particularly the

elderly, single parents etc. Many more people are ‘touched’ by poverty over a period than are poor at a point in time. Almost one third have low incomes at least once over the four year period.

The data show important changes in ‘exit’ and ‘re-entry’ rates for those who stay in or ‘escape’ low income:

	Exit rate	Re-entry rate
After 1 year	0.54	0.29
After 2 years	0.51	0.11

We need to combine information about exit and re-entry rates – only taking account of exits is not good enough. We need to look at the “churning” effect or potential cycles of disadvantage. We may be seeing a paradigm shift – we are moving away from thinking in terms of a stock of long-term dependence towards looking at flows of people moving in and out of poverty. One can talk of the “rubber band” model of income determination. Most people move along the income line only within the scope allowed by their rubber band. For some, the rubber band breaks (e.g. death of a partner or entrepreneurs going bust) and income changes are much larger.

Discussion

- Incomes were viewed as an escalator going up and down. Although it is difficult to track, raw correlation suggests that if a person has been ‘down’ before, they are more likely to go ‘down’ again.
- Those most at risk of persistent poverty are single parents, women and elderly pensioners.
- The rate of movement was greater towards the top and the bottom. At the top income fluctuates due to the nature of income sources, for example, returns from investment. There are also measurement errors that can cause fluctuations. There are also age variations.
- The researchers were currently examining how much change in income is related to change in household composition. Escape from low income is associated with gaining an earner and more demographic stability. Entry into low income is associated with losing an earner and also losing adults.
- The numbers in the sample were too small to say whether re-partnering was the main way out of low income for lone parents.
- Mobility patterns looked similar for gross and net income, so the tax and benefit system made fluctuations smaller rather than ‘tethering’ their income firmly.
- It was suggested that it was encouraging that the research indicated that relatively few people are permanently poor, but that the ‘rubber band’ model was discouraging. People need jobs to escape poverty but it is essential to consider the quality of the match

for long-term escape. Data from other longitudinal surveys showed that for those with minimal qualifications, the ‘rubber band’ preventing permanent escape is very strong.

3. Movements on and off benefits

Professor Robert Walker

(Centre for Research in Social Policy, Loughborough University)

Over longer periods of observation, we find more people in poverty, and they will increasingly rely on benefits. Over a 3-year period, 15% of people may receive Income Support whereas only 9% will be claimants at any one moment. The more people come within benefits, the more benefits do for people, the wider the constituency in support of benefits.

Long-term claimants build up in the caseload and the characteristics of the caseload increasingly come to reflect the long-term claimants. For instance, Family Credit – an in-work benefit – started as a bridge into work, but over time it becomes a kind of wage subsidy. But the majority only claims it for a short period.

Poor and non-poor groups are not discrete. We have to focus on transitions and reasons for transitions. What policies help these transitions?

Research in Loughborough had looked at a sample of people claiming Income support (IS) between 1990 and 1993. Unemployment doubled from 5.5% to over 10% from 1990-1993. The IS caseload increased – 59% of entrants had lost their jobs (of which 17% were at the end of fixed term contracts). In 1991 there were larger flows of people into than out of the system. The change in unemployment equals the balance of flows in and flows out. 4% suffered adverse changes in their health; 7% retired. Only 1 in 4 of those becoming unemployed went onto Unemployment Benefit. Only 1 in 5 entered Income Support via Unemployment Benefit – a very different pattern from continental Europe. 10% of people becoming unemployed did not receive any benefits – this may be due to redundancy payments.

1 in 5 people were looking after a home, most of these were women. Two fifths came onto IS because both they and their partner lost their jobs. Therefore this suggests that some people whose partners lose their job also stop working. However, an important new finding was that as many partners **started** jobs when partners lost them as gave up jobs.

Where did people who left Income Support go? They generally follow the route back to where they were before. 27% left benefit but did not work – they were still unemployed. 7% were looking after their home. 2% retired. 3% were suffering from long term sickness.

In the mid 1990s spells on benefits were generally not long. People also return to benefits. 25% of people return to the labour market within six weeks. 50% of people return within 14 weeks. But the escape is not necessarily permanent; 1 in 5 have returned to benefit

within one year. More lone parents had also returned within the space of a year. There is a lot of churning within the system.

What enables some to leave and why do some not get to leave? Factors which reduce time on IS include:

- Degree, 'A' levels and a HNC or equivalent – academic qualifications make a real difference, but vocational qualifications do not;
- Work experience;
- Driving licence/telephone (employers may demand these as part of the job, or these may help as tools in the job search process);
- Women move off more quickly than men.

Attitudes are important – there is a new moralism in the political debate. There is a feeling that 'self improvement' has been weakened. The unemployed do look for work and are flexible in what they look for. Life on benefits is not congenial – it is stigmatising and you may leave having debts.

Limits to work – structural constraints:

- Labour demand – the 'missing guest at the feast';
- Informal networks are important; people get jobs through the people they know;
- Disincentives;
- Uncertainty – being on benefits is a risky situation – taking a job may be even more risky;
- Benefit design.

There is a set of obstacles that prevent transition from benefits into work. Policy could build a bridge over these obstacles. The task for researchers is to learn about transitions and triggers to change, and should suggest to policy makers ways of preventing such obstacles.

Discussion

- Having a degree or 'A' Levels was important in determining the speed of re-employment. The extent to which lower qualifications helped people back into employment depended on the sub-group they were in. Higher qualifications were more critical than lower levels (although results from a larger survey suggest that lower level qualifications do help). People with degrees have an advantage. There are also gender differences – for women, holding a higher level qualification is like a passport for long term stability. For men this is less important.
- The unemployed were tapping into a certain sector of the labour market which contained many short term and temporary jobs. This would be a huge hurdle for the New Deal.

- Other research suggested that couples are trying to be flexible (e.g. a man stays at home and looks after the children and the wife looks for work) but are often frustrated by the inflexibility of the Job Seeker Allowance rules (which say that it is the man who should look for work). The researchers interviewed couples whose strategy was for one partner to look for work rather than both. The propensity to go back onto benefits was higher among couples where only one partner was working. Traditional one-earner couples were more vulnerable in advance to what happens when they hit benefits. People carry on their past norms of behaviour into the benefits system. Benefits do not necessarily shape their behaviour.
- The study had found that two-thirds of people thought they needed to work on the side but very few people did so. Official participants thought that this might be due to many of these people denying that they were working for fear of being identified. Professor Walker suggested that there had been a change over the last 10-15 years, with more now likely to see 'working on the side' as legitimate. Qualitative research picks up more actual work than quantitative surveys, but it also demonstrates the barriers; contacts are needed to get even casual work, even if skills are not. The Loughborough researchers followed the unemployed for 9 months – 4.7% were sanctioned by the unemployment system, half said unfairly. 90% of the unemployed saw a need for sanctions against working whilst claiming benefits – all the unemployed are tainted by the same brush of cheating.
- Professor Walker reported that analysis of the sample suggested that housing tenure was **not** important once other factors were taken into account. This was queried by another academic participant who suggested that there was a link between homeownership and length of time in unemployment. Research undertaken by University of Glasgow suggests that lots of homeowners do not claim benefits and go back to work very quickly. There is now a record number of owner occupiers within the benefits system. The unemployment trap is worst where people are on Income Support to pay their mortgage interest.
- It was asked whether self-employment is an important route out of unemployment. Nobody who was self-employed before became employees – they went back to being self-employed. This is linked to risk – people may be risk averse – and risks are multiplied for the self-employed.
- The reasons for going back onto benefits were discussed – did people return to unemployment because of the type of work they were doing, or because they simply cannot hold down a job? Most people returning to the labour market were offered fixed term employment. It was thought people might require more support – for instance, some form of mentoring - after returning to work.

4. Family Forms and Intergenerational Links

Dr Kathleen Kiernan

CASE, London School of Economics

This presentation examined two themes: early parenthood and the legacy of parental divorce, using longitudinal data from the National Child Development Study (NCDS – a cohort study of people born in one week in 1958).

Teenage motherhood

The higher incidence of teenage motherhood in Britain may form part of the explanation as to why British lone mothers are more likely to be living in poverty compared with lone mothers in other West European countries. In Britain 44% of never-married lone-mothers and 31% of separated/divorced lone mothers had their first child in their teens. This compares with 15% of married mothers. The evidence below shows that teenage mothers are the ones who have accumulated the least human capital on their way to adulthood and thus are less likely to be self-sufficient if they become lone mothers. The UK has the highest teenage fertility rate in Europe and the rates have not altered over the last 15 years.

Teenage parents are more likely to: experience unemployment; be reliant on benefits; experience homelessness; and have large families themselves (20% of NCDS teenage mothers had 4 or more children by age 33).

Who becomes a teenage mother?

- those who themselves had a teenage mother (one in four compared to one in eight);
- those with a low socio-economic status;
- women who have performed less well at school, and left with no qualifications;
- they are twice as likely to have achieved poor reading and math scores. Six out of ten had no qualifications by age 23, compared to 23% of women who had babies later;
- those who experienced emotional problems while growing up;
- those who expressed a preference at 16 for marrying and starting a family (but only 1 in 4 planned their pregnancy; equally only 1 in 4 were using any kind of contraception).

Estimated probabilities of teenage motherhood: Putting together five different risk factors (educational scores below median level, high emotional scores, had a teenage mother themselves, had suffered financial hardship at age 7 or 16, and wanted an early birth) the probability of becoming a teenage mother was 56% of those affected by all five factors, compared to 3% for those affected by none (and 11% if affected by all except low education). An improving school record was linked to decreasing probability of becoming a teenage mother. The analysis pointed to a group of underachieving girls who are at a greater risk of becoming single parents. This group can now be more systematically identified at an early time through school test scores, and appropriate action could be taken.

Legacy of parental divorce

Studies using longitudinal data point to the idea that long before parents' divorce, there are observable differences in the behaviour of their children. There are also factors that affect children long after the divorce. These can have an impact upon socio-economic attainment, demographic behaviour and mental health.

Children whose parents separate are likely to:

- have a lower educational attainment;
- have a lower income in adulthood;
- have more unemployment;
- have less prestigious jobs.

However, some of these links between divorce and poor socio-economic outcomes become much weaker when pre-divorce conditions are taken into account. For instance, financial stress in childhood is associated with much of the lower educational attainment and male unemployment. But the poorer demographic outcomes cannot be explained in this way. Even controlling for pre-divorce conditions, children from divorced families were more likely to form partnerships earlier and start sexual relations earlier. They were more likely to have children during teenage years themselves, and to experience partnership breakdown themselves.

Discussion

- The US debate about teenage fathers focuses on the lack of eligible males, and men lacking a role in life. The characteristics of men becoming fathers are the same as the women. There is an age gap when US teenage mothers marry - the difference in age of the teenage mother and spouse is 10 years – this could mean that young women are looking outside their cohort for long term partners. However, UK research suggests only a 2 year age difference.
- There are difficulties in using cohort surveys – there has been a shift in attitudes towards single parenthood and teenage pregnancy since the 1958 cohort was growing up. Official participants were worried about the conclusions that can be drawn from such surveys. However, Dr Kiernan pointed out that very similar results were found in the 1946 cohort, suggesting stability in the relationships, and other participants pointed to similar findings for the 1970 cohort (where prevalence was different, but the processes were similar).
- 80% of teenage mothers have their baby outside marriage and/or without a partner. The factors associated with having a baby have not changed from the earlier cohort.
- It was suggested that the value and purpose of pregnancy had different roles for fathers and mothers. There is a rational choice to be made between the labour market and an identity as a mother. For teenage men, becoming a father perpetuates adolescence – for mothers it propels them into adulthood. Young fathers are much less likely to be involved with their families, therefore being a father is less salient for them.

- Conception and pregnancy need to be separated. People make their decisions about work versus having a baby after they become pregnant. There is a need for intervention before they get pregnant in terms of conception; the ones who do not conceive are those who talk to their mothers and/or are taught about contraception at school.
- The level of basic skills was seen as being important. Those who have low basic skills are more likely to have children during their teenage years. There needs to be intervention to raise skills levels. Also comparing the 1958 cohort at age 23 and 33, it was only those with **some** qualifications to start with who had upgraded their skills by age 33.
- Lone parenthood is now seen as a social problem – single parents are a much more residualised group. Being without a partner is a more unstable structure. Most young people are shifting up their child rearing and marriage into their late twenties.
- It was very difficult for researchers to ask if young mothers regretted their teenage pregnancy. They do not regret having their baby, but they may regret not having a partner. A PSI study on how lone parents feel about their children suggests that they feel very positive about them.
- There is less teenage pregnancy and less divorce in Europe. The trends varied between the Southern, Northern and Eastern regions of Europe. In southern Europe the response to unemployment is not to have a baby. In Britain, it is.
- Another recent study had looked at women getting awards to enable them to return to higher education. The group is not representative but throws light on what is going on - a number of these were teenage mothers. Important factors for women leaving the education system early included poor teaching at schools and major family upsets. Having a child gave them a time to 'invest in themselves'. Being a mother could be good for self-esteem. Having a partner was not always useful. For some women returning to education, there was an 'Educating Rita' effect, leading to problems with their partners involving break-up and disruptive behaviour.

5. Policy and Changing Family Forms

Professor Jane Millar

Department of Social and Policy Sciences, University of Bath

Current trends are rising divorce rates (from 5.9 to 13.4 per 1000 from 1971 to 1995/6) and increasing numbers of births outside marriage (from 8% to 36%). There has been a rapid change over the last twenty years. There is a greater risk of poverty for lone parents, and therefore also the children in those households – 60% of lone parents and their children have below half average income. Apart from elderly women, they are the group most likely to be persistently poor.

These changes raise strong anxieties:

- about what governments can and should do about these changes
- how far has government policy reinforced or encouraged these changes

There are no simple left/right government answers to these questions. Both the Conservative and Labour parties see strong families as re-enforcing community.

Relationships between parents and children: children are often seen as the victims of the selfish behaviour of adults and there is concern about the long-term impact upon children. This depends upon a multiplicity of factors. It is difficult to single out divorce or separation from other factors. There is much less research on the long-term consequences of child poverty.

Relations between women and men: Some argue that state benefits give women the ability to choose to live without men. Men may be seen by some women as superfluous to family life, but it is difficult for research to unpack this.

There is confusion over the use of the word 'single' – many 'single' women are cohabiting and separate later. Only half of 'single' parents have never lived with a partner. An important change from the past is the decline in 'shot-gun weddings', followed by divorce. These mothers previously showed up as 'divorced', but are now counted as single. McKay & Rowlingson (1998) divide single parents into two groups –those who have never lived with a partner and those who did live with a partner at some point. Solo women are more likely to come from a low socio-economic group and live in poor housing. They did not plan to become pregnant but they did not necessarily see it as a problem. Singleness was better than being with a partner who would have been a poor one.

Looking at separated women:

- the decision to separate was not taken lightly;
- it is not always the woman choosing to separate, but they do not necessarily regret the separation;
- partnerships were often perceived as unequal: there was an aspiration to an equal partnership, but the reality turned out to be different.

Marriage is seen as a partnership to which men and women contribute equally. Some argue that lone parenthood could be reduced if you make men more 'eligible' by enhancing their breadwinner status. But women are saying that they want not so much breadwinners, but rather equality in partnerships.

Policy responses

The focus on single parents as a group should be scrapped and replaced with a dynamic analysis across the life cycle of the family. Lone parenthood is part of a much wider set of family changes – cohabitation, birth outside marriage, re-partnering and step parenthood. Lone parents are not homogenous – they are a dynamic group. Eventually they will all get out of this status – their kids will grow up. Lone parenthood is not a permanent status, it is a life course stage, but with particular pressures and needs.

The focus on lone parents is unhelpful and leads to negative representations. They are stigmatised and portrayed as a threat to society, as being selfish and acting against their children's' interests. The capacity to recognise positive aspects of parenthood is often forgotten. In some other countries, for example, Denmark there is no focus on single parents as a special group – there is a focus on single earner households (not necessarily single parents). This enables single parents to get access to proper benefits. The international evidence is that lone parents do better in countries where they are treated in the same way as other lower income families.

The key area is children and the needs of children:

- we have high child poverty rates
- policy is failing children
- we need to review the nature and level of support for children

Australia and Canada are moving towards integrated systems of support for children. The UK needs an integrated system for children, payable to families in and outside work on the lines of the system recommended by the Finer Committee. We need to think dynamically as single parenthood being a stage in the life cycle. We need to shift the focus on to children.

Discussion

- Length of lone parenthood varies but all lone parents have a higher chance of being poor and staying poor. On re-partnering, it depends on who they re-partner with that determines the effect upon their level of poverty. Re-partnering with an unemployed person may lead to a worse condition.
- Official participants asked if lone parents with children over age 5 should be required to seek work. Professor Millar replied that the voluntary element is important. Child care, wage levels and attitudes about lone mothers working are important. All these factors play a part, but they all interact. There needs to be individual support for individual needs. Some come forward very ready to be employed, others are less ready. The New Deal has to regain lost trust from the last government. It has to be seen as something that can help people and benefit them.

- It was suggested that a focus solely on socio-economic group was a limiting factor in tackling disadvantage. Policy makers and researchers needed to look at wider variations, for example, rural versus urban differences.
- Local variation should be allowed to operate in the New Deal.
- The extent to which lone mothers were actually alone varies. It is much more likely that they will be living alone than in the past. This is important in determining the extent of poverty.
- Quality of life studies show that work is important in giving lone mothers contact and networks with adults. Recent research by Michael Young suggested that current local authority housing allocations policies separate single parents from potential networks of support. Sons' and daughters' allocations policies had been abandoned by local authorities but this removed potential support from grandparents.
- There are marked variations in availability of housing. In northern England, it may be possible that single parents are re-housed close to their parents. This is made possible by elastic supply.
- The average time women take to commute is the same for council estate dwellers as for owner-occupiers. Local government housing policy has led to concentrations of lone parents – they are housed in poor estates with poor transport. The mechanics of getting to work and getting children to school are difficult – arranging your life is much more complex.
- Poor health outcomes are associated with teenage motherhood, including links to smoking. Poverty is associated with poor health for children. This may be a problem associated with all young parenting, not just single young parenting.
- An integrated benefits system for children would help to reduce risks. Policies for women - and not just families - are important. Women need a sense of control and independence. Women going back into partnership after single parenthood go back with much more control. They seek much more equitable relationships.

6. Social Exclusion and Poor Neighbourhoods

Dr Anne Power

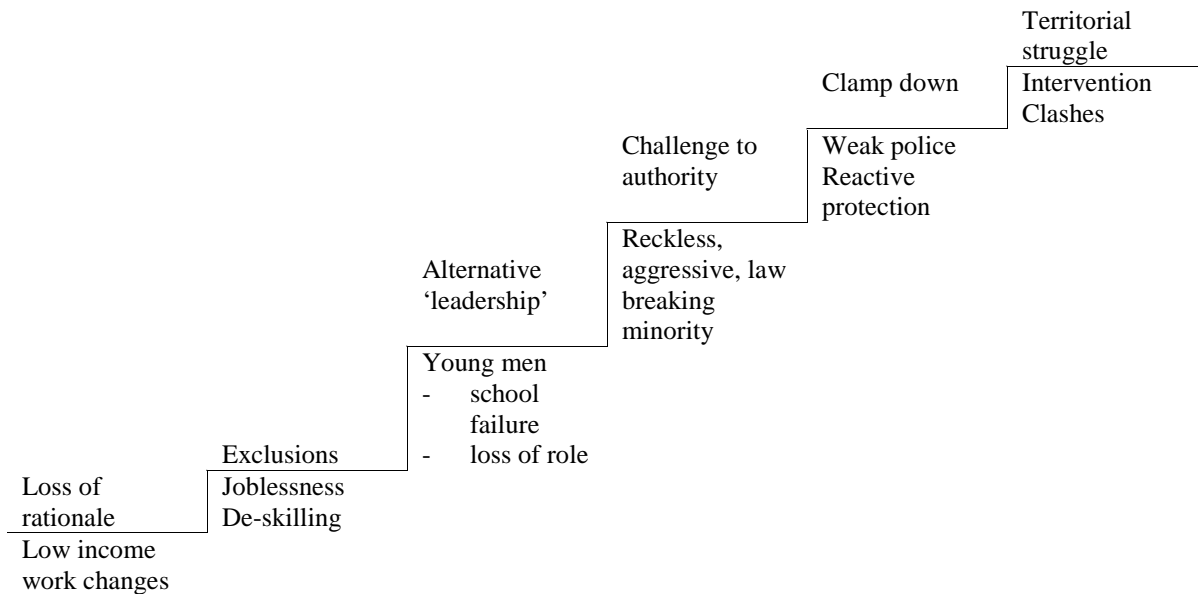
CASE, London School of Economics

1. Wider pressures on areas

The underlying problems are:

- global job pressures and de-skilling;
- family change and increasing lone parenthood
- migration;
- individualism which butts up against collective responsibility.

Changes in work have led to a loss of role in life for young men. They have been pushed into a marginal position and they are less motivated to work at school. The young men that fail often challenge authority and end up truanting or being excluded. ‘Rumbling disorders’ have occurred over time in a number of areas. Riots seem to follow a ‘staircase of escalation’:



2. Why estates matter?

- 17m households live in estates in Northern Europe;
- there are 5.5 million units in the UK alone;
- they are a huge public investment – they will not be built again;
- there are increasing pressures on people at the bottom;
- there is fear of an underclass developing
- across Europe there is evidence of viability – if something is done, conditions do improve.

3. Range of management approaches to urban problems:

<u>USA</u>	<u>UK & Ireland</u>	<u>Continental Europe</u>
Hands off approach Abandonment and ghettos	Strong political ownership Weak bureaucratic management Intense welfare decline	Indirect political ownership Strong management Quick rescue

In US cities like Milwaukee, the ghetto has spread widely from its original core over the 1980s. If we allow this to happen here, there would be a massive increase in marginal estates. There is already a very big gap between local authority area unemployment rates and levels on marginal estates. This is also true for rates of single parenthood and school performance – 5 times the proportion of children leave school with no qualifications in the most marginal estates compared with the average. There are similar patterns of unemployment, concentrations of empty properties and empty units on unpopular estates in many European countries.

4. Lessons from Europe (see *Estates on the Edge*, Power 1997)

- estates were built as dormitories for people in work with low incomes, but they house the unemployed; they need much more varied uses and facilities as a result;
- A social mix on estates is essential to the viability of social organisation, shops and public transport;
- Social buffers – schools, policing, shops, voluntary organisations are all important;
- Estates need revenue funding for rescue programmes and long-term management - capital improvements by themselves are likely to fail;
- Revenue resources need to be directed to the front-line;

Swimming against the tide or dangerous disorder?

If landlords invest revenue from rents into running an estate it is sometimes possible to change their trajectories. But there are strong unchangeable factors such as the physical structure and location of estates and difficult to change elements such as government policy.

Discussion

- Dr Power argued that local authority ownership of housing created some difficulties. Originally they were supposed to have passed on their housing ten years after it was built. Now they are heavily involved and it is difficult to extricate them. She would adopt a radical strategy and thought that until this was put in motion public housing would not get the continual re-investment it needs, rather than occasional government rescue programmes.

- Another academic participant argued that researchers need to understand more about the importance of concentration effects. An understanding of the way they ratchet together is essential – this constitutes a set of factors that are over and above the characteristics of people who are there. Even if it were possible to change the people who lived there, conditions would remain the same.
- It was suggested that riots occurring in estates in the US in the early 1960s were riots of rising expectations; by the 1990s people had given up hope (although the Los Angeles riots were given as a counter example). Was the position similar in the UK? Dr Power said that the majority of riot areas had many government programmes, but they lacked the revenue-funded on-site management that all housing needs. The European case studies went through rapid decline over 10 years. Rescue programmes took between 2 and 5 years to have an impact. Evidence from the UK shows that if you take attention off an estate it begins to decline again. What is missing is hands-on multi-faceted control.
- It was pointed out that no riots occurred in Scotland, even though unemployment there had reached the same levels as on the 13 estates in the *Dangerous Disorder* study at the beginning of the 1980s
- Official participants asked if there was a view of what an estate adds to the characteristics of the people living in them? If something is happening to the people, is there an alternative strategy to address concentrations of poverty (i.e. change policy to avoid concentrating vulnerable people in the same estates)? Or do we just manage them better? Dr Power replied that there are area effects, but there are so many interacting variables that it is difficult to separate them out. For example, a poor school damages the people in the area. Services interact with people. We are witnessing the ‘double disadvantage of the weak’ – concentrating poor people in areas where other people think they cannot succeed and so leave. A large, privately owned estate in Cologne began to improve when management became tough on criminals who had moved in when void levels increased. Estates are not prisons, therefore – it is important to find ways of curbing anti-social behaviour to avoid inflicting the consequences on vulnerable communities.
- Accessing employment is an essential part of tackling social disadvantage on estates. Landlords and other local services do not have control over local labour markets, but they can play a role by employing tenants to do many of the jobs that have to be done at estate level.
- Some researchers suggested that it was important to take account of the huge variations in the quality of estates within the council sector. Researchers need to examine the trajectories of different types of estates, not just the worst ones. We also need to look at variations within estates. More sophisticated and detailed studies are needed.

7. Crime & Drugs: Continuity, Change & Transmission

Professor Geoffrey Pearson

Department of Community Studies, Goldsmiths College

The way society complains about crime is very static. Discourses seem incapable of keeping up with change (Pearson, 1983). Between 1981-1995 violent crime rose by 65%, and acquisitive crime by 109% (more than half of the increase is attributed to auto thefts) while vandalism remained static, which is in some ways puzzling (British Crime Survey, 1996).

Crime and deprivation

Geographical consistency over time in areas of deprivation, crime and drug use - in the 1920s and 30s, Chicago's inner city contained dense concentrations of young delinquents. The use of opium was also concentrated there. Heroin use patterns in the 1960s would follow similar patterns.

Using British Crime Survey data and the ACORN model of classifying neighbourhoods, criminologists have identified concentrations of crime in particular areas; half of neighbourhoods in the country account for 85% of victimisation; one tenth account for 30% of crime. There is a high level of crime in poor areas but people living there often have no insurance. People in more affluent areas have less fear of crime – they are more likely to be insured.

Drugs

Research from the north of the USA indicates that drug problems are concentrated in poor areas. Research in the UK also reflects this. For example, there is a high use of Class A drugs in north Lewisham where you can also find the highest concentrations of social problems. Why does this clustering occur? Why should we find single parent households, marginal people, old people and heroin addicts all together? The housing market seems to fuel these 'urban clustering' effects (Pearson and Gilman, 1994).

'Normalisation' of drug use; Surveys of drug consumption indicate that between 40-50% of young people self report having used drugs. Between 40-50% of whites and Afro-carribeans have used drugs, while only between 10-15% of Asians report drug use, despite the poverty in these families. This is possibly due to strong social control in Asian communities. However, surveys invariably ask 'Have you **ever** used drugs?' This is not a useful question – we need more precision and more detailed information on drug using careers – how they got in, how they get out. We also need to know about family processes and patterns that protect against risk factors, and peer effects outside families. Parenting skills teaching needs to begin in early childhood, otherwise the influence of peers may override parental influence. Not enough attention has been paid to how people get out of drug use.

USA drug use researchers have taken a sample of arrested people (for a wide range of crimes, not just drug related) who are asked to complete a questionnaire and give a urine sample. The 'DUF' data produced enables us to follow trends. In New York the result used to be that 70% of people in the sample had recently used cocaine. Cocaine use is now dropping among young people in a number of US cities, to as low as 10-15% – people

have seen the damage it has done to their parents and their brothers. This is one of the few pieces of ‘good news’ in recent years in the drugs field (Golub and Johnson, 1997). This has been accompanied by a decline in violent crime and homicide rates. There is much debate as to whether the fall in crime is due to zero tolerance or declining cocaine use (Butterfield, 1997).

Crime, drugs and deprivation are inextricably linked at local levels and driven by the housing market. The field of drugs is complex – we need a local focus, rather than the national picture. We also need to focus on serious misuse rather than recreational use. Families are an important influence, but peer groups are more important. USA research suggests that to tackle drug misuse, more money should be invested in health care. Most impressive in this respect is the RAND model for cocaine control which compares costs and benefits from different interventions: source-country control programmes; border interdiction; domestic enforcement; and treatment (Everingham and Rydell, 1994). In brief, to obtain the same goal of a 1 per cent reduction in cocaine consumption it is estimated that this would cost \$783 million for source-country control, \$336 million for interdiction, \$246 million for domestic enforcement, or \$34 million for treatment. Put another way, the savings created by supply-control programmes are smaller than the control costs. The savings involved in the reduction of social costs (crime etc.) resulting from cocaine misuse are as follows for every dollar spent: 15 cents for source-country programmes; 32 cents for interdiction; 52 cents for domestic enforcement; and \$7.46 for treatment.

Discussion

- An official participant asked why young people were turning away from drugs, and did this rejection ‘just happen’ or was it to do with public health intervention. Did we just have to wait for the penny to drop and would things get much worse before they get better? Professor Pearson replied that declining crack use in USA has had little to do with public health campaigns. The messages were not getting through. The peak year for US overall cocaine consumption was 1977/8 – the trend has been downward as more people turn away from cocaine. One may just have to wait for the penny to drop. When it came, the turning point was very fast – drug use was associated with guns and homicide – because so many young people died, it was such a powerful message. Violence was dealer related, but its very much about local experiences, which are largely uncontrollable.
- North British cities are different – in the south you do get concentrations. In the north you get poor people and empty dwellings – when drug dealers move in they can destabilise a whole estate within 3-6 months – this can increase turnover very quickly. The police would rather go after the big boys, but failing to tackle drug use at micro level does great damage to estates. The divisions between crime, drugs and housing programmes are very difficult – this is a problem for the Social Exclusion Unit.
- Another participant pointed to the UK epidemic of property crime. However, epidemics kill off their hosts and so are eventually self-limiting. An increase in offending leads to a change in victim behaviour. It is not clear how the segregation between rich and

poor areas is linked to crime. In the ESRC Crime and Social Order Programme, adjacent estates in Salford were studied. One was deteriorating, but in the other, order had re-emerged – but only after accommodating to powerful groups. Issues for policy were:

- If material circumstances improve, will crime wither away?
- Or is there still 'slack', implying that extra measures are needed to take out a minority of criminals?
- Crime and drugs are themselves a **barrier** to getting the structure right.

- The value of the current fashion for parenting as a solution was questioned. Professor Pearson pointed to David Farrington's work arguing for investment in parenting skills as part of crime reduction, but he himself was sceptical about the value of parenting skills. The drug issue is undeniably new – outside London heroin use was virtually unknown until the 1980s. Maybe 12% of burglaries are heroin related – the most careful study estimates that, on the basis of different assumptions, between 1% and 21% of the costs of acquisitive crime were heroin related, or between £58 million and £864 million (ISDD, 1994). But the data are poor; Britain has to start testing on American lines – this is a much better measure than self-reporting. We now have a pilot study of urine testing along similar lines to the US DUF programme, see Bennett, 1998).

8. Report back

Three of the official participants then summarised what seemed to them to be the key points emerging from the preceding sessions.

a) Income and benefit mobility

Social Exclusion cuts across policy boundaries. Links between research evidence and where DSS policy is coming from are essential.

The latest Loughborough research that suggests that if one partner loses work then the other often goes out and gets work. This implies that maybe we need to be more flexible about who goes out and looks for work. Or maybe both partners should! We also need to understand the importance of measures of not only income, but also consumption and expenditure.

The steers from Ministers are that work, education and training are the way forward. This is consistent with evidence presented on the relevant factors on mobility. But the evidence on ‘churning’ shows that people may not move far. This does not invalidate the New Deal, but there is a risk associated with work – we have to balance work experience with skills acquisition.

A lot of benefits go to people who are outside the labour market e.g. they have effectively retired. Only a one third of people who received income support for mortgage interest are currently in the labour market – others are long term sick or old.

We need to look at tapers. Modifying tapers has ambiguous effects on the poverty trap and is expensive. The earnings/income disregard is expensive and has a dead weight cost. Lack of knowledge by claimants of how the system works is important in thinking about reform.

There is no pressure from Ministers to raise general benefit levels, as spending is seen as untargeted and the effects of general increases too slow. We are bound to look at targeting. A lot of what happens on the ground may be to do with doubts about what happens when you move into and out of benefits. DSS are looking into piloting localisation of benefits. There could be a bolder approach if a local office had control over its entire budget – this might have a greater effect on how individuals actually get out of a cycle of disadvantage.

b) Family Change and Family Policy

The Treasury is interested in cycles of disadvantage for three reasons:

1. The core aim of HMT is to raise the sustainable growth rate and opportunities for everyone to share in the benefits of growth;
2. Cycles of disadvantage result from multiple problems which require multiple solutions and the Treasury cuts across sectors;
3. Substantial amounts of public expenditure are devoted to mitigating the effects of cycles of disadvantage.

We are mid-way through the Comprehensive Spending Review. The government is taking its time to set its priorities for the medium term – it is deciding how to spend money more carefully in order to deliver on its promises.

Family policy - What can government do to help break cycles of disadvantage, without interfering in people's lives?

- people are held back by the 'rubber band' syndrome – how can government help them move up?
- How do we distinguish between cause and effect?
- There are problems with getting into peoples' personal lives, but government is interfering all over the place in various areas.

What are the characteristics of families in cycles of disadvantage? We know that they are prone to single parenthood and unemployment. The New Deal will help to tackle the problems of unemployment, but what else can be done? Is there a role for government to look at families suffering from cycles of disadvantage in order to target help more effectively?

The problems of families in cycles of disadvantage require multiple solutions. Communities and local residents have a great capacity to pull themselves up given a modest amount of government financial or other type of assistance. We need to know about what good experience there is and how we can spread this experience.

c) Communities, Drugs and Crime

Three key themes had been highlighted in presentations and discussions:

1. The multi-faceted nature of the problems: families, areas, peers and genes (from Professor Rutter's presentation);
2. The spatial dimension and impact of concentrations – the problems of people are distilled and strengthened if you put them all together.
3. The issue of gradient – the City of Manchester is much closer to England than Hulme is to Manchester. This is something that EU structural funds fail to capture.

We need to focus on time and movements within life cycles. How can we design policies and timings of intervention to maximise their impact?

- Dr Power had given the “estateist” view. DETR is also estateist, making a great deal of use of it in Single Regeneration Budget and City Challenge. These programmes are not just about physical renewal, but also to design out crime and promote energy conservation – but these improvements have little impact on peoples’ disadvantage – you also have to tackle problems in the local economy. Nor is simply bringing jobs to the area enough by itself.
- It is harmful for so much housing to be owned by local authorities. However, there has been limited transfer activity as tenant ballots have slowed the process down.
- Society aspires to social improvement – in health, housing, education and environment. But crime is a conspicuous failure – crime has worsened. Cars had become a source of rising prosperity for criminals. Perpetrators and victims of crime are living cheek by jowel. This makes victim protection a priority.

These issues relate to DETR policies on cities – we are trying to prevent the ‘volcano’ effect of bigger and bigger cones with a bigger crater in the middle. We need to aim for people with choices wanting to live in cities and in their particular area all their lives.

Policy follow-up is essential – we need to get people into jobs – we have to follow up the housing questions, including the question have we allowed housing to decline then put in emergency programmes to rescue it instead of investing in it. We need to start treating council housing as an asset.

We also need to examine:

- what we can do to buttress community leaders
- the role of local authorities. We are trying to help them improve, but they need to let community leaders have their say as well.

Discussion

- The research evidence that had been presented was impressive, particularly the schematic understanding of the transitions of individuals, communities and estates. It was important to examine how well this research engages with policy makers. Policy makers and academics needed to be on the on the same level. Researchers needed to conceptualise the ‘churning’ and ‘rubber band’ approaches; there was a need for ‘big thought’ on social stratification. In comparative research, and there was a need for further examination into the reasons for differences on rates of teenage pregnancies.
- How do we know what works and what doesn’t work? How do we re-tool to learn from and analyse policy? An important area of methodological thought is how we can evaluate local policies and initiatives.
- The reason why localisation and linkage to the wider economy determines why an estate becomes viable is partly due to resources. But also if people on the ground are not

involved in the rescue programme then it is likely to fail. If an area is bad, people who have choice will leave, and vulnerable people will come in. We are asking vulnerable people to re-double their efforts to make the areas succeed. Does the pig make the sty? Is it the building type that creates poor conditions or is it the people? The USA view is that it is the people so support is cut. In Europe the view is that the building type has caused the problems, so we have put in support on a localised model. Residents face huge barriers to change and they are best placed to break them down. Supporting parents makes a big difference in their performance as parents. There is a lot more promise in people-focused schemes than those without the people element. The National Tenants Resource Centre has run training programmes for 5000 tenants. Most programmes are targeted on young people.

- When looking at solutions to drug misuse on estates it is very tempting to resort to eviction. People in areas who do not use drugs have rights too – they need systems of defence. The Phoenix Trust is engaged in intensive housing management solutions, working closely with tenant drug users - sometimes this approach works but not always.
- We have a unique opportunity now that we have a Government that believes it can do things to achieve a positive change. Most people are working hard to succeed. Government should recognise and support this.
- We are now discussing how the government can intervene and give sustained support to tackle some of the problems we have been discussing. One approach is one-to-one support – we need to find a way to make this work – people on the receiving end of seemingly workable policies react with fear because they do not understand the assumptions behind them. We need to look at which things work well and in which context.
- We need more research on links between policy, attitudes and behaviour. A lot relates to choice, being in work or on benefits and about parenthood. There are problems with a ‘do-it-yourself’ welfare state if people get it wrong.
- Looking at ‘problems’ is often not very helpful. Family literacy programmes show that motivation is often the solution to getting people involved. If you pull certain triggers people will do all kinds of things. In France and Scandinavia, social exclusion would be seen as a breakdown in the contract between state and individual.. People have to take responsibility for their lives. Social exclusion is more than disadvantage – it is also about lack of engagement.
- Research has explored reactions to youth justice and social inclusion/exclusion. This highlights the crucial importance of local institutional structures – the ‘conduit’ for resources downwards and for democratic voice upwards. This has got lost in the quasi-market delivery of resources.

9. Social Exclusion, Research Inputs and Research Needs

Moira Wallace

Social Exclusion Unit, Cabinet Office

Government effort on social exclusion runs across government and does not depend solely on the SEU. Policies to tackle social exclusion include: Welfare to Work, tax and benefits reform, literacy and numeracy programmes and an integrated transport policy. The government recognises the need to do more than pump departmental policies through departmental chimneys.

We need to tackle the whole problem – this requires a multi-departmental approach. We need to look at prevention - we need to shift more money to prevention from mopping up problems.

The SEU will focus on areas where it can add value; it will not try to tell departments how to do what they already do better. We will focus on areas of interdepartmental problems. There are difficulties where costs and benefits fall on different departments.

The SEU is attempting to turn this into a manageable work programme. We have to maintain momentum to maintain support for the Unit – the Prime Minister has asked the Unit to tackle some difficult questions quite quickly. The three areas of our focus in the first six months will be:

1. School exclusions and truanting
2. Street homelessness
3. Worst estates – an integrated approach looking at the estate, the school, the jobs, crime and drugs.

We have to get government departments working together. The theme underpinning SEU's work is how to integrate the work of departments with local agencies. We also need to look at the things government does that do not help. We need to define 'social exclusion' and find out how much there actually is.

For our longer-term agenda, we will be looking at young people and how we can stop them falling off the conveyor belt. We will look at ethnic minority aspects of social exclusion, for example, ethnic variations in school exclusions. We will look at access to services – both public and private – and the levers of access, which are in the Government's hands. As part of the long-term agenda we need to look at transmission mechanisms and risk. We have to be careful that policies are designed well. For example, school league tables were meant to improve schools but they have led to greater exclusions.

How can we engage with research? We need to know what issues ought to be on the agenda. What are the problems we can only just see the beginnings of? This type of forum is useful, as we cannot read everything. It is also useful to hear academics disagreeing with each other!

Discussion

- The issues we have been discussing are high on the political agenda. The SEU is one of the key institutional moves to put this agenda into action. The Government is pragmatic and brings with it little ideological baggage, and is therefore more open to academics' ideas than ever before. The Downing Street Policy Unit is keen on holding events like this one with a small group of people and a smaller focus. This is a period of accelerating learning for the Government, but this may not last, so now is the time to have influence over the direction of Government thinking.
- The ESRC's Children 5-16 programme will look at a variety of related issues. This research might not report for several years. Policy is about 'snakes and ladders' – everything that policy does contains a snake and a ladder. There are choices in talking about children and social exclusion. We can talk about children as the outcomes of social policy. Or we can talk about them as participants in social processes. This distinction could be important in how we translate policy into action at the local level. We can either focus on children as a problem or as a resource. We need to know how we can harness this resource.

Annex A: Conference Participants

Academic Participants:

Prof John Bynner	Director	Social Statistics Research Unit (City)
Prof John Hills	Director	ESRC Research Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion (LSE)
Prof Tim Hope	Director	ESRC Crime and Social Order Research Programme (Keele)
Prof Stephen Jenkins	Professor of Economics	ESRC Research Centre on Micro-social change (Essex)
Dr Kathleen Kiernan	Co-Director	ESRC Research Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion (LSE)
Prof Hilary Land	Director	Centre for Family Policy & Child Welfare (Bristol)
Anthony Lee	Researcher (Conference Rapporteur)	ESRC Research Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion (LSE)
Prof Ruth Lister	Professor of Social Policy	Loughborough University
Prof Stephen Machin	Professor of Economics	Centre for Economic Performance (LSE and UCL)
Prof Duncan Maclennan	Director	ESRC Cities Programme (Glasgow)
Prof Susan McRae	Director	ESRC Population & Household Change Research Programme (Oxford Brookes)
Prof Jane Millar	Professor of Social and Political Sciences	University of Bath
Prof Geoffrey Pearson	Wates Professor of Social Work	Department of Community Studies (Goldsmiths)
Dr Anne Power	Deputy Director	ESRC Research Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion (LSE)
Dr Alan Prout	Director	ESRC Children 5-16 Research Programme (Hull)
Prof Sir Michael Rutter	Honorary Director	Medical Research Council
Prof Robert Walker	Director, Social Security Unit	Centre for Research in Social Policy (Loughborough)

Official Participants:

Don Brereton	Policy Director	Department of Social Security
Peter Brook	Home & Legal Team Leader	HM Treasury
Robert Culpin	Spending Directorate Director	HM Treasury
John Geive	BPF Directorate Deputy Director	HM Treasury
Norman Glass	Spending Directorate Deputy Director	HM Treasury
Paul Gregg	Special Advisor	HM Treasury
Richard Harrison	Divisional Manager	Department for Education and Employment
Andrew Hudson	Health Team Leader	HM Treasury
Daniel Hulls	Environment, Transport & Regions Team	HM Treasury
Nick Macpherson	CORE Economist	HM Treasury
Geoff Mulgan	Special Advisor	Downing Street Policy Unit
Gill Noble	Spending Directorate Deputy Director	HM Treasury
Mike Parsonage	CORE Economist	HM Treasury
Andrew Turnbull	Permanent Secretary	Department for the Environment, Transport & the Regions
Moira Wallace	Head of Social Exclusion Unit	Cabinet Office

ESRC Participants

Prof Ronald Amann	Chief Executive
Jane Dale	Senior Policy Officer
Margaret Edmonds	Programme Director
Peter Linthwaite	Director of Policy
Christine McCulloch	Head of Research

Annex B: References and further reading

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