

Working neighbourhoods? The salience of paid and unpaid work in six neighbourhoods



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Outline

- Summary of Poverty and Place research programme
- Political and economic context
- Experiences of and attitudes towards paid and unpaid work
- Policy implications

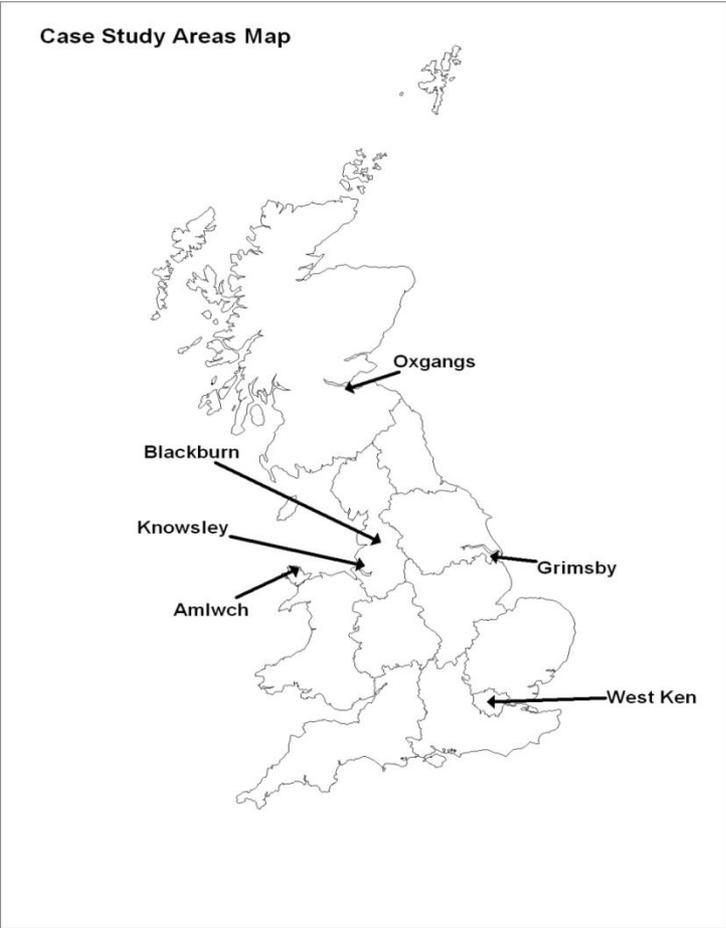
Aims of Poverty and Place

- ❑ Understand relationship between poverty and place
- ❑ Salience of 'place' in decisions and actions
- ❑ Focus on *agency* of individuals
- ❑ Broad range of themes
- ❑ Not a specific programme evaluation
- ❑ Policy relevance? Extent to which policy assumptions reflect lived experiences of poverty

The Research Programme

- ❑ 2007- end of 2010
- ❑ Research team based at CRESR
- ❑ Six neighbourhoods across Britain
- ❑ Qualitative interviews with households in each area
 - Wave 1: 30 h/holds in 2008
 - Wave 2: 18-20 h/holds in 2009
 - Wave 3: 10 h/holds 2010
- ❑ Visual element: photos and film

Case Study Areas Map



Labour market context

	Total work'ness	Labour market trajectories
Knowsley	34	Severe long-term decline in manufacturing, little alternative employment. Isolated from key centres of employment (e.g. Liverpool)
Blackburn	30	Long-term decline in textiles, manufacturing but alternative work in service sector (retail, taxi driving). Close to sources of employment in town centre and industrial estates.
West Marsh	27	Long-term decline in fishing and manufacturing although food production sector still key employer. Close to sources of employment in town centre and industrial estates.
Oxgangs	24	No sense of long-term decline in key workplaces or sectors. Employment available in diverse range of sectors. Close to sources of employment in city centre.
West Kensington	23	No sense of long-term decline in key workplaces or sectors. Employment available in diverse range of sectors. Highly polarised labour market. Close to sources of employment in city centre.
Amlwch	20	Long-term decline in chemical processing, fishing, shipbuilding. Limited alternative employment in service sector (retail, tourism) Isolated from main centres of employment (e.g. Bangor).

Welfare reform

- ❑ Coalition policy marked by continuity rather than change
- ❑ Extension of conditionality to the economically inactive

- ❑ Making work pay (Universal Credit white paper)
- ❑ The Work Programme
- ❑ Volunteering as a route back into work
- ❑ Tougher conditionality:
 - Maximum three year benefit withdrawal
 - 'Mandatory Work Activity'

Assumptions remain the same

The causes of worklessness:

- ❑ Worklessness is largely a supply-side phenomenon
- ❑ Culture is a major barrier to work:
 - Welfare as *'lifestyle choice'* (Osborne, 2010)
 - *'The culture of worklessness and dependency that has done so much harm to individuals, families and whole communities'* (DWP, 2010).

And the benefits of work:

- ❑ Work is *'good for all of us beyond the importance of income...people in work have better health; they develop strong social networks'* (CSJ, 2009)
- ❑ *'Welfare dependency [has] huge social and economic cost for individuals, their families and wider society'* (DWP, 2010).

Neighbourhood renewal

- ❑ End of large-scale ABIs (NDC) and discretionary funds to tackle worklessness (WNF)
- ❑ Focus on stimulating private sector growth through LEPs and Regional Growth Fund
- ❑ The Big Society – communities taking control through a '*new culture of voluntarism, philanthropy, social action*' (Cameron, 2010)

The economic context

- ❑ Concerns about **job quantity**: 2.45m workless + '*hidden unemployment*' in the industrial regions (Beatty and Fothergill, 2007)
- ❑ And possibility of jobless growth?
- ❑ And also concerns about **job quality**: Six out of ten households in poverty have one person in work (Cooke and Lawton, 2008)
- ❑ Two million '*vulnerable workers*' in '*precarious work*' that is insecure and low-paid (TUC, 2008)

Understanding the role of work

- ❑ Employment histories
- ❑ Experiences of worklessness
- ❑ Availability of work
- ❑ The importance of paid work
- ❑ Engagement in unpaid work (parenting, caring, volunteering)

Two reports

- 'Work and worklessness in deprived neighbourhoods' (JRF, 2009)
- 'Work, place and identity: the salience of work in six neighbourhoods' (CRESR, 2010)

'Work and worklessness': key findings

- ❑ Finding work difficult even *before* the recession and has now got harder

- ❑ Employment can build self-esteem and confidence....

- ❑ ...but work does not always pay and detrimental to well-being when it involves:
 - Long or unsocial hours
 - Poor or exploitative working conditions
 - Insecurity

Orientations to work

Strong attachment to work

Nobody's pushing me to work because I've two young children, three of them are under 16, nobody pushing me, nobody asking me, so I just want to work... some people they just go 'I don't want to work' stay on benefit their whole life, ... but I want to do something, I want to be working, independent, I want my children to be independent. Sometimes I struggle with the money, if I work they take it off and some people say 'what's the point you working, they take it off'.

(Carmel, Blackburn, 20-24, works part-time)

Morally I've always done it, I've had a job since I was about 12 always done some sort of work, paper rounds, odd jobs, I've always done it, never been out of work ever. ... never been on the dole either, never gone to the dole.

(Malcolm, Grimsby, 16-24, works full-time)

The importance of paid work (1)

- ❑ Concerns about availability and quality of work (pay, hours and security)...
- ❑ ..but work also valued for:
 - (limited) financial gains and sense of financial independence
 - self-esteem and confidence
 - social interaction
 - routine, structure and purpose
 - sense of 'making a difference'

The importance of paid work (2)

Financial gains

[It's become] easier, a lot easier... obviously I get my wages which cos I work part time it's not a lot but tax credits are really good, they give you a lot of money. They pay for 80 per cent of my son's nursery place plus I get in work credit which is £60 a week for the first year of working so the benefits system is very good. I'm probably about £75 a week better off which is good definitely.

(Sandra, West Kensington, 25-29, works part-time in a shop, previously looking after family full-time)

Financial independence

The job is my life, if I don't go to work I can't pay my rent, I can't look after the family. It's my living, if I don't go to work I don't get money, I don't want to be on government, getting money for the government, so I just work to get the things I need, I want to buy something when I work I get paid that's when I can do things I want to do.

(Gary, West Kensington, 45-64, works full-time)

The importance of paid work (3)

Routine, structure and purpose:

We do all sorts. I actually tiled the bathroom, never tiled a bathroom and I thoroughly enjoyed it. And to get paid for doing something that you get so much satisfaction out of, it's not a job is it? ... I get out and about with her because we go shopping, clothes shopping and we go and have a coffee and a chat and meet friends out, not many people can have a job where you have got to look after somebody but you still have a social life at the same time, which we do.

(Julie, Grimsby, 45-64, works full-time)

Work good *and* bad for well-being?

Reconciling the two narratives:

I left [the company] last summer because the stress got to me, the big hours and all that ... I was going to start jobs very early in the morning, I'd had enough. I was taken ill really, I was on antidepressants for a bit, I couldn't cope any more...

...I enjoy working, I couldn't sit in the house all day watching telly, that's not me, there's only so much you can do in the house, painting and stuff so no, I enjoy work.

(Bryn, Amlwch, 25-29, works full-time)

- Benefits of work could be experienced *in spite* of otherwise onerous terms and conditions.

Experiences of unpaid work

- ❑ Includes parenting, caring and volunteering
- ❑ Unpaid work devalued within policy agendas that prioritise paid employment (Levitas, 2005)
- ❑ Fairly widespread participation in unpaid activity including among the workless
- ❑ Confers significant benefits to both individuals and wider communities
- ❑ Sometimes more valuable than paid work?

Parenting and caring

Moral obligation

I just [worked] when I was a teenager because I had three in the family and I was at that age when I used to stay at home and look after them. They don't do that now do they, they have to go to work some of them. It's a shame really cos ...they haven't got that care from an early age, a mother there all the time to learn them right and wrong.

(Cherry, Blackburn, 45-64, retired due to ill-health)

Source of self-esteem

I had a nervous breakdown, I met [my husband] in hospital, and we sort of just got together and I had taken early severance from the office and I became his full time carer. I actual feel more confident doing that than I ever did in the office really, I feel I'm needed, he couldn't do without me ...I enjoy looking after him... but I don't really miss work.

(Maureen, Oxfords, 45-64, retired)

Volunteering

Making a difference

I am full time carer but in order to feed myself as a human and provide something to my society I am not living just for my mother, I have two days per week to four days ,one day I go [to a hospital] and work as volunteer there.. and I work also as volunteer in my culture in the church, if the church need anything. In any occasion related to the church the bishop will call me in order to come and serve in this occasion because I am professional at take photo. I feel that I am providing something to my society, I'm not completely isolated.

(Ahmed, 45-64, West Kensington, full-time carer for his mother)

Volunteering

Social contact

We have so much social contact that church that to be quite honest at the end of the day you want to lock yourself in an attic somewhere and have some quiet time on your own with no other people around because you are moving in a circle where you have to interact all the time with various people on various levels. You don't miss going to work for the social bit because you've got all that in that field.

(Kimberley, Blackburn, 35-44, looking after family full-time, volunteers at local church)

Conclusions

- ❑ Paid work can provide *qualified* forms of satisfaction
- ❑ Challenges assumption that paid work is *unequivocally* good for well-being
- ❑ Unpaid activities provide equally (if not more) important source of esteem and satisfaction
- ❑ Undermines characterisation of workless as passive and dependent
- ❑ Worklessness not invariably bad for well-being
- ❑ 'Workless neighbourhoods' are source of unpaid work

Policy implications (1)

- ❑ Sluggish labour markets and ‘jobless growth’ may limit the ambition of welfare reforms
- ❑ Conditionality may require individuals to look for (appropriate) jobs that don’t exist
- ❑ Positive experiences of unpaid activity suggest value in harnessing these activities as:
 - routes back into paid work (Work Programme)
 - or as medium to longer-term *alternatives* to work e.g. Community Allowance
- ❑ Broader social and economic benefits (SROI)

Implications for policy (2)

- ❑ Provide some impetus to Big Society agenda
- ❑ Harnessing the strengths, interests and skills of workless residents for the benefit of communities

- ❑ But naïve exhortations for residents to '*club together*' will not solve area deprivation
- ❑ Not 'container spaces' (Amin, 2005) in which the causes and remedies of decline can be discerned
- ❑ But limited scope for developing unpaid activities.

References

- ❑ Crisp *et al.* (2009) *Work and worklessness in deprived neighbourhoods*: (<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/work-worklessness-deprived-neighbourhoods>)
- ❑ Crisp, R. (2010) *Work, place and identity: the salience of work in six neighbourhoods*:
(<http://research.shu.ac.uk/cresr/living-through-change/documents/RP10WorkandIdentity.pdf>)