



**Policy Seminar: Work-Life Balance
Tuesday 7 June 2011, University College London**

Presentation 1 . Lone parents and employment: an exploration of findings from the Families and Children Study (FACS) 2006-2008. Anne Connolly, Researcher, NatCen.

The Lone Parents Obligations is the most recent policy initiative aimed at increasing the employment rate of lone parents. It is a mandatory programme which moves lone parents onto job seekers allowance when their youngest child is in primary school. Understanding the ways in which lone parents make decisions about moving into work, and how they perceive constraints and barriers to employment, is important to help ensure a successful transition into sustained employment. Findings from a project that used structural equation modelling to analyse lone mothers' answers to the Choices and Constraints question set in three waves of FACS will be presented. Although the analysis observed lone mothers' transitions into work in a 'voluntary' policy support environment, the findings relating to attitudes, perceptions and intentions of those lone mothers who did not move into work have implications for the service providers under the Lone Parents Obligations programme.

Anne Conolly is a Social Researcher at NatCen. For a number of years Anne worked on the Families and Children Study (FACS), both implementing the survey fieldwork and analysing the data. Her research interests include the effects of maternal employment on the social and emotional well-being of children.

Presentation 2. To be or not to be an employed mother- what is the answer to this frequently asked question? Jitka Pikhartova, PhD Student, ICLS

The aim of this study is to assess the influence of maternal employment in three childhood periods (preschool, primary school, secondary school) on the health of adolescents aged 16-21 in British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). Health is measured using self-rated health (SRH) and the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). Data on SRH/GHQ-12, childhood maternal employment, and covariates such as maternal education, marital status or household income from 18 waves of the BHPS are used. Nearly a fifth of adolescents reported poor health. Over half (55%) of mothers were in paid work when their children were preschool age. This rose to over three-quarters during the school-age years (76% when children were 5-11, and 79% at 12-16 years).

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Children of non-employed mothers were 11%-48% more likely to report poor health compared with employed mothers; however, these differences were mostly explained after adjusting for co-variables. Relationships between adolescent GHQ and maternal employment were similarly explained by social position. Associations between maternal employment in childhood and health in adolescence exist mainly because of the generally higher social position and more stable family structure of households with working mothers.

Jitka is a PhD student and her research is investigating maternal employment and adolescent health and well-being.

Presentation 3. Combining work & family: Health effects in women and their children. Dr Anne McMunn, ICLS Research Leader, Work-Life Balance.

Previous research has fairly consistently shown that women who combine paid work with parenthood tend to be healthier than those who enact fewer roles when looking at a snapshot in time, but there has been little evidence about the direction of this relationship. Does this body of work provide evidence that combining work with having a family is good for women's health, or that healthy women are more likely to work and have children?

Evidence from a study, which tracks the long term health of British men and women born in 1946 throughout their lives, suggests that holding down a job, being a mum and maintaining a steady marriage helps keep women healthy over the long term. In addition, evidence from children born at the start of the millennium suggests that there is no detrimental effects of maternal employment in the early years on subsequent child wellbeing.

Dr. McMunn currently leads an ICLS research project investigating the influence of parental divisions in paid employment and childcare, as well as stability and change in family structure, on the emotional wellbeing of children in the UK Millennium Cohort Study (MCS). In addition, Dr. McMunn continues her work on the social determinants of healthy ageing in the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) and is the Graduate Tutor for the UCL Division of Population Health.

Presentation 4. Labour market position, family circumstances and health in later life. Bola Akinwale, PhD Student, Imperial College

Individuals take on a variety of roles in their work and family lives. In relation to work, individuals may be employees, self-employed, unemployed, home-makers, retired, or out of work for other reasons. In the family sphere, people may simultaneously take on the role of child, parent, partner and carer.

How do labour market and family experiences over people's adult lives impact on their health around retirement age?

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Using data from the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study (ONS-LS) of England and Wales, this research considers the extent to which certain labour market and family histories are relatively beneficial or detrimental for longevity and general health in later life. It suggests that domestic and labour market experiences that provide opportunities for socially productive activity are advantageous for health.

Bola Akinwale is a PhD student in the Department for Primary Care and Public Health, Imperial College London and an attached member of the ICLS. Part of her research was conducted during a project funded by the New Dynamics of Ageing research programme.

Presentation 5. Transitions in work and family and quality of life at older ages.
Dr Elizabeth Webb, ICLS Social Epidemiologist.

How do transitions in family and paid and unpaid work influence quality of life at older ages? And how do gender and changes in health, income and wealth interact with these transitions to affect quality of life? Transitions to be considered include those in and out of the labour market, caring, volunteering and cohabitation. These questions will be answered using analyses of data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, a cohort of 12 000 older people living in England.

Dr Elizabeth Webb is a social epidemiologist working with ICLS. Elizabeth's work focuses on the social determinants of health and well-being in older age and she has a particular interest in the longitudinal impact of work and family.

Glossary

Cohort studies sample a cohort (defined as a group of subjects experiencing some event - typically birth - in a selected time period) and study them at intervals through time. A Household panel survey is an important sub-type of cohort study. This type of study draw representative households, following all individuals through time on a usually annual basis.

A longitudinal study is a research study involving a repeated observations of the same cohort over long periods of time — often many decades, unlike cross-sectional studies that are conducted for a set period.

The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) follows the lives of a sample of about 19,000 babies born in the UK in the year 2000/2001. It is the fourth longitudinal birth cohort study conducted in the UK and is aimed at creating a multi-purpose dataset which describes the diversity of backgrounds into which children are born in the beginning of the 21st century. The MCS is funded mainly by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and various government departments and managed by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS)

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The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS): A sample of British households drawn and first interviewed in 1991. The members of these original households have since been followed and annually interviewed. The resulting data base is very popular among social scientists for quantitative analyses of social and economic change. The BHPS is managed by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) of the University of Essex.

The Families and Children Study (FACS) is a longitudinal study collecting information about families with dependent children in Great Britain. It was originally known as the Survey of Low Income Families (SOLIF) which was set up in 1999 as a new survey for Britain's lone parent families and low-income couples with dependent children. From the third wave in 2001 onwards, the survey was renamed FACS and was extended to high-income families in order to represent a complete sample of British families. FACS is managed by NatCen and funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and other government departments.

MRC National Survey of Health and Development (NSHD), aka 1946 birth cohort, is the oldest of the UK national birth cohort studies and is based on a nationally representative sample of 5362 births out of all the single, legitimate births that took place in 1 week in March 1946 in England, Scotland and Wales. NSHD is managed by the MRC Unit for Lifelong Health and Ageing (LHA)

The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) is a longitudinal study that collects multidisciplinary data from a representative sample of the English population aged 50 and older. The survey data are designed to be used for the investigation of a broad set of topics relevant to understanding the ageing process. ELSA is jointly run by teams at University College London (UCL), the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), National Centre for Social Research and the University of Manchester. ELSA is funded by the US National Institute on Aging and a consortium of UK government departments.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Longitudinal Study (LS) contains linked census and vital event data for 1 per cent of the population of England and Wales (approx. 500,000). Information from the 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 Censuses has been linked across censuses as well as information on events such as births, deaths and cancer registrations.