

CMISTNews

Cathie Marsh Institute for Social Research (CMIST)

An advanced quantitative methods research centre in the School of Social Sciences



Welcome to the March 2015 edition of the Cathie Marsh Institute for Social Research (CMIST) newsletter.

This newsletter aims at highlighting the diversity of research at our centre, showcasing research outcomes from PhD students, young researchers and more experienced members of staff, as well our involvement in larger projects where members of CMIST are taking a leading role, such as the British Election Studies and Q-step. We hope you enjoy reading about what we do, and want to remind you of our upcoming summer school in July.

6-10 July 2015 Summer School

- Introduction to Social Network Analysis (using UCINET and Netdraw)
- Advanced Methods for Social Network Analysis
- Structural Equation Modelling (using Mplus)
- Integrated Mixed Methods Research

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Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in the UK – A Scoping Study

Kingsley Purdam



Elisabeth Garratt



Aneez Esmail



Food insecurity is when people do not have the capacity or resources to ensure a sufficient supply of nutritionally appropriate food. Despite the legal obligations of the government under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, an estimated three million individuals are thought to be at risk of malnutrition in the UK. Whilst food insecurity and malnutrition are very different issues, it is important to understand how they can be related in people's lives.

The etiology of malnutrition is complex but general health, affordability, and social isolation are thought to be factors. Malnutrition can lead to poorer health outcomes, delays in recovery from illness and is associated with slower development amongst children. It is estimated that £13 billion is spent on disease-related malnutrition each year.

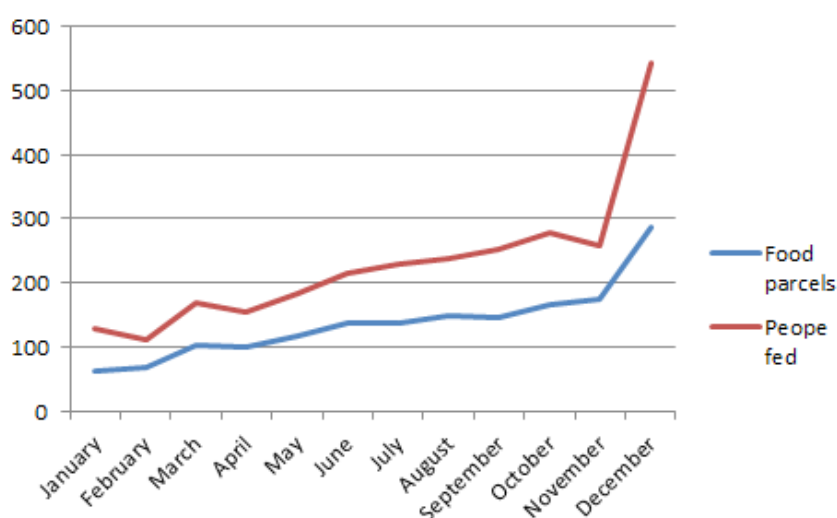
There has been a rapid growth in foodbanks in the UK in recent years. The reasons for this growth are disputed but include claims about increased supply and the impact of the recession and welfare reforms. In the media and political debates foodbank users have been variously described as being: 'opportunists', 'not able to cook or budget', 'living like animals', and 'spending all their money on tattoos'.

In this scoping study we explored the use of food aid and food budgeting by analysing government survey data and conducted case studies of foodbanks. Our initial findings suggest that substantial numbers of people are constrained in their food choices and are skipping meals, often to prioritise their families. In the 2012 Health Survey of England, 2 per cent of adults had a Body Mass Index (BMI) of less than 18.5 (kg/m²) and would therefore be classified as at risk of suffering from malnutrition. In the 2010 English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, 7 percent of those aged 50 and over reported that: "Too little money stops them buying their first choice of food items". Evidence from the 2012 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey suggests that more than a quarter of people had cut down on their food so that their dependents "have enough to eat".

Foodbank users and those at risk of food insecurity were found to have an awareness of their financial choices and had been reluctant to seek food aid. As one foodbank user stated: "It throws your pride out of the window... I am doing it for my kids, I am not going to make my kids suffer just because of my pride" (Female, aged 34). A father of two children, commented: "I was nervous coming here, I thought I had done something wrong...having to ask for food your ego takes a battering" (Male, aged 40). At the same time, some foodbank users were balancing their budgets and using the food parcels as a top up. We found that some older people who were in need were unable to visit the foodbank and so volunteers delivered food parcels to their home.



Figure 1: Case Study Foodbank 1 Users 2012-2013



The political and media language of blame used to describe people using food banks seems a long way from the day-to-day reality of food insecurity in the UK. The recent All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger and Food Poverty concluded that without effective intervention including in relation to the responsibilities of the state and also citizens themselves, hunger in the UK is here to stay. It can clearly be questioned why the levels of malnutrition and food insecurity are so high and whether a reliance on local food aid is economically efficient, given its impact on people's well being and the longer term costs to the public purse.

The food insecurity, nutritional deficiency and older people in the UK scoping study is being conducted by the Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA) with support from Manchester City Council, Food@Manchester and the HEIF Environmental Sustainability Knowledge Hub Project. Final research findings will be published in Spring 2015. Follow the project: twitter.com/InsecureFood

Intra-generational social mobility and educational qualifications

Ian Plewis



For many, social mobility refers to the difference between a child's social class in adulthood and the social class of their parents. How likely is it that the son or daughter of a plumber will become a lawyer, and vice-versa? Social mobility in this view is an inter-generational phenomenon.

But the reality of many children's lives is that their parents move between more and less advantaged social and economic positions while they are growing up: their parents acquire more qualifications and so become accountants rather than just bookkeepers, for example. Or the family breaks up so that the child is brought up by a single mother who works as a bank clerk rather than in a two parent family where the father is a bank manager. This intra-generational social mobility is the topic Mel Bartley and Ian Plewis tackled in a new piece of research. Is the level of education attained by sons and daughters associated with a change in parental social class? If, as we suspected from earlier work we had done on health, children whose parents were upwardly mobile had, on average, better educational qualifications than peers in their less advantaged class of origin but worse qualifications than those in their more advantaged destination class (and conversely for those who were downwardly mobile) then this would have three implications.

First, it would mean that the intra-generational mobility acts to constrain social class differences in educational qualifications. Second, it would support the theoretical perspective that educational inequalities arise more from the unequal distribution of economic resources across the social classes than they do from social class differences in cultural capital and aspirations. Finally, it would imply that we need to be careful when comparing associations between parental social class and children's educational qualifications across studies because this association will vary according to the age of the child at the time their parents' social class is measured.

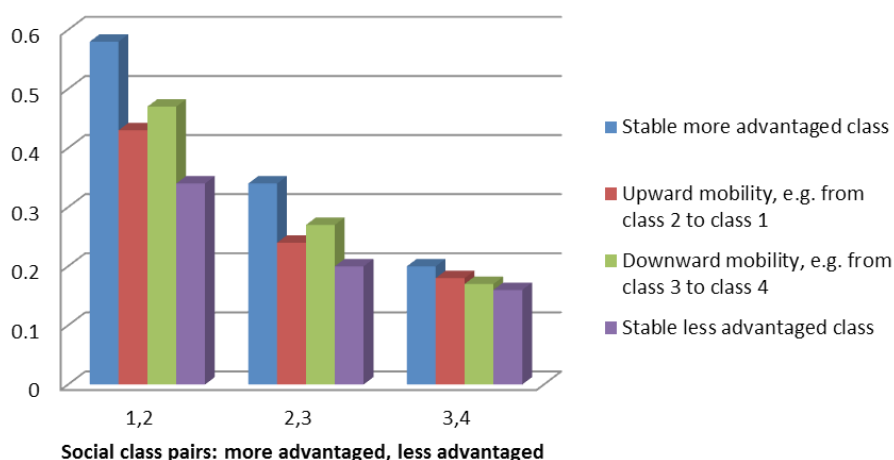
We tested our hypotheses using data from the Census-based Longitudinal Study (ONS LS) and the 1970 birth cohort study (BCS70). The figure gives a flavour of our results from ONS LS data. It shows that intra-generational parental social mobility between 1981 and 1991 leads to the predicted differences between the upwardly and downwardly mobile on the one hand, and those whose social class is stable on the other, in the probability of a child having a degree by 2001.

Intra-generational social mobility is extensive; it was experienced by about one third of the sample in the figure. It is a topic worthy of further investigation, not just in terms of social class but also the effects of changes in family income.

<http://bit.ly/1GRGVne>



Figure 1: Model-based probabilities of obtaining a degree



Hard times and capabilities: The effects of economic crisis on well-being in the UK

Annie Austin

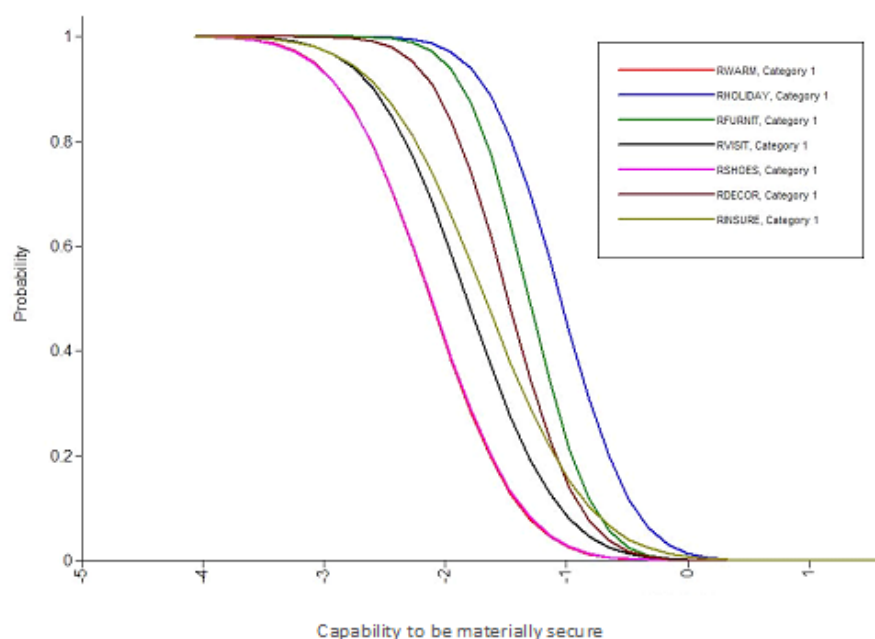


The global economic crisis of the late 2000s was characterised by the worst macro-economic conditions since the Great Depression and had real, measurable effects on individuals and households in the UK (ONS 2011). Most existing literature on the effects of these recent hard times on well-being and the quality of lives, however, focuses on either economic effects (e.g. Bell and Blanchflower 2011) or subjective well-being (e.g. Deaton 2012). I argue that economic indicators and measures of subjective well-being provide important yet only partial perspectives on the effects of economic crisis on well-being and the quality of lives. Following Sen and Nussbaum, I use the capabilities approach as a framework for assessing the impacts of hard times on well-being in the UK.

The capabilities approach is an alternative, 'eudaimonic' approach to well-being, based on the proposition that a person's capabilities – her real opportunities to be and do that which she has reason to value – define the extent to which she can reasonably be said to be leading a flourishing human life (Sen 1993, Nussbaum 2000). Proponents of the capabilities approach therefore argue that the aim of public policy ought to be the expansion of capabilities – the space within which people can develop a conception of a good life, and have the opportunity and ability to live in accordance with that conception (Nussbaum 1997). The objective of this project is to examine whether, and how, hard times such as the recent 'great recession' affect the real, substantive opportunities open to people, and their ability to fare well. The thesis combines political theory with empirical quantitative analysis: I use data from the European Social Survey and the British Household Panel Survey; methods include Exploratory Structural Equation Modelling and Latent Growth Curve Modelling. Initial findings indicate that the economic crisis did adversely affect people's capability to flourish, with effects concentrated among economically vulnerable groups and young people.



Figure 1: Item response Theory (IRT) model of capabilities BHPS (2008) n=7,550



Graph shows item Characteristics Curves of seven questions used to measure latent capability, relating to ability to e.g. keep home adequately warm.

The Social Context of Suicide in England and Wales

Pauline Turnbull



Suicide is a devastating event, affecting many people both directly and indirectly. The most recent UK figures reported 5,981 suicides among people aged 15 and over. The UK suicide rate declined over a ten year period, but increased significantly the last two years.

For many years, sociologists have argued that suicide rates are a product of place. Some research has shown associations between suicide and deprivation and/or social fragmentation, which is a measure of population turnover and household structure. However, certain socio-demographic and other individual-level factors are also known to be associated with suicide. The majority of UK research into the social context of suicide has failed to take individual-level factors into account.

This study linked general population and patient suicide data for England and Wales with area-level data from the 2001 UK Census. Multilevel modelling ensured that both area- and individual-level factors were accounted for simultaneously. As health reforms focus on local areas being tasked with local decision-making, there is a need to understand what is happening in health provider localities. Therefore, data were analysed by health provider area.

The study shows that individual-level factors, such as age, gender, and contact with mental health services, account for most of the variation between areas. Where there were more suicides than expected, this is mostly explained by individual characteristics rather than area features. Nevertheless, suicide incidence was associated

with social fragmentation even after individual-level characteristics were controlled for. This is an important finding which suggests that the current government policies engaging communities to be more socially cohesive could potentially aid in reducing the incidence of suicide at health care provider level.

Acknowledgment: The author thanks the Office for National Statistics and The National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness for granting access to their data.

Research

Museums are good for the health!

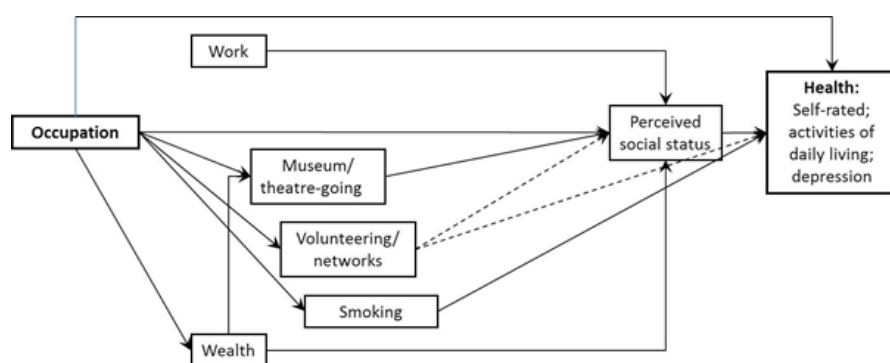
Pauline McGovern

Occupational class is known to be a predictor of health status in working people. It is, however, less theoretically robust in defining life chances once people reach state pension age and a majority cease to be in paid employment. In addition to the direct effects of material circumstances and the specific occupational characteristics that mark social position during working life, there may be indirect effects from occupational class on the health of older people that relate to their lifestyles.

We use the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (Waves 1 to 5) in a longitudinal path analysis of the relationship between occupation and health in older people (a sample of 6241 respondents of 50-plus years). This analysis is influenced by the sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. He argued that there is a link between occupational class, lifestyle and the opportunities and constraints that frame an individual's practice. We argue that health status is part of the framework that underlies practice.

We found that, for older people, occupational class is still an important predictor of health status (see fig. 1). However, for this age group, there is a strong mediating effect on health from cultural participation (visiting museums, art galleries, the theatre and opera). For example, one-fifth of the effect of occupation on respondents' self-rated health is indirect, mediated through visiting the theatre or going to the opera. Most of the effect of cultural participation is indirect, via respondents' own perceptions of their social

Figure 1: The relationship between occupation and health in older people (black lines are strong links, dotted are weak, no line means no link)



status. It is possible that activities such as theatre or museum-going make people feel positive about themselves and that this affects their health. Having a large social network and being a volunteer have a moderate effect in reducing symptoms of depression.

In conclusion, if the health status of older people is partly the result of structural factors that operate in cultural and civic domains then the provision of public resources to encourage cultural and social participation more widely will have positive health effects. There are ten million

people in the UK over 65 years old (one in six people). In 2007/08, the average care bill for NHS services to retired households was over £5,000 per household per year (www.parliament.uk). In this context, if the government wants to reduce costs to the NHS from ill-health in the elderly, it might be good policy (even in a recession), to reconsider the evidence for cutting subsidies to museums, theatre groups and sports activities.

McGovern P., Nazroo J. (2015, forthcoming) Patterns and causes of health inequalities in later life: a Bourdieusian analysis *Sociology of Health & Illness* DOI 10.1111/1467-9566.12187

Environmental concern and political affiliation in Great Britain from 1991 to 2008

Gabriella Melis



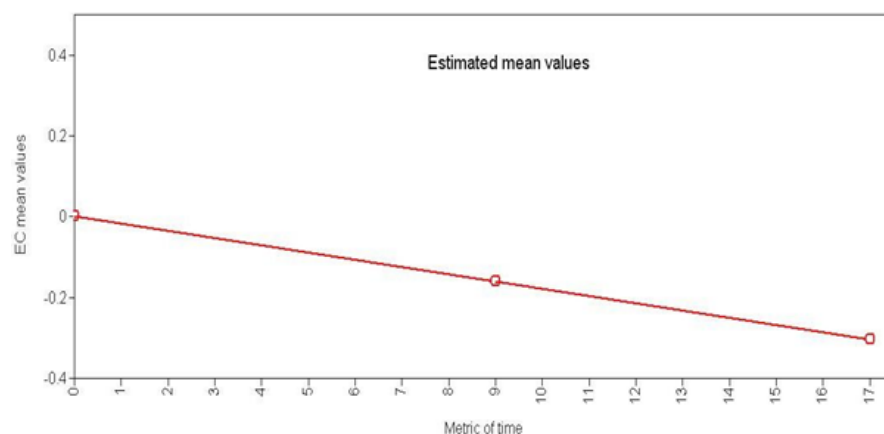
Does environmental concern vary over time? What is the role of political affiliation on this issue? Gabriella Melis answers these questions, using the National Child Development Study (NCDS).

Environmental concern (EC) slightly drops from 1991 to 2008-2009 for the cohort of people who were born around the 1958 in Great Britain (see Figure 1), and the cohort members' attitudes on this topic also become more polarised over time. The latest available data (2008-2009) were collected at the onset of the current financial crisis, and we found that the greatest downfall over time for the EC measures is for the question that counterposes environmental and economic concerns (see Figure 2). The suitability of the NCDS for this analysis stems from the possibilities offered by this dataset regarding the inspection of individual-level change on EC, that is, the same questions were asked to the same individuals over time, as opposed to the large majority of studies on this issue which, instead, observe aggregate-level change (same questions for different individuals at each time point). At the time when the work was carried out, the NCDS was the only study allowing for this type of analysis.

The relationship between EC and political affiliation is suspected to be different for different political ideologies. For example, right-wing political views tend to deny the natural-world limits to the growth of production and consumption. Our study confirms this hypothesis as, net of the influence of other theoretically relevant characteristics (gender, presence of children, education and employment status), voting for the Conservative Party in the General Election preceding every sweep of data is associated with lower levels of EC than any other voting choice (including non-voting). Finally, for the 1958 cohort, the higher the interest in politics, the higher are the initial levels of EC, and the slower is the rate of decline of EC over the three data points.

For more information see: Melis, G., Elliot, M., & Shryane, N. (2014) Environmental concern over time: evidence from the longitudinal analysis of a British cohort study from 1991 to 2008. *Social Science Quarterly*, 95 (4), pp. 905-919.

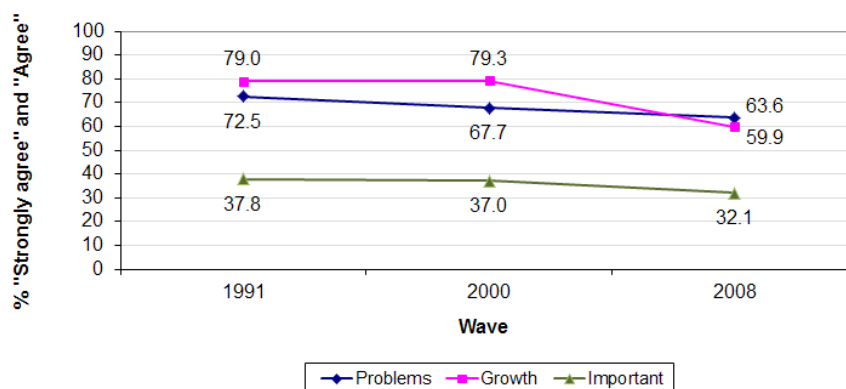
Figure 1: Estimated-mean trajectory of environmental concern (EC) from 1991 to 2008 in the UK for those born around year 1958 in Great Britain (12994 cases)



Notes: The estimates are computed via unconditional Latent growth curve models (LGCM). The metric of time was defined as number of years from sweep in year 1991 ($t_0 = 0$), to the second sweep in year 2000 ($t_1 = 9$), up to the third sweep in year 2008 ($t_2 = 17$).

Source: Authors' own calculations based on data from the National Child Development Study 1958.

Figure 2: Percentage values of "Strongly agree" and "Agree" to each item of our measure of EC by sweep year



Notes: Item labels and respective item contents are "Problems with the environment are not as serious as people claim"; "We should tackle problems in the environment even if this means slower economic Growth"; "Preserving the environment is more Important than any other political issue today".

Source: Authors' own calculations based on data from the National Child Development Study 1958.

Generous labour market policies protect workers against job insecurity

Ewan Carr



Job insecurity is bad for your health. Past studies consistently show fears about job loss to result in anxiety, depression and reduced life satisfaction. Such problems intensify during economic recession. Not only is insecurity more prevalent, but the consequences of job loss are more severe. Finding new work is harder when jobs are scarce.

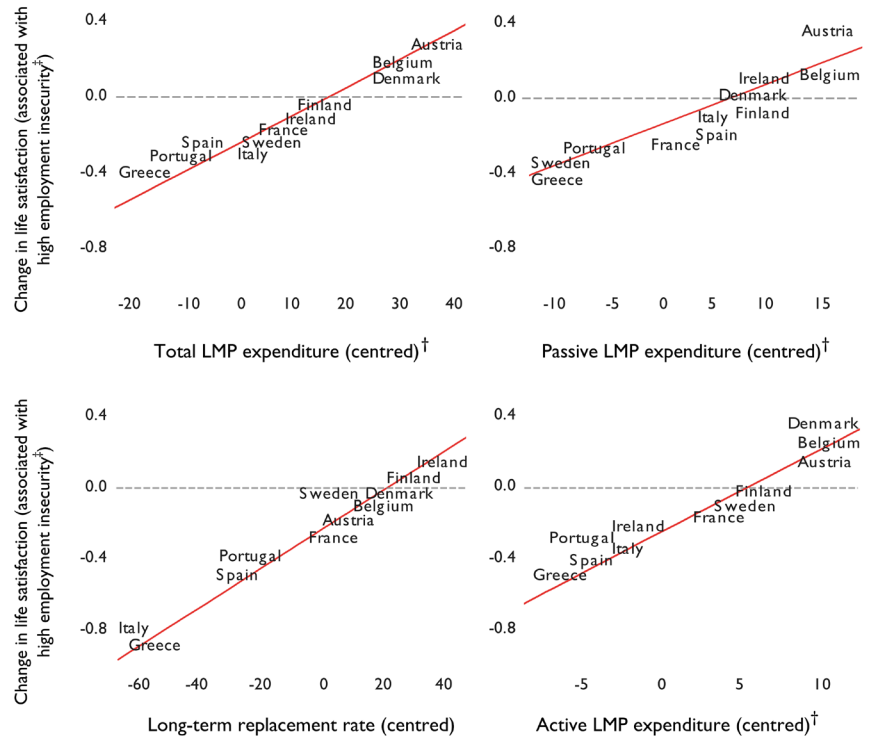
This study considered whether welfare policies can lessen the harmful consequences of anticipated job loss. Job insecurity provokes anxieties about (a) the difficulties of finding a new job and (b) alternative income sources during unemployment. These components can be related to active and passive labour market policies, respectively. Active policies (e.g. training or job creation programmes) are expected to make it easier to find another job. Passive policies (e.g. unemployment benefits) guarantee a minimum income during unemployment. Workers are expected to worry less about the prospect of job loss if they are confident that their income (and subsequently, standard of living) will be adequately protected.

The analysis used data for 22 countries from the 2010 European Social Survey (ESS) in a multilevel structural equation model. This tested whether the relationship between life satisfaction and job insecurity was influenced by the generosity of active and passive policies. Consistent with past research, insecure workers were reported lower levels of life satisfaction (having accounted for individual characteristics such as age, income or health). Moreover, the reduction in satisfaction attributable to job insecurity was largest in countries where policy support was least generous. For example, where a smaller proportion of GDP was spend on active interventions, or where unemployment benefits replaced a smaller proportion of in-work incomes (see Figure 2). The analysis further showed labour market policies to buffer insecurity more effectively among more vulnerable (e.g. temporary or older) workers.

In the same way that insecurity is harmful even for workers who never lose their job, labour market interventions benefit individuals who never actually receive support. Combined with the finding that labour market policies protect vulnerable workers most, an increase in generosity represents an efficient way of targeting resources.

For more information, see Carr, E. and Chung, H. (2014) 'Employment insecurity and life satisfaction: The moderating influence of labour market policies across Europe' *Journal of European Social Policy*, 24(4),383-399.

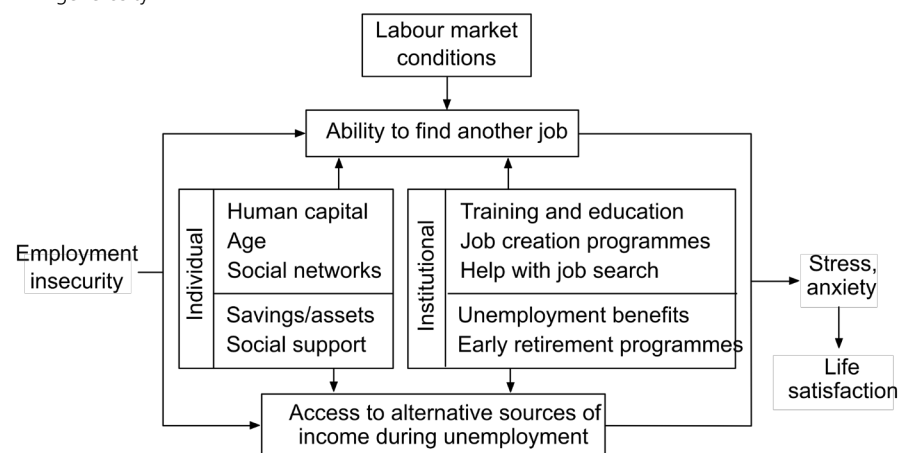
Figure 1: The analytical model



[†] Percent of GDP / unemployment rate

[‡] This represents the change in life satisfaction associated with 'high' employment insecurity, controlling for other variables in the model.

Figure 2: Change in life satisfaction associated with high job insecurity, at differing levels of LMP generosity



British Election Study to launch Data Playground

The British Election Study is to make a significant chunk of its data collected in 2014 available to anyone who wants to know what the nation thinks about politics, when it will launch a new project at an event in Westminster, attended by some of the nation's top names in politics.

The BES has been an invaluable resource to civil servants, scholars and journalists since its inception in 1964, but until now only experts with specialist knowledge and software have been able to work with the data. The new project - called the Data Playground - is set to change all that when it becomes available on December 9.

For the first time, the politically interested will be able to get their hands on the BES's data, for free, by visiting www.britishelectionstudy.com and will be able to create tables or charts from over 400 different variables at the click of a mouse.

The event, on 9th December, is hosted by BES and the Economic and Social Research Council. BES is managed by The Universities of Manchester, Oxford and Nottingham and funded by the ESRC.

Chaired by ITN newsreader Alastair Stewart, Andrew Cooper, Founder of Populus, and former Director of Political Strategy at 10 Downing St, Greg Cook, The Labour Party's Head of

Strategy and Tom Smithard, Head of Strategic Research at the Liberal Democrats, will be asking: "Is Britain's political system is fit for purpose?"

They will be joined by Ruth Fox, Director and Head of Research at the Hansard Society, Katie Ghose, Chief Executive of the Electoral Reform Society, and Neil Serougi, Vice Chair of Freedom from Torture.

The event will also showcase new research findings by some of the country's leading researchers in the field, using recently released British Election Study data from surveys of over 30,000 people. The BES will also show a new film about the challenges in the run up to the general Election and the preview is available on YouTube.

The Data Playground will allow users to investigate areas as diverse as how citizens engage with politicians during election campaigns - to what we feel about our political parties and their leaders. There are also sections on attitudes to policies, public spending, the European Union, immigration and other issues discussed widely in the media. The demographic details of the people who take part in the surveys are also available. The Data Playground can also give an overall picture of what people are thinking about

politics, not just across the United Kingdom, but any combination of English, Welsh and Scottish data as well.

Professor Jane Green, a co-Director of BES, said: "Because there are so many new questions facing the British electorate, there's never been a more important time to have an election study in the UK. The public are grappling with coalition politics, concerns over immigration, the economy and the rise of UKIP. It's a complex mix of issues, which BES data can help to unpick.

"The Data Playground, for the first time in BES's history, allows anyone to examine large parts of BES's topical and recent data without the need for specialist expertise or software. It is part of our mission to provide balanced and impartial information about electoral politics, away from the lens of the political parties. As academics, we think it is important to make our research accessible and relevant to the wider community and our belief is that this is a powerful way to do that."



The Manchester Q-Step Centre

Led by Jackie Carter and Mark Brown of CMIST/Social statistics, the **Manchester Q-step Centre** is a major initiative to promote the development and integration of quantitative skills within our undergraduate programmes. Involving Sociology, Politics, Social Anthropology, Philosophy, Criminology and Linguistics, the Centre is introducing a raft of exciting new curriculum developments and work placement opportunities, designed to encourage and support our students in developing the skills needed to evaluate evidence and analyse data - skills highly valued by employers in today's competitive graduate jobs market.

New quantitative specialists have been appointed to Sociology, Politics, Linguistics and Criminology to help develop and deliver an ambitious programme of change. 9 months in we are already making an impact.

Embedding quantitative methods into teaching Working with lecturers from across the disciplines we are introducing greater use of quantitative data into the substantive curriculum. Building on work undertaken through the ESRC-funded Curriculum Innovation project, and complemented by a suite of new modules from Social Statistics, we cover a diverse range of topics from 'Understanding Social Media' to 'Modelling

Social Inequality.' Building more quantitative training into our degree programmes is bearing fruit, as we see a growing number of final year students seeking to use secondary data analysis in their dissertations.

Specialist degree programmes We will shortly be advertising the launch of 5 new degree pathways allowing quantitative specialism within the schools inter-disciplinary degree programme BA (Social Sciences) These will enable students to combine training in their chosen discipline with more advanced training in quantitative methods. Students taking these pathways will have the opportunity to progress to our prestigious MSc in Social Research Methods and Statistics (supported by a Q-Step bursary)

Work Opportunities we have teamed up with a variety of local and national organisations to launch an exciting programme of Summer Placements for 2nd year students, supported by a generous stipend. Students will spend 6-10 weeks developing their quantitative skills in a supportive workplace setting, using real world data. The programme has generated huge interest from both employers and current and future students. We are currently recruiting to the 20 projects for this Summer, with plans to expand to up to 50 from 2015, including some 'gold star' placements with international organisations like the World Bank

The Manchester Q-Step Centre will support these initiatives with a range of extra-curricular activities and events to help showcase the increasing relevance of quantitative data and skills in an age of big data. These will include working with schools and colleges to promote the opportunities of a degree in quantitative social sciences, including 'discover days' to give students a taster of applied quantitative work in a university setting.

Further details:
www.manchester.ac.uk/q-step

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Q-Step is a £19.5 million programme designed to promote a step-change in quantitative social science training. It is funded by the Nuffield Foundation, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).



A step-change in quantitative social science skills

Funded by the Nuffield Foundation, ESRC and HEFCE

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