

MOVING TO WORK?

BY BRUCE BRADBURY AND JENNY CHALMERS

What determines the choice of residential location for workforce-age income support recipients? Do jobseekers tend to move toward or away from areas with greater employment opportunities? Does location matter for employment outcomes?

A study recently completed by the SPRC finds that unemployment payment recipients do tend (on balance) to move towards areas of better employment opportunities. When they do move to areas with better labour markets their likelihood of leaving income support is increased.

These results are important for housing, income support and other policies designed to help those most disadvantaged in the labour market, as well as for policies that seek to ensure a smoothly functioning labour market. Does cheap housing (public or private) attract people to areas where they

have little chance of finding employment? Should housing and income support policies attempt to discourage this?

Current social security legislation does assume that location matters. People can be excluded from unemployment payments if they move to areas of higher unemployment.

These questions are also relevant to housing policy decisions about where to site affordable housing and how to structure rent assistance programs to take account of regional variations in housing costs and labour markets.

This study was undertaken as part of the SPRC's involvement in the UNSW/UWS Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) Research Centre. (Some information on the project goals and methods was presented in the November 2002 issue of the SPRC Newsletter.)

BACKGROUND

Research in the US and UK has found that housing affordability has a strong influence on the geographic mobility of low-income families. Some studies have also found evidence that labour market conditions matter. US research on the impact of variations in levels of welfare provision across regions has found that this has little impact.

In Australia, the main focus of research has been on migration into and out of the major cities, with a substantial movement of low-income people away from the cities being documented. Greater housing affordability has been proposed as the main reason for this. However these Census-based studies are limited. They cannot tell whether it is unemployment that leads to exit from the city, or

"Is [it] unemployment that leads to exit from the city or movement out of the city that leads to unemployment?"

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FEATURE

Bruce Bradbury and Jenny Chalmers discuss the effect of location on employment outcomes.

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STAFF AND VISITOR UPDATE

NEW ARRIVALS:

TRISH HILL has joined the staff, working on the ARC Linkage project *Reaching Isolated Carers: Contacting Carers with Unmet Need for Information and Support*.

ADELINE LEE has joined the Centre to work the project *Updating and Extending Indicative Budget Standards for Older Australians*.

ROGER PATULNY has joined the staff to work on the project *Updating and Extending Indicative Budget Standards for Older Australians*.

VISITOR:

KYUNGJA JUNG is visiting the centre after completing her PhD on *Women and Violence in Korea* at the School of Social Science and Policy (UNSW).

DEPARTURES:

SHARON BURKE is currently on leave to take up a temporary research position at the NSW Commission for Children and Young People.

ELISABETH EMRYS has left the Centre to work in Indonesia.

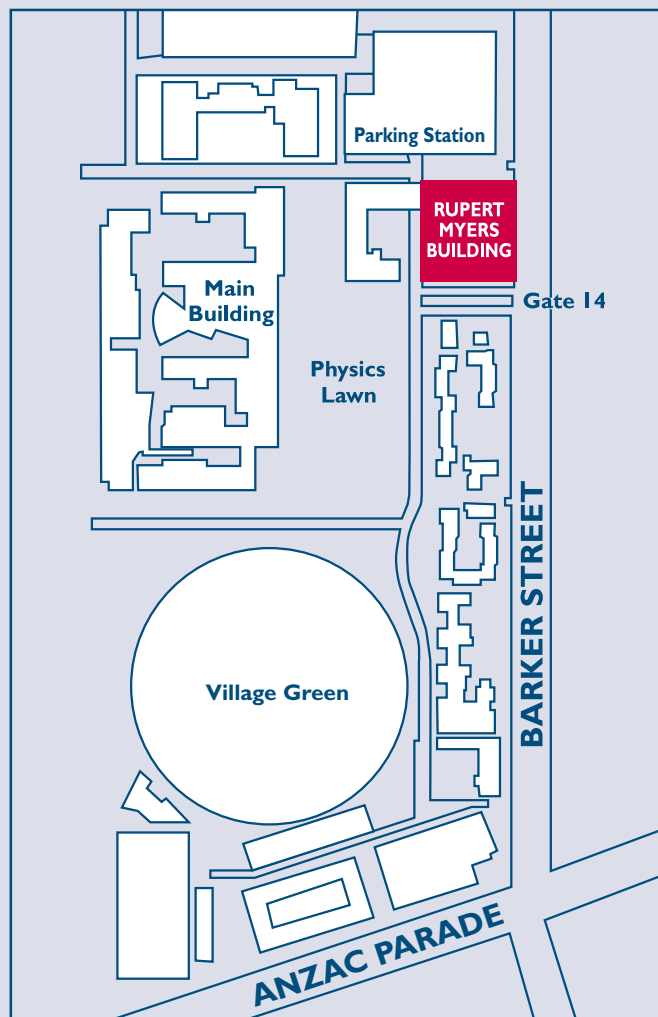
SHEILA SHAVER has left the Centre accepting the position of Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) at the University of Western Sydney.

NICK TURNBULL has left the Centre and will complete his PhD with the School of Philosophy and School of Social Science and Policy.

THE SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH CENTRE

The Social Policy Research Centre is an independent research centre of the University of New South Wales. Under its original name, the Social Welfare Research Centre was established in January 1980, changing its name to the Social Policy Research Centre in 1990. The SPRC conducts research and fosters discussion on all aspects of social policy in Australia, as well as supporting PhD study in these areas. The Centre's research is funded by governments at both Commonwealth and State levels, by academic grant bodies and by non-governmental agencies. Our main topics of inquiry are: economic and social inequality; poverty, social exclusion and income support; employment, unemployment and labour market policies and programs; families, children, people with disabilities, and older people; community needs, problems and services; evaluation of health and community service policies and programs; and comparative social policy and welfare state studies.

The views expressed in this Newsletter, as in any of the Centre's publications, do not represent any official position of the Centre. The SPRC Newsletter and all other SPRC publications present the views and research findings of the individual authors, with the aim of promoting the development of ideas and discussion about major concerns in social policy and social welfare.



The Social Policy Research Centre is located on Level 3 of the Rupert Myers Building, South Wing, Kensington Campus. Enter by Gate 14, Barker Street.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

BY PETER SAUNDERS

The Social Policy Research Centre has always been actively involved in both conducting research and its dissemination. This reflects a belief in the value of research as knowledge – as contributing to how we understand the society in which we live – whatever the nature or implications of specific findings. Of course, research will always be subject to criticism, or to alternative interpretation. These aspects are central to the role of academic inquiry in advancing knowledge generally.

But debate over research should not be left entirely to the ‘experts’. Judgments are an integral part of most social policy research and the experts have no monopoly on wisdom where these are involved. Politicians see it as their job to make these judgments, but expert judgment is as important in social policy as in many other fields. Both should be listened to, but so should the judgments of the community at large, because social policy aims to improve the well-being of the community – or of specific groups within it.

In order for this kind of broad debate to take place, it is necessary that research is made widely available so that the various stakeholders can debate its relevance and implications. And I include among the stakeholders here not only those who have an

immediate interest in any specific piece of research, but also those with an interest in the role that knowledge can play in civil society more generally. Transparency, collegiality and open debate are what define a ‘knowledge nation’ and investment in research should be guided by and promote these key objectives.

With its changed funding arrangements, the SPRC has had to look very closely at its ability to pursue all of its dissemination activities. Funding limitations place a premium on identifying priorities, as governments and the agencies they fund understand all too well! We have also had to adjust to the very rapidly changing technological conditions that are affecting the way that research is made publicly available. Most of our publications no longer appear in ‘hard copy’ but are posted on our website, although there are exceptions. The most notable is this Newsletter which still performs a very valuable role in informing people about what we are doing and reporting findings to a broad audience.

Another activity that has survived our recent upheavals – flourished would be a more accurate description – is the Australian Social Policy Conference (ASPC), which will take place for the eighth time this July. We expect this to be largest ever and

have received well over 200 papers, which augurs well for the quality of the Final Program (see our website for more details!).

The increased interest in the ASPC is significant. Part of the explanation lies in its ability to satisfy a need for those working in the field to gather together, to hear what others are doing and listen to the comments that this generates. There is no substitute for the excitement aroused by a debate over the nature or interpretation of specific findings – particularly when they challenge the conventional wisdom. This sense of engagement with the production of knowledge is something we all thirst for and the ASPC provides a venue in which it can happen.

My sense is that this is one reason behind the on-going success of the ASPC: as we all become more closely enshrined within our own particular enclaves of expertise, we can easily lose sight of the bigger picture. Events like the ASPC remind us that we are part of a broader network and that our research has a role to play in the accumulation of knowledge generally. Above all, it allows us to test our ideas out on others and be exposed to new ideas and arguments. My expectation is that the ASPC will survive long into the future.



Sheila Shaver left the SPRC at the end of March to take up the position of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the University of Western Sydney. Since Sheila joined the SPRC in July 1990 she has played a major role in setting our research direction and in developing the PhD program. Her own theoretically informed research on the gender dimensions of welfare has achieved international acclaim and been influential in the national policy debate. Above all, she has been a marvellous colleague – always putting the needs of the institution first and responding supportively to all who have sought her advice. For my part, she has made my job easier and more effective by providing wise counsel on the many occasions that I have needed it. We will miss her many contributions, not the least of which was her enthusiasm for the job that made working with her a pleasure. We wish her well in her new position. *Peter Saunders*

“On balance, about 4200 unemployment payment recipients per annum are leaving the regions with the highest unemployment rates”

movement out of the city that leads to unemployment.

Studies that collect information on the same individuals at two or more points in time (longitudinal data) can help disentangle these causal relationships. Two recent studies by Morrow and Dockery use the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) Longitudinal Data Set (LDS) to examine the impact of housing costs and labour market conditions on mobility of income support clients. In contrast to the Census-based results, Morrow finds that unemployed people tend to move toward the cities rather than away from them. Dockery, on the other hand finds that locational decisions do not seem to respond to labour market opportunities. However, it is possible that Dockery’s results stem from a too-small definition of labour market regions that do not take into account the commuting possibilities within large cities.

Though there is ample evidence that labour market conditions (such as unemployment rates) vary substantially across Australia, there is very little research that attempts to ascertain the causal impact of locational characteristics on individual outcomes. Such research needs to control for the characteristics of the people that live in different regions. Social experiments in the US do suggest

that location may be important for a range of social outcomes such as youth crime rates.

METHODS

The results in this study are based on the FaCS LDS. This includes (anonymous) data for a one per cent sample of FaCS income support clients. The file includes information on the income support payments received for every fortnight between January 1995 and June 2001.

The LDS contains information on the postcode of residence at the time of payment receipt. People are defined as moving when they change postcode while receiving income support. The 1996 Census postcode concordance is used to match these postcodes to 1996 Census Statistical Local Areas (SLAs).

A *travel region unemployment rate* for each SLA is estimated using Journey to Work data. This is a weighted average of the unemployment rates in the surrounding regions around the target region, with greater weight given to those regions whose residents work in the same location as the target region.

The LDS data on rent paid is used to estimate the relative housing prices in each region. The measure of housing costs is thus an estimate of the extent to which a

particular location has a higher than average rental (controlling for family size).

RESULTS 1: THE DETERMINANTS OF MOBILITY

Who moves, and what is the net impact of this movement on the geographic distribution of income support recipients?

We find that unemployment payment recipients were more likely to move than those people receiving other payments. Women were slightly more likely than men to move.

Forty five per cent of moves were within a state capital city, four per cent between capitals, ten per cent non-capital to capital, ten per cent capital to non-capital and 31 per cent within non-capital regions. Unemployment payment recipients tended to move further than people receiving other payments.

In general, between any two regions, significant numbers of people are always moving in both directions. Our main interest, however, is in the *net impact* of this re-location.

From this perspective, there is a tendency for unemployment payment recipients to move away from the regions with the poorest labour markets. On balance, about 4200 unemployment payment recipients per annum are leaving the regions with the highest unemployment rates (see Figure). This is 4.3 per cent of the average total number of unemployment payment recipients in those regions, or 17.1 per cent of gross flows (average of those moving in and out of the region). Associated with this, there is a tendency for people to move towards the larger labour markets, and towards higher housing cost areas.

For non-unemployment payment recipients, the patterns of movement, if anything, are in the opposite direction.

Controlling for other regional characteristics, we find that for

Figure 1: Relationship Between Unemployment Rate and Net Inflows to Region



unemployment payment recipients, an increase in the travel region unemployment rate of a region by one percentage point is associated with an increase in the net outflow per annum of around one per cent of the recipients in the region. A similar relationship exists for both short and long duration unemployment payment recipients. The size of the labour market also has an impact on net movements, though only for the short duration unemployed.

RESULTS 2: THE IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

How much impact do regional labour market conditions have on the likelihood that a person will be employed or not receiving income support? We restrict our attention to unemployment payment recipients, both for data availability reasons and also because this is the group for whom labour market factors are likely to be of most importance in influencing spell exit.

Using a spell-duration model, it is found that a one-percentage point increase in the travel region unemployment rate is associated with a five per cent drop in the probability of exit from benefit. This translates into an increase in average benefit duration of around nine per cent.

This should be considered an upper bound for the impact of regional characteristics, as it partly reflects the fact that people with

low skill levels can only afford to live in high unemployment regions (though the analysis does control for housing costs).

To control for this we also examined the change in benefit receipt for those people who moved between regions. The dependent variable is the number of fortnights that they received payment in the 12 months after the move, minus the number of benefit receipt fortnights in the 12 months prior to the move. A regression is estimated with this difference as the dependent variable and with the change in the regional characteristics as independent variables.

Though this differencing approach controls for fixed differences between people even when they are unobserved, it is subject to some potential selection biases as we can only observe people who move while receiving benefit.

The change in labour market conditions associated with moving has a significant impact. Moving to an area with a one percentage point higher travel region unemployment rate leads to an increase in income support receipt of about one-third of a fortnight. This increase is about two per cent of the average number of fortnights of income support receipt per annum. As expected, this impact is less than that found using the first estimation method, and we, believe, a better measure of the true impact of location. However, data limitations mean that this result should not be regarded as definitive.

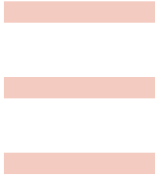
POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the results of this study suggest that regional labour market conditions do matter, at least for unemployment payment recipients. The recipients themselves appear to believe this – they tend to move towards areas of better labour market opportunities (though this is by no means the main factor influencing mobility). The estimates of the independent impact of regional characteristics also support this view.

This study therefore provides some support for policies that seek to influence the movement decisions of income support recipients (and unemployment payment recipients in particular). Potential policy interventions include income support policies such as exclusion rules for people who move to high unemployment regions and possible regional variations in rent assistance. Housing and other policies that might influence the geographic distribution of affordable housing in Australia may also be important. Whether the strength of the relationships observed here are sufficient to justify particular policy interventions can only be assessed in the context of the costs and other benefits of those policies.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The final report from the project will be available from the AHURI national website www.ahuri.edu.au



“Moving to an area with a one percentage point higher travel region unemployment rate leads to an increase in income support receipt of about one-third of a fortnight.”



WORKING BETTER WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND ISSUES

BY MARGOT RAWSTHORNE

For some time staff within the Social Policy Research Centre have been concerned about the Centre's ability to undertake appropriate research with Indigenous people and communities. There is a growing awareness and commitment by non-Indigenous research institutions undertaking social research to working better with Indigenous people and communities. SPRC is grateful for the support and advice of Sue Green, the Director of the Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre and the Koori Centre at the University of New South Wales.

In March, 2003 the Centre adopted the *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies* produced by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (www.aiatsis.gov.au). These Guidelines will inform the work of the Centre to ensure it appropriately incorporates the experiences of Indigenous people, communities and issues.

In addition, the Centre is currently developing an Action Plan that will seek to ensure Indigenous issues are dealt with appropriately at both a systemic or structural level and an individual project level. The Action Plan will adopt a framework for 'doing good Koori research' suggested by Associate Professor Ian Anderson, Director, VicHealth Koori Health Research and Community Development Unit at a seminar entitled 'We Don't Like Research: but in Koori hands it could make a difference' hosted by the Indigenous Health Unit, School of Public Health and Community Medicine at UNSW. This framework has four key elements:

PARTNERSHIPS

Relationships are vitally important in Indigenous culture. These

relationships take time and come with responsibilities. Indigenous communities are increasingly demanding more from researchers in terms of outcomes for individuals or communities and reporting back. SPRC is committed to improving its relationships with the Indigenous community and looks forward to working in partnership with Indigenous organisations. It is envisaged that these partnerships will be formalised in some circumstances through agreements such as memorandum of understandings.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Indigenous researchers, like Indigenous lawyers, doctors and social workers, are rare. As an important teaching institution SPRC sees itself as having a role supporting Indigenous research students, academics and practitioners interesting in furthering their research careers and skills. Strategies are also being explored to increase Indigenous participation in forums such as the Australian Social Policy Research Conference.

ETHICS

Among Indigenous researchers there is considerable discussion about ethical issues and the completely inappropriate processes employed by most academic institutions. Consent forms were just one example of the inappropriate ethical procedures. Of more concern, however, is that institutional ethical approval may hide the need for community ethical approval. An honest and open dialogue with Indigenous people and communities is essential to the appropriateness of the research. Developing an appropriate method should include not only consideration of common

issues affecting research (such as literacy levels, access to phones, sensitive topics, etc.) but also cultural issues. Methodologies that allow face-to-face discussion are often best but time variations also need to be considered. Repeat visits to communities are important to establish trust and obtain community ethical approval.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BENEFIT

We need to remember that 'we may not live in the past but the past lives within us' (Charles Perkins). Indigenous people and communities are likely to respond to SPRC as 'just another whitefella mob coming to steal our stories'. Whilst we cannot change the past it is incumbent on us to learn lessons from the past and make every effort not to repeat the mistakes of the past. We need not only to ensure our research does no damage but puts in place strategies to maximise community benefit from projects. This may include: work alongside partner organisation to maximise skills and knowledge exchange; where possible, train, support and pay Indigenous people to assist with the research; discuss with the community how they would like to participate in the research (this could include training or employment opportunities, accessible language reports, participation in an advisory committee) and negotiate what is possible the employment of local people as researchers on projects.

For more information about the Action Plan or related issues contact either David Abelló (9385-7831 or d.abello@unsw.edu.au) or Sonia Hoffmann (9385 7807 or soniah@unsw.edu.au).

FROM THE PROJECTS

EXPLORING VOLUNTEERING

The *Exploring Patterns of Volunteering and Participation* project for the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) has entered the final write-up phase. Michael Bittman and Kimberly Fisher have used the 2000 ABS *Voluntary Work Survey*, the 1997 ABS *Time Use Study*, and the basic comparative time use activity tables of the Harmonised European Time Use Studies project to examine who volunteers in Australia, how long Australians engage in voluntary activity on those days when they volunteer, and how voluntary activity in Australia compares with volunteering in other countries. The final report analyses three policy relevant aspects of volunteering – its effects on direct government expenditure on services, its contribution to the stock of social capital, and the possibility for volunteering to provide a pathway to economic, social, and civic participation. The project includes a special focus on voluntary activities among FaCS customers.

The proportion of Australians who volunteer has increased from under 25 per cent in the late 1980s to over 30 per cent in 2000, though the increase primarily reflects a small rise in the voluntary activity of people aged in their 20s, 30s, and 50s, and a larger rise for people aged in their 60s. Even so, on any given day, Australians spend about half the amount of time doing voluntary activities as people in Canada, Finland, France, and the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, certain categories of Australians, most notably lone mothers, people aged 25 to 45 who live with their parents, as well as single retired

Australians, tend to volunteer for longer times than their counterparts in the other countries.

Formal participation in voluntary organisations, informal care of the frail elderly and people with disabilities, and travel and communication related to voluntary activity each account for around 30 per cent of voluntary activity in Australia, with the remaining roughly 10 per cent of voluntary efforts expended on helping others or the community outside organisational contexts. Even conservative estimation procedures (which are more likely to underestimate the monetary value of volunteering) reveal that the financial value of all voluntary services are worth more than double the value of services provided by all levels of government in Australia.

When all other factors are held constant, people working in professional or managerial jobs and people who have achieved educational qualifications at university level or higher are more likely to engage in all forms of volunteering. People who do not speak English at home, work full-time, or are aged less than 30 are less likely to undertake any form of voluntary activity. These findings emerge consistently in both the *Voluntary Work Survey* 2000, which measures whether people performed any work for a voluntary organisation over the last year, and in the 1997 *Time Use Survey*, which measures who is most likely to volunteer in any capacity on an average day.

Results from this work will be presented at the annual meeting of the International Association of Time Use Research in Belgium in September.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES WHO HAVE A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY: THE ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE

Little scrutiny has been directed toward the nature of the assessment of children with a disability or what support needs families may have specific to the assessment process. This project was conducted for Families First Inner West Sydney by the UNSW Consortium of the Social Policy Research Centre and the Disability Studies and Research Institute.

Interviews were conducted with families who have a child with a disability, other stakeholders (such as people who provide assessment, family advocacy group representatives) and service providers. Focus groups, face-to-face and telephone interviews were employed. Service documentation was collected to augment the information gained from interviews. A number of general issues were identified by families.

UNDERSTANDING OF DISABILITY

When asked to define 'disability', most service providers were primarily concerned with the direct implications of impairment to their work. Broader social disadvantages and needs that characterise the experience of disability appeared to be of secondary concern. This contrasts to the broader and more inclusive definitions offered by a number of parents, particularly those with older children who have had time to develop a relationship with their child that is distinct from their child's impairment.



FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

Whilst none of the families interviewed felt that issues of ethnicity, socio-economic or familial characteristics impacted on their assessments, much of what they said reflected cultural differences in the way they experienced the assessment process. Service providers and advocacy groups on the other hand, explicitly raised this as a major issue. The disparity is most likely due to the fact that individuals tend not to define themselves in terms of broader macro structures, rather than the absence of culture as an influencing factor.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Much of the experience of childhood disability is characterised by waiting – waiting to see how an impairment manifests, waiting for test results, waiting for vacancies to become available. The primary concern of parents here was that their child is missing the window of opportunity to help their kids be all they can be.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

For many service providers, no formal policies or procedural guidelines were maintained about their practices. Many service agencies had a commitment to verbal communication with families and as a result, had very little printed material. As many workers were in small teams, they preferred to communicate verbally with each other as well.

Families and service providers made suggestions about some of the key issues about communication between families and service providers; links between services; access to transport, respite and generic family services; a strengths-based approach to information; connecting with other families, peer support and informal networks; and parent involvement in service management.

Principles emerged from the research to support families before, during and after assessment. These related to the way assessment outcomes are communicated to families; principles for support during assessment; and recognising responsibility for continuity in information, support and communication through the protracted assessment period.

Researchers in the project were Karen Fisher, Jacqueline Tudball, Katherine Cummings and David Abelló from the Social Policy Research Centre; and Therese Sands, Leanne Dowse and Phillip French from the Disability Studies and Research Institute. The report will be available in 2003.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF WITHIN-HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN

This project is aimed at examining whether children are better off if their mothers, rather than their fathers, receive income. Research in the UK and Canada has shown that income received by mothers is more likely to be directed towards consumption by children than income received by fathers. Our study examines whether this result applies to Australia too; it tests the impact of the reforms to the Australian income support system made in the early 1990s that increased the share of income support going to mothers.

Research in this area has used two main methodologies. One approach is to examine the association between the patterns of income receipt in the household and household consumption outcomes such as expenditures on child-related goods. The other is to interview parents about the nature of financial relationships within the household.

The project, therefore, consists of two complementary modules. In

Module 1 we study the literature on within-household attitudes and behaviour vis-à-vis money with a view to understanding the implications for the well-being of individual members, particularly children. The review draws on interview-based studies to understand the attitudes and processes involved in decisions regarding money in families. In particular, it looks at the ways in which couples manage their incomes and who controls different spending decisions, as well as individual household members' feelings about their current arrangements.

The review has revealed a dissonance between attitudes towards money in marriage and the reality of spending decisions, which continue to be largely gendered. Pooling of resources and sharing of expenses was seen as essential to the marital relationship. Along with the notion that money in marriage ought to be based on equal sharing, regardless of who contributes what to the household, goes the opposing notion of the individual's right to what they earn. This latter idea feeds directly into the second belief that the breadwinner has a right both to more power over household money and to more money for his/her own use. In practice, it is the ideology of power that dominates; for although husbands in sole-earning couples do not overtly restrict their wives' expenditure, the wives feel inhibited about spending money on themselves and limit their expenditure from the joint account. Moreover, variations in occupational status and income appear to have little impact on marital power, and couples tend to organise their lives in ways which hide or ignore these variations.

There is a growing interest in the kinds of financial management likely to arise in the non-traditional family types, such as the so-called blended families. There are very

few studies that directly address this question. One can, however, survey the literature on such family types in general and attempt to glean some implications for our study. This literature is also discussed in Module 1.

Module 2 examines the changes in household expenditure patterns associated with the changes in payment arrangements for married pensioner and beneficiary families in the early and mid-1990s. During this period, the introduction of Additional Family Payment and Partner Allowance led to a large

shift of income towards the primary carer. The study tests the extent to which this led to an increase in child-related consumption using data from the *ABS Household Expenditure Surveys* of 1988-89, 1993-94 and 1998-99.

The influential research of Lundberg, Pollak and Wales (1997) used the 'natural experiment' of changes in the patterns of UK family payments. In the late 1970s these payments changed from a tax deduction (mainly accruing to fathers) to a cash transfer, mainly paid to mothers. They examined

patterns of household expenditure both before and after the policy change and observed an increase in spending on women's and children's clothing relative to men's clothing. Module 2 of this study employs a similar methodology, using the natural experiment of the changes in payment arrangements for married pensioner and beneficiary families in the early and mid-1990s. The SPRC researchers working on the project are Bruce Bradbury and Saba Waseem.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH CENTRE

SOCIAL POLICY IN THE CITY

Jointly sponsored by the Social Policy Research Centre, Mission Australia and The Smith Family.

June 5: Wendy Stone (Australian Institute of Family Studies), *Social capital poor: reflections on the meaning and relevance of social capital for understanding disadvantage in Australia*.

Social Policy in the City is held at Mission Australia (4-10 Campbell Street, Sydney) from 12pm-2pm. A light lunch is provided.


RSVP to Thanh Vuong (Mission Australia) on either 9219 2022 or VuongT@mission.com.au.

SEMINAR

June 10: Joergen Elm Larsen (University of Copenhagen), *The Politics of Marginal Space*.

The seminar will be held from 1:00pm to 2:30pm, in Room 3.096 Level 3 (South Wing) Rupert Myers Building.

For further details contact Justin McNab (j.mcnab@unsw.edu.au or 9385 7818) or Duncan Aldridge (d.aldridge@unsw.edu.au or 9385 7802)



AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL POLICY CONFERENCE

SOCIAL INCLUSION

UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SYDNEY 9-11 JULY 2003

KEYNOTE AND PLENARY SPEAKERS

New And Old Conditions For Inclusion

Professor Hugh Stretton, University of Adelaide

People compress their inequalities, and share necessities and hardships more willingly, when war endangers their lives and liberties. Ours are endangered now by

environmental degradation. The measures needed for an effective green reconstruction of our economy have much in common with a classical social-democratic

mixed economy. Their marriage offers much more inclusion, by national and by local action, than a continuing neo-liberal economic strategy (green or not) can hope for.

Work Is Not Enough

Associate Professor Kathryn Edin, Northwestern University, USA

Over the last decade, the United States has embarked on one of the boldest social experiments in its history. Under its reformed welfare law, poor families with dependent children are no longer automatically entitled to public financial assistance. Instead, the federal government mandates States to impose stringent work requirements and to limit welfare receipt to 60 months over the lifetime. In the aftermath of the reform, unprecedented numbers of welfare recipients have left the assistance rolls and gone to work. Though many laud the reform and

consider it an unqualified success, others point to problems. These include: the large number of former recipients who remain poor or near poor and have no health benefits; the inexplicably low take-up of childcare subsidies and transitional Medicaid and Food Stamp benefits among those workers who should remain eligible; and the large numbers who must work evening or night shifts, or in temporary or seasonal jobs. Most worrying of all is the small yet significant minority who have left welfare but have no visible source of economic support.

Drawing on a number of

focused, in-depth studies. Dr Edin will demonstrate the value of qualitative research for policy makers and practitioners. These studies illuminate how personal characteristics, local contexts and larger social forces profoundly shape the ways in which individuals, families and communities respond to policy efforts. In doing so they offer crucial insights into the unintended consequences of policy and the missteps that often occur in its on-the-ground implementation.

How Has The Notion of Social Exclusion Developed In The European Discourse?

Professor Jonathan Bradshaw, University of York, UK

When the notion of social exclusion began to emerge in European discussion many poverty researchers were sceptical that it added value. However as time has passed more and more academics and policy makers are using the

words and even trying to operationalise them in empirical research and tackle it in policy. Indeed new notions have been added - social inclusion, social quality. Yet in the US discourse it remains ignored. This paper is a

review (by an early sceptic) of the theory and empirical practice of social exclusion and it will attempt to settle the question - is social exclusion merely a euphemism for poverty?

Bringing Australia together for Children and Youth

Professor Fiona Stanley AC, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth

Professor Stanley is the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, and the Australian of the

Year for 2003. Professor Stanley will be giving a special conference address entitled 'Bringing Australia together for Children and Youth'

on 9 July at 5.15pm, before the conference reception.

FORUMS AND ROUNDTABLES

- What Does Poverty Mean in Rich Countries Today?
- Combating Indigenous Exclusion
- Where to From Here for a New Social Settlement?
- Relaxed and Comfortable? Middle Australia in the Millennium
- Consumer-governed Care in Aged and Disability Services
- Going Public: Getting the Media Interested in Social Issues

SPECIAL RESEARCH WORKSHOPS

- First findings from the new ABS General Social Survey
- Emerging results from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics of Australians (HILDA) survey
- New research from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI)
- Community service futures – linking the labour force with service quality

CONTRIBUTED PAPER STRANDS

- employment, unemployment and welfare reform;
- income distribution and social inequalities;
- work/family balance;
- retirement and ageing;
- childhood and social inclusion;
- inclusion and exclusion of Indigenous Australians;
- health, disability and inclusion;
- spatial dimensions of social policy;
- citizenship and inclusion;
- organisation and delivery of community services;
- open

REGISTRATION

For registration, information on accommodation or special needs, contact the Hotel Network (02) 9411 4666, email aspc@hotelnetwork.com.au, or to register on line www.hotelnetwork.com.au/conference.php. Early bird registration closes 30 May.

For further information on conference content and arrangements, see the conference website at www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/ASPC2003/index.htm, email us at aspc2003@unsw.edu.au or phone (02) 9385 7802.

Conference sponsors include the Department of Family and Community Services, the NSW Department of Community Services, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Mission Australia and The Smith Family.

NEW PUBLICATION

ASSESSING THE QUALITY AND INTER-TEMPORAL COMPARABILITY OF ABS HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION SURVEY DATA

SPRC Discussion Paper No. 123, April 2003

Peter Siminski, Peter Saunders, Saba Waseem and Bruce Bradbury

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has conducted numerous surveys that are used to analyse poverty and the distribution of income amongst

Australian households. Confidentialised unit record data for those surveys held since 1975 are available for the use and scrutiny of researchers. Recently, concerns have arisen over the reliability of these data to represent the circumstances of the population, and especially changes therein over time. This paper examines the quality and inter-temporal comparability of these survey data by comparing aggregates derived from the surveys to external data such as official population estimates, labour force data, the National Accounts

and administrative data. We summarise the major changes to the survey data in an Appendix. Issues discussed include mis-reporting of income, and differences in scope, weighting procedures, definitions and collection methodology. The analysis suggests that uncritical use of the data may give rise to flawed estimates of the extent of poverty and inequality in Australia and how these have changed over time. There is scope to improve the comparability of the survey data, and the SPRC is pursuing this task in partnership with the ABS.

MAILING LIST FORM

SPRC DISCUSSION PAPERS (FREE)

A new SPRC Discussion Paper has been posted to the SPRC website.

Peter Siminski, Peter Saunders, Saba Waseem and Bruce Bradbury Assessing the Quality and Inter-temporal Comparability of ABS Household Income Distribution Survey Data

Available from: www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/dp/DPI23.pdf

- MAILING LISTS (FREE)**
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