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SPA Policy Events

As members know the Association advances the role of Social Policy research within policymaking, practice and wider public debates. As part of this, we have been holding policy roundtable events. These are aimed at policy makers, think tanks and practitioners as well as academics.

The next event, a roundtable on **Welfare-to-Work Policy**, will take place in London, on 11th September 2015 from 12pm-3pm, Location: Elliott Room, British Library Conference Centre, 96 Euston Road, London

This event will draw on a range of Social Policy research to explore the impact of and lessons learnt from this development. Alongside academic experts and research

groups, representatives from Citizens Advice Bureau, Policy Exchange, IPPR, Demos, and the New Economics Foundation will deliver policy briefings to answer the question: “Does Welfare Conditionality Work?”.

In collaboration with the British Library, a recording of the policy briefings and a brief summary of the event will be available on the SPA website.

Lunch will be provided for delegates. Places are limited.

Event contact:

D.Edmiston@leeds.ac.uk

Later in the Autumn there will be a policy roundtable event on Criminal Justice Policy. More details will be made available on the SPA website -

<http://www.social-policy.org.uk/what-we-do/events/>

SPA Grants Programme

Report On Event Supported By Social Policy Association Grants Programme

‘Getting with the Programme’ Seminar Series, February - April 2015

Stephen Crossley (PhD Candidate, Durham University)
Michael Lambert (PhD Candidate, Lancaster University)

Introduction

In the aftermath of the English riots in 2011, David Cameron announced that one only had to ‘join the dots’ to work out that parenting failures were a primary cause of many young people being involved in the disturbances. He went on to say that if the ‘broken society’ was to be mended, family and parenting was the place to start, making clear his ambition to ‘turn around’ the lives of the 120,000 most ‘troubled families’ in the UK – ‘the ones that everyone in their neighbourhood knows and often avoids’.

Four months later, in December 2011, the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) was launched, tasked with realising the Prime Minister’s ambition. Shortly after the launch, critics noted that the figure of 120,000 families was misappropriated from research carried out by the previous Labour government around multiple disadvantages and not ‘troublesome’ behaviours. Despite this, and subsequent concerns regarding the integrity of some of the ‘data’ used in the ‘troubled families’ agenda, the TFP has become one of the coalition government’s highest profile social policies. This profile has undoubtedly been aided by the presence of Louise Casey, the former head of the Anti-Social

Behaviour Unit and the Respect Task Force, as the senior civil servant responsible for the programme. The expansion of the programme to include 400,000 more families was announced in June 2013, before the independent evaluation had published any findings. The programme has been heralded as a success by politicians of all the major parties and the media, with a strong emphasis on an allegedly new way of working intensively with families, which meets both the needs of the families involved and 'the taxpayer' in a time of austerity.

Supported by a postgraduate grant from the SPA, three seminars were organised in the lead up to the General Election in 2015 to discuss and explore different aspects of the 'troubled families' narrative. These seminars were supported by, and held at, Durham University, Lancaster University and the London School of Economics.

Workshop 1 – History and Contemporary Practice

The first workshop in the series explored the history of the concept of 'troubled families' by examining how the state's interest in family life had evolved over time. Professor Roger Smith, from the School of Applied Social Sciences at Durham University welcomed participants and provided a brief introduction to the state's concern with 'delinquent' or 'deviant' populations. He concluded that 'we have been here before'. Michal Lambert, a PhD candidate in the Department of History at Lancaster University, then spoke in detail about some remarkable continuities between the discourses surrounding the 'problem families' of the 1950s and those involved in the 'troubled families' today, also

highlighting some changes that had taken place along the way. The second part of the workshop saw Sue Bond-Taylor, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Lincoln, explore an 'ethic of care' within the 'troubled families' policy, using Sevenhuijsen's *Trace* methodology. Sue highlighted the differences between the 'troubled families' policy narrative(s) and the way practitioners talked about the families they were working with. Dr Aniela Wenham, a Lecturer from the Social Policy and Social Work department at York University, drew on empirical research with young people who had experienced the TFP as an intervention in their families' lives. The sometimes positive experience of the programme was contrasted with the 'void' that was left when engagement with the programme ended, as a result, in part at least, of sharp reductions in youth service provision. The workshop, which attracted around 60 participants concluded with discussions amongst the audience, facilitated by Professor Lena Dominelli of the School of Applied Social Sciences at Durham University, around the implications for local policy-makers and practitioners of narrative like 'troubled families', and those that came before it.

Workshop 2 – Theory and Sociological views

The second workshop was held at Lancaster University in March 2015 and explored the development of the 'troubled families' narrative and its wider implications, using a variety of sociological and theoretical perspectives. Dr John Welshman from the Department of History at Lancaster opened the proceedings and gave a brief

introduction to the development of the 'troubled families' agenda and some of its historical antecedents. Dr Imogen Tyler from the Department of Sociology at Lancaster drew on work she has carried out with Dr Tracey Jensen from the University of East London, to highlight the political crafting of the 'troubled families' narrative and how the policy, along with others, is being used as a weapon against the poor in a post-welfare Britain. Professor Andrew Sayer, also from the Department of Sociology at Lancaster, continued in a similar vein when he highlighted the power for framing the problem as a group of 'troubled families' rather than a dysfunctional economy which failed to address structural inequalities. Stephen Crossley, a PhD student from Durham University explored issues of class and cleanliness in a talk which focused on the emphasis on practical hands-on support in domestic tasks as a way of the state supporting 'troubled families'. Professor Rob MacDonald from Teesside University then drew on empirical research conducted with families experiencing severe and multiple disadvantages and who would almost certainly fall into the 'troubled' category. He highlighted work he and Professor Tracy Shildrick of Leeds University have been involved with which challenges the official representation of 'troubled families', highlighting issues around the structure of opportunities and the socio-spatial concentration of health inequalities affecting these families and the areas in which some of them live. Dr Andrew

Wallace of School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Lincoln concluded the day with

a thought provoking talk on 'landscapes of correction' in which he explored the 'domestic' as terrain for framing and naming deficient subjects in the UK at the current time.

Workshop 3 – In Search of the 'Troubled Family'

The third and final workshop took place at the LSE in April and was opened with a keynote speech from Professor John Macnicol of the LSE, one of the most influential writers on the history and development of the 'underclass' thesis in the 1980s and 1990s. Professor Macnicol explored the history of the underclass and concluded that, when examining the various reconstructions of the underclass concept and the proposed policy solutions, today's politicians had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. Jonathan Portes, Director of the National Institute for Economic and Social Research responded to Professor Macnicol and used his experience as a former senior civil servant to offer an alternative perspective on policy development, before highlighting some concerns over the use and misuse of research and statistics in the TFP. Dr John Welshman then explored changes and continuities between 'problem families' and 'troubled families', with a particular focus on definitions and descriptions, the nature of the intervention and the criteria for success. The talks were concluded Dr Nicola Horsley and Professor Val Gillies from Goldsmiths highlighting a more detailed comparative case analysis of 'troubled families' at four different points in history which they are currently undertaking with Professor

Rosalind Edwards of Southampton University. This work is being carried out with

Family Action, a voluntary organisation that began life as the Charity Organisation Society and draws on archival records of casework notes written by workers working with the families, going back to the 1870s. The seminar – and the series – finished with a discussion of what to do next with both the material produced by the speakers at the three events and the interest generated by the series in challenging the dominant current narrative surrounding 'troubled families.'

Next steps

The Conservative victory in the 2015 General Election should ensure that the Troubled Families Programme continues and develops. It will be interesting to see if and how a pre-election commitment to explore ways of developing the TFP model to include work with different types of households will be operationalized. The independent evaluation of the TFP by Ecorys, expected at some point in 2015, will be of interest to social policy researchers and practitioners.

There is work taking place to produce a themed section of a journal with some of the papers presented during the seminar series and other outputs are expected as well, with the potential for a Parliamentary event suggested by one of the participants at the events. A brief summary of the seminar series, along with some photographs and all of the presentations from the events, can be found in the Postgraduate section of the SPA website.

Stephen Crossley is on Twitter at @akindoftrouble

Michael Lambert is on Twitter at @grandcamouflage

Applying for an SPA Grant

The deadline for applications for the current round of SPA Grants is the **18th September 2015**.

The maximum payment for awards is £500.

'For further Information on how to apply go to

<http://www.social-policy.org.uk/what-we-do/grants/>

Employability Soundbites

In an initiative developed by post-graduate representatives on the SPA Executive Committee, Social Policy Association Executive members give their thoughts on how to increase employability. To find out more go to:

<http://www.social-policy.org.uk/uncategorized/employability-soundbites/>

On writing *Father and Daughter*

Ann Oakley

UCL Institute of Education

Father and Daughter is a book that straddles a number of genres – biography, autobiography, social history, sociology, social policy, gender studies. It is about aspects of my father, Richard Titmuss's, life and work, and about some of the connections between these and my own life and work as a social scientist. At the book's centre is a puzzle: how and why a political commitment to equality can sometimes be blind to other axes of difference, and particularly the issue of gender. Discrimination against women is a matter of evidence,

not of opinion, in exactly the same way that we know about class inequalities from the statistics of poverty and wealth: the facts stare us in the face. Richard Titmuss and his colleagues in the social policy world of the 1950s-1970s concerned themselves very much with social divisions, but they paid little attention to the gendering of either public or private lives, seeing this as a taken-for-granted and therefore essentially uninteresting feature of social systems. It has, of course, been the subject of much of my own work.

The dismissal of gender was one of several key contradictions that accompanied my growing up in the Titmuss household. I was reminded of these when English heritage put a blue plaque on my childhood home in west London a few years ago as a memorial to my father's work. Seeing the house again, and going round it (the new owners were very hospitable), evoked powerful memories. These included memories of a particular period soon after we moved to the house in 1951 when I was seven, and my father had recently taken up his academic post to run the Department of Social Administration at the London School of Economics. The main business of the Department when he inherited it was social work training, and most of the staff were women social workers. He did not find this an easy situation, nor one that fitted his vision for an academic department whose work would make a major contribution to social policy. I recall being somewhat puzzled at the time by his description of the social workers as 'difficult women' – when I met them they did not really seem particularly difficult to me. I stored the

memory away, perhaps as something that might one day become a research project.

The middle chapters of *Father and Daughter* are about what I discovered was known as 'the LSE Affair': a long-drawn out, tense and tear-causing saga about the relationships between social work, social policy and social science. This also turned out to be the beginning of a story about forgotten women welfare-state-builders. The 'difficult women' my father complained about were part of an international network of women activists and academics whose work promoting public welfare was a much more important influence on policy on both sides of the Atlantic than is generally recognised. (This fascinating story is one I intend to continue sometime.) The gender alliances in the LSE Affair – the women social workers versus the (mainly) male social policy experts – also stared me in the face when I started researching it. I was struck by the way these resonated with the fabric of family life in the 1950s, and with my own experience as a child in the 'blue plaque' house. My father had the public role, my mother the care of the house, him and me. They led the distinctly but ordinarily gender-differentiated lives of middle class families at the time, whose dissatisfactions (for women) would eventually give birth to second-wave feminism.

Writing about one's parents is not an easy task. There are memories and there are posthoc explanations and insights, and there are, to some extent, also the facts of what actually was going on. I did very much enjoy my forays into these fields of facts – not only the backroom story of the LSE Affair but

another backroom story about my father's reputation as a self-made man, the son of a poor farmer, who rose to international fame without any educational qualifications at all. His family background turned out, when inspected more closely, not to be so impoverished after all. I even uncovered a group of relatives who are probably related to the Queen!

Books by sons and daughters have a certain reputation, usually for being serial complaints about the sins committed by parents, although sometimes such memoirs have the opposite character of completely uncritical celebration. The stereotyping of filial memoirs was a problem for me in writing *Father and Daughter*. What I wanted to write about was not my parents, but the whole social fabric and context of the period, and the way in which social scientists and others whose professional business is the social understood and analysed this. I have always been fascinated by the connections between private lives and public issues, by the way in which people's personal lives interact with their public ones. This, of course, was an important insight of feminism in the 1970s, and it is one that I and many others have tried to import into academic work. *Father and Daughter* explores the ways in which my father's private life influenced his work and his writing, and the ways in which being my father's daughter has influenced mine.

I learnt much from being Richard Titmuss's daughter – about the importance of evidence, for example, about the policy impact of powerful intellectual analyses, about the connectedness of health, welfare and education systems, about the role of moral

values in binding or separating communities of people and scholars. I learnt that scholarship could, and should, be passionate, and that the only lasting value of academic institutions is the contribution their inhabitants can make to the welfare of people outside them. This sifting of the past into legacies we value and legacies we dispute that occupies *Father and Daughter* is very much an ordinary everyday story of how identity is constructed and reconstructed, with that particular edge that comes as we get older and embark on a reconciliation of ourselves with the people, places and circumstances that shaped us.

***Father and Daughter* is published by Policy Press**

The York Policy Review

The York Policy Review (YPR) is the UK's first postgraduate peer-reviewed journal focusing on social policy and social work issues.

Run by students for students, the journal aims to publicise postgraduate research to as wide an audience as possible and avoid the delays and costs associated with 'traditional' publishing outlets. The journal was officially launched in March 2015 at the University of York and is available both in print and online. The YPR carries three different types of submissions:

Research Articles (approximately 5,000 words)

These take the form of 'stand-alone' papers detailing the findings of social science research.

Methods in Practice Articles

(approximately 1,500 to 2,000 words)

These outline methodological challenges faced by students or present interim research findings.

Policy Analysis Articles (approximately 1,500 words)

These briefly examine a policy issue or proposed policy change and are designed to provide a mechanism for undergraduate students to gain experience of writing for publication.

The YPR is accepting submissions for its autumn edition and is currently recruiting doctoral researchers to join its bank of reviewers.

For more information please visit www.yorkpolicyreview.co.uk or follow us on Twitter @YorkPolReview.

SPA EXECUTIVE Welcome to the New Members of the SPA Executive:

- Zoe Irving, University of York,
- Theo Papadopolous, University of Bath,
- Lee Gregory, University of Birmingham
- Hardeep Aiden as the new postgraduate rep from the University of Bristol.

Looking Ahead: Jane Millar, University of Bath, will be shadowing Nick Ellison for a year before taking over as chair of the SPA in 2016 and Rachael Dobson will be shadowing Tina Haux before taking over as Honorary Secretary in 2016.

Social Policy and Society and Journal of Social Policy

The new members of the Social Policy and Society Editorial Board are Jon Glasby and Simon Pemberton from the University of Birmingham and Kayleigh Garthwaite and Theo Papadopolous from the University of Bath.

James Rees from the University of Birmingham will be joining the Journal of Social Policy Editorial Board.

SPA Conference

A full report on the 2015 SPA Conference and Awards will appear in the Autumn edition of the Newsletter

The 2016 SPA Conference will be hosted by Ulster University and take place in Belfast from 4-6 July 2016.

