



## **The New Dynamics of Work: A Scoping Study**

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## Executive Summary

### Part I

1. The world of work is changing as processes of globalisation, digitisation, economic crisis, demographic and social change intersect to produce new forms of work, working and working lives. At the same time, enduring inequalities of gender, class, race and ethnicity, age and region continue to shape the patterning of work and employment as well as the experiences and relations of working lives. The ‘new dynamics of work’ must be understood as emergent and complex formations at the intersection of *continuity* and *change*.
2. ‘Work’ includes both employment and unemployment, paid and unpaid work, in and outside formal workplaces. In order to better understand and respond to its increasing complexities and dynamics, research and policy must take the broadest possible interpretation of work.
3. An Advisory Panel of academic researchers, key informants from policy and practitioner backgrounds, a round table discussion and survey with Work Employment and Society conference delegates, and extensive review of the existing literatures and datasets contributed to the identification of nine interrelated themes emerging within contemporary research and policy on work. These are:
  - Structural changes in the labour market;
  - New organisational forms;
  - New, emerging and newly-visible groupings of work and workers;
  - Unpaid work in public and private domains;
  - Unemployment, worklessness and welfare;
  - Education, training and skills;
  - Transitions into, through and out of the labour market;
  - Subjectivities of work and well-being;
  - Identity, culture and citizenship.

a) *Structural changes in the labour market*: there has been a marked expansion of flexible employment practices, part-time and temporary work, zero-hours contracts, low pay and poor quality work. These have extended across social gradients, but women, older workers, young workers and the growing numbers of migrants are the most adversely affected. Gaps in knowledge relate to how inequalities structure routes into and experiences within good jobs and bad jobs.

- b) *New organisational forms*: Across the public and private sectors, there has been an extension of outsourcing, sub-contracting and a shift from centralised organisations, with a broad range of in-house functionalities, towards loose networks of organisations held together by short-term agreements. This may contribute to an erosion of pay, terms and conditions for employees and a reduced 'voice' for employees in organisational decision making and a loss of organisational skills and capacity. Alternatively, it may contribute to organisational competitiveness and perceived efficiencies. More research is needed on the experiences of workers and employers.
- c) *New, emerging and newly-visible groupings of work and workers*: New forms of work include digital jobs and jobs in the green economy, work which is little-explored in terms of occupational structures and practices. Newly-visible jobs include those on the margins of legality such as sex work and informal work but also covers the expanding creative and knowledge industries. Finally this theme encompasses emerging working practices from individualised profile maintenance to crowdsourcing as a way to outsource online.
- d) *Unpaid work in public and private domains*: The impact of labour market changes on the domestic division of labour has remained an on-going research question, although conceptual developments give greater prominence to reproductive labour, parenting and childcare and forms of consumption work, raising further questions about how unpaid work is structured and experienced at the household level. Meanwhile, we know relatively little about unpaid work in the public domain, which includes volunteering, community work, political activism and forms of work embedded in paid employment such as unpaid overtime and internships, which may be important routes into work, especially for young people. More research is needed to understand how unpaid work is experienced, at the individual level or its role within community, organisational and occupational structures, or at a more global scale.
- e) *Unemployment, worklessness and welfare*: The effects of deindustrialisation and unemployment strongly impact on worker identities, reverberating for generations. Current austerity losses have hit sectors and industries unevenly, with women in the public sector and the youth labour force emerging as areas of particular concern. This economic contexts intersects with recent welfare reforms that increase conditionality for benefit recipients and research is required that explores the impacts of these changes and on the movement of workers across sectors and occupations, and in and out of poorly paid jobs in search of work.

- f) *Education, training and skills*: Labour market shifts and a drive towards increased significance of credentials and qualifications have resulted in qualitative under-employment, particularly among young people, including graduates. The under-utilisation of skills has implications for the efficiency of the economy as well as for individual career progression and job satisfaction. At the same time, the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) has remained consistently high, and their lack of training a concern. A notable knowledge gap remains around the maintenance and updating of digital skills over the lifecourse and between different social groups. The role of different kinds of workplace environment in supporting employees' learning, workforce development and career progression is also under-researched.
- g) *Transitions into, through and out of the labour market*: The complexities of youth transitions amid economic uncertainty and a new dynamics of work provide an important area for renewed study. In addition, reformulated expectations about paid work are also critical in understanding the working trajectories and retirement transitions of an ageing population, have gendered and classed implications, and are interconnected with unpaid work commitments. So too the new dynamics of work highlights a number of work transitions warranting further study around retraining, movement across sectors and industries, and into new forms of work.
- h) *Subjectivities and well-being*: Meaningful work has positive effects upon health and well-being, although 'meaningfulness' is not fully understood and these meanings are cross-cut by social inequalities and labour market experiences. Looking at work-life balance provides insight into how people are managing competing demands on their time and the effects of this on individual and workforce performance.
- i) *Identities, culture and citizenship*: Past and present circumstances provide competing influences in the way that workplace identities are formulated, and restructuring is changing the landscape of how particular groups are balancing and coping with these. Differences by gender, ethnicity, class, age, occupation, employment status, and working practices are emerging as significant in the reformulation of working identities.

## Part 2

4. *Recommendations for a new dynamics of work research programme*: A backdrop of adverse economic climate has exacerbated pre-existing labour market inequalities, which a new programme of research now urgently needs to address. The report outlines recommendations for key pillars of research to support a programme that

sees an understanding of the new dynamics of work translated into improvements in work and working lives for future generations.

5. Part I has illustrated that a new programme would need to engage with the interplay between long-standing historical processes and more recent economic, social, political and cultural changes. This requires a broad perspective on work dynamics, cross-disciplinary collaborations, and the development of new and innovative ways of thinking. Future research should continue to ask ambitious questions about the new dynamics of work, and address methodological capacity issues. A balance between coherence and flexibility will be required to ensure synergies and synthesis and thereby best value for investment. We have identified *cross-cutting themes* to underpin such a multi-dimensional programme, which are discussed in relation to their substantive content and policy drivers.
  - a) *Gendered inequalities in the new dynamics of work:* Since the 70s, government policy has sought to establish a legislative framework for equality at work, which more recently has focused around flexible parental leave provision. The 2010 Equality Act has developed a single legal framework to tackle discrimination. Nevertheless, as Part I has shown, men and women's roles continues to be core to the new dynamics of work: work and employment, the formal labour market, voluntary and domestic work all operate through strongly gendered processes. Although gender equality at work is a key policy driver, funding programmes have lacked a systematic investigation of these processes, experiences and outcomes. Furthermore gender intersects with a range of other inequalities of class, ethnicity, age, sexuality and disability. A programme of work around gender and the new dynamics of work would look the gendering of work from the perspective of multiple actors: employers, unions, governments, the education system, and individuals in a gendered workforce.
  - b) *Unpaid work in the new economy:* Unpaid work in the form of domestic labour, including childcare, poses significant challenges for governments aiming to reduce unemployment and under-employment. Unpaid work also stretches into the public domain in family businesses, volunteering, unpaid overtime and work experience, including interning and Workfare requirements – aspects of unpaid work whose wider social and economic significance remains largely unknown.

- c) *Work in the digital economy:* The digital economy is a key driver for economic and employment policy. However, research to date has been fragmented, siloed around: skills, education and training; intensification, deskilling and upskilling; the globalisation of production and labour markets; and 24/7 work. There is a pressing need to synthesise our knowledge of these different aspects of the digital economy to understand more about winners and losers at individual, organisational and national levels, and to understand how digital skills might impact on established inequalities.
- d) *Lifelong resilience and sustainability:* The new dynamics of work raise unanswered questions about individuals' engagement with different forms of work, including precarious work, over the lifecourse, as well as the sustainability of emergent organisational forms, family work practices and local communities in the face of these changing dynamics. A key policy driver is what sustainable jobs can contribute to deficit reduction, as well as how work can intersect with environmental agendas to create a sustainable future.
- e) *Well-being, dignity and citizenship:* Recent focus on precarity and work-life balance underscore the need to understand how different forms of work impact on well-being and dignity, and thus upon social cohesion and citizenship. These issues illustrate how workplaces can facilitate and underpin a set of moral responsibilities across working lives and beyond; bolstered by a framework of employment rights, such as the current Government's Employment Law Review. To engage with and care about one's work is to engage in society so we need to understand the impact of new forms of work on the dynamics of citizenship over time, for workers of differing generations and between different workplace organisations and cultures, voluntary, community and domestic work.
- f) *Public policy and the new dynamics of work:* Public policy impacts across the new dynamics of work, from benefits policy and welfare to work and childcare to business support and investment, health and safety, education, training and skills as well as strategic decisions to involve the private and third sectors in the delivery of public services. A strategic cross cutting review of UK policy and policy evaluation would enhance our understanding of the new dynamics of work, drawing on comparative examples across the devolved governments, and other relevant countries.

- 6 *Data, methodology and capacity challenges:* We suggest 4 key priorities for strategic investment: (1) enhancing methodological capacity in mixed methods research to develop improved synthesis of qualitative and quantitative methods, to include revision of established data sets and broadening the repertoire of methods in use to allow full investigation of the new dynamics of work; (2) the development of qualitative research capacity, which has been under-valued in recent years yet holds key potential to address the new dynamics of work; (3) exploration of how to secure maximum benefit from existing data, including new sources of digital data, such as recent government and ESRC investments under the Big Data programme but also through the wealth of qualitative data sets available for sharing and reuse; (4) greater attention to longitudinal and comparative research data for research on work. Greater use might be made of existing data sources with longitudinal and comparative elements and systematic review of these could recommend areas for strategic investment to leverage maximum value from past investments (5) Support for conceptual and theoretical capacity. Without this, our understanding of the new dynamics of work will be seriously circumscribed. Conceptual development will be the key to making the interconnections and developing the analytical clarity necessary to inform policy and practice.
- 7 *Policy and practitioner engagement.* Since academics and practitioners come at work issues from different perspectives and frame them differently, there a greater role for knowledge brokers to support the translation of research findings into policy implications. It is essential that researchers can continue to ask ‘big questions’ about work, working and working lives, which may be of little direct interest in the immediate moment to any particular end-users but may re-shape how we think about and understand work in more profound and long-term ways, which in turn may impact on the nature of more specific and applied research projects. This said, we do need to find better forms of sustained dialogue and engagement between the academy and external interests. Research generators will play a critical role in creating sustainable impact, both in timing research strategies around a recognition of gaps and in promoting synergies around these.



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## **PART 1**

### **1. Introduction**

The world of work is changing. Barely a day goes by without a high profile media report presenting new trends in the labour market - from zero hours contracts, to youth unemployment, new flows of migrant labour, or digital technologies replacing skilled workers - it is clear that significant and substantial changes are underway in the organisation, nature and experience of employment. At the same time, we are witnessing changes to the organisation and practice of unpaid work: the rise of internships and Workfare schemes; an increasing number of grandparents called on to undertake childcare (at the same time as there is greater pressure on older people to stay in paid work longer); and the movement of tasks formerly part of the paid economy into the unpaid and/or domestic sphere, for instance as we make more use of the Web to book our own holidays or take our waste to be recycled.

In part, some of the empirical changes described above can be linked to particular events and interventions, for instance the financial crisis of 2008 and the ensuing global recession, the expansion of the European Union to include the free movement of workers from Eastern Europe, and government policy responses to both. But it is important to remember that none of this takes place on a blank canvas. For all the change, our working lives are also shaped by familiar continuities, long term processes of globalisation and digitisation, weak and declining labour representation and persistent inequalities of gender, class, race and age, often in pernicious intersections that exacerbate the inequalities of lived experience.

The 'new dynamics of work' must be understood in this sense, as emergent and complex formations at the intersection of continuity and change (Halford and Strangleman, 2009). At a substantive level we urgently need to know more about what is changing, what is staying the same, and for whom? How? Where? Why? Addressing these questions effectively will require both theoretical and methodological consideration. We need to develop a sophisticated grasp of the conceptual and methodological challenges involved, not least in appreciating the breadth and depth of change across individuals' lives. 'Work', both paid and unpaid, involves much more than tasks, income and skill. It is also about identity, citizenship and well-being; and linked to wider power relationships and divisions of labour - not only in the workplace, but also in families and communities; whilst the changing nature of work is important at a range of scales, from the individual, to social groups, businesses, policy makers and the wider economy, both nationally and internationally.

This report provides our brief overview of current themes, resources and challenges in understanding these new dynamics of work. In the short space available, we focus largely on the UK, with full recognition of the need to place these dynamics in a broader global

context. We will address the new dynamics of work from the perspectives of both academic researchers and policy/practitioner end users of research in order to inform an integrated approach to a future research funding strategy that builds on the strengths of both parties and enables effective dialogue between them. Paying attention to substantive, theoretical and methodological issues, we identify both synergies and gaps in existing knowledge to suggest priorities for future ESRC investment in this field.

## **2. Aims and methodological approach**

The main aims of this scoping study were twofold: first, to review existing knowledge and the established research base and identify where gaps and synergies occur; and second, to identify priorities for future ESRC research on the 'new dynamics of work'. Broad definitions of both 'working' and 'work' were applied: the terms were taken to include both employment and unemployment, paid and unpaid work, in and outside of formal workplaces. It is of crucial importance to acknowledge the increasing complexities of what is understood to constitute work and working in contemporary society and, consequently, a diverse mix of methodological tools are required to research these effectively. However, despite this complexity, this is an agenda of the utmost importance, given the continued centrality of work to our everyday lives. Understanding the new dynamics of work should be seen as the central strand of any project to promote a fair and vibrant society and ensure economic competitiveness and national well-being in the decades to come.

This review has been conducted under the auspices of the Work Futures Research Centre, at the University of Southampton. From the outset, our aim was to include a broad representation of expertise and interests from across the academic and non-academic communities engaged with research in this broad area. We used three main methods to achieve this:

A: At the beginning of this 2-month scoping study we convened an *Advisory Panel* of academic researchers, with outstanding track-records of knowledge and expertise in the field of work research (see Acknowledgements). The Panel was chosen to include scholars from a range of disciplines and with diverse substantive and methodological expertise. Structured discussion with and feedback from the Advisory Panel helped to identify key themes, relevant literatures and data sets, and to establish a long-list of priorities for future research, as well as offering direct input into this final report.

B: We identified a list of non-academic *key informants*, drawn from a range of policy and practitioner organisations engaged in workforce and business issues (see Acknowledgements). Telephone and/or face to face interviews were conducted during

August and September 2013 to establish knowledge gaps, research priorities, and to consider how to extend the engagement of academic researchers with these stakeholders.

C: The ESRC hosted a *round-table discussion* at the triennial Work, Employment and Society (WES) conference in September, where early findings from the scoping study were presented to participants, who were asked for feedback and suggestions. At the same conference, we distributed a *survey* to the 400 delegates, designed to offer broader input from the academic community to this scoping study.

All research instruments used in the scoping study can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Alongside these mechanisms for consultation and engagement we have conducted a literature search and a review of existing datasets which can be found in **Appendix 2**. The report that follows is based on the resultant combination of materials, expertise and advice.

This report is divided into two parts:

- This first section of the report, **Part 1**, looks at the context central to contemporary debates on work and employment, defined by the ESRC as the ‘new dynamics of work’. Nine emergent themes are outlined, including the knowledge gaps and synergies that characterise them.
- **Part 2** reflects on the theoretical and methodological challenges of engaging with the new dynamics of work and employment. It engages with a series of cross-cutting issues, grounded in the themes and dynamics outlined in Part 1, to inform ESRC discussion of future funding priorities in this area.

### 3.1 New dynamics and continuities

Our scoping of existing research, literature and data sources, our consultations with Advisory Panel members, key informants and WES conference participants emphasised a range of widely debated factors underpinning the current emergence of new forms of work, working and working lives in the UK. These include:

- On-going globalisation, specifically the emergence of new global divisions of production and labour that have contributed to the continued decline of the UK manufacturing industry, jobs and skills (Grint and Nixon, forthcoming). These new divisions are increasingly coming to challenge the dominance of Europe and North America in the global service sector (Brown, Lauder and Ashton, 2012), pitching competition for middle-class jobs onto a world-wide stage. The development of global labour markets has led to changing trends in migration, mobilities and new migrant divisions of labour (Leonard, 2010; Wills, *et al.*, 2010).
- Digitisation of information and communication, alongside the diversification and proliferation of devices and applications, resulting in the phenomenal growth in scale and speed of data generation, storage and circulation. These changes place digital skills in high demand, are creating new occupations and reshaping existing ones, enabling new forms of 'networked' organisation (Castells, 1996), new labour processes and new employment practices, such as web based sub-contracting, crowd-sourcing and related piece work (Leonard, 2013). Meanwhile the places, spaces and times of work are re-cast, for some, as location and working hours become less relevant than connectivity (Felstead and Jewson, 2002; Halford, 2005) impacting on the experiences and attitudes of workers (Felstead and Jewson, 2012).
- Economic crisis, recession and austerity, leading to rises in unemployment - particularly for young people (both graduates and NEETs) (McDowell, 2012) and women, under-employment, precarious work, differential sector effects, and increases to in-work poverty on the back of longer term decline in real wages (Aldridge *et al.*, 2012; Pessoa and Van Reenan, 2013; Rubery, 2011). Meanwhile unionisation has seen long term decline (levelling-off more recently (van Wanrooy, *et al.*, 2013), undermining collective responses to the crisis.
- Demographic change - the ageing population, alongside fiscal crisis and associated pension reforms raises questions about how to integrate and support an ageing workforce, a challenge that will become ever more pressing in the face of long term decline in birth rates across the UK and much of Europe. Longer working lives may have consequences for younger generations, on the one hand reducing the supply of jobs as older employees stay

in work longer and, on the other, increasing the supply of jobs in the health and social care sector (Cangiano *et al.*, 2009). These trends must be considered alongside, the inflow (and also return migration) of migrants from the A2 and A8 countries since 2002, and the managed migration of skilled workers from outside the EU (Spencer, 2011).

All these factors are important in shaping the emergent dynamics of work: sometimes together and sometimes separately. The pressing challenge for researchers and policy makers is to understand how these factors are interacting with each other *and* with the longer term processes shaping work, working and working lives to produce new dynamics of working in the current period. Enduring inequalities of gender, ethnicity and social class and also age, disability and religion continue to shape the patterning of work and employment and the experiences and relations of work, often in new, subtle and hidden ways.

In what follows we identify nine key themes and priorities for framing the existing research and data sets in this area.

### **3.2: Emergent themes, knowledge gaps and synergies**

Our review established that the following nine themes dominate contemporary research agendas and policy priorities. However, whilst a substantial evidence base exists or is emerging on these issues, significant gaps remain in our knowledge and conceptual understanding, and in places there is a lack of join-up and recognition of synergies.

- a) Structural changes in the labour market;
- b) New organisational forms;
- c) New, emerging and newly-visible groupings of work and workers;
- d) Unpaid work in public and private domains;
- e) Unemployment, worklessness and welfare;
- f) Education, training and skills;
- g) Transitions into, through and out of the labour market;
- h) Subjectivities of work and well-being;
- i) Identity, culture and citizenship.

For each of these we link together evidence on why these issues are important conceptually, as well as for policy and practice, and identify some critical knowledge gaps.

### 3.2.1 Structural changes in the labour market

The nature of work and working is being reshaped by a series of structural changes to the labour market, which have important effects upon the quality and processes of working. There is a range of evidence to suggest that employers' search for flexible employment systems, alongside a long-term decline in union power and erosion of institutional protections, has increased the volume and variety of 'poor work'. The extent, contours and policy implications of related polarisation in the labour market has been the subject of considerable debate (Holmes, 2010; 2011).

A key product of recent restructuring has been the expansion of *flexible employment practices* (McGovern *et al.*, 2004). Alongside a rise in part-time work (Doogan, 2009), including involuntary part-time work (Aldridge *et al.*, 2012), concern has surrounded the use of zero hours contracts (Chandler and Barrett, 2013; House of Commons, 2013), temporary work and agency work (Standing, 2011): forms of work tied to low pay, financial insecurity and poor quality (Warren, 2011; Lyonette and Baldauf, 2010). Flexible working may serve as a 'bridge' as well as a 'trap' (Warren, 2011), varying by context (Fagan *et al.*, 2012), although the process distinguishing positive from negative flexibility and the long term effect on careers is not well understood. Survey data on zero hours contracts, for example, does not establish whether they are a choice or necessity for workers or indicate whether they are a temporary phase or more permanent feature of working lives. However, we do know that there has been a rise in involuntary part-time working, linked to cuts to overtime and contracted hours amongst full-time workers (Bell and Blanchflower, 2013). This *underemployment* is linked to a range of demographic and work-related characteristics, including having dependent children, low levels of education and is concentrated in specific occupations (Cam, 2012). Alongside this 'quantitative' underemployment, we see a rise in 'qualitative' forms of underemployment, whereby workers are in jobs that do not make full use of their education and skills (OECD, 2010). *Low pay* continues to be central to the workings of the UK economy (Lloyd *et al.*, 2011). While the 'knowledge economy' has grown, the expectation that this will drive high value, high wage employment has not been realised (*ibid*). Over the past 10 years the UK has seen a sustained period of real wage decline fuelling an increase in in-work poverty.

Taken together, contractions and insecurities in working time, underemployment and low pay have led to the growth of *precarious employment* (Kallenberg, 2011; Huws, 2011) and arguably a new 'precariat' class (Standing, 2011; Savage *et al.*, 2013): a working poor, employed in insecure, temporary and casual work, with some of those in more traditionally 'middle-class' jobs whose security has been eroded through outsourcing and short-term contracts (Lane, 2011). These processes do not mirror traditional class distinctions, not least



as the middle-classes increasingly experience the insecurities of contract work, with individualised responsibility for career progression outside organisational structures (Sennett, 1998). Drawing on secondary data, the dynamics underpinning the apparent stark *polarisation* between ‘good jobs’ and ‘bad jobs,’ and growth in precarious employment in the US have been explored (Kalleberg, 2011), with an analysis that resonates with developments in the UK (Stuart *et al.*, 2012; Thompson, 2013).

Despite these suggestions of polarisation, relatively little attention has been devoted to the impacts of labour market restructuring upon assets and the wealthy. A notable exception is Rowlingson and McKay (2011) who explore how the family resources support people from wealthy families in getting to the top, and note too the gap between the kind of work rewarded by the market and the work which people place most social value on; a longstanding theme in campaigns for minimum and living wages and equal pay for work of equal value.

Whilst there is a body of work documenting the existence of insecure and precarious employment, less is known about the inequalities that structure these types of jobs. It appears that women are disproportionately represented in insecure workforces (Fudge and Owens, 2006; McDowell, 2013), although groups including older workers, young workers and migrants are also significantly affected (Standing, 2011). Recent qualitative research shows that low paid white British and ethnic minority workers (including recent migrants) share many experiences of low paid work and barriers to progression, but there are also differences contributing to ethnic minorities’ persistent over-representation in low paid work (Hudson *et al.*, 2013; Low Pay Commission, 2013). More generally, the bottom end of the labour market may be misrepresented in large-scale surveys and remain under-examined: the Labour Force Survey does not capture people living in hotels and caravans and thus under-samples the precarious workforce. There are considerable gaps in the literature relating to how inequalities structure routes into and experiences within good jobs and bad jobs, particularly in terms of the gendering of low pay, insecurity and zero-hour contracts and the relationship between these and welfare.

### **3.2.2 New organisational forms**

Many of the changes described above are associated with the extension of outsourcing, sub-contracting and a shift from centralised organisations with a broad range of in-house functionalities, towards loose networks of organisations held together by short-term agreements. We can see the impact of this organisational form on the nature and experience of paid work in two similar iterations. First, the increased movement towards contracting out of public services and second the fragmentation of business in particular

sectors. In the former case, linked to the rise of 'new managerialism' in the public sector (Exworthy and Halford, 1999), increasingly, complex and often multi-national webs of organisations, contractors and sub-contractors are involved in delivering public services (Huws and Podro, 2012). It is well documented that a long-term trend towards the outsourcing of public sector activities - particularly in the provision of social care has led to an erosion of pay, terms and conditions for employees, a reduced 'voice' for employees in organisational decision making (Cunningham and James, 2009; Baines *et al.*, 2011), and blurred lines of control and responsibility for employees (Overall, 2012). This process has accelerated over recent years, with the New Labour governments from 1997 extending the practice to a far wider range of services and functions (from prisons, to information technology, and accounting). With the election of the Coalition Government in 2010 this process received significant further impetus, not least with the 2013 Health and Social Care Act, which opens all NHS services to competitive tendering by 'any willing provider'. Whilst existing staff are commonly subject to Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE), in practice this can produce divisions within the newly constituted workforce and indirect forms of discrimination, for example, if TUPE'd staff are more expensive they may be offered less work. Notably, contractors of public services comprise a mixture of third and private sector organisations, some very large consultancies and businesses (KPMG and Virgin Healthcare, for instance) as well as small local charities and start-up businesses.

Second, we have seen an extension of the international division of labour as organisations make increased use of digital technologies to take advantage of differentiated labour markets across the world. In particular there has been increased use of global labour markets by service sector employers, well documented in research on call centres (Glucksmann, 2004; Mirchandani, 2004; Taylor and Bain, 2005; Budhwar *et al.*, 2006; Russell, 2008; Taylor *et al.*, 2013) and emergent in research on the globalisation of legal work (Brown *et al.*, 2012) and software (Grimshaw *et al.*, 2007; Flecker and Meil, 2010) for instance. Whilst this globalisation of service sector production may continue within single parent companies, we also see a rise in the organisation of business beyond the single, multi-function corporation and towards a 'networked' model whereby multiple organisations are tied together by often short-term and fluid relationships (Castells, 1996). This replaces the security of a single integrated organisation, with the associated support structures such as pensions, training provision, long bureaucratised career ladders, with more temporary, partial and often individualised experiences of work and organisation. Contracts are made on a global scale, often via the web or other digital communications that enable very short-term and market sensitive contractual agreements between organisations and individuals. This is transforming the conditions for certain forms of work: piece rates for software coding or language translation, given to the lowest online bidder; short production runs for the large supermarkets, and so on. These trends towards digitally-

mediated globalisation perpetuate long established questions about the significance of technological innovation for deskilling and up-skilling, autonomy and surveillance (Lloyd and Payne, 2009; Bain and Taylor, 2000; Fleming and Sturdy, 2010).

Related to this, we see the broader impact of a range of new work practices associated with the proliferation of digital innovation, including a rise in home-working (at least for some hours/days in the week) (Felstead and Jewson, 2002; Halford, 2006), and an erosion of boundaries between work and non-work life (Davis, 2012), with potential implications for family life and well-being

We have uneven empirical evidence of these new organisational forms. Whilst there are some good studies of public sector outsourcing, we do not know much about how working terms and conditions vary between third sector and private sector contractors (does the third sector 'do it differently'?) or the long term career trajectories and livelihoods of those working on short-term outsourced contracts. In relation to the global organisation of service sector production existing research is dominated by marketing and particularly supply chain management, with little attention to the experiences and trajectories of workers.

### **3.2.3 New, emerging and newly visible groupings of work**

This theme groups together three interrelated strands that encompass new, emerging and newly visible forms of work, occupations and industries. The first strand captures the proliferation of emerging occupations, including new digital jobs in, for example, cyber security, software development and the management and storage of data, but also the emergence of a green economy focused on increasing sustainability, recycling and reusing, and the development of alternative sources of power and resources. These new occupations do not, of course, emerge in a vacuum; an emerging digital economy has created an array of associated occupations and groups and others might arise from government policy agendas. For example, quasi-markets created by outsourcing welfare to work provision has over the past 10 years given rise to a multinational million pound industry in the UK. The 'green economy' is of considerable interest to policy makers looking for new routes to economic growth or meeting climate change targets and will have employment implications (Martinez-Fernandez *et al.*, 2010; Bowen 2012). Understanding not only the structure and organisation of these new occupational groupings, but their relationship with the labour market more generally and with existing inequalities, is a key requirement for future research.

Second are the related and sometimes overlapping groupings of forms or aspects of work; that might be defined as newly visible; where academic attention is being paid to a previously under-researched field or aspect of the work done. It includes work on the

margins and industries such as sex work (Sanders and Hardy, 2013), body work (Wolkowitz *et al.*, 2013) and various types of informal work (Ram *et al.*, 2007, Williams and Nadin, 2012) some which may straddle boundaries of legality. It also includes the expanding creative and cultural industries, including not only arts and media but work in the knowledge economy (Florida 2004, 2010) and 'style' (Ball *et al.*, 2000). Again the key questions here relate to how these occupations are structured and organised, how they are accessed and how they are shaped by existing labour market structure and inequalities.

Third, this theme also encompasses new forms of work or work practices, rather than distinct occupations - the product of shifting scales of social relations from local to global and the impact of digital technologies and Web 2.0 innovations. These might include, for example, the work undertaken by people to manage their online profile and the use of these social media strategies in recruitment and reputation economies, particularly for freelancers. Another example might be practices such as crowdsourcing (Barnes *et al.*, 2013, De Hoyos *et al.*, 2013), (the online outsourcing of work) or crowd funding (a way of raising money to produce new products or solve particular issues) which create new mechanisms for labour market participation and new forms and divisions of labour.

#### **3.2.4. Unpaid work in public and private domains**

Existing knowledge and research on unpaid work has two key dimensions. Unpaid work in the private sphere - domestic or household labour - has long been a key issue in research agendas, which have focused on divisions of labour in relation to women's shifting role in paid employment (Charles and James, 2005; Cousins and Tang, 2004) and more recently the potential convergence of women's and men's work patterns (Kan *et al.*, 2011). Interest has also broadened from domestic labour to specific understandings of the work of parenting (Reay, 2005; Dermott, 2008), reproductive labour and its depletion as a result of the impact of intensified paid work (Hoskyns and Rai, 2007), and consumption work in household labour, for example, in relation to recycling, food preparation and IT provisioning (Wheeler and Glucksmann, 2013).

However, there are gaps in our evolving knowledge of unpaid household labour, particularly around the interconnections between its diverse and multiple dimensions. Data collection on these complex issues in large scale surveys is limited compared to that collected on paid work (Warren, 2011). The impacts of the austerity context on the organisation of household labour are largely unexplored and there are new dynamics around care work. In particular, the complex intersections of care arrangements for older people that stretch beyond the family to public, private and third sector providers continue to be a key policy concern given the implications of an ageing population on public care provision. At the same time, grandparents can be a key source of child care for working parents and the scope and

dimensions and implications of this are only starting to be addressed (Crompton and Lyonette, 2010).

Second, existing research draws attention to the wide range of unpaid labour that takes place outside the household, including informal (non-familial) care, community work, political activism, and formal volunteering. A body of empirical work reveals something of the scope and dimensions of volunteering in the UK (NCVO, 2013), although its diversity and lack of coherence make it notoriously hard to measure. Volunteers tend to come from prosperous, middle-aged, middle class and highly educated sections of the population (Fyfe and Milligan, 2003; Brodie *et al.*, 2009; Mohan and Bulloch, 2012), but on closer inspection particular activities and roles appear to be differentiated by class and gender (Davis Smith, 1998). There is a dearth of evidence both at an individual level about how it is experienced, organised (with other forms of labour) and resourced and at a macro level its role within community, organisation and occupational structures (Taylor, 2005). In the current period of austerity we know very little about the extent and manner to which a substitution of paid for unpaid workers has occurred, and despite its high profile in welfare to work debates there is little evidence of its role in activation programmes.

Third are forms of unpaid work conducted in direct relation to paid employment, as unpaid hours beyond employment contract such as unpaid overtime, skills development training activities, or increasingly as an internship. Many young people from all social backgrounds now face extended periods of training and unpaid work (Jones, 2009; Lanning, 2012). For graduates, for example, an internship, often unpaid, is now becoming established as the 'normal' route into many professional occupations; an additional and required credential. Although there is no national monitoring of internships, it is estimated that in 2010, 45 per cent of graduates moving into jobs did so via internships (Graduate Prospects, 2011), a development which constitutes a significant restructuring of employment opportunities following education (Baxter, 2011; Cain, 2011; Malik and Syal, 2011; Cabinet Office, 2009). Access to internships is, however, uneven. Although there has been little sustained research on this new form of work (in some industries, at least), emerging reports suggest that reflecting the inequalities in volunteering, the ability to secure internships is unequally distributed, strongly mediated by education, social class, ethnicity and religion (Poulter, 2010; Penny, 2011), with graduates being the most likely and sought-after interns.

### **3.2.5 Unemployment, worklessness and welfare**

Research over the past decade has continued to record and understand the on-going processes and effects of deindustrialisation and unemployment on worker identities, and more widely their communities. Walkerdine and Jimenez (2012) explore how people and their communities exercise individual and collective agency, despite the uncertainty and

chronic insecurity affecting multiple generations. Qualitative research studies have challenged simplistic notions of cultures of worklessness that pervade current policy, instead trying to map the contours of multiple disadvantage (Shildrick *et al.*, 2012). Research points instead to endemic cycling between low paid insecure work and unemployment and redirects attention to demand side issues shaping households' relations with employment and unemployment (Goulden, 2010). The uneven geographies of unemployment remain critical to understanding experiences of worklessness.

Whilst job losses in the current austerity period have not been as big as predicted, they have been substantial and affected workers in different sectors and industries in different ways. Younger people's employment have been particularly hit (Bivand, 2012), although the rise in youth unemployment predates the recession. In particular, some have argued that the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) has reached crisis levels (ACEVO, 2012). The jobless rate for 16-24 year olds has been persistently above 20 per cent (Work Foundation, 2013). However other groups are also affected. Cuts to the public sector have impacted more heavily on female unemployment rates (Green, 2012), and increases in levels of female unemployment have been exacerbated by the fact that many of the jobs created by the Government's plans for growth are in the male-dominated private sector (Fawcett Society, 2013). Recent quantitative analysis of the British Household Panel Survey shows that school attainment (grades), family background (parent and sibling work status, parental qualifications and housing tenure) and gender emerge as the strongest predictors of labour market outcomes (Dorsett and Lucchino, 2012).

A second dimension to this theme is how individuals' relationship with work is affected by their relationship with the evolving benefit system and its rewards and sanctions. Recent changes to welfare benefits, such as the imminent roll out of universal credits to replace means-tested benefits and tax credits for people out of work or on low incomes (Tarr and Finn, 2012) and to Employment Services through large scale general schemes like the Work Programme have involved, on the one hand a personalisation of benefits, but alongside this a more punitive and conditional response to worklessness - part of a new phase in a longer term re-commodification of labour (Dean *et al.*, 2005). For example welfare reforms have also seen new ways of defining and measuring health and disability alongside increasing levels of conditionality for disabled people (Patrick *et al.*, 2011).

These new generations and groupings of unemployed people operating in an evolving welfare context signal new dimensions to fundamental questions about work, unemployment and identity, particularly in light of changes since the last period of large scale job loss in UK. These dimensions include the implications of increasing welfare conditionality on the experiences of worklessness for different groups. They raise issues about the effects on individual attitudes and behaviours in ways which lead to different societal outcomes (Han *et al.*, 2012). They also include understanding the movement of

workers across sector and occupational boundaries in the search for work for example (Knight *et al.*, *Sectoral rebalancing, mobility and adaptation*, current ESRC project) and the cycling between low paid insecure jobs, and unemployment.

### **3.2.6 Education, training and skills**

Despite the trends towards precarious low paid work, employment in traditional low-skilled areas of employment (e.g. elementary manual jobs) is shrinking in the UK, while other areas of employment growth (e.g. retailing) are requiring higher levels of skill, or higher minimum qualifications than previously (Hasluck, 2011; Felstead and Green, 2013). At the same time the drive to increase qualification rates means there are now fewer workers with no qualifications and more workers with a first or higher degrees than ever before (Lanning, 2012). But there is a considerable mismatch between the requirements of jobs and the qualifications of the supply of workers, suggesting 'qualitative' under-employment is becoming a critical issue in the UK labour market, particularly for young people. There is also an increase in employees taking on work that makes little or no use of their expertise – a more invisible form of underemployment (OECD, 2010; Scottish Parliament, 2013). Felstead and Green (2013) use a range of measures and datasets to highlight the increase in over-qualified workers and under-utilisation of skills in different occupations in the UK. They point out how the underutilisation of skills can impact, not only on the efficiency of the national economy, but also individuals' career prospects, job satisfaction and well-being. They note that the distinction between employment and unemployment has become more 'fuzzy', separated by this grey area of underemployment which involves not only time but also skills (Felstead and Green, 2013). At the lower end of the labour market, there is concern that the increasing emphasis on formal qualifications to enter many occupations disproportionately excludes women as they are over represented amongst those in the UK with no, few or lower level qualifications (McBride, 2011).

The ongoing failure of educational credentials to translate into secure forms of paid work during the economic recession has impacted significantly on the nature of youth transitions into work. Many young people from all social backgrounds now face extended periods of training and unpaid work (Jones, 2009; Lanning, 2012), including internships (see section 3.2.4 above). For young people without higher level qualifications, the landscape is also unequal. The numbers of NEETs remains at a consistently high level and their engagement with education and training remains an ongoing concern (Darlington, 2012). There has been some research examining the scope to boost the capacity of the Third Sector to work with young people who are not in education, employment or training (Dixon *et al.*, 2011). For some of those with some lower level qualifications as well as more highly qualified young people, the economic recession together with the introduction of high university tuition fees has meant that apprenticeships are becoming more sought after as a route into

employment and training. However, apprenticeships remain highly gendered by sector, although the expansion of apprenticeship training into service and public sectors has resulted in an increase in the numbers of female apprentices (Fuller and Unwin, 2012; Newton *et al.*, 2012). There has also been a rise in the numbers of older 'adult' apprentices, aged 25 to 60 (Data Service, Feb 2012), and their experiences are currently the subject of ongoing research (Fuller *et al.*, 2015). That the acquisition of workplace training and skills is now an ongoing requirement which extends over the lifecourse is now widely accepted and recognised (Felstead, 2010). In addition, there is increasing interest in understanding how different kinds of workplace 'learning environments' support or inhibit workforce development (Felstead *et al.*, 2009)

The occupationally distinct nature of skills distributions, underemployment and need for ongoing training signal wider issues around skills acquisitions. The evidence for continued upskilling is mixed, as there has been a shortening of training and learning times for jobs (Felstead and Green, 2013). Digital skills are an area of specific concern, with employers reporting a lack of suitably qualified young people entering the labour market (Haggerty, 2013). Concern over secondary level education has led to the recent suspension of the Information Technology GCSE, to be replaced from 2014 with a new Computer Science curriculum. The effects of this *inter alia* on skills acquisition and the gendering of this, given the strong sex-stereotyping of computer science, remain to be seen. Meanwhile, we know very little about how digital skills are maintained and updated over the life-course. However qualified young people are when they enter the labour market, these skills are unlikely to be sufficient in the medium to long term. In a context where employers may have declining capacity for training, responsibility for skills updating may fall to individuals, although there are questions about how realistic and effective this will be in providing an adequate skills base for the knowledge economy.

### **3.2.7 Transitions**

Research on transitions into work and training over the lifecourse have been dominated by a focus on youth, which was the subject of a major ESRC Research programme *Youth Citizenship and Social Change 1997-2003* (Catan, 2004; Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Timely work going on as part of the ESRC's Secondary Data Analysis Initiative promises to provide an important resource in documenting precarious working and unemployment prospects for young people over the past 20 years (Furlong, *The Making of the Precariat*, current ERSC project). This would doubtlessly be complemented by research on how the economic recession is affecting the entry routes of young people into work. Building on on-going debates within youth studies on the relationship between transitions into work and the construction of young people's identities and cultural lives (Furlong *et al.*, 2011; McDowell, 2012) important questions remain about the 'new' dynamics which may be occurring in relation to the forms and patterns of work and working by young people.



However, there is a growing literature on transitions through the lifecourse (*inter alia* Ecclestone *et al.*, 2010) and there has been a body of research on transitions to retirement of the over 50s, sometimes through intermediary stages of part time or unpaid work (Barnes *et al.*, 2002; Barnes *et al.*, 2004; Vickerstaff and Cox, 2005). Conversely, keeping older people in paid work for longer has become important as the reverberations of the recent fiscal crisis collide with the emergent implications of longer term demographic change (Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2011; CIPD, 2012). Specifically, the pensions' crisis means that many will have to work longer to support themselves in old age, whilst birth rate decline in the West means that working lives will have to be extended to meet long-term labour market demand. Nonetheless, it is clear that there remain significant challenges to achieving this and that these challenges take specifically gendered forms. Women's labour market participation in later life continues to be shaped by gendered divisions of labour related to caring responsibilities for both elderly relatives and children (Loretto *et al.*, 2005; Phillipson and Smith, 2005; Evandrou and Glaser, 2007), and exacerbated by very limited provision of flexible working hours for older workers despite apparently high demand (TUC, 2013). Furthermore, there is clear evidence that age-based stereotyping and discrimination are gendered and that this is often especially severe for women (Duncan and Loretto, 2004; Moore, 2009).

The impact of the economic climate on these various transitions is less well documented or understood, but raises questions about transitions at other points of the lifecourse. The impact of redundancy, retraining and reskilling, movement between more secure and precarious forms of employment and across occupational and industrial sectors, movement into and out of self-employment and portfolio working, and involvement in new forms of work affect workers of all ages- but these experiences will be intersected by age, gender, class and region. In addition, the impact of abolishing retirement age and working beyond pension age on subjective well-being demands further investigation.

### **3.2.8. Subjectivities of work and well-being**

Inclusion in forms of work, whether paid or unpaid, has been demonstrated to have clear benefits to health and well-being, and the meaningfulness of work is seen as a central motivating force in people's lives (Frankl, 1984; Waddell and Burton, 2006; Baumberg, 2011), contributing to overall happiness (Green *et al.*, 2013). However, meaningfulness is not necessarily understood in the same way (Madden and Truss, 2013). Further, the ways in which work is both drawn upon subjectively and positions workers is highly differentiated by gender, class, race and ethnicity, age, sexuality and personal biography (Parry, 2003; Konrad *et al.*, 2006), as well as by the impact of structural changes to jobs, organisations, industrial sectors, trade unions and labour markets (Perrett and Martinez Lucio, 2009). Whilst this enormous diversity in the meanings and experiences of work is being reflected in some

innovative research (e.g. Lyon and Back, 2012; Strangleman, 2012), key questions remain on the impact on subjectivity and well being of recent changes in the dynamics of work, as well as the broader moral economy within which workforces and workers are situated. Shifts to zero-hours, casualisation, in-work poverty as well as longer hours and larger workloads, for example, all raise issues of ethics in working practices and of dignity for those both in and out of paid work and at all levels of the workforce (van Wanrooy, 2013).

Changes in labour legislation and workforce restructuring make such questions timely. Findings from the Skills and Employment Survey 2012 reveal a sharp rise in fear and insecurity, with the largest increases among workers in the public sector. Employees who felt able to participate in decision-making about organisational change and their own work experience lower increases in anxiety than those who have little or no influence within their workplace. The longer working hours, work intensification and the 'function-creep' and blurring boundaries of many information-based jobs which accompany restructuring (Gregg, 2011) has implications for work-life balance and the way that people feel about their paid work (Cartwright and Holmes, 2006; Chalofsky, 2010). However, balancing work and life is often seen as down to the individual: there was no general increase in employers' provision of flexible working practices between 2004 and 2011 and, moreover, the proportion of workplace managers who think it is up to employees to balance their work and family responsibilities has increased (van Wanrooy, 2013).

The increased demands caused by work can lead to work-related stress and long term sickness (Parry *et al.*, 2005; Taylor *et al.*, 2010) ), resulting not only in personal costs but economic ones. As such, the health at work agenda has become a central feature of political debate, catalysed by the Black Review 2008 (Baumberg, 2011). This identified not only cultural factors standing in the way of a healthy working population, such as managerial attitudes and misconceptions, but also systemic factors. The Review called for a pathway of care to prevent worklessness, and whilst some important steps have been made, research is urgently needed to evaluate these. In 2010, the Marmot Review of health inequalities identified 'fair employment and good work for all' as a key plank of good health. Important questions remain as to the extent and manner in which new dynamics of working impact on four key characteristics: appropriate income in and out of work, participation in the labour market, a positive psychosocial environment and avoidance of adverse physical/chemical hazards.

### **3.2.9. Identities, culture and citizenship**

As well as impacting on subjective well-being, research continues to show that work remains a core element of individual and collective identities (Strangleman, 2004):

participation and non-participation in the waged labour market, paid work and unpaid work continue to be significant in the everyday construction and performance of identities. These processes are both historically grounded and dynamic. References to the past can be strong, for example through geographically embedded cultural identifications with industrial histories (Russo and Linkon, 2005; Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012) intersecting with more recent layers of economy, opportunity and activity and together shaping contemporary experiences of engagement and disengagement with work at a range of scales, from the very local to the global.

Identities remain closely related to the performance of paid work, and to occupational and organisational cultures (Watson, 2008; Akerlof and Kranton, 2010), particularly revealed at times of occupational and organisational change (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). The interaction of new dynamics of work with older identities is far from fixed. Older occupational identities may prove remarkably resilient in the face of change - in healthcare for instance, familiar identities associated with medicine and nursing remain powerful (Halford and Leonard, 2006) - but we also see the emergent of newer 'hybrid' identities as managerialist discourses, and practices, change the nature of work and careers. By contrast, the contraction of occupational certainties around some traditional industrial labour markets has prompted a 'crisis of masculinity' for working-class men (Nixon, 2009), lacking viable alternatives.

Three emergent emphases in this research may be of particular interest in exploring the new dynamics of work. First, it is increasingly recognised that it takes a great deal of work to maintain and manage identities (Watson 2009; Petriglieri and Stein, 2012; Knapp *et al.*, 2013; Essers *et al.*, 2013). This has long been apparent from studies of gender, sexuality and ethnicity at work, where the privileging of masculinist, heterosexual, able-bodied and white identities demand contextually specific performances from others to meet cultural expectations (Stewart *et al.*, 2012; Foster and Wass, 2013; Bradley and Healy, 2008; Leonard, 2010; Garner, 2011). However, these expectations are apparently extended in a digital era, with the proliferation of personal branding via social media (Leonard, 2013). Second, there is increased interest in how identities are constructed at the interface of paid work and other forms of work (Lloyd, 2012; Moisio *et al.*, 2013). Third, whilst more sweeping claims that work has been replaced by consumption and leisure as the central sources of identity in post-industrial society cannot be sustained (Strangleman, 2012), it is clear that this is differentiated by labour market position, social group and lifecycle. Increased precarity may be undermining collective occupational cultures and reducing identification with the paid labour market (Lloyd, 2012). In turn, this has the potential to revitalise debates about industrial citizenship, social inclusion and social cohesion.

### **3.3. Summary and Conclusion**

As is clear from our thematic overview, this report has been conducted against the backdrop of an adverse economic climate and it is clear that this has served to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities in the labour market. We have provided compelling evidence that a new programme of research is now urgently needed to address these, as well as to better understand how new dynamics of work may be translated into improvements in work and working lives across the lifecourse as well as for future generations. However, and as the Marmot Review recommended, this may require moving beyond economic growth as the sole measure of 'social success'. There are other important societal goals, including health and well-being, environmental sustainability, and a fair, equal society. In Part 2, we turn to outline our recommendations for some key pillars of research which would serve these broader aims.

## PART 2

### **4. Introduction**

Part 1 has begun to illustrate the breadth and scale of the challenges that we face in documenting and understanding the new dynamics of work, emergent in the interplay of long-standing historical processes and more recent economic, social, political and cultural changes at a range of spatial scales. The nature, experience and practice of work shapes lives from cradle to grave with profound implications for individuals' life chances and for the broader character of families, generations, communities, organisations and economies. We need to pay attention to work, the workforce and working lives: what work is, how work gets done and by whom, the routes into, through and out of different forms of work and how these emerge at the intersection of processes from the global to the local, shaped by history and geography. The new dynamics of work cannot be explored without this broad perspective.

This is challenging, but we should not be tempted to divide the study of 'work' into (apparently) neat categories - for example by industrial sector or occupation, voluntary work or paid work - to make it manageable. Instead we must pay attention to the dynamics and interconnections between forms, practices and experiences of work. We need to understand, for example, how domestic divisions of labour are changing and continue to shape gender divisions of labour, as well as assumptions about workplace commitment, promotion prospects and so on; how emergent business models generate new forms of domestic labour or vice versa; and how contracting out of public services impacts on the scale and nature of voluntary work. These are not simply academic concerns. Rather, we suggest that effective answers to pressing questions such as organisational performance, the skills base, and youth unemployment will not be forthcoming without recognition of the interconnectedness of forms of work and the multiple processes at play in shaping these.

This will require cross-disciplinary collaborations. The research described in Part 1 has drawn on centrally on the disciplinary expertise of the authors and our advisory team - sociology, history, geography, economics, health sciences, education, industrial relations, and management - but future research should also draw in relevant expertise, for example from the wider humanities as well as from psychology, medicine and computer science. The study of work bridges all these disciplines - and more - and it is important that we find effective ways to exploit this: to capitalise on the strengths of the different disciplines and their associated methodologies and develop synergies between them. This must mean more than the inclusion of diverse disciplines on particular projects, and should not rely on 'lowest common denominator' interdisciplinarity (Urry, 2005) but should aim towards new

ways of developing innovative and transformative ways of thinking, built on integrated approaches that will extend UK interdisciplinary research capacity.

On this basis, a future programme of work should seek to ask ambitious questions about the new dynamics of work and working lives, and will need to pursue ground-breaking methodological approaches in addressing these. This will require a careful balance between coherence and flexibility. There should be sufficient orchestration and shared effort to allow integrated understandings of the new dynamics of work, so that individual investments are able to come together and produce collective outcomes that are greater than the sum of their parts. Without this we will forfeit the opportunity to develop the sophisticated, multi-dimensional understanding of the new dynamics of work that is so urgently required. In short, a deliberate strategy should be developed to *forge* synergies - across disciplines, stakeholders, methodologies and substantive areas. However, we should be wary of imposing an over-prescriptive top-down framework, which would run the risk of marginalising novel, unanticipated approaches to the new dynamics of work.

We suggest that we may walk this line by focussing on core themes, arising from the research review and consultations with policy and practitioner actors that informed Part 1, and deliberately constructed to cut across disciplines and methodologies.

## **5: Cross-Cutting Themes**

### **5.1 Gendered inequalities in the new dynamics of work:**

Gender has been a persistent theme in the academic study of work since at least the early 1970s as well as in government policy, which has worked to establish a legislative framework for equality at work. A key agenda has been to improve family leave provision to include fathers as well as mothers as recipients (EHRC, 2009; BIS 2011), and the Children's and Families Bill contains new proposals to include flexible parental leave by 2015. Further, the Equality Act 2010 developed a single legal framework to tackle discrimination, and the public sector now have a duty to promote equality, whilst private sector employers may offer a range of family leave packages and flexible working conditions. However, despite over 40 years of policy intervention, and as Part 1 has shown, gender remains core in the new dynamics of work. Gender is central to all aspects of work in particular intersections *inter alia* with class, race, sexuality, disability and age: employment and unemployment, the formal labour market, volunteering and domestic work continue to operate through strongly gendered processes. These continue to produce some largely familiar outcomes - women's disproportionate responsibility for domestic labour, for instance; alongside newly emergent patterns: the increased involvement of men in parenting, high unemployment amongst young, ethnic minority men contrasting with the higher levels of girls' and young women's educational achievement. Gender equality at work continues to be a key policy

driver, and consecutive governments have set up a range of bodies to investigate barriers to women's participation and progression in the labour market (e.g. BIS Select Committee, 2013). Between 2004 and 2010, the ESRC funded the Gender Equality Network (GENET) in which an interdisciplinary team of researchers addressed a range of issues about women's working lives. However, the empirical research was largely undertaken before the economic crisis, and before the full impact of EU expansion in 2004 and 2007 was felt in the labour market. It also focused almost exclusively on women rather than on patterns of gender inequality, as well as largely ignoring questions about organisations and employers. New questions about the relative position of men and women, and how gender intersects *inter alia* with class, ethnicity, age, sexuality and disability now need asking (Anthias 2013).

A new programme of work should investigate the gendering of work from the perspective of multiple actors: employers, who urgently want to know more about how to prevent wastage and make best use of women employees; unions, who are concerned about the persistent feminisation of the lowest paid and exploitation of migrant labour; governments, who face the intractable task of supporting family labour, work across 'big society' and full participation in waged work; the education system, concerned about the gendered performances of young people in different subject areas; and individuals - women and men - whose working lives are profoundly shaped by gender. These are inherently gendered questions that demand joined up thinking across the different sites and forms of work, drawing on expertise from across the disciplines.

## **5.2 Unpaid work in the new economy:**

Unpaid work has long been an important, yet under-researched element in the economy but it is rapidly becoming clear that the significance and dynamics of unpaid work in the current period demands better knowledge and understanding of both the work and workforces involved and the implication of both in the dynamics of the waged economy. Unpaid work has long been synonymous with domestic labour and the policy challenges that the domestic workload – particularly childcare - poses for governments aiming to reduce unemployment and underemployment are well known (most recently in Labour's pledge to spend an additional £800m on childcare and encourage 'wrap-around' childcare' to support 'hard-working families'). However unpaid work stretches far beyond this to include family businesses, volunteering, unpaid overtime, work 'experience' including the recent rise of internships on the one hand and benefits-related volunteering requirements on the other. We know relatively little about some of these forms of unpaid work or their significance in wider society and economy. For instance, will the growth of unpaid internships differentiate returns from education in the graduate labour market, to the disadvantage of those who cannot afford to spend months working without income? Do either internships or benefit-related volunteering actually result in paid jobs, and if so, how and for whom? And should

governments become involved in the regulation of these? Turning to more traditional forms of voluntary work, disproportionately undertaken by middle-aged, and middle class people, how will this be affected by the recent rise in pension age and longer working lives and work intensification? What will this mean for civil society more broadly? The Coalition, like previous governments have sought to promote volunteering (particularly at the community level and amongst young people) through the Community Organisers programme, the Do-it website, V-inspired and the Volunteering Fund for Health and Social Care. However these programmes are underpinned by less explicit and untested notions that volunteering is a route into paid employment and that volunteers are a potentially cost effective substitute for or added value to paid workers. Research is needed to understand the impact of these policies for organisations and individuals. More widely there is a question about how unpaid work is shaped by the recession and austerity; will unpaid work decline again as the economy begins to grow?

### **5.3 Work in the digital economy:**

High hopes have been invested in digital technology as the ‘...single biggest lever for productivity and competitiveness across every sector of the economy’ (ESkills, 2009: 5) and the key source of job and business growth in the UK. Digital innovation is touching on every sector of the economy posing challenges to individuals, businesses and governments in responding to and making the most of emergent opportunities. However, to date research on the digital economy is largely ‘siloes’ into a few key areas: (1) Skills, education and training - there is significant employer concern over skill shortages in the labour market and wider concerns about the ability of current systems of education and training to effectively meet demand. However, we know very little about how individuals acquire and update skills, the role of formal education and training, on-the-job training, employer input and personal responsibility or how access to different types of training and work are shaped by gender, age, disability and ethnicity. (2) Intensification, deskilling and up-skilling - we have good knowledge of how some types of work have emerged and/or been transformed by digital innovation, but to date this has been restricted to a limited range of occupations and industries. Pioneering research on call-centres has produced good in-depth knowledge but this needs to be extended across a variety of settings to provide strong comparative understandings. (3) The globalisation of production and labour markets - it is clear that digital technologies are allowing new scales of corporate organisation for types of work previously co-located, whilst the web especially allows for new, often short-term and very insecure contractual arrangements for the supply of good and services, whether by individuals or companies. To date we have only very partial knowledge of these emergent practices and the working lives that are shaped by them. (4) 24/7 work across earlier boundaries of work, home and public space has become increasingly normal for a significant



proportion of the population, enabled by mobile digital technologies, yet we have little knowledge of the impacts on well-being, family life, organisational performance, etc. As this suggests there are limits to our knowledge in each area. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to synthesise our knowledge of these different aspects to the digital economy to understand more about the 'winners' and 'losers', at both individual, organisational and national levels, and understand how digital skills might impact on established inequalities of gender, race and class.

#### **5.4 Lifelong resilience and sustainability:**

The new dynamics described in Part 1 raise some important and, as yet, unanswered questions about individuals' engagement with different forms of work over the life-course and the medium- to long-term sustainability of particular working lives. Similarly, there are outstanding questions about the sustainability of emergent organisational forms, family work practices and local communities in the face of these changing dynamics. A key policy driver here is the contribution of sustainable jobs and sustainable growth to deficit reduction. Key questions include: living with precarity and in-work poverty - how do individuals and communities survive and how can resilience be supported? The Coalition Government's recent introduction of Universal Credit is the latest in a long line of policy interventions designed to bolster work incentives and this will require in-depth evaluation in and of itself, but in a wider policy context (see below) and from the lived experience of work-poor communities. What are the key vulnerabilities and risks for precarious lives and how might policy address these before they become big(ger) social problems? In a world where credentials matter but are increasingly insufficient, how do we educate for a fair and vibrant society? Further, these issues need to be considered within the context of social and environmental sustainability. The need for mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change means that we may all need to do things differently, and there is an urgent need to better understand how work can intersect with environmental agendas to create a sustainable future in the broadest of senses.

#### **5.5 Well-being, dignity and citizenship:**

The current emphasis of existing research on precarity and the recent problematisation of work-life balance underscore the need to understand the impact of different forms of work on well-being and dignity which, in turn, are known to be important for social cohesion and citizenship. Attention to these issues in the study of paid work has shown how workplaces can facilitate and underpin a set of moral responsibilities across working lives and beyond; bolstered by a framework of employment rights. This resonates with the current Government's Employment Law Review which aims to 'make the improvements necessary

to embed a flexible, effective and fair labour market' (BIS, 2013: 16). To engage with and care about one's work - paid or unpaid - is to engage in society so we urgently need to understand the impact of new forms of work on the dynamics of citizenship over time, for workers of differing generations and between different workplace organisations and cultures, voluntary, community and domestic work. As part of this we need to consider the changing nature of employee participation, for example the role of trade unions in the new economy, emergent forms of labour organisation using social media, and policy interventions to encourage employee engagement. However, as these all concentrate on citizenship through participation in paid work, we should also consider parallel and alternative mechanisms of engagement through community groups, web based interest groups ([www.mumsnet.com](http://www.mumsnet.com) for instance).

## **5.6 Public policy and the new dynamics of work:**

Public policy impacts across the new dynamics of work, from welfare policy and unemployment programmes, and childcare to business support and investment, health and safety, education, training and skills as well as strategic decisions to involve the private and third sectors in the delivery of public services. Our understanding of the new dynamics of work would be significantly enhanced by a strategic cross cutting review of UK policy and policy evaluation, drawing on comparative examples across the devolved governments, and other relevant countries. The European Commission, the International Labour Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development offer excellent sources of data and expert analysis for comparison yet appear to be underused resources in this respect. Greater insights could be drawn as to 'what works' in particular contexts that would also inform policy and academic debate on the nature and shape of the new dynamics of work.

## **6. Data, methodology and capacity challenges**

In order to address the themes above effectively, we must also address a number of more practical challenges. We suggest five key areas for strategic investment, based on the discussions in Parts 1 and 2 above.

a. Enhancing methodological capacity: our knowledge and understanding will be pushed forward most fully if we draw on multiple and mixed methods, drawn from both quantitative and qualitative paradigms. However whilst there is increasing recognition of the value of mixed methods across the social sciences, existing research on work remains largely within one or other tradition and relies on a limited range of methods from each. Whilst UK research capacity to address the new dynamics of work already includes well-

established strengths in survey design, large scale quantitative data collection and analysis, ethnography, interview and focus groups methods, with exciting developments in visual, mobile and digital methods, we have less experience and therefore capacity in combining these. We need to develop our skills in combining qualitative and quantitative data, continue to explore the contribution that new methods and data can make to understanding the new dynamics of work; revisit well-established but under-used methods (for instance oral histories and more anthropological ethnographies) and review their contribution to this field; and update and revise established methods of data collection. Linked to this, there is some need to review the design of established data sets, for example, to boost samples in the devolved countries of the UK to allow more meaningful findings to be drawn from the data.

b. As one specific iteration of point (a) above we draw attention to the need for strategic investment in development of qualitative research capacity. Whilst a great deal of recent investment has rightly gone into building quantitative capacity, it appears that qualitative skills are either taken for granted or under-valued. We should not underestimate the skill involved in executing these methods effectively or the potential knowledge to be gained from investing in methods development and secondary analysis of existing data sets.

c. A great deal of excellent and potentially very valuable data of relevance to the new dynamics of work already exists and it is essential that we find ways to secure maximum benefit from these data. We must explore the value of new sources of digital data for social science research on work. Recent government and ESRC investments under the Big Data programme - specifically administrative data, government and business data and social media data - are promising here, as is the current expansion of open data, and emergent techniques for computational methods of linking data. In this context it would be timely to support investments that include some engagement with these data, perhaps through experimental trials, and to support capacity building training in this area.

d. Throughout this review we have returned many times to the need for longitudinal and comparative research data. Whilst this is expensive to collect, we suggest that it is essential. Greater use might also be made of existing data sources with longitudinal and comparative elements and a systematic review of these could recommend areas for strategic investment to leverage maximum value from past investments. Linked to this, our consultations with key informants revealed a particular interest in foresight work. Several already made good use of the UKCES Working Futures strand, and were developing foresight research into their own in-house activities. Developing this as part of the ESRC longitudinal research capacity would appear to an effective way of working with external stakeholders.

e. Alongside this, it is essential that we support conceptual and theoretical capacity. Without this, our understanding of the new dynamics of work will be seriously circumscribed. Conceptual development will be the key to making the interconnections and managing the complexity described in Part 1 above. Without this we risk building an empirical data base with little capacity for the innovative analytical work that is so urgently required to inform policy and practice.

## **7. Policy and Practitioner Engagement**

The themes and priorities outlined across this report have taken into account the concerns of a range of policy and practitioner actors. As this shows, there is already a great deal of synergy between academic research and the interests of those outside academia. However we should not be naive about this. There are differences in emphasis, priorities and the types of knowledge and understanding that are most valued by the academic research community and those beyond. In particular, some external stakeholders require very short-term, high level analyses, not comparable to the longer-term, in-depth research valued by the academic peer review processes.

These tensions cannot be resolved by subsuming one set of priorities to the other. The ongoing challenge will be to maintain the qualities and strengths of academic research, particularly in-depth, long-term and thoroughly conceptualised approaches to the new dynamics of work *and at the same time* enable mechanisms through which these can be informed by, and speak to, end users of research outside academia. These end-users themselves are highly diverse, with far from identical interests, which change over time not least with the changing economic climate and changing policy drivers. The priorities for academic research cannot be driven by one set of these interests, or another and, in any case, must sustain the unique strengths of academia as an independent knowledge base. It is essential that researchers can continue to ask 'big questions' and use theoretical concepts about work, working and working lives which on the face of it may appear be of less direct interest in the immediate moment to any particular end-users, but may re-shape how we think about and understand work in more profound and long-term ways. This in turn may well impact on the nature of more specific and applied research projects. This is a point appreciated by many of our key informants, as well as those beyond (ref. British Library panel)

This said we do need to find better forms of sustained dialogue and engagement between the academy and external interests. Responsive modes of engagement, whereby employers, government, or others commission specific pieces of work from academic researchers may build relationships, but the one-way nature of consultancy research agendas serve to limit the input of academics and, in any case, are increasingly put to tender with time-scales that

make them all but impossible for academics to respond effectively in competition with the large private consultancies. We suggest that we should build longer term modes of engagement that rely less on contracts for specific pieces of work and foster more collaborative discussion and understanding.

Our consultations revealed some important evidence on research that is already having particular impacts and effective mechanisms for engagement and effective impact that might be strengthened in the future. Discussion focused on a number of strategies including funding collaborations such as that established by UKCES and ESRC on the Skills and Employment Survey and the five research council programme on the New Dynamics of Ageing. These were seen to drive forward cross disciplinary working giving a broader reach to findings. It was also noted that large, clearly branded, funding programmes, with a strong web presence and easily accessible findings, facilitated policy makers and practitioners in accessing research data when required as they provided a one-stop-shop for research on a particular theme or focus. Some practitioners pointed out that since business and policy makers' engagement with research tended to be demand-led they required better ways to quickly find and engage with research outputs that they needed. Collaboration between the academy and business and practitioners at various stages in the research process was also seen to be valuable – specifically in terms of framing research questions and discussion of findings.

There was a marked difference in the kinds of language used around work research by different stakeholders. This was very evident in the ways that the Advisory Panel and key policy/practitioner informants engaged in questions explored in the scoping study. This supported suggestions that more use could be made by academics, employers and policy makers of knowledge brokers to support the translation of research findings into policy implications. Academics noted the importance of developing relationships with policy advisors and ensuring representation on select committees and Local Economic Partnerships. The current practice of including practitioner and policy makers on ESRC funded research advisory groups was noted as an important mechanism for both shaping research questions and disseminating findings. Seminar series were identified as a context in which dialogue and potential future collaboration on work research might be fostered. Some practitioners noted that they tended to subcontract aspects of their research activity to market research companies rather than HE academics in part because these companies were seen to understand business and management, in relation to the implementation of ideas for operational change, alongside having a client base of employers that facilitated engagement in research.

Long-term planning by research generators regarding research gaps and how to address them, and recognition of the central role of timing in research strategies were also critical in developing synergies around knowledge gaps. The UKCES model for bringing together policy

and academic knowledge included a number of potentially useful strategies including encouraging the government to invest in key issues; commissioners acting as ambassadors; and an academic panel and annual research programme incorporating flexibly-deployed research fellows and strategic partnership with the ESRC supporting initiatives. Yet it is salutary to view these ideas and strategies in the context of a review of the impact of the ESRC's highly regarded Future of Work programme which suggested that the programme rarely caused major changes in policy. The programme did however result in impacts such as stimulating debate, fine-tuning policy, dispelling myths and providing confirmatory support (Nason *et al.*, 2007).

The central ambition of a future research programme on the new dynamics of work should be to create the knowledge and understanding for people at all points of the lifecourse and from all social backgrounds to enjoy their work and working lives and at the same time to contribute to productivity - in the broadest sense - and UK competitiveness in a global economy. This demands a sophisticated research programme which takes a holistic approach to understanding the multiple complexities involved in 'the new dynamics of work'. By integrating, rather than separating, all the various elements which we have demonstrated in this report as being intrinsic to a better understanding of work, future research should be enabled to provide policy with the evidence which is now urgently needed.

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