



Working for baby

If motherhood is so essential to continuing the human race, why is it such hard work? And can it be made any easier?

Sarah Womack, social affairs correspondent, *The Daily Telegraph*

“ONE TO TAKE THE EDGE OFF” is a phrase used by female friends of mine to describe the activity of pouring a glass of wine after a 13-hour day supervising children during the school holidays. It is a phrase that never ceases to raise a wry smile or a hollow laugh. I was reminded of it the other day when I came across a cartoon by *Chicago Daily News* cartoonist Luther Bradley from 1908.

Called ‘Sacred Motherhood’, it portrays a haggard and over-worked mother combining domestic and factory duties, with dismal results. Unions used the illustration to call for a shorter working day for women and to draw attention to poor working conditions in the clothing industry.

More and more mothers are combining their childcare duties with a full-time job.



Fast forward 100 years to 2008, the 100th anniversary of the first Mother’s Day. The cartoon now looks dated, but the idea of an exhausted mother combining full-time work and family is as relevant as ever. In recent years there has been a huge rise in the number of working mothers. Only one in five new mothers worked 20 years ago, but today around half of all mothers with a baby aged up to one go out to work.

Many women now have considerably better conditions than in the past, with paid maternity leave, pension rights and sick pay – my company even offers free 15 minute sessions with a masseur – but combining long hours with a family is undeniably arduous. ➤

LIFESTYLES WORKING FOR BABY

► As Karen Pasquali Jones, former editor of *Mother and Baby* magazine, put it: “The hardest thing is days like today, when you’ve planned your appointments, you’ve worked 18 years to be in the position you’re in, and then the baby is sick.”

“Baby just wants mummy – daddy won’t do.

I give him Calpol and hope he’ll go back to sleep. Then I feel guilty about that. Cleaning baby’s teeth, cleaning my teeth, changing the nappy – twice – running to the nursery, running to the tube – every minute of every day is timed. It tears you in half and you think: ‘Oh my God, something has to give.’”

So much for the ‘have-it-all woman’, the term attributed to Helen Gurley Brown, one-time editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, and personified by Nicola Horlick, the financial expert who explained one aspect of her superwoman philosophy thus: “I timed the conception of my children so that my maternity leave could include the Christmas holidays.”

Debunking the have-it-all myth

Increasing numbers of women are giving up on the have-it-all myth by postponing motherhood and having smaller families, or no family at all. Recent ESRC research paints a jaw-dropping picture: 40 per cent of graduate women are childless at the age of 35, an increase of 20 per cent in just over a decade. A third of female graduates will never have children. These findings come from a longitudinal study of more than 5,000 women born in 1970 and tracked through their lives by researchers at the Centre for Longitudinal Studies.

Many will have opted to concentrate on their careers and a high proportion will simply have left motherhood too late. If the trend continues, more than a third of the graduates now in their 20s are



What a woman really wants is a family, a job and a man who knows how to unload a washing machine.

likely never to have children. Professor Heather Joshi, Director of the Centre for Longitudinal Studies, said that the 1970 group “waited to establish their housing, their careers and sometimes to find the right man”.

But current research by Professor Joshi, within the Understanding Population Trends and Processes Programme, indicates that there is actually little financial advantage in delaying motherhood – and much biological disadvantage. Her analysis of the Millennium Cohort of 18,000 families found that there is actually not “much more of a pay off” for women in postponing having children until after the age of 30. Those who leave motherhood until their late 30s were not significantly better off. And after the age of 35 significant numbers run into fertility problems. The 40-somethings are the fastest-growing group of patients seeking In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) – up from fewer than 1,000 in 1991 to more than 6,000 in 2006.

No wonder then that the recipe for modern-day happiness, according to separate research, is a family, a job and a man who knows how to unload a washing machine. This research found that, contrary to popular belief, women in Britain do not want to be housewives or stay-at-home mothers, but they would like more flexibility at work and more help around the house.

“Our findings contradict claims that women would be happier if they went back to being traditional housewives,” said Professor Rosemary Crompton, of City University and a member of the Gender Equality Network. “The recipe for personal happiness, satisfaction with the family and lower stress at home seems to be a combination of liberal



attitudes to work outside the home and a fairer division of household chores. Men tend not to do washing and ironing and they don't clean."

Shirley Conran, author of *Superwoman*, expresses the same sentiment in different language. The new millennium woman, she says, needs to acquire 'domestic democracy': "There are two areas at home, responsibility for housework and responsibility for childcare. You say (to your partner) 'Why should I have three jobs when you do one?' Make a list of everything you do, which will probably get very long indeed. Then sit down and ask him what he wants to do. If neither of you wants to do the ironing then just toss for it, or nothing will get ironed. Once he puts down what he wants to do then just walk away and let him do it. Don't interfere, don't criticise."

How motherhood has changed

Research by Professor Rachel Thomson of the Identities and Social Action Programme is finding out how motherhood has changed, talking to grandmothers and great-grandmothers within the same families. Her research has yet to be concluded but she has some intriguing insights into modern day motherhood, including the fact that it is the middle-class mother who is struggling the most to come to terms with change, because the middle-class mother never used to work. Her study of 60 expectant first-time mothers of varying social class and background – the youngest mother is 15, the oldest 48 – will be published in 2008.

In the case of working class families, says Professor Thomson, the concept of the working mother is well established. The grandmother was often a working mother herself, so her daughter simply follows in her footsteps. The middle-class grandmother, however, often gave up work to raise

Modern motherhood presents a complicated picture, with millions of working mothers juggling and struggling.

and mothers who have children with less than an 18-month gap between births. Her findings were based on a study of three separate datasets of women born from 1911 onwards in Britain and the United States. The research suggests that the physiological and psychosocial stresses associated with caring for young children close in age may be an important factor for some mothers. Professor Grundy's study provides further evidence of the link between teenage motherhood and poorer health in later life and also reveals that teenage mothers have poorer mental health in their 50s than other mothers.

At the other end of the scale, the study reveals that women who have a child beyond the age of 40 experience better health in later life. The reason, the researchers suggest, is not necessarily that having children later makes women healthier, but rather that women who conceive late must already be in good health and feel fit enough to bring children up.

So modern motherhood presents a complicated picture. We have witnessed legislation on equal opportunities, equal pay and sex discrimination. We have seen the advance of the Pill, the legalisation of abortion, and huge advances in IVF and fertility treatment. But we also see millions of working mothers juggling and struggling, and a whole generation of children will be the guinea pigs of this new way of living. Globalisation, the digital revolution and the 24/7 economy may be second nature to our children – but were our children the price we paid for these advances? ■

<http://www.uptap.net>
<http://www.identities.org.uk>
<http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/cps/staff/egrundy.html>
<http://www.genet.ac.uk>
<http://www.cls.loe.ac.uk>

Grandmothers feel quite muted as to the extent to which they can offer advice and are ambivalent about whether they are seeing progress

her family and feels ambivalent about her daughter working and her grandchild going into childcare.

"These grandmothers feel quite muted as to the extent to which they can offer advice," says Professor Thomson, "and they are quite ambivalent about whether they are seeing 'progress'. We find grandmothers biting their tongues about full-time working mothers and what they think of them. But there are also real issues for the daughters, who attribute their social mobility to intensive parenting by educated full-time mothers." These mothers, now working long hours outside the home, "are worried they are damaging their child's life chances".

Research is also showing that there are interesting and important knock-on effects of remaining childless. Professor Emily Grundy from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine found that the childless run the risk of earlier death and poorer health in later life – so do mothers of five or more children, teenage mothers



Problem internet gambling

HOW COMMON IS IT AND WHO CAN HELP THE VICTIMS?

PROFESSOR
GILL VALENTINE,
Director,
Leeds Social
Science Institute,
University of Leeds



INTERNET GAMBLING IS a growing international cultural phenomenon. Around the world, there are over 2,300 dedicated gambling websites and the internet is one of the fastest growing forms of betting. Whereas gambling has traditionally been a male pursuit associated with public spaces such as race tracks, football grounds, casinos and arcades, online gambling is targeting a more diverse market and is opening up new spaces for gambling, taking it into the home and workplace.

Some commentators have suggested that online gambling is more psychologically enticing than traditional offline betting because it offers gamblers anonymity. Individuals can participate without the social embarrassment of being seen by others, gambling opportunities are omnipresent online, and electronic cash can seem less real than everyday money. This has raised the fear that the internet could exacerbate problem gambling and create new forms of participation and new forms of risk, for example by encouraging women, young people and the elderly to gamble.

If these fears are correct, problem gambling will enter new domains, including the family home. Some traditional gambling venues, such as the bookmakers, can feel uncomfortable, masculine, and even seedy. This can deter some people from betting, or at least limit their participation. But the home provides a more conducive environment in which to gamble.

Most UK households are now connected to the internet. Individuals can combine online participation with working, listening to music, watching television, and even

There are over 2,300 gambling websites, and the internet is one of the fastest growing forms of betting

childcare. For some players, online gambling is a form of home entertainment. It is easy to become so immersed in a game that people lose track of the amount of time, and more importantly the money, that they spend gambling.

The opportunity to gamble at home involves individuals in exploiting their technological skills, their control of household finances and their personal time and space at home.

Research has found evidence of online problem gamblers running up thousands of pounds of debt without their partners' knowledge, even taking out credit cards and loans in other household members' names without their consent, or 'stealing' from joint accounts to fund an addiction. At the same time, online gamblers often attribute their 'problem' to the pressures of their current family life or to their upbringings.

While problem drinking can manifest itself in public displays of drunkenness and disorderliness, problem internet gambling is a less visible, more private affair. It is often deeply embedded in everyday family life. Like passive

smoking, its effects are not only felt by the addict: they can have a profound impact on other family members. Research suggests that problem gambling can lead to partners, parents and children experiencing a loss of trust, relationship breakdown, guilt and self-blame, as well as the financial losses they have to share.

But families are also an important positive resource in pathways out of gambling. At a time when 'the family' often seems to be under attack by press and policymakers for dissolving too easily, for failing to control young people or to care for the elderly, it is important to recognise the emotional commitment and sacrifices many family members make for each other.

Problem gamblers are often reluctant to contact agencies offering formal assistance and are fearful of attending group therapy. Instead, many rely on their families to pay off their debts, provide preventative support such as controlling access to the home computer and family finances, and help them find alternative sources of 'therapy', such as informal online support from other problem gamblers. Some gamblers even claim that the process of coming out to their families about their problem and receiving support and encouragement from them has improved the quality of their relationships and led them to re-evaluate their family life in positive ways.

This so-called 'self-correcting behaviour' casts doubt on the findings of the British Gambling Prevalence survey, which suggests that rates of problem gambling in the population may be as low as half a per cent, and show no sign of increasing in line with the current growth of internet gambling.

The extent to which online gambling is contained and corrected within the family means that the scale of the problem may be going unrecognised in such research. Those who seek formal help or publicly acknowledge an online gambling problem may be only the tip of a very large iceberg.

Whatever its scale, awareness of problem online gambling is on the rise. The Government is focusing on managing it through industry regulation and the industry has already taken some responsibility for addressing problem internet gambling; so have public and voluntary agencies such as Citizens Advice and Relate, which deal with the consequences of gambling for individuals and their families. Specialist problem gambling organisations such as Gamblers Anonymous hold 'pressure relief' meetings where long-time members help newer ones to develop a plan for their debt repayment, budgeting and money management.

It might also be worth considering how informal family-based strategies might be scaled up for use within the therapeutic community. Ironically, the internet often provides a cost effective form of informal mutual support for gamblers and their families. ■

<http://www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/people/g.valentine/gambling>



DO FATS MAKE YOU FAT?

Well, they certainly help... but the answer seems not to be quite as clear cut as we might imagine

THE UNITED STATES may be the world leader, but Britain has one of the world's highest and fastest-rising rates of obesity. Excess weight is unfashionable and can lead to social ostracism and depression. But there are consequences too for physical health, such as respiratory function, heart disease and diabetes.

So what role has diet played in the rising prevalence of obesity? A study by Paola de Agostini of the Institute for Social and Economic Research has analysed the complete sequence of The National Food Survey undertaken in Britain between 1975 and 2000. This provides details of the food bought and consumed by more than 130,000 households. Comparing foods used with household composition makes it possible to work out calorie intake by men and women, and boys and girls, according to age.

In general, consumption increases as children grow up, plateaus over the adult years and declines with advancing old age. The key question is: do changes in food intake explain the rising trend in obesity, especially among children? The answer is not as obvious as might be expected.

AT A GLANCE

Children aren't eating more fat than they used to – at least not when they're at home – but there has been a considerable rise in fat as a proportion of their calorie intake.

The overall intake of calories at home for children aged 7-12 has actually reduced over the years, from an average of 1,600 calories per day in the late 1970s to only 1,100 calories per day in the late 1990s. But most of this reduction has come from cutting down on carbohydrates – sugar and starchy foods like bread and potatoes. Intake of proteins, such as lean meat and beans, has declined only slightly. But the consumption of fats – butter, oil and fatty meats – has held steady, so that it represents an increasing proportion of children's diets.

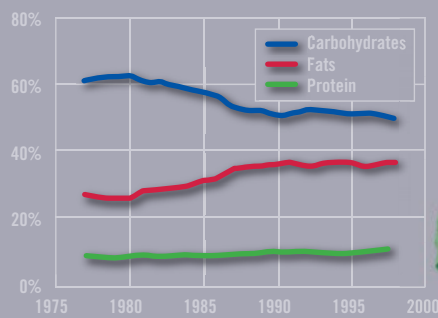
General medical guidelines recommend that no more than 35 per cent of calorie intake should consist of fats. Since the late 1980s, that has been the average percentage in children's diets. All the children who eat more fat than the average are above the guideline threshold.

As the chart on the left shows, this increase in the relative importance of fats in children's diets occurred mainly between about 1980 and 1988. There was no serious increase in their fat consumption in the 1990s.

These findings suggest that the total amount of food being eaten by children at home, and especially their consumption of carbohydrates, has decreased, and is unlikely to have been associated with the rise in obesity. But while fat consumption has been stable, it represents a rising proportion of children's diets – and this may be associated with increasing weight problems.

Other possible explanations for the trend in obesity, not directly addressed by this research, could be an increase in the amount of food being eaten outside the home, or a reduction in physical exercise needed to burn off those calories. ■

COMPOSITION OF 7-12 YEAR OLDS' DIET



The general medical guideline is that no more than 35% of calorie intake should consist of fat.

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk>

'LIVING APART TOGETHER': A NEW FAMILY FORM?

Our changing attitudes to partnership

'NOT LIVING WITH a partner' is a category used widely in surveys and other research for classifying relationship status. It is usually taken to imply solitary living, but not living with a partner does not necessarily mean not having a partner – they might simply live somewhere else. Yet the idea of 'living apart together' (LAT) has only recently been recognised. This is perhaps because a traditional view of families, partnering and relationships places co-residential marriage at the centre, and would see living apart from one's partner as both abnormal and statistically insignificant, perhaps a temporary condition brought about by external causes, like one's partner obtaining a job a long way away.

But LATs are more common than anyone thought, in Britain and elsewhere. Until recently, the evidence has been limited, but in 2003 the Office of National Statistics (ONS) estimated that around a third of British adults between 16 and 59 who were neither married nor cohabiting were LATs. After excluding children living with their parents and full-time students, this still left about two million people, around five per cent of the adult population. That LATs are this common has lent support to the view that people are rejecting 'traditional' families and are instead creating 'families of choice' consisting of wider and less formalised relationships.

Professor Simon Duncan of the University of Bradford and Miranda Phillips of the National Centre for Social Research have explored the nature and status of LATs in greater detail than ever before, using the latest British Social Attitudes survey, and can shed light on this debate. Their work is part of a wider ESRC-funded research project looking at 'the new family', including unmarried cohabitation, solo living, same-sex partnerships, and friendship. It forms the basis of a chapter in the forthcoming *British Social Attitudes, The 24th Report*.

Their initial results are in rough agreement with the ONS figures. Around one in ten report that they are in a relationship but not living with their partner, compared with two thirds who are married or cohabiting, and a quarter who are single and do not have a current partner, either in the household or outside it. This covers people who are separated, widowed, divorced or never married.

Most respondents with a partner living elsewhere had been in the relationship for six



There are many reasons why two people in a relationship might not be living together.

months or more. So if time is a measure of relationship status, then these LATs seem relatively established. But the researchers were able to conduct a more incisive assessment of the status of living-apart relationships by asking questions about why people were in this position, and about what partners who are living apart do together socially.

By far the main reason for not living together, given by four in ten of these respondents with a partner living elsewhere, is that they are not ready to live together, or that it is too early in their relationship. This is not because these respondents are waiting to get married – a mere five per cent cite this as a reason for living apart. Their relationships may be akin to the old-fashioned notion of 'going steady' boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, rather than full-blown partnerships.

Other reasons given by these respondents suggest that both choice and constraint act on the decision to live apart. Around half indicate clear external constraints. They include a quarter who cannot afford to live together and a fifth whose

Do a couple not need to live together to have a strong relationship?

54% agree

25% disagree

AT A GLANCE

Not living with your partner is becoming increasingly common and increasingly accepted, but that does not mean we are rejecting more traditional forms of partnership.





AT A GLANCE

It is known that marriages in which the woman works full-time are more likely to end in divorce. Until now, nobody seems to have asked what happens if men do more housework and childcare.

MEN'S HOUSEWORK COULD REDUCE DIVORCE RATES

DIVORCE RATES IN Britain started going up in the early 1960s and have stabilised at a high level since the mid-1980s. Over this time, female labour market participation has increased. So what is the relationship between these two trends? One of the most influential explanations is that of the Nobel prize-winning economist Gary Becker. He said that marriages are most stable when there is sex-specific task specialisation. If one partner is responsible for 'breadwinning' and the other for 'home-making', then both tasks are done more efficiently and thus the marriage is more stable. According to this argument, women's greater financial independence as a result of employment reduces their gains from task specialisation within marriage and makes divorce more likely.

We know that female employment – and mothers' employment in particular – can create stress and conflict in partnerships where women are largely responsible for domestic work and childcare. But most research seems to ignore the idea that men could compensate for women's 'double burden' by helping with the housework. Dr Wendy Sigle-Rushton of the London School of Economics and a member of the Gender Equality Network, has investigated this issue using data from the British Cohort Study, selecting families whose first child was born in 1970.

Like previous research, her study finds that working mothers are more likely to divorce. But she also finds that families in which men engage in housework are less likely to divorce. This suggests that the active involvement of men in housework can offset the effect women's employment may have on the likelihood of divorce. When men take on domestic work, the likelihood of divorce decreases to a level similar to that found in couples with a traditional division of labour. It is not task 'inefficiency' that explains the correlation between women's employment and divorce, but inequality in the division of both paid and unpaid labour. ■

partners are working or studying elsewhere. Around a third of respondents cite 'choice' type reasons for living apart, including one in seven who 'just don't want to live together', the same proportion that want to keep their own homes. Smaller numbers explain that although they don't want to live with their partner, the feeling is not mutual.

When asked which of a number of activities, if any, 'you and your partner often do together?' just over a half act as long-term partners in a social sense, in terms of seeing relatives together, while a similar proportion go on holiday together. Around three quarters see friends or spend weekends together, while around eight in ten go out for food or drink together. Putting all this together suggests that only a minority of respondents who live apart from a partner are LATs in the sense of both being in a significant relationship and choosing to live apart.

But how are couples who live apart regarded by the general population? A majority of British Social Attitudes survey respondents (54 per cent) agree that 'a couple do not need to live together to have a strong relationship', with only 25 per cent disagreeing. Indeed, over 20 per cent of respondents in the 2000 National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles plumped for LATs as their 'ideal relationship', compared with over 40 per cent for exclusive marriage and just under 20 per cent for unmarried cohabitation.

While actively choosing to live apart seems quite rare, many more people find themselves living apart from a mixture of circumstances, and this is generally seen as good enough for a partnership relationship. So while being a LAT is no longer seen as an abnormal or deficient way of living, the evidence does not easily support the impression of a developing rejection of conjugal relationships. ■

<http://www.natcen.ac.uk>
http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/socsci/staff/departamental/duncan_s

Inequality in the division of housework could lead to divorce.

<http://www.genet.ac.uk>



LIVING TOGETHER, BUT PLANNING TO MARRY

MORE COUPLES are living together without being married, but they still dream of wedding bells. In a study of cohabiting people in Britain by Dr Ernestina Coast of the Understanding Population Trends and Processes Programme, three quarters said they probably would get married, while two thirds said they did not find particular advantages in living together as an unmarried couple.

In 2005 only 12 out of every 1,000 single people married – fewer than ever. And the proportion of never-married people in cohabiting relationships is rising. If this trend continues, by 2031 more than 30 per cent of never-married people will be in cohabiting relationships.

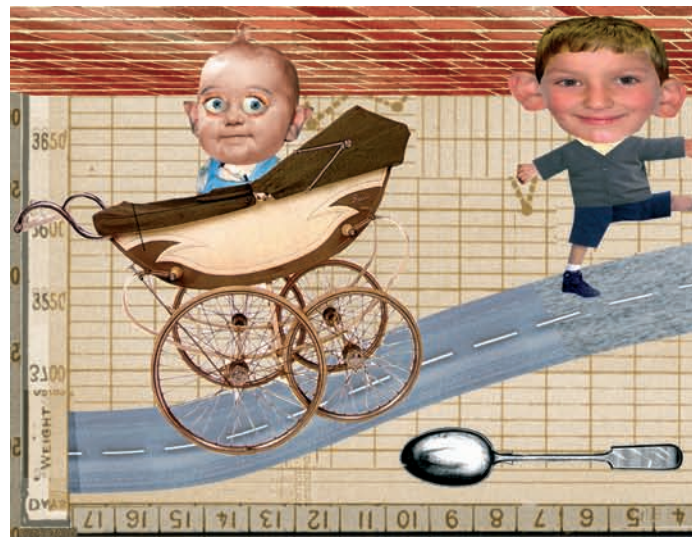
The research used data from the British Household Panel Survey on never-married, cohabiting people under 35 and their views on cohabitation and marriage. The findings reveal that having children or being childless make a significant difference to reasons for cohabiting. Both men and women who find cohabitation advantageous are more likely to be childless. Compared with cohabiting women with children, childless women are significantly more likely to see cohabitation as a 'trial marriage'. Cohabiting mothers are more likely to cohabit due to financial benefits and report this as the advantage of cohabitation over marriage more often than the fathers. ■

<http://www.uptap.net>



AT A GLANCE

While more people are living together without being married, eventually three quarters probably would marry.



LIFE CHANCES

Social mobility in the UK has decreased

THERE IS A growing political consensus that children's life chances should not be determined by their circumstances of birth. And yet 'intergenerational mobility' – a measure of the degree to which people's economic and social status changes between generations – has fallen between the cohort of British children who grew up in the 1960s and early 1970s and those who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s.

Children born to poor families seem less likely to break free of their background and fulfil their potential than they were in the past. This social science 'fact' – uncovered in a series of studies by economists Dr Jo Blanden, Professor Paul Gregg, Professor Stephen Machin and Lindsey Macmillan – is now in the national bloodstream, mentioned almost daily by politicians and commentators.

The first finding that stimulated this interest compared the association of individuals' adult earnings in their early thirties to their parents' family income at age 16 for two cohorts of people, one born in 1958 and the other born in 1970. This association turned out to be stronger for the 1970 cohort, showing that family background mattered more for the later generation.

The fall in mobility can be illustrated by looking at someone's chances of moving up or down the income distribution relative to the position occupied by their parents. For example, for the 1958 cohort, 31 per cent of sons from the poorest quarter of families stayed in the poorest quarter; this percentage rose to 38 per cent for the 1970 cohort. Similarly, at the top end of the distribution, while 35 per cent of sons born in the top quarter in 1958 stayed there, this proportion rose to 42 per cent for the 1970 cohort.

It is clear that social mobility has slowed down. Moreover, comparing measures of mobility from the 1958 cohort with similar data across other countries indicates that mobility in Britain lies well below



levels in Germany, Canada and the Nordic countries, though it is a little higher than in the United States.

So why has social mobility declined? One relevant factor is education. Educational equality allows those with a poor start in life to escape their background, whereas a strong link between educational opportunities and family income has the reverse effect and reinforces inequalities. The research shows that education contributed to the observed decline in mobility as people's educational attainment became more strongly related to their family background. This was in part because more individuals from higher parental income groups benefited from rising participation in universities as the sector expanded in the late 1980s and 1990s.

There is also evidence of an increase in the importance of 'soft skills', such as application in the

Data on cohorts born several decades ago cannot be used to test the claim that current Labour policies have improved the outlook

classroom and the ability to distinguish between chance and self-made opportunities. These skills have become more closely associated with family background: better-off children are emerging from school with more confidence and the ability to apply themselves. Soft skills appear to be helping more privileged children do better in exams at 16 and achieve more in further and higher education.

From the late 1970s, the gap between the richest and poorest in British society opened up significantly. This contributed to the decline in social mobility – because the income distribution is now wider, a given individual now has to gain more income to move the same distance up the income distribution as before.

Since 1997, the Labour government has placed a strong focus on improving the outcomes of disadvantaged children and this still lies at the heart of government policy on children's opportunities. Perhaps the most striking of these policies is the commitment to end child poverty in a generation,

which has helped the number of children in poverty to fall to its lowest level since 1989.

Recognising the importance of educational attainment for mobility, Labour has also targeted numerous programmes at schools, particularly those in disadvantaged areas. In addition, Sure Start centres aim to provide education, health and social support for families with very young children.

A statement by the then Secretary of State for Education, Alan Johnson, in May 2007 makes it clear that the Government believes these policies are working: "The progress we have made since 1997, particularly at schools in deprived areas, means there is every reason to expect that today's generation of poor children will have a much better chance to escape the limitations of their background."

Obviously, data on cohorts born several decades ago cannot be used to test Johnson's claim that Labour policies have improved the outlook for poor children. Doing this requires evidence on what has happened for more recent birth cohorts. And of course, we cannot relate adult earnings to parental income for people from these more recent cohorts since they are too young to enter the labour market.

Instead, new projects funded by the Sutton Trust and the ESRC are examining the relationship between cognitive test scores or educational attainment of children and young adults, and the income of their parents. This research will make it possible to discuss possible changes for young people born in the 1990s and beyond – those likely to be most affected by the post-1997 policy shift.

Early findings indicate that the rise in the association between educational attainment (including getting a degree) and family income that accompanied the past decline in mobility has levelled off for more recent cohorts. The big change between the 1958 and 1970 cohorts appears to be an episode where mobility worsened and took a step change downwards, leaving Britain near the bottom of the intergenerational league table of mobility. ■

AT A GLANCE

Levels of social mobility in the UK lie well below those found in other advanced countries. This is in part because educational attainment has become more strongly related to family background but also because the gap between society's rich and poor has grown.

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/Depts/CMPO/research/new/families/childev.htm>

DELAYED MOTHERHOOD

How much has women's participation in higher education influenced current fertility trends?

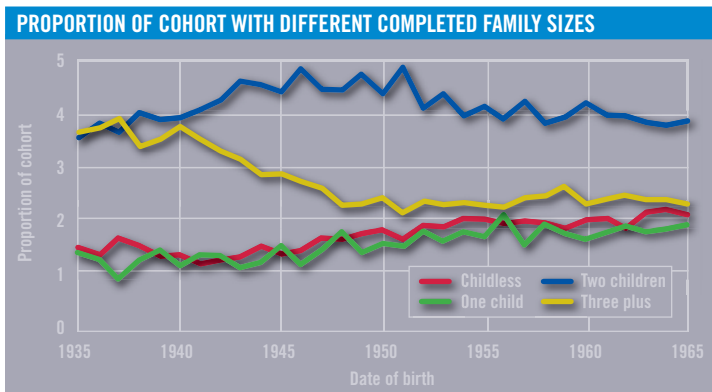
IN 1964, THE TOTAL fertility rate stood at 2.95 children. By 2001, the rate had fallen to just 1.63 children. Part of the reason for this is that women with a college education have consistently lower fertility than women without one and more women are now going on to higher education. But the expansion of higher education can account for only one half of the fall in fertility. Declining fertility among women with college education is also an important contributory factor.

Women's lifetime experiences have become increasingly polarised between those who have experienced higher education and those who have not. Regardless of their education, most women born in 1945 had given birth to their first child by the age of 30. This also applied to women born in 1965 without college education. But the progression to motherhood was much later for women born then who had a college education. They were more likely to spend their twenties forging a career.

Research by Anita Ratcliffe and Dr Sarah Smith from the Centre for Market and Public Organisation (CMPO) shows that between the cohort of women born in 1935 and those born in 1965, the average completed family size fell by 0.5 of a child. This decline was driven by a fall in the average number of children among women who had children and by a rise in the proportion of women who remained childless. Falling family size rather than rising childlessness accounts for most of the decline.

The changes in fertility took place in distinct phases. Women born between 1935 and 1950 were more likely to have two children. The proportion of women with three or more children fell by almost a half across these cohorts, from 40 per cent to just over 20 per cent.

For women born between 1945 and 1955 the trend was a rise in childlessness. Around one in 10 women born in 1945 never had children, a proportion that rose to almost one in five for women born in 1955. The trend towards later childbearing also started with these cohorts. For younger women, family size has been more stable but there have been further changes in the timing of motherhood.



AT A GLANCE

Delayed motherhood and rising childlessness can be partly explained by more women in higher education, but also by changes among educated women: in their 20s they are now more likely to pursue a career than start a family.

A number of factors are linked to the changes in fertility. One is the introduction of the Pill. Another is changes in female employment. The cohorts of women that saw the biggest increases in childlessness also saw big increases in full-time employment among those without children. In recent times, full-time employment has grown among women with children, pointing to more women being able to combine a career with motherhood.

Women with college education tend to begin childbearing later, and to have fewer children and higher rates of childlessness. The CMPO research confirms these findings. But it also shows that the expansion of higher education can only account for half of the observed decline in fertility. There has been a steady decline in fertility among college-educated women, together with a big delay of entry into motherhood. Fertility patterns have been far more stable among women leaving school at 16.

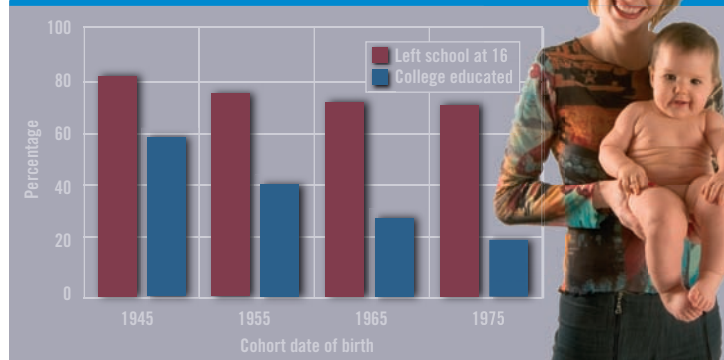
Growing polarisation

This indicates growing polarisation over time between women according to their level of education. Among those with a college degree in the 1945 cohort, the majority went on to have their first child before the age of 30, while only a minority worked full-time, following broadly the same pattern as the group of women who left school at 16. But college-educated women in the 1975 cohort were more likely to regard their twenties as the decade for pursuing a career, not for having children.

This polarisation will probably mean growing material advantages for better-educated mothers, and for their children. Women with higher levels of education work full-time for longer, before and after having children, which implies higher household income and wealth.

This change is likely to exacerbate social inequalities and affect social mobility if increased resources affect early childhood development. ■

PERCENTAGE GIVING BIRTH BEFORE THE AGE OF 30



<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/CMPO>
www.utap.net



NAMING CHILDREN OF MIXED HERITAGE

Should it be Kiran, or Kieran, or neither of these?

WHAT TO CALL the baby is a common preoccupation for new parents. Name choices for couples from different racial, ethnic or faith backgrounds – ‘mixed heritage’ parents – can be particularly tricky. Will the name be seen to favour one side of their child’s heritage? Might some family members feel rejected or offended by the choice? Why not choose on the basis of personal taste rather than tradition?

The 2001 census indicated that Britain’s ‘mixed’ population is now the third largest and fastest growing ethnic group. Half are under the age of 16, and over half have married or cohabiting parents. There are also increasing trends of marriage and cohabitation across religious boundaries. Professor Rosalind Edwards and Dr Chamion Caballero, from the Families and Social Capital Research Group at London South Bank University, have been exploring the experiences of some of these couples.

At the heart of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation-funded study was a series of in-depth interviews with 35 sets of parents with a diverse range of ‘mixing’ in their relationships. They were asked about how they negotiate the everyday practice of parenting in relation to racial and cultural difference, and the passing on of aspects of heritage across generations. Decisions about naming children often came up.

The researchers found that for many parents, rather than seeking to transcend their children’s specific mixed background and avoiding ‘which side’ dilemmas through the personal choice of name, denoting some kind of collective affinity was still of significance. Most parents wanted names for their children that they liked, perhaps drawing on popular culture or adapting or constructing idiosyncratic names. But they also wanted names that symbolised their children’s various heritages.

This individual taste within collective parameters can involve parents in quite complicated practices

around who names the children and what names are chosen. While most parents said that they chose the names together, the discussions sometimes indicated that one parent had far more influence where a name reflected their particular background.

For example, Jinglei, who is originally from China, is married to a white British man. They have two children with English names, which they chose together. As a way of reflecting the other side of their heritage, the children also have ‘alternative’ Chinese names, which Jinglei took responsibility for choosing in consultation with her father.

In some cases, tradition demands that the father or a grandparent chooses a child’s name, or that a particular name be given. Bucking these conventions can cause difficulties in intergenerational relationships, and parents often try to avoid this.

Paul is a black Ghanaian from a Christian background and his partner, Katy, is of white British and South African Jewish parentage. While they did not follow Ghanaian customs, in which the paternal grandfather names the children, nor have them christened as Paul’s family would have preferred, they did ensure that their children had Ghanaian ‘day’ names as their middle name in an effort both to symbolise that aspect of the children’s heritage and placate Paul’s family.

Indeed, a common means of acknowledging naming customs, and of symbolising children’s mixed heritages and parents’ own connection to their children, is for parents to give a ‘run’ of personal names reflecting each aspect of their backgrounds. But in some cases, parents felt that the principal name choice was not well received by one side of their wider family.

Daniel is mixed in terms of ethnicity and faith, with white British and Polish, and Christian and Jewish heritage. His wife, Meena, is of Sikh Indian origin. Their children have Indian first names, two middle names – one Sikh, one English – and finally Daniel’s Polish family name. Meena felt that Daniel’s parents had not received the children’s first names well, with her father-in-law making uncomfortable jokes about them.

Sometimes efforts to acknowledge both heritages and satisfy the wider family can go awry. Jafar and Chloe tried hard to find a name for their son that they liked and that sounded both Asian and British, reflecting his Muslim and Pakistani and her white British and Christian backgrounds. They settled on the name Kiran, which could also be Kieran. Unfortunately, on informing Jafar’s parents, they found that the name was Hindu rather than Muslim, and this caused something of a rift between them and Jafar’s father in particular.

The many considerations around naming children that this research identifies may tell us something about the society in which parents hope to raise their children – one in which boundaries on the basis of race, ethnicity and faith can be transcended but also one in which collective belonging is valued. ■

AT A GLANCE

Parents of ‘mixed-heritage’ children find the decision about what to name their child is often very complicated. This may tell us a lot about the society in which these parents expect to raise their families.

<http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/families>

PARENTS' INCOME AND KIDS' OUTCOMES

We know that low family income translates into poorer outcomes for children, but why is this so?

IT IS RECOGNISED that children from poorer families begin school less ready to learn than their peers from richer families. Poorer children of this age also seem to be doing less well in terms of physical health and non-cognitive behaviours, or 'soft skills'. But we know less about how low family income translates into poorer outcomes for children. To what extent do low-income parents behave in particular ways that disadvantage their children? Are the local environments in which low-income families live worse for children? And does behaviour that leads to disadvantage in one dimension of children's lives, say their schooling, have negative effects on other dimensions, such as their obesity levels or self-esteem? To answer these questions, researchers at the Centre for Market and Public Organisation and the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion have used data from the 'cohort of the 1990s', a group of 6,000 children born in and around Bristol in 1991 and 1992.

Professor Paul Gregg, Professor Carol Propper and Elizabeth Washbrook looked at several aspects of development, broadly defined, including school performance at age seven, IQ, self-esteem, behaviour and obesity. These outcomes of children's development are rarely considered together by researchers, yet they are of deep concern to parents. And of course, the public and politicians may be as concerned with non-cognitive behaviours as with educational outcomes. To understand how low income translates into poorer outcomes, the

The research finds that by the age of seven children of low-income families are doing worse than their peers on all outcomes

research team looked at the links between income, outcomes and a set of parental behaviours and circumstances that may be associated with poor outcomes in children, including maternal anxiety and depression, the extent to which parents read to their children, the food the children eat, whether they attend out of school classes, and the physical environment in which the families live. A greater exposure to these 'risk factors' may harm (poor diet) or help (being read to) children as they develop.

The research finds that by the age of seven, children of low-income families are doing worse than their peers on all outcomes. The differences are greatest for cognitive outcomes, measured by IQ and performance on the national Key Stage 1 tests. But they are also falling behind in non-scholastic outcomes: they have lower self-esteem, are more likely to manifest difficult behaviour and, even by the age of seven, are at greater risk of obesity.

While low income has clear effects on children's development, the risk factors associated with parental poverty vary markedly in their association



Poorer families have worse health behaviours and lower levels of education. Both contribute to their children's lower educational attainment.

with different outcomes. As might be expected, the schooling deficits of low-income children are strongly related to lack of parental education. And poor psychological functioning by parents and poor health-related behaviours are drivers of the greater behavioural problems and risk of obesity.

But there are also important links in unexpected places. The poorer schooling outcomes of poor children are just as closely related to the poorer health-related behaviours of their parents – such as greater smoking, less breastfeeding and feeding their children worse diets – as they are to their parents' lack of education. This finding supports calls for better food as a way of improving not just children's diets but also their school achievement.

Another surprise from the research is that some aspects of poor children's upbringing that are seen as harmful may actually be protective. For example, the learning-focused environments of children in more affluent families, along with their greater car ownership, appear to increase the risk of childhood obesity by discouraging physical activity. The use of long hours of childcare for three- and four-year-olds also appears to foster greater behavioural problems in the children of the better off. Finally, what appears to matter at this age – if not later – is the quality of the home environment: the impact of school appears to be very weak compared with the role of the home environment provided by low-income parents.

These results indicate that the effect of income on children's wellbeing operates through a number of different channels. It therefore seems likely that policy interventions narrowly targeted on one aspect of home environment will miss the point. If adult social and economic success depends on a broad spectrum of skills and abilities, then only a multi-faceted approach will help to reduce the intergenerational persistence of inequality. ■

AT A GLANCE

A study of children born in the early 1990s indicates that the effect of income on their wellbeing works on a number of levels. Policy interventions therefore need to target various aspects of the home environment.

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/CMPO>
<http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case>

The 2012 Olympic Games

SPORT, FAMILIES AND CHILDREN – THE OLYMPIC PROMISE

PROFESSOR ANNE
POWER, Deputy
Director, ESRC Centre
for Analysis of Social
Exclusion, London
School of Economics



IN JULY 2005, LONDON beat Paris in the contest to stage the 2012 Olympics. A key part of its bid was to fly a multi-racial group of schoolchildren from around the Olympic site in the East End of London to Singapore to 'back the bid'. The winning argument was the regeneration of the poorest part of the city, now earmarked for London's biggest investment project.

Since 1998, researchers at the London School of Economics have been tracking the fortunes of these Olympic neighbourhoods. This work has revealed three kinds of deep change that form a dynamic backdrop to the Olympic decision.

These areas have attracted physical reinvestment over decades. Programme has followed programme in an attempt to stop poor areas which had lost their economic rationale from 'falling off the edge'. This effort was paying off even before the Olympic bid succeeded. The two East London areas we studied were both recovering, as were others we looked at around the country.

More people in the East End were in jobs in 2007 than in 1998. Women were more often moving into the new service jobs than men, and many former manual workers remained outside the formal job market. Because they were often uncountried in official job figures, boys and men were much less visible in the new economy of the East End than women. Many mothers were struggling alone.

Many parts of the East End were changing rapidly in ethnic composition. Newham, at the heart of the Olympic regeneration, now has the highest share of minorities of any local authority area in Britain. By 2001, nearly two

Young people need continuous low-cost, youth-focused activity with space, rather than one-off events

thirds of the Borough's population were from a minority background. Over the East End generally, the proportion of minorities has been rising. We visited a hundred families in the East End every year for eight years to find out how changes in neighbourhood and social conditions, physical regeneration, jobs and training opportunities, schools and leisure facilities, open spaces and crime affected them, including the Olympic decision itself.

Parents told us that what they most enjoy with their children is outdoor activity and sport. Almost all go to parks often and want their children to join in local sporting activities. But the vast majority are on low incomes and the charges for local leisure centres, football clubs and gyms are prohibitive. This upsets them. At the same time, most will not let their children out on the street or to local playgrounds unaccompanied. They regard the street as too dangerous, peer pressure as too threatening, 'gangs', bullying and violence as real, live problems. Most young people do not have enough places to go, enough to do or enough money to participate. The cost of the Olympic



The regeneration of London was in progress long before the successful Olympic bid.

investment over the next four years will make this problem worse, as public bodies direct more and more of their limited resources to meeting rising Olympic costs. The children who live in the Olympic neighbourhoods will be more, and not less, deprived of space and support.

Meanwhile, regeneration has changed its meaning in these areas because of the sheer scale of the works. Cheap housing is now snapped up and prices have tripled over the last few years. Local families feel threatened and many are being pushed out, either by demolition to make way for regeneration, as it is still called, or simply by the exorbitant costs of a home except for social renting. As a result, the limited supply of affordable and social housing is increasingly targeted at the most needy. White families say they feel "pushed out", and black families, increasingly from Africa, say they feel "we're chasing white residents away". Ethnic polarisation and competition are growing. Housing pressure is most acute in the old council estates. Here, the hope for the future is that things will be better for their children, but schools are under intense pressure and are also increasingly segregated.

Half of one per cent of the Olympic investment would pay for Sport Action Zones covering the Olympic neighbourhoods, providing low cost, competitive local sporting activity for the youth of these areas in the run up to the Games, using schools, parks, halls, playgrounds and other underused facilities. This would create popular local support for the Games and divert young people's energy into community-based activity that might raise sights and draw public attention away from the media obsession with drugs, guns and gangs. It might convince Olympic strategists that young people need continuous low-cost, youth-focused activity with space, rather than one-off events. Currently, Londoners are failing their youth and condemning them in the same breath. ■

<http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cr/CASEREport35.pdf>

See also *City Survivors: Bringing Up Children In Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods* by Anne Power, November 2007. Bristol: Policy Press