Future perfect: Managing the governance of Olympic risk

Education: How home life affects learning

Judith Rees: Coping with a changing climate

Pillow talk
Have we become a nation of insomniacs?
Welcome to the Spring issue of Society Now, the ESRC’s regular magazine that showcases the research we fund and the impact of social science.

As the first findings of the Understanding Society survey are published, our main feature on page 10 looks at how working longer hours is affecting our sleep and family life, potentially putting our health at risk.

This issue also includes a feature on education and social mobility – why do children growing up in poorer households still underperform in school and eventually drift away from education?

The work to assess and manage the complex risks of staging the London 2012 Olympic Games is explained on page 20. And this issue also includes two opinion pieces that look at protest: what is the role of the internet in galvanising protestors; and what can social science teach us about the best and least provocative ways to manage demonstrations?

I hope you find the magazine enjoyable and informative. We always welcome letters, feedback and ideas for content.

Nick Stevens, Editor

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CUTS IN FUNDING to the voluntary sector are placing the Government’s vision for a big society in jeopardy, according to researcher Dr Jane Holgate of Leeds University Business School. A three-year study of how ethnic minority workers deal with problems they have encountered at work finds evidence of an ‘advice desert’. Problems at work can have a serious impact on employees’ personal lives in terms of ill-health, unemployment and poverty. “The lack of support for employment problems is a serious issue,” argues Dr Holgate. “Current advice agencies are seriously under-funded and this is likely to get worse because of forthcoming cuts. If the big society is to be meaningful, then resources need to be directed at community level to provide the advice and support that is needed.”

The study, conducted among Kurds in Hackney, South Asians in Ealing and Black Caribbeans in Lambeth, was prompted by concerns about the lack of support for workers facing disciplinary and grievance issues ranging from bullying to failure to pay wages (including the National Minimum Wage). With over 70 per cent of workers in the UK labour market without union representation, researchers aimed to discover what people do when they have a problem at work.

Findings reveal a dearth of employment advice available, particularly for the most vulnerable workers, but also for most workers without trade union representation. Only 44 per cent of those interviewed were trade union members. Of the non-trade union members, 45 per cent said they either did not have a union in their workplace, or that no-one had asked them to join.

Finding timely, informative and appropriate employment advice from sources other than trade unions was very difficult. While there are a number of government and voluntary sector advice websites and telephone helplines available to workers, very few of those interviewed knew about these. Moreover, what workers really wanted was to talk through the specifics of their case and to find an advisor who would represent them in dealings with their employer. When advice was available – from Citizens Advice Bureaux or Law Centres – there were problems with access, restricted opening hours and ineligibility for legal aid.

“The government appears not to realise the devastating impact that the cuts in funding to voluntary sector organisations will have on the most vulnerable in society,” Dr Holgate points out. “Recently, we heard how five Birmingham Citizens Advice offices were to close immediately. And this is only the start. Our research shows that if the government is serious about its big society agenda then we will need these types of services more than ever as hundreds of thousands of people lose their jobs and are in need of help and advice to keep themselves and their children out of poverty.”
IN BRIEF

WEIGHING THE RISKS
Many choices in life, such as how much to save, depend on how willing people are to take risks. Research will provide new measures of the willingness to take risks and to forgo current pleasures for future rewards. Having such measures will provide a more complete picture of the factors that shape choices relating to savings, borrowing and health behaviours.

ESRC Grant Number RES-000-22-4264

SURROGATE MOTHERS
What are the longer-term experiences of surrogate mothers? A previous study of women who were interviewed one year after the birth of the child suggested surrogacy could result in positive experiences. Researchers will follow up this sample of surrogate mothers ten years after surrogacy. Findings will be of relevance to families, clinicians and other professionals involved in surrogacy and will inform policy and legislation nationally and internationally.

ESRC Grant Number RES-061-25-0480

A CHILDREN’S FORUM
The newly established Children’s Sector Forum in Scotland aims to provide a powerful, unified voice in national-level policymaking. Researchers will identify sustainable ways of working which support children’s and young people’s participation that are effective in influencing policy and meaningful to the people involved – for Scotland’s Children’s Sector Forum and thus national policymaking.

ESRC Grant Number RES-189-25-0174

Migrants boost UK hotel innovation

MIGRANTS PLAY A key role in making smaller British hotels more innovative, according to research. Findings show that migrants are an important source of fresh ideas and capacity to implement change for the hotel industry.

“Migrants are essential because they constitute two thirds of the management in London’s small and medium-sized hotels and they are more innovative than British managers, particularly in areas of marketing and management,” says Professor Gareth Shaw. “The types of innovation they implement are small and incremental (such as updating software) but are essential in terms of improving the quality and performance of hotels and, in the longer term, the UK’s international competitiveness.”

Researchers explored innovation processes in large hotel organisations operating at the international level, as well as innovations within micro and small enterprises in London.

The research also found that many large hotel groups are quick to adopt and exploit innovations developed outside the industry, although there is a considerable gap between the most and least effective companies in terms of innovation. While hotels of all types have low levels of in-house research and development, innovative activity has been boosted through the formation of strong links and direct co-production between the hotel and, for example, IT providers. In-room technology for guests has become an important service, for example, with hotels initiating direct links with IT companies to develop products. “The strong level of co-production of innovation means that the hotel industry is critical to the development and survival of many UK-based IT companies,” co-researcher Professor Allan Williams points out.

The study reveals that the UK hotel industry is a rich environment for innovation, and a good example of how the shifting boundaries of technology innovation are promoting new forms of co-production. Hoteliers need to ensure they have the necessary expertise and attitude to take advantage of new technological approaches in the industry, researchers suggest.

Findings further indicate that a continuing supply of migrant managers into the UK is essential. Many do not have a professional education or previous background in hotels, but have strong generic skills. “A new points-based migration management system could make it hard for these managers to work in the UK,” Professor Williams argues. “But cutting off this source of innovative managers could pose problems for the competitiveness of the small to medium-sized enterprises hotel sector in cities such as London.”

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Targeted Initiative on Innovation Programme
**Russian female prisoners suffer dual isolation**

At the end of 2009, there were approximately 49,000 women imprisoned in 46 of Russia’s penal colonies. The majority were held at considerable distances from home, often in remote places difficult for their relatives to access. Transportation of prisoners, including juveniles, to some colonies could take over two weeks.

New research with imprisoned women and girls and former prisoners in Russia highlights the ‘dual isolation’ they feel within the Russian penal system. Distance results in women feeling ‘out of place’ and makes maintaining contact with the outside world difficult, which can lead to family breakdown. More than 70 per cent of female prisoners in the colonies receive no visitors.

Despite the recent announcement of a radical restructuring of the penal system, which includes plans to increase the number of facilities for women, the prospects for change in Russia’s penal system geography that victimises as well as punishes are not, in the short term, encouraging.

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IN BRIEF

YOUTH POLITICS
Only 39 per cent of young people voted in the 2001 General Election. This project follows a 2002 survey investigating attitudes towards politics held by 18-year-olds. It will focus on the new generation a decade later and examine whether their views on the political and democratic process differ from those recorded in 2002.

ESRC Grant Number RES-000-22-4450

EXPERIENCE OF AWE
Technological advances have come at the cost of natural resources, putting humanity at risk. Researchers will examine how far awe-inspiring natural environments (eg, wilderness) sensitise people to nature by providing exceptional emotional experiences of awe and self-transcendence. Outcome measures will include quantification of concern for the natural environment and the protection of resources.

ESRC Grant Number RES-000-22-4453

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP
Little is known about the role leadership plays as small, innovative companies grow and face increasing organisational, strategic and commercial challenges. This study will explore the factors affecting leadership and the types of leadership in small, innovative companies and small to medium-sized enterprises as these transform into larger enterprises and encounter increasing organisational complexity.

ESRC Grant Number RES-073-27-0024

Long-term costs of birth problems

AVERTING WOMEN’S pregnancy-related death is recognised as an international health and development priority. Maternal survival is, in this sense, a success story. However, new research into those women who survive severe obstetric complications in Burkina Faso, West Africa finds that the long term-effect is social and health-related rather than financial. These survivors had more fertility and chronic health problems, and were still experiencing higher mortality, as did their children four years on. They were also more likely to migrate or to divorce. Researchers suggest that maternal health policy needs to be concerned not only with averting the loss of life but also with preventing or ameliorating other losses set in motion by an obstetric crisis.

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US home ownership falls for young

HOME OWNERSHIP AMONG young Americans fell strikingly between 1980 and 2000, a period when ownership should have become easier. Why was this? A new study has explored house ownership during a period when US government initiatives to increase home ownership and developments in the mortgage market should have made it more attractive to own a home.

Findings show that a fall in marriage rates accounts for half of the decline in young Americans’ home ownership. The other main reason was a rise in household earnings risk. A substantial increase in uncertainty about earnings resulted in people delaying home ownership. These two reasons account for three to four-fifths of the decline in home ownership among the young.

This research, the first to draw the connection between heightened earnings risk and lower home ownership, has important implications for public policy both in the US and the UK. “To the extent that heightened income risk is here to stay, then we should expect aggregate home ownership rates to begin to decline going forward,” states researcher Professor Martin Gervais. “If such a decline is the optimal response of households to an increase in risk, then policymakers should be wary of introducing market distortions to offset the decline. On the other hand, if high rates of home ownership are viewed as a desirable public policy objective then existing institutions and regulations designed to boost home ownership will need to be rethought.”

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MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF North African radicalism as a uniform phenomenon is wide of the mark, according to a three-year study of radicalisation in North Africa. “People tend to ‘lump’ together militancy in North Africa when a more nuanced and balanced view is required if you really want to understand the situation,” argues Alison Pargeter. “Militancy in Morocco, for example, has very different characteristics from militancy in Libya and to understand this properly we need to consider the different national or, more appropriately, local experiences.”

Researchers set out to analyse what factors have had and continue to have a bearing on Islamic radicalisation in North Africa, in particular what local factors may have fuelled support for Islamist alternatives in the region. Researchers interviewed North African Islamists including militants and former militants, as well as officials, defence lawyers, human rights activists and the families of suspects imprisoned on terrorist charges.

A key finding is that a new generation of militants has emerged that differs in many respects from that of the 1980s and 1990s. “This new generation is less overtly politicised,” explains Pargeter. “Up to the 1990s even those in militant groups had some sort of directed political goal and were also able to articulate the grievances felt by certain parts of the population. In marked contrast, today’s militants seem to be driven by rejectionism, despondency, religious fervour and, in many cases, appear to be wrapped up in a reckless nihilism. Where violence used to be almost a by-product of the political environment, for this new generation it appears to have become an end in itself.”

This reckless nihilism may, researchers say, be the consequence of the lack of progress made by earlier militants. Today’s militants seem to radicalise quickly and have shallow religious knowledge. The internet is not their biggest influence. Rather, these young militants are often heavily influenced by individuals within their own circle and by the radical ideology advocated by religious satellite channels from Egypt and the Gulf.

While today’s militants may be inspired by Al-Qa’ida, particularly in terms of tactics, they appear largely driven by local preoccupations and grievances. “Despite repeated efforts by the State and by older generations of Islamists to portray this new current as something imported from abroad, the disaffection has deep roots within individual North African societies,” Pargeter concludes.
WHAT ARE THE most effective ways of engaging citizens so they do things for the common good? Researchers from an ESRC Ventures project have conducted 12 experimental trials and initiatives to test whether nudging citizens to get involved using some incentive, feedback or cue is effective in giving people the opportunity to think about key social problems and prompt them into action.

Researchers carried out a range of research developing innovative experiments over a three-year period in areas such as charitable giving, recycling and volunteering. Researcher Professor Peter John says: “We found that citizens are willing to change their behaviour and do more to help themselves and others if approached in the right way. But government will have to learn to operate differently if the big society is to be encouraged.”

For example, in one project researchers tested the impact of canvassing on household recycling. In partnership with EMERGE, a social enterprise which delivers a weekly kerbside recycling service, more than 6,500 households were assigned to either a control or treatment group.

The treatment group was visited by canvassers trained to promote and encourage recycling. The canvassing campaign raised participation in kerbside recycling by ten per cent and this effect was found to be sustained after three months, albeit at a reduced rate of four per cent. Canvassing was found to be most successful in streets with low initial recycling rates, deprived areas and areas with a high ethnic minority population.

Other trials found a six per cent increase in household food recycling as a result of residents getting a ‘smiley face’ feedback on how their street was performing; book donations rising by 22 per cent as a result of people pledging to donate and their names being publicly displayed; and provision of tailored information about organ donation resulted in a 17 per cent increase in registered donors.

In contrast, an online experiment in which participants debated youth anti-social behaviour led only to modest shifts in opinions among those who participated.

Professor John concludes: “Overall, we show that governments and other agencies should customise the messages they convey to citizens to ensure they nudge them to achieve the best impact.”
Planning undermines land reform

LAND REDISTRIBUTION in Southern Africa has had significantly different impacts on poverty reduction and improvement in livelihoods. Research at sites in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe finds that planning approaches have been informed by a model of farm viability drawn from large-scale commercial agriculture. As a result, project plans and support systems are poorly aligned to the needs and aspirations of beneficiaries and allow for little flexibility in implementation. Positive impacts, where found, have often been the result of beneficiaries abandoning official plans. There is an urgent need, researchers conclude, to radically rethink the notion of viability in land reform.

Let’s talk about it...

HOW DO PEOPLE in the UK feel about talking about their emotions? Research based on a survey of more than 2,000 adults’ views and experiences of emotional distress and support suggests that Britain is now characterised by a relative openness to talking about emotions.

Yet, while attitudes towards ‘emotions talk’ are more positive, people are still not comfortable with the idea of discussing their problems with a therapist or counsellor and would prefer to turn to friends or family for support.

Over half of those surveyed said they found it easy to talk about their feelings and two thirds felt that people in Britain now are more comfortable talking about feelings than they were. But differences by age and sex are evident with women under 45 the most positive towards ‘emotions talk’.

Findings also highlight the significance of non talk-based responses to emotional difficulties including listening to music, exercising and keeping things to ourselves as well as the continuing importance of privacy in our everyday emotional lives – features which, Dr Julie Brownlie suggests, are often overlooked because of the assumption that our culture is now uniformly characterised by disclosure and unburdening. She concludes that “we need a more nuanced understanding of contemporary emotional culture in Britain – and of how people ‘get through’ emotionally difficult times – rather than one necessarily defined by a sense of vulnerability.”

A number of issues for policy and practice are raised, including whether the balance is right between talk- and non talk-based services. More fundamentally, researchers argue, it asks how we should view ‘not talking’. Is it a sign of resilience or of emotional failing; is it something to be encouraged or overcome?

NETWORKS FOR HEALTH
What is the nature and extent of social networks for maternal and child health in England and how are these shaped by ethnicity, religious identity, social class and gender? Infant mortality among some UK minority groups and teenage mothers is significantly higher than the average. This research will identify women’s social networks for health and gaps in support.

ESRC Grant Number RES-061-25-0509

LIFETIME VIEW ON TAX
How do financial incentives to work change over the lifecourse? How is the tax burden shared over the population and over the lifecourse? How do changes in taxes/benefits affect the distribution of lifetime income?

New research will provide a richer understanding of the UK tax system and its effects on individuals’ decisions to invest in human capital and work, lifetime income and well-being.

ESRC Grant Number RES-194-23-0016

EXPERIENCING COURT
Fieldwork at two Crown Courts will inform research into the public’s experience of the criminal justice process. The study will examine how far victims, defendants and witnesses understand court proceedings, perceive them to be fair and believe that they are treated respectfully by the court. Researchers will identify the factors that determine levels of understanding and perceptions of fair and respectful treatment.

ESRC Grant Number RES-062-23-2493
HAS THE UK become a nation of insomniacs? New research suggests it has, with 26 per cent of those who work in excess of 48 hours a week sleeping for less than six hours a night. Founding Father of the United States Benjamin Franklin may have claimed that ‘fatigue was the best pillow’, but the longer the working day, the worse a person’s sleep becomes, in length and quality.

These are the first findings of the Understanding Society study tracking 100,000 people in 40,000 British households. It says that while exhaustion may set in after a week of nine-hour days at the office, the chances of restorative sleep become increasingly elusive. One in ten men (11 per cent) and one in seven women (14 per cent) working 48 hours a week now sleeps less than six hours a night – two hours less than the recommended amount. Poor sleep quality is also experienced by nearly a third of women (31 per cent) working 48 hours or more a week, while a quarter of women working 31-48 hours per week complain of the same.

For their research on our sleeping habits, academics drew in part on responses from 15,098 adults and stated that sleep was ‘clearly an area of concern for public health and public policy’. The situation is so significant that some experts have called for a public health strategy to help prevent sleep problems, on a par with campaigns on alcohol and smoking.

Lack of sleep has many bad health effects, they say, including obesity, hypertension and diabetes. It has been attributed to raising the chances of a woman getting breast cancer by as much as 60 per cent, because melatonin, a hormone produced by the brain during sleep to regulate the body’s internal clock, plays a key role in preventing breast tumours by suppressing the amount of oestrogen that is released.

Academics in the UK and Italy recently claimed that sleeping less than six hours a night increased the risk of early death, with people who regularly had this little sleep becoming 12 per cent more likely to die over a period of 25 years or less, than those who got the recommended six to eight hours.

The sleep deficit also contributes to productivity slumps, caused by sickness absence and accidents. The current sleep shortfall is estimated to cost employers eight million sick days a year, compared with just over three million in 2008.
Dr Mark Bryan, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Social and Economic Research, based at the University of Essex, who conducted some of the Understanding Society research on sleep, said that one important factor in whether people slept well was job satisfaction. “People who are completely dissatisfied with their job – and this may be because they are fearful of losing that job, or cannot find another one in a contracting jobs market – sleep badly and for shorter hours. An economic upturn may generate better sleep patterns if people become happier at work.”

FOG OF DROWSINESS

For now, however, workers wade through a fog of drowsiness, with all its concomitant effects. “Our research, conducted in 2009 (when the UK entered recession for the first time since 1991) shows that working long hours affects people’s sleep quality and increases the number of people sleeping very short durations,” he said.

Working long hours, with the accumulation of physical fatigue which accompanied that, was no guarantee of sleep. In fact, the opposite was true. “Long hours jobs tend to be those with more responsibility, so poor sleep may be attributed to sheer workloads, and it is higher qualified people who tend to be those putting in the long hours.” Working women were particularly hard hit by poor sleep, he said, and not, as one might assume, because they were juggling paid jobs with childcare responsibilities – although many are. “A large proportion of women in our study who worked long hours did report bad sleep quality and we thought this might be because of their other responsibilities. But women with childcare responsibilities tend not to be able to work long hours so these were actually women with non-dependent children.”

Dr Bryan’s research confirms recent findings in the Financial Times on the sleep deficit. A survey by Philips, the Dutch healthcare and electronics company, of respondents in five countries, found that the average manager was sleeping 19 per cent less than the ‘ideal’ eight hours, according to the newspaper. Forty per cent of those questioned blamed the state of the global economy for their insomnia. Americans were more likely than other nationalities to lose sleep through work stress, with 30 per cent citing it as the reason they wake up at
night. Germany was next, with 27 per cent; then the UK, 24 per cent; and Japan, 20 per cent. The Dutch, at 12 per cent, were the least affected.

Understanding Society found that it was not just length of sleep and quality of sleep that was the problem, it was getting to sleep in the first place. A quarter of women said they had trouble dropping off within 30 minutes on three or more nights a week. One in five men said the same. By the time men and women reached the age of 65, half had trouble sleeping on three or more nights a week. Many of these people were still working. Around 28 per cent of people over the current retirement age, and without long-term illness or limitation, are still in employment. Dr Bryan said: “The EU Working Time Directive (introduced in 1993 to regulate the amount of time spent at work in order to protect the health and safety of the European workforce) restricts long hours, but in this country you can opt out of that, which accounts for people working 48 hours or more a week.”

In the UK an estimated 3.2 million people are working these long hours. While lack of sleep affects health and productivity, it may also skew David Cameron’s project to measure societal happiness. The Prime Minister says he inherited a ‘Broken Britain’. He wants to create a greater focus on well-being rather than wealth, and from 2012 has pledged to introduce a happiness or GWB – general well-being – index which will measure people’s quality of life.

But sleep deprivation has an effect on well-being because of its impact on temper and mood. Tired parents bicker and are less optimistic. Children suffer when mum and dad snap at them, argue with each other, are too exhausted to listen to their problems or too busy to eat with them.

For Understanding Society, 1,268 children between the ages of 10 and 15 were interviewed about family life and how happy they were at home. The research showed that the biggest influence on children’s well-being was the quality of relationships within their family – not just relationships between parents and children, but also the quality of the parents’ partnership. Children who ate at least three evening meals a week with their parents were more likely to report being ‘completely happy’ with family life. Hours spent watching TV were unrelated to a young person’s happiness with his or her family situation.

“Watching TV has been linked to several adverse outcomes among children,” said Dr Maria Iacovou, a Research Fellow at ISER specialising in family structures and education. “But it looks as though children’s perception of their own well-being isn’t one of them.”

CHILDLESS COUPLES

The research found that childless couples were happiest with their relationships, while those with a pre-school child – and often the least sleep – were least happy, although happiness increased with the age of the youngest child. Dr Iacovou said: “When you have a baby, it is terribly hard and a very difficult time in the life of couples. When you have a pre-school child, that’s the time when there is the most strain on a relationship and it is possible that some people never recover the happiness they had originally (as childless couples).” More research is planned on whether these differences vary according to whether couples are childless by choice or expecting to have a family in the future.

Other research showed that while being jobless was associated with lower levels of happiness in a man’s relationship with his partner, income had no additional effect on relationship happiness among men, and was ‘only mildly important’ for women. But better educated people were happier with their relationships, and for women the association between relationship satisfaction and education was stronger than for men. Dr Iacovou said: “It might be that better educated people find it easier to conduct their relationships – they may have more space and more money, and relationships are not such a strain. But it may also be because people who have more education are more likely to match up with someone better suited to them. People who are more educated also tend to settle down later in life and when you are more mature, you tend to make a better choice of partner.”

With work-life balance, marriage, mental health, and job satisfaction increasingly regarded as the solvent of societal happiness, the issue of sleep and how it affects all these things is becoming an important area of study. If the Government is keen on our collective happiness, perhaps it should consider ways to improve people’s sleep – a recipe for increased happiness for us all.
Aimed at A-level teachers, the Social Science for Schools website provides research findings, news stories and a blog to discuss issues and ideas.

Research on street crime and teenagers, body image, the power of positive thinking and volunteering are just some of the resources available to teachers and students.

www.socialscienceforschools.org.uk
Tobacco use causes nearly five million deaths worldwide each year – more than any other avoidable cause. In England 85 per cent of all lung cancer deaths and 80 per cent of all Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease deaths are attributable to smoking.

Preventing smoking is a public health priority and because the majority of smokers become addicted in their teens, measures to prevent the exposure of children and young people to tobacco products are especially important. Adolescents who view tobacco use in film and who admire leading actors and actresses whose characters smoke in films are arguably more likely to view smoking favourably and are more likely to start smoking themselves.

However, whilst tobacco advertising and sponsorship are now heavily restricted in the UK and many other countries, tobacco imagery in the media has not been controlled to the same extent.

Recent research by Ailsa Lyons, Ann McNeill, Yilu Chen and John Britton at the ESRC-funded UK Centre for Tobacco Control Studies (UKCTCS) looked at images of tobacco and related products in the most popular films shown in the UK.

“We found that while tobacco imagery has declined substantially over the past 20 years it continues to occur and predominantly in films categorised as suitable for viewing by children and young people,” said Ailsa Lyons.

The UKCTCS research sought to objectively measure the extent to which tobacco imagery and specific products have appeared in the most popular films viewed in the UK from 1989 to 2008, in relation to year of release, the age certification allocated to the film by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), the country of origin and other characteristics.

The researchers used listings of the most commercially successful films based on gross UK cinema box office takings data provided by the UK Film Council to identify the most popular films viewed in the UK for each year between 1989 and 2008.
1989 – the first year that UK-specific figures were collected – and 2008. The researchers viewed and coded the films to record appearances of tobacco or tobacco-related products, inferred tobacco use, and verbal or non-verbal inference such as a comment on smoking or leaving a scene with a packet of cigarettes and lighter.

Of the 300 films analysed 15, 27, 26, 26 and six per cent respectively were BBFC U, PG, 12/12A, 15 and 18 categories. Most films (94 per cent) were produced by or in partnership with US producers, and 68 per cent were produced solely from the US. UK producers were involved in 20 per cent of films, and were solely responsible for three per cent. Other countries were involved in producing 19 per cent of films, but only one film, *Muriel's Wedding*, had no UK or USA involvement. The 15 most popular films typically accounted for 50 per cent of each year’s gross UK cinema box office takings.

Occurrence of tobacco use, implied use or appearance of smoking paraphernalia occurred in 70 per cent of all films. Over half (56 per cent) of those were rated by the BBFC as suitable for viewing by children aged 15 and under, and 92 per cent were rated as suitable for people aged 18 and under. However, tobacco use did not occur in any U-rated film released after 1999.

Tobacco appearances did fall by 80 per cent over the study period, yet persisted in films in all BBFC categories. Brand appearances were nearly twice as likely to occur in films originating wholly or in part from the UK (UK films) and most brand appearances (59 per cent) were in films with BBFC 15 classification. This raises the possibility that product placement by tobacco companies could still be occurring. As far as brands were concerned, the leaders were Marlboro, which featured 21 times in 13 films, and Silk Cut, which featured 14 times in four films. Marlboro occurred in all BBFC categories except U, and with no relationship to country of origin. Silk Cut appearances all occurred between 1996 and 2004 in films set in the UK and made with UK production involvement.

The most Silk Cut brand appearances were in *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *About a Boy*, both of which were categorised as suitable for youth viewing (BBFC categories 15 and 12, respectively). The lead character in *Bridget Jones's Diary* smoked Silk Cut regularly throughout the film, as she does in the novel on which the film was based. In *About a Boy* the main character (Will) also smoked Silk Cut regularly throughout the duration of the film, mostly in the presence of a 12-year-old boy. However, in Nick Hornby’s novel on which the film was based, Will smoked infrequently and no brand was identified.

BBFC classification guidelines do not directly refer to tobacco use under the suitability criteria for certifying ratings of films submitted, but do state in U and PG category guidance that films receiving these certifications will show ‘No potentially dangerous behaviour which young children are likely to copy’. No reference to tobacco use, smoking or imitable behaviour is mentioned in either of the other youth-rated age categories (BBFC 12/12A or 15). “The BBFC refers specifically to use of drugs, violence, bad language and sex in official guidelines, including strict limitations in youth-rated films, so it’s surprising, given the extent of the harm caused by smoking, that these guidelines do not include tobacco,” said researcher Ailsa Lyons.

As exposure to tobacco smoking and other forms of tobacco imagery in film is a potent driver of youth and adult smoking, the research team concluded that the serious potential hazard represented by tobacco exposure should also be a determinant of film classification. This could then prevent unnecessary or inappropriate exposure of children and young people to smoking role models when they are at their most impressionable and vulnerable.
The net effect

Professor Helen Margetts assesses how the internet has made a difference to collective action, participation and protest

The year 2011 is bringing dramatic political developments in a growing list of Arab states, including Iran, Tunisia, Jordan, Algeria, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain and Egypt, where mass demonstrations are challenging authoritarian regimes. The media has associated the internet with all these protests but in Egypt the internet was cut off for six days on day three of the 18-day protest leading to the unseating of President Mubarak. So is the internet really vital to contemporary protest or is the ‘net effect’ insignificant?

The scale, sustainability and success of the Egyptian protests raise questions for political science, which draws on Mancur Olson’s argument that the ‘logic of collective action’ works against mass demonstrations. Large-scale mobilisation will be paralysed by ‘free-riders’, people who still receive the benefits of collective action without incurring the costs, which in Egypt were tragically high for many. Some argue that mobilisations can be rescued by a critical mass of activists who undertake the bulk of the costs. But this work doesn’t quantify critical mass, or provide tools to predict when mobilisations will attain it.

Enter the internet. Although commentators have long predicted the potential of technology to empower citizens and subvert bureaucratic power, mainstream political science has tended to minimise the effect of the net on collective action.

Some recent research identifies internet use and skills as being significantly associated with political activity, as much as interest in politics. Other researchers dismiss this ‘aimless surfing’ as mere ‘slacktivism’. The author Malcolm Gladwell argued in the New Yorker on 4 October 2010 (‘Why the Revolution won’t be tweeted’) that the ‘weak ties’ accumulated on the internet could never bring about the type of organised protest that sparked off the civil rights movement.

Perhaps the best clue to how the internet mobilises protestors comes from economics. In Micromotives and Macrobehavior Thomas C Schelling argues that people differ in their threshold for joining a mobilisation. This variation leads to a ‘tipping point’ at around 45 per cent of the number needed for success; when they perceive that this is reached, most potential joiners will join.

So how many protestors were needed to act collectively to unseat Mubarak? In the minds of the protestors, one million was significant. On 1 February, the first ‘march of millions’, involving between one and two million protestors in Cairo alone (Al Jazeera) was clearly a turning point for the protestors and the regime. The first protest took place on 25 January. We don’t know how many gathered on the first days but it seems there were tens of thousands rather than Schelling’s tipping point, 45 per cent of one million.

On 27 January, the Egyptian government shut down access to the internet through the main Egyptian ISPs. But by this time, the net had given three important signals to potential protestors that the tipping point had been reached. First, it had publicised plans for the demonstrations of 28 January via Facebook, Twitter and SMS, which had been used by the early protestors (with low joining thresholds) for many months.

Second, the Google executive Wael Ghonim’s Facebook page (We Are All Khaled Said) showing images of a young man brutally killed by Egyptian police, had collected 473,000 supporters. It was a weak signal, yet important for the five million Egyptian Facebook users in a newly impoverished information environment, with little coverage of the protests by the state-controlled media and events on the ground making it impossible to judge numbers.

Third, the very act of cutting off the internet sent a ‘nice fat public signal’ (see the economist Jeff Ely’s blog) to the protestors that the regime considered the protest a real threat. It also minimised the likelihood of potential protestors being put off by news of pro-government violence.

On 28 January, the number of demonstrators reached ‘hundreds of thousands’ in most reports and continued to grow into the ‘march of millions’. Malcolm Gladwell might like to revisit his own book, The Tipping Point, before dismissing the potential of internet-based protest to topple governments. 

Commentators have long predicted the potential of technology to empower citizens and subvert power
Cairo has recently been the focus for perhaps the most fascinating series of crowd events since the ‘velvet revolutions’ of the late 1980s. Despite a peaceful beginning, conflict emerged when the widely despised police tried to disperse the crowds through force. The violence ebbed as the police withdrew, and the arriving army were embraced as liberators.

This was not an uncontrolled explosion of rage then, but a meaningful attack on a specific authority that had lost legitimacy. Of course, there were other transitions; at the height of the protest pro-Mubarak supporters mobilised in an attempt to destabilise the crowds’ revolutionary thrust. And it was only then that widespread collective conflict again emerged.

Eventually, the forces of change became so strong that the army effectively undertook a coup d’état. This episode demonstrates once again how the actions of crowds are not peripheral phenomena of passing curiosity. These crowds have played and will continue to play a central role in global politics. In this sense alone, Egypt demonstrates precisely why the study of crowds should be central to the social sciences. In particular, we see some powerful lessons about the nature of crowds in our own society.

It is hard to see how the Cairo crowds can be understood from the perspective of theories that render crowd action irrational. These were not ‘mobs’ blindly open to the casual influence of ‘foreign’ agitators seeking to destabilise a legitimate political regime – despite the regime’s attempts to define the situation in such terms. The crowds mobilised around a shared belief in the illegitimacy of the Mubarak regime and acted to create meaningful social change. These crowds were not the enemy of enlightened democracy but its origin.

But the events in Egypt resonate powerfully with the Elaborated Social Identity Model of crowd behaviour (ESIM). Research within the ESIM theoretical tradition demonstrates how crowds act in terms of shared beliefs about the social world around them. It has shown that the perceived legitimacy of the relationships between crowds and the authorities can be central to whether or not widespread collective violence develops. This is a general pattern: what is true of crowds in Egypt is true of crowds in the UK and this is why we have argued forcefully for an analysis of the role of police tactics in the disturbances surrounding the recent student protests in central London (Gorringe, Stott, and Rosie, 2010).

The ESIM has recently played a significant role in informing Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Constabulary’s (HMIC) inquiry into public order policing. The inquiry came about as a consequence of the death of a member of the public following the use of the police tactic of ‘kettling’ during the 2009 G20 protest in central London (Stott, 2009). In my report to the HMIC, I suggested that the police often rely too heavily on the use of force in their attempts to manage crowds. Such police tactics inadvertently run the danger of initiating and escalating ‘rioting’.

Preliminary research suggests that there is a need to develop techniques of dialogue and communication with the radicalised groups within protests crowds. Such non-confrontational techniques allow the police to move from the reactive controlling of ‘public disorder’ to the proactive facilitation of ‘public order’. Consequently, the police are much better positioned to prevent escalations of disorder and avoid the use of ‘kettling’ with all of its subsequent dangers.

These crowds were not the enemy of enlightened democracy but its origin.

Not long after these recommendations were published, November and December 2010 saw a series of student protests in London. During the first of these, protestors managed to occupy Conservative Party headquarters. Almost immediately the Metropolitan Police faced a media backlash against the core recommendations of the HMIC and of the science that underpinned them. And by the time the largest of these demonstrations occurred in December we had witnessed a return to ‘kettling’ in Parliament Square, widespread rioting and serious injuries to both protestors and police.

There can be no sense in which the science of crowd psychology can or should be seen as some panacea that can remove the potential for conflict from society. But this science has begun to make an important contribution to our understanding of how and why riots come about and of how to prevent them. What these episodes make clear is that an understanding of crowds is fundamentally important and has a place of central theoretical and practical importance within the social sciences.
Our at-a-glance overview of the changing face of lifestyle, health and treatment in Britain today

**THE UK BY NUMBERS**

**HEALTH**

“The greatest wealth is health” Virgil

In 2007, almost a quarter of adults were clinically obese. *(Source: The Health and Social Care Information Centre – HSCIC)*

Just under half of the population drank more than twice a week. *(Source: Office for National Statistics – ONS)*

In 2007, almost a quarter of respondents to the National Travel Survey reported that they took walks of at least 20 minutes less than once a year or never. *(Source: HSCIC)*

Those aged 20 to 24 reported the highest prevalence of smoking. *(Source: ONS)*

The number of death certificates in England and Wales mentioning methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) fell from 1,230 in 2008 to 781 in 2009. *(Source: ONS)*

Deaths involving SA (including those which did not specify methicillin resistance) fell by 16% from 1,500 in 2008 to 1,253 in 2009. *(Source: ONS)*

Drug-related admissions

Hospital admissions in England where there was a primary diagnosis of drug-related mental health and behavioural disorders, by age group

“Life is not merely to be alive, but to be well” Martial
Life expectancy
Within the UK, life expectancy varies by country. England has the highest life expectancy at birth, 78.0 years for males and 82.1 years for females, while Scotland has the lowest, 75.3 years for males and 80.1 years for females. Life expectancy at age 65 is also higher for England than for the other countries of the UK.
(Source: Office for National Statistics, November 2010)

Teenage conception
In 2008 the number of conceptions to women aged under 18 was 41,361 compared with 42,988 in 2007, a decline of 3.8 per cent. Nearly half (49.4 per cent) of conceptions to women aged under 18 in 2008 led to a legal abortion.
(Source: Office for National Statistics, November 2010)

Cigarettes consumed
Number of cigarettes consumed per person smoking per year
The British are relatively light smokers. (Source: World Health Organization)

Cancer survival
Five year survival % for adults (15-99 years) diagnosed with cancer
Breast cancer in women and prostate cancer in men remain the two most survivable types of cancer. (Source: Office for National Statistics)
Risky business

The complex assessment and management of risk is now woven into the administration of large-scale events. Will Jennings explains what the organisers of the London 2012 Olympics are doing to prepare for the worst.

The London 2012 Olympics will be the largest sports event ever to be staged in the UK. As recently as February 2011, the National Audit Office reported that the final cost of the Games to the British taxpayer was ‘inherently uncertain’ – due to timing constraints leaving little scope for responding to unforeseen, last-minute financial pressures.

Risk, and the associated vocabulary of hazards and threats, is pervasive in preparations for London 2012. With little more than a year to the start of the Games, uncertainties and risks remain across the Olympic programme, such as potential repercussions of the success of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games’ (LOCOG) ticket pricing for its business plan, the threat from terrorism and cyber attacks, and the danger of legacy planning being sidetracked by more immediate concern with the deadline for the opening ceremony on 27 July 2012.

As ‘the world’s largest peace-time event’, the Olympics represent a special venue for the governance of risk. The prominence of risk management in the organisation of London 2012 highlights the complex mix of risks that organisers face. The event has massive financial expense and a large-scale construction programme; it is dependent upon London’s fragmented transport network; the main Olympic site is close to high density domestic and commercial populations; and the UK is exposed to both domestic extremism and international terrorism. Finally, a successful Olympics is vital to the reputation of the UK. For London 2012, ‘risk’ – estimation of the likelihood of an event multiplied by its adverse outcome – can be related to various aspects of organising the Games. These include security, finance, construction and transport, as well as different geographical locations – the main Olympic site, central London, the regions.

As a consequence, a number of stakeholders are dealing with a diverse set of risks, including strategic national level risks (Cabinet Office), programme risks (Government Olympic Executive), project management and delivery (Olympic Delivery Authority), Games operations and commercial revenue (LOCOG), safety and security (the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police) and social and economic legacies (the Greater London Authority, the Olympic Delivery Authority and the Olympic Park Legacy Company). While such a broad overview of Olympic risks provides a list of things that might go wrong, it also shows the complex and interconnected nature of Olympic governance.

Because of the extended lead time of preparations for 2012, there are numerous critical risks that have emerged or changed over the lifetime of the project. Since feasibility studies were conducted by the British Olympic Association during the late 1990s organisers have had to adapt to the new threat from Al-Qaeda and domestic extremists, and downgrading of the threat from Irish Republicanism. Likewise, in the period since the Games were awarded to London in 2005, the global financial crisis has created a far tougher climate for public and private financing of the Games than expected, with the developer of the athletes’ village encountering difficulties in raising private equity and debt funding for the project, and requiring a government-led rescue package.

Hazards and Threats

Throughout history, the Olympic Games and Olympic movement have experienced hazards and threats including political protests and boycotts, budget overspends, terrorist incidents, logistical difficulties, refereeing controversies and doping. Risk has become increasingly important to the Olympic movement and its governance.

Within the International Olympic Committee (IOC), there is growing interest in risk and its
management both in selection of host cities and in monitoring preparations for the Games. Past experience of difficulties with venue readiness, operations and financial management have led to standardisation of the IOC candidature procedure. The IOC actually describes the selection process for 2012 as a risk assessment exercise ‘to verify the information stated in the candidature file, to determine whether proposed plans are feasible and to make a qualitative assessment of risk’.

The preparations of host cities are subject to additional monitoring through the IOC Coordination Commission appointed for each Games, which regularly assesses progress, preparedness and expected exposure to operational risks during the Games itself. The IOC’s interest in risk therefore contrasts with the disregard of FIFA for its own technical reports in awarding the 2018 and 2022 Football World Cups.

Risk-based thinking has been more extensive than ever before in preparations for London 2012, with audit and risk management practices in use across all aspects of the Olympic programme. This reflects the organisers’ efforts to integrate risk into decision-making processes of all major strategic, delivery and operational functions. Risk is an object of strategic planning as well as a focus of administration and operations, through reporting systems aimed at performance and delivery.

For example, the audit and management of programme risks is conducted by the Olympic Board and Government Olympic Executive. They use general information from reports on threats and hazards to the UK (such as the Cabinet Office’s National Risk Register) as well as Olympic-specific information compiled from risk registers and risk logs of bodies such as the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) and the Olympic Security Directorate (OSD) within the Metropolitan Police.

At the same time, audit and management of project and operational risk is conducted at the level of the individual organisation through implementation of bespoke strategies. These strategies include the ODA’s ‘three lines of defence’ policy of line management, programme assurance and risk and audit functions, and evaluation of risk and value for money in the OSD’s assurance of security projects for internal funding.

**THE LANGUAGE OF RISK**

While increasing reliance upon risk management within Olympic governance is a response to its organisational environment, it also reflects the growing influence of the risk management profession. The language of risk is common to organisers responsible, for example, for security, legacy, infrastructure, operations and finance – even if that common language is subject to difficulties of translation across jurisdiction or differences in opinion concerning priorities for risk mitigation.

Concern with the formalised management of risk is associated with foresight and control. It does not guarantee, though, that all risks are avoidable. Tools such as risk registers are reliant upon the quality of information fed into them and creation of risk-based cultures inside organisations. Maintaining consistency in risk assessments across the programme has been one of the major efforts.
There is increasing concern with formalised and standardised anticipation and management of risk.

The importance of reputational risk is a subject of ongoing debate in planning for London 2012. For some organisers, reputation is a consequence of operational factors, so if functional objectives are delivered, reputation should look after itself. Others are more concerned with reputation. In one of the early feasibility studies for the London bid it was noted that: ‘The Atlanta experience showed the media can play an important role in defining the perception of the success or otherwise of the Games.’ A recent Foreign Affairs Committee report recommended creation of a ‘rapid response unit’ to rebut negative stories in the international media during the Games, to manage reputational risks to the UK. On top of concern with project risks and operational risks, then, is increasing preoccupation with the framing of risks and adverse events.

The idea of risk has been argued to be inextricably interlinked with control of the future. One of the oldest solutions to the management of

Olympic risk, observed as early as the Paris 1900 Olympics, was the purchase of insurance to cover liabilities for personal injury claims from workers, athletes and spectators, or loss of revenues from cancellation or postponement of events. What has changed in governance of the Games in recent times is increasing concern with formalised and standardised anticipation and management of risk, beyond taking steps to cover the costs when things go wrong.

While London 2012 might be said to be risk-based in terms of its general organising principles and integration of risk throughout its programme and its frontline operations, these cannot guarantee that the Games will pass without minor or more serious incident. Such possibilities often remain uncertain because the likelihood of threats and hazards is difficult to quantify and, moreover, inherently probabilistic. Even in the governance of risk there is such a thing as bad luck.

The case of the London 2012 Olympics highlights the degree to which the concept of risk, which 30 years ago would have been rarely mentioned in the same organisational contexts, has become central to the practice of administration and our desire to anticipate and control future events.
S E R O U S   N O W

The ESRC starts 2011 with a new, improved website offering easy access to our comprehensive research catalogue, features, expert opinion and informed debate...

Digital developments

STRAIGHT TO THE point, easy navigation and dynamic research content on the important topics facing society today are just some of the new features of the ESRC’s web portal, launched in January 2011. This unique online resource is dedicated to high quality and leading research on subjects from British business and foreign ownership to child happiness and the UK’s journey from recession to recovery. Through the new ‘research topics’ section visitors will have access to topical features, case studies, informed debate and expert opinion on a range of topics including climate change, ageing, employment and crime.

The innovative ‘research catalogue’ has an improved search feature which allows users to find information they want with a few taps on the keyboard. The new design of the ‘research catalogue’ clearly details all ESRC-funded research findings and outputs including books, papers and journal articles, holding over 11,000 research findings and over 100,000 outputs covering the past 20 years. There are also details of the impacts that research has had on the economy, society and individuals. The ESRC is committed to ensuring that our research community makes the outputs from ESRC-funded research readily available and the ‘research catalogue’ is one of the ways we can achieve this goal. This available source can be used by the public, business, third sector and academics alike, by providing research on the biggest issues affecting Britain today.

The emphasis on providing first-time and regular visitors with a more informative and easy-to-use resource continues throughout the site. Users can navigate between current funding opportunities, research evidence or impact case studies by topic, collaboration schemes and publications or, for a quick update on the latest information, read the notice board on the home page.

Professor Paul Boyle, Chief Executive of the ESRC, said: “We are delighted to launch the ESRC’s new website. The site caters for anyone with an interest in the UK’s society and economy by providing leading social science research at the touch of a button. Visitors will now have unprecedented access to expert opinion, informed debate and features on the topic of the day.”

Although the new website will deliver some significant changes, key services such as competition announcements and information on ESRC funding and training opportunities will continue to be available on the new ESRC site. The new site will not only offer an improved service, it also offers significant cost savings. The site has been improved in response to feedback from visitors and the academic community. It is structured around key tasks and information that visitors require. This enhanced performance will ensure a better experience for all users.

The ESRC will continue to develop and improve the site through user feedback. Jonathan Connor, ESRC Digital Communications Manager, is enthusiastic about the positive changes ahead for the site: “Our new website provides improved functionality, design and content based around the needs of our users; it also creates opportunities for further developing our online presence over the coming years.”

www.esrc.ac.uk
On the education of the people of this country the fate of the country depends.” This proclamation from Benjamin Disraeli is still shared by today’s politicians a century and a half later. Ensure access to a proper education for all, and the result is improved well-being, prosperity and social mobility – benefiting both individuals and society in general. Or at least, that has been the ambition.

But although the politicians may be willing, the results are weak – or limited at best. Children growing up in poorer households are still generally underperforming in school. Despite hopes, performance targets and rigorous testing have not propelled ever larger numbers of British children and teenagers up the education ladder.

As research shows, there is no ‘silver bullet’ to tackle the education challenge. The report Poorer children’s educational attainment: how important are attitudes and behaviour, by Alissa Goodman at the Institute for Fiscal Studies and Professor Paul Gregg at the ESRC Centre for Market and Public Organisation, uses data from several ESRC-funded longitudinal surveys to analyse influences on children’s educational attainment. It reveals that a wide range of factors come into play – including not only material resources, but also aspirations and attitudes both from the child and from their parents.

The report, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, shows that the cracks appear at a very early stage. According to data from the Millennium Cohort Study there are already ‘considerable gaps’ in cognitive test scores by the age of three between children in the poorest fifth of the population and children from better-off households – and these gaps widen by the age of five. Not only cognitive abilities, but children’s social and emotional well-being follow a similar development through childhood years.

One important factor may be the home environment and how much it encourages, or discourages, learning. Results show clear differences between poor and better-off households both in health...
and well-being, family interactions, home learning environment and parenting styles.

“Children from poorer families enter the school system considerably behind those from affluent families. This is associated with a weaker home learning environment and less sensitive parenting,” says Professor Paul Gregg.

Ironically, once children start school the educational gap does not narrow; it widens more quickly. An analysis of the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children reveals that the gap grows particularly fast during primary school years. Poorer children who performed badly at Key Stage tests at age seven were less likely to improve their ranking compared with better-off children. And even those poorer children who performed well at this age were more likely to fall behind the better-off by age 11.

Only around three-quarters of children from the poorest fifth of families reach the expected Key Stage 2 level at age 11, compared with 97 per cent of children from the richest fifth.

“Throughout the school years bright children from poorer families drift away from educational achievement – through lower aspirations, a lack of belief that their own efforts can lead to academic success, and fewer material resources in the home to support learning, for instance internet access,” explains Professor Gregg.

Alissa Goodman and Paul Gregg point to several reasons why poorer children fall ever further behind during primary school – including parents’ aspirations for higher education, the belief of parents and children in determining their life course through their own actions, and children’s behavioural problems. Findings show that only 37 per cent of the poorest mothers said they hoped their child would go to university, compared with 81 per cent of the richest mothers.

“Such adverse attitudes to education of disadvantaged mothers are one of the single most important factors associated with lower educational attainment at age 11,” the researchers state in their report.

By the time the children finish primary school these gaps are wide and established. Analysis of the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England showed that further widening through teenage years is relatively small in comparison to the childhood years. At this stage it is harder to reverse patterns of under-achievement, but attitudes and aspirations continue to be important factors. Pupils are more likely to do well at GCSEs with a good home environment, parents expecting them to go on to higher education, and access to computers and internet. Their own attitudes are also crucial, such as a belief in their own abilities, a belief that their actions make a difference, an expectation of applying for and entering higher education, and avoidance of anti-social behaviour.

“These findings suggest that attitudes and behaviour are potentially important links between socio-economic disadvantage and children’s educational attainment,” conclude the researchers.

Without success in closing the ‘education gap’ between poorer families and the better-off, true social mobility and an equal society will remain an elusive political goal.

As the American educational reformer Horace Mann declared: “Education, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men – the balance-wheel of the social machinery.”
Climate change champion

Professor Judith Rees, director of the ESRC Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy, talks to Martin Ince about local, national and global initiatives to tackle climate change and how evidence informs climate policy.

Judith Rees is not someone to get annoyed easily. But she shows every sign of irritation when she describes how, following the Copenhagen climate conference in 2009, the whole process of attempting to reach an international agreement to curb greenhouse gas emissions is described as a failure.

For her, our future approach to climate change may not involve a big international treaty like the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Instead, she thinks that solid progress on mitigating climate change and adapting to it will come from modest agreements such as those struck at Copenhagen and a year later at Cancun. These should be regarded as important stepping stones towards the strong international framework that will still be needed.

The ESRC Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy is a joint venture with the Sustainability Research Institute at the University of Leeds, where her co-director Andy Gouldson is based. At the LSE the Centre is situated alongside the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, of which Professor Rees is also director. Together this has created perhaps the UK’s biggest group of researchers into the politics and economics of climate and environmental change. It numbers about 70 people in all, including associates based in other departments, visiting fellows and PhD students.

Professor Rees’ original academic interest is in water and other natural resources, and she has undertaken research on the energy industry. She says that once climate change emerged as an issue: “It was always obvious that I would be involved.” For one thing, climate change can have big effects on water resources. Professor Rees points out that our ability to adapt to climate change will depend critically on how we manage water to ensure food security and minimise the effects of extreme events such as floods and droughts. Additionally, the policy instruments available for cutting carbon emissions are basically the same as those which have already been used in attempts to manage water demand and curb water pollution. They include one family of measures which involves trading and taxing emissions, and another which involves regulation and enforcement.

As someone who speaks often to policymakers, business executives and politicians, Professor Rees is reassured by how rarely she encounters full-blown climate change scepticism. She believes: “The generally accepted scientific picture of climate change has become embedded in the life of decision makers in the UK at a national level. People in the street are less convinced, and still ask why we have cold winters if the world is getting warmer. But I am impressed by the way in which both the last and the new UK government seem to regard managing the risks of climate change as a central aim.”

She is aware that the picture is less clear in the rapidly developing countries, which are now major emitters of greenhouse gases. “On a recent trip to India, it was evident that climate change seems to be accepted as a reality and is blamed for droughts and for changes to weather patterns and growing seasons. But there was still a strong view that the problem was caused by the advanced nations and had to be solved by them.”

However, it is now clear that action by the advanced countries alone will not be enough to solve climate change. Professor Rees sees that there is growing acceptance in India and other emergent economies of the need to curb greenhouse gas emissions and pursue low-carbon growth strategies. In China the new five-year plan has major commitments to carbon reduction including big renewable energy targets. “The argument in China is not about climate change,” she says. “It is expressed in terms of energy efficiency, competitive advantage and new jobs.”

The Centre is at the forefront of efforts to bring this sort of thinking to the UK. ‘Green growth’ is one of the themes of its ESRC-funded programme, which is looking at the opportunities for new jobs and industries, and at the barriers to success. The Centre’s researchers are aware that carbon reduction policies cannot be considered in isolation from the need to encourage economic recovery and reduce world poverty. They regard green investment and growth as ways of promoting economic development without unsustainable natural resource use.

Professor Rees says: “The UK needs to become more serious about these opportunities. The Danes got first-mover advantage in wind power, and India and China are pushing ahead with solar energy. But there is scope to encourage innovation...”
Professor Rees believes that the agreements reached at Copenhagen and Cancun might be more effective than that of Kyoto.
I think there will be big European emission reductions, but I am not confident about US action in the near future. So how does she see the world coping with the need for a new approach to the climate? Professor Rees does not rule out a big new global framework treaty on climate change. Centre colleagues such as Lord Stern are big players in the hunt for such an agreement. But she believes that more modest agreements may well have a large effect, for example by getting countries such as China to make serious carbon reduction investments. The effort to achieve an international agreement in Copenhagen has produced a long list of nations with carbon reduction commitments.

She has a particular interest in adaptation to climate change, and stresses that adaptation will be inevitable. Even if we stopped all greenhouse gas emissions today, warming would continue for decades. She adds that “adaptation costs need not be excessive but thinking about adaptation has to be embedded in land use, planning, and infrastructure decisions, including major road, rail and water developments. The Committee on Climate Change Adaptation Sub-Committee and the Environment Agency are both doing important work and will have a continuing influence here.”

In the longer term, Professor Rees sees immense scope in encouraging behaviour change in energy use. This needs incentives for the general population to become as conscientious as the greenest of us are already. But there is a long way to go, particularly as such a high proportion of the population remains uncertain about the reality of climate change. It will be important for innovations which allow the transition to a low-carbon lifestyle without substantially lowering human welfare.

So, on balance, is she an optimist about this apparently complicated picture? She answers this question in two ways. She is pessimistic in that she thinks the world will warm by more than two degrees Celsius. This is the target set out in the agreements from both Copenhagen and Cancun and is the level beyond which the risks of potentially irreversible ‘dangerous’ climate change are thought to rise. However, she is optimistic about how fast China, and some other big emitting countries, are reacting to the problem.

She adds: “Things are not moving fast enough in Europe or the US. I think there will be big European emission reductions, but I am not confident about US action in the near future.” The British government regards climate change as a serious problem. But there are major barriers to change, including the political sensitivity of big price rises for energy.
**NEW YEAR HONOURS LIST 2011**

Several people with links to the ESRC have received awards in the New Year Honours list 2011.

- **Knights Bachelor – Knighthoods**
  - Sir David Butler, CBE, FBA, OA Fellow, Nuffield College, University of Oxford. For services to political science.
  - Peter James Bottomley, Deputy Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Social Science and Policy. For public service.

- **Order of the British Empire – Dames Commander of the Order of the British Empire**
  - Professor Helen Wallace, former Director of the ESRC’s ‘One Europe or Several?’ programme. For services to social science.

- **Order of the British Empire – Knights Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire**
  - The Earl John Selborne, KBE, Chair of the RCUK Living with Environmental Change programme. For services to science.

- **Order of the British Empire – Officers of the Order of the British Empire**
  - Professor Susan Cox, Dean, Lancaster University Management School, and former member of the ESRC’s Strategic Research Board. For services to social science.
  - Professor Fiona Steele, FBA Professor of Social Statistics, University of Bristol and member of the ESRC’s Methods and Infrastructure Committee. For services to social science.
  - Alastair Kent, Genetic Alliance UK, a reviewer for the ESRC’s Knowledge Exchange Schemes. For services to healthcare.

**BIRTH COHORT FACILITY PROJECT**

The Birth Cohort Facility Project has received a landmark £28.5 million commitment from the Government’s Large Facilities Capital Fund (LFCF). This investment adds to the £5 million committed by the ESRC and Medical Research Council (MRC).

This pioneering project will combine a new Birth Cohort Study and Cohort Resources Facility.

**ESRC FESTIVAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE**

The ESRC Festival of Social Science will be held from 29 October to 5 November 2011. This celebration of the social sciences includes initiatives across the UK including public debates, conferences, workshops, interactive seminars, film screenings, virtual exhibitions and more.

We will open the call for applications in April, with closing dates for both funded and non-funded applications in June. For more information, visit www.esrc.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/festival/index.aspx

**BBC GREAT BRITISH CLASS SURVEY**

The BBC’s Great British Class Survey was launched on 26 January 2011. The largest ever survey of social class in the UK, it draws on research from the ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC). The BBC’s LabUK team developed the survey under the direction of CRESC’s former convening director Mike Savage (now at the University of York) and sociologist Fiona Devine, University of Manchester.

To take part in the survey, visit www.bbc.co.uk/labuk/experiments/class

**UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY – EARLY FINDINGS**

The first findings of the Understanding Society study have been published. The study, which follows 40,000 UK households, is a major social science investment with potentially huge long-term implications for the understanding of the UK in the early 21st century.

These first findings cover a wide range of topics including family life, employment during the recession, and young people’s attitudes to climate change. For more information, visit www.understandingsociety.org.uk

**ESRC DELIVERY PLAN PRIORITIES: YOUR VIEWS COUNT**

The ESRC’s Strategic Plan 2009-2014 identifies an ambitious agenda for the social sciences, set out in the format of seven cross-cutting challenges. Following the publication of our new Delivery Plan 2011-2015 we have sharpened our focus with the introduction of three priorities:

- **Economic Performance and Sustainable Growth**
- **Influencing Behaviour and Informing Interventions**
- **A Vibrant and Fair Society**

The three priorities will provide a focus for maximising the impact from our existing portfolio of research, resources and training investments, realigning the activity of investments working in relevant areas and directing a proportion of our budget towards new activities.

We welcome your views on refining these priority areas; please visit www.esrc.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/14950/working-together-to-deliver-our-strategic-goals.aspx before 14 April 2011.
**EVENTS**

**CENSUS & SOCIETY: WHY EVERYONE COUNTS**

Census & Society: why everyone counts is a new British Library exhibition that explores how the census has influenced and reflected our view of society. Each section of the exhibition (families and households, health, employment and migration) includes photographs, maps, public information broadcasts and cartoons, alongside insights from the census data itself which illustrate how life in Britain is changing, and the issues of most concern. For more information, visit www.bl.uk/census

31 MARCH

Scottish third sector research conference

The conference, co-hosted by the ESRC Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy, will bring together Scottish Government, local government, third sector and academic researchers, as well as policymakers and third-sector practitioners from across Scotland. In addition to providing a platform for researchers to showcase their work, the event will offer a forum for delegates to discuss demands, challenges, opportunities and a range of findings of relevance to policy in Scotland. For more information, visit www.cgap.org.uk/news/64/61/The-2nd-Scottish-Third-Sector-Research-Conference.html

3 APRIL

New technologies in transnational youth research

The ESRC’s seminar series on diasporic and transnational youth identities looks at the understanding of young people’s networks of social relationships, which operate locally and across geographical borders. The third seminar focuses on critical and methodological studies of the use of new technologies, performance and creative arts as well as participatory research methods in youth research. For more information, visit www.lsbu.ac.uk/families/diasporayouth/seminar3.html

**PEOPLE**

**PROFESSOR ALAN HUGHES**

Prime Minister David Cameron re-appointed members to the Council for Science and Technology (CST) on 16 December 2010. Professor Alan Hughes, Director of the Centre for Business Research at Cambridge University, began his appointment on 1 January 2011. The CST is the UK Government’s top-level advisory body on science and technology policy; its remit is to advise the PM and the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales on strategic issues that cut across the responsibilities of individual government departments.

**PROFESSOR PATRICK STURGIS**

In January 2011, Professor Patrick Sturgis, Director of the National Centre for Research Methods, joined the Nuffield Council working group on emerging biotechnologies. Emerging biotechnologies such as synthetic biology and nanotechnology have the potential to provide benefits for health, the environment and the economy, but they also raise concerns. Members are considering the common ethical issues raised by new and converging biotechnologies, both past and present, in particular the implications for policy, governance and public engagement.

**PROFESSOR PHIL LEVY**

We are sad to announce the death of Professor Phil Levy in Winchester on 23 January 2011. Professor Levy attended Leeds Modern School and read psychology at Leeds University, graduating in 1955. In 1958, he married his wife, Gill, and took a PhD in psychology and education from Birmingham University; in his doctoral research he became an expert in the science of psychological-test construction and analysis.

Throughout the 1960s Professor Levy worked closely with the National Children’s Bureau, providing statistical advice to its director. He was professor of psychology at Lancaster University from 1972-94 and for many years was also editor of the British Journal of Mathematical and Statistical Psychology.

In the 1980s he became a skilled policymaker within higher education. From 1979 to 1989 he was chair of three consecutive Social Science Research Council (now the ESRC) research committees, and in 1986 he co-chaired the psychology panel for the first Research Assessment Exercise.

A meticulous statistician who always understood the limitations of that discipline, Professor Levy’s advice was often sought in academic and political circles alike.

**ROBERT ADAM**

Robert Adam won the UCL provost award for public engager of the year. Robert is studying for his PhD in sign language linguistics at UCL’s ESRC-funded Deafness, Cognition and Learning Research Centre. His research focuses on sign language in the lives of deaf people, for example those bilingual in sign languages or working as interpreters in the deaf community.

His work helps us understand how people learn sign language and is contributing towards the development of resources and materials for teaching and language assessment.

**PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT**

David Willetts, the Minister for Universities and Science, has reappointed Professor Malcolm Grant to the ESRC Council. Professor Grant is a barrister, environmental lawyer, academic and public servant. He was Professor of Land Economy and Pro-Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University before becoming President and Provost of UCL in 2003, and is a member of the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Hong Kong University Grants Committee.
Publications

**The Sage Handbook of Workplace Learning**

This handbook provides an overview of the growing field of workplace learning which cuts across higher education, vocational education and training, post-compulsory secondary schooling, and lifelong education. It offers a broad yet insightful analysis of the range of theory, research and practical developments in workplace learning, including contributions from members of the ESRC-funded Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies (LLAKES).


**Gods Behaving Badly**

Western society is obsessed with the idols and gods of the red carpet. We worship their triumphs, judge their sins, and hold vigils at their deaths. Can our fixation on and devotion to celebrity culture itself be considered a religion? *Gods Behaving Badly* is written by ESRC/AHRC Religion and Society Programme Grant holder Pete Ward and examines the blurred boundary between popular culture and religion, and the creation of a confounding fusion of the sacred and the profane.


**Global Migration Governance**

Until now, the emerging debate on global migration governance has lacked a clear analytical understanding of what this governance actually is. This book by Alexander Betts, a research associate of the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), brings together a group of the world’s leading experts to consider the different aspects of migration, offering an accessible introduction to the global governance of low-skilled labour migration, high-skilled labour migration, irregular migration and lifestyle migration.


**Anticipating Risks and Organising Risk Regulation**

Anticipating risks has become an obsession of the early 21st century, with private and public sector organisations devoting resources to risk prevention and contingency planning to manage risk events. This book by Bridget Hutter, Professor of Risk Regulation at the ESRC Centre for Analysis of Risk and Regulation, shows how we can organise our social, organisational and regulatory policy systems to cope with the local and transnational risks we regularly encounter.


**EVENTS**

**14 APRIL**

**Inequalities in childhood and adolescent health**

The ESRC Centre for Market and Public Organisation will be holding a workshop aimed at academics, population health practitioners and policymakers who are interested in understanding and reducing health inequalities in children and adolescents. The workshop will present methodological research that will enable participants to better understand causal effects and possible biases in inequalities research. Applied research concerned with recent evidence on inequalities and the policy implications of these will also be presented. For more information, visit www.bristol.ac.uk/cmpo/events/2011/inequalities/index.html

**19-21 MAY**

**Urban conflicts**

This interdisciplinary conference aims to further our understanding of the nature and dynamics of ethno-national conflicts in divided cities. Equally, it questions how cities and everyday urban life are used and abused. It explores their potential for achieving the self-sustaining moderation, constructive channelling or resolution of conflict. A guided tour of Belfast’s ‘peace-walls’ and ‘shared spaces’ will be included. For more information, visit www.arct.cam.ac.uk/conflictincities/PDFs/Call for papers.pdf

**26 JUNE – 1 JULY**

**UKERC summer school 2011**

The UK Energy Research Centre is holding its seventh annual Energy Summer School. The school has been designed to give first- and second-year PhD students an understanding of energy systems as a whole and of pathways to low-carbon energy systems. This week-long course will help students understand and examine challenges involved in the transition to an affordable energy system. For more information, visit www.ukerc.ac.uk/support/blsi-index.php?page=Summer+School+2011
The ESRC magazine *Society Now* aims to raise awareness of our research and its impact. It is aimed at a wide range of readers, from the MP to the businessperson, the voluntary worker to the teacher, the public through to the social scientist, and is published three times a year (spring, summer and early autumn).

*Society Now* offers a readable, intelligent, concise overview of current issues concerning society.