

Social Stratification Research Seminar 2009

Social Stratification: Contemporary issues

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Paper titles, authors, and abstracts

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Anna Bagnoli, Jackie Scott (Dept. Sociology, University of Cambridge)

Gender differences in young people's aspirations for their future

Since 1994 the British Household Panel Study has been running a Youth Survey of the young people in households who were aged 11 to 15. In waves 12, 13, and 16 (2002, 2003, and 2006) young people aged 14 and 15 have been asked an open ended question about their future aspirations: 'What would you like to be doing with your life in about ten years' time from now?'. The paper will look at young people's responses, analysing the extent to which their aspirations may indicate that boys and girls orient themselves towards different careers from an early age. By joining the youth data with data from the adult survey, the paper will also check the impact of parents' education and employment on young people's aspirations, in particular whether maternal employment may be related to choice of non-traditional careers in girls.

Robert M. Blackburn (Clare College, University of Cambridge)

Social Inequality

[No abstract currently available]

Fabio Bolzonao (Dept. Sociology, University of Cambridge)

A developed welfare state in a very unequal society: Italy as a case study

It is generally supposed that welfare spending should be aimed at lessening social differences. It is so expected that developed welfare regimes would promote more equal societies. However, this assumption is not always true. Under this issue Italy represents a particularly interesting case study. According to the latest statistical figures provided by international organizations such as those, for instance, from Eurostat, Italy is one of the most developed welfare states. On the other hand, at the same time, this country is one of the most unequal societies in Europe. From the analysis of the social policies reforms implemented in Italy in the late 1990s, and, in particular, the study of family policies, this paper will address this apparent puzzle. It will observe that not only the Italian welfare state has traditionally been highly skewed, with overprotected categories and lack of attention for others, but, like many other Bismarkian welfare regimes, one of its main features has been the presence of social

programs that tend to reproduce social differences rather than overcoming them. This paper will question to what extent is still possible to recognise these characteristics in the Italian welfare state.

Steffen Hillmert (Institut fuer Soziologie, Universitaet Tuebingen)

Individual continuities, social mobility and cumulative inequalities along the life course

This paper discusses conceptual links between various analytical perspectives on continuities and developments of inequality along the life course. To what extent are occupational careers characterized by stability, co-variation between various stages of the life course and mobility? In what way does this reflect cumulative advantage and disadvantage? And finally, how can these developments be related to inter-generational social mobility? The paper also discusses how specific institutions and labour market conditions may influence mobility patterns as well as the accumulation of advantage in individual careers and thus of the development of inequality within a cohort. In its empirical part, the paper describes patterns of intra-generational occupational mobility in Germany drawing upon analyses based on life-course data from a broad range of birth cohorts. These analyses look at the intra-generational development of aggregate distributions as well as individual-level stability and mobility among occupational positions and compare these patterns across cohorts.

Jennifer Jarman (National University of Singapore)

Gender Inequality, Modernization and Development in South and Southeast Asia

By March 2005, the 1979 Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, had been adopted by 181 countries of the United Nations General Assembly. Nevertheless, there remain considerable differences in the extent to which men and women are educated around the world, and, when they enter the labour force, there remain differential patterns of participation and compensation. This paper examines trends in education and labour market participation in four Asian countries: Bangladesh, Pakistan, Viet Nam and Thailand. These countries were chosen to represent two regions: South and Southeast Asia. The findings are linked to broader debates about gender inequality and its relationship to development.

Paul Lambert (Department of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling), **Richard Zijdeman, Ineke Maas, Marco van Leeuwen, Kenneth Prandy**

Inequality in recent history: Evidence from HIS-CAM scales

This paper will present recent evidence on the occupational structure of social stratification and inequality that has been accumulated during a recent project undertaking the estimation and analysis of 'HIS-CAM' scales. These scales are CAMSIS measures derived for a range of historical datasets concentrating on the period 1800-1938. These calculations give us empirical evidence on the relative advantage and disadvantage associated with occupational positions over the time period and across 8 different countries.

Roger Penn (Lancaster University)

Work regimes in contemporary logistics

The proposed paper will examine work regimes within contemporary logistics. The first part of the paper will present a model of the global logistical system that has emerged over the last thirty years. The second part will examine empirical findings from recent research into working conditions at various points within this overall system.

Three models of work will be probed: the notion of primary/secondary labour markets, the post-modern concept of 'new time regimes' and the salience of classical models of factory work as the template for understanding the central properties of work in capitalist societies.

Lucinda Platt, Simonetta Longhi, Chetti Nicoletti (University of Essex)

Disability and pay gaps

There has been analysis of employment disadvantage among disabled people in the UK. This includes a discrete selection of papers on pay disadvantage (Jones 2006; Jones et al. 2006). In general it appears that disadvantage in pay is a less salient issue than disadvantage in access to employment. However, the focus of research on pay differentials, both in the UK and the US, has been on pay gaps at the mean and has tended to treat disability as a homogenous category. In this paper we address these two issues of heterogeneity among disabled people and of differentials across the distribution of pay. Specifically, we use 47 pooled quarters of the Labour Force Survey to explore pay differentials in relation to specific conditions, as well as taking account of co-morbidities. Moreover, using an approach proposed by Firpo et al. (2007) we decompose differences in pay at the mean and at the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th and 90th percentiles. This allows us to reflect whether, in policy terms, we should be concerned about sticky floors pulling the low paid down or about glass ceilings inhibiting the further advancement of the more successful.

In examining the pay gaps, we aim to understand the causes for differences in pay by disability status and type. We investigate whether pay gaps are a consequence of individual earning potential as represented, for example, by educational qualifications, or whether they appear to stem from the job context of disabled people; or whether they are largely unaccounted for. In the case of remaining unexplained differences, we consider how we might understand them, including considering whether they indicate evidence of employer discrimination.

Chris Playford, Vernon Gayle, Paul Lambert (Dept. Applied Social Science, University of Stirling)

How is GCSE attainment stratified?

The Education Reform Act 1988 led to rapid changes in the secondary school curriculum, and to the organisation, management and financing of schools. A major change for pupils was the introduction of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). GCSEs differed from the qualifications that they replaced. A new grading scheme was established and all pupils were entered for a common set of examinations. There were also changes in the content and format of examinations and assessment by coursework was introduced.

Despite the introduction of GCSEs and various changes within secondary education, exam attainment at age 16 is still stratified. Typically, those from more advantaged social backgrounds generally achieve higher levels of attainment than their counterparts from less advantaged backgrounds. We argue that gaps in GCSE attainment are sociologically important. GCSEs are public examinations and mark the first major branching point in a young person's educational career. Poor attainment is a

considerable obstacle which precludes young people from pursuing more advanced educational courses. Young people with low levels of GCSE attainment are usually more likely to leave education at the minimum school leaving age and their qualification level frequently disadvantages them in the labour market. Low levels of qualifications are also likely to have a longer term impact on experiences in the adult labour market.

In this presentation we will examine relationships between social background and GCSE attainment with data from the Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales (YCS). Through harmonising data from a number of nationally representative Year 11 YCS Cohorts, we will outline trends in GCSE attainment. A number of competing GCSE attainment measures will be compared and contrasted. A range of indicators of social background will be explored. These include gender, ethnicity, social class, school and family measures. A specialized dataset that contains alternative classifications of parental occupations has been constructed for this analysis.

Kevin Ralston (Department of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling)

Social stratification, child-bearing outcomes and reproductive regimes

The empirical focus of this paper is on variation in first birth within Scotland. Based upon analysis drawn from the Scottish Longitudinal Study the main research methodology employed is Event History Analysis. The paper draws upon previous research linked with the concept the reproductive regime (Irwin 2000) in presenting key findings in terms of the spatial and hierarchical nature of childbearing in Scotland. In so doing it is argued that the variation in duration until first birth that we see is representative of differing reproductive regimes.

Geographers argue as to the importance of region in childbearing outcomes in Scotland (Boyle et al. 2007). However research into childbearing generally shows that the best indicators of childbearing outcomes are measures of stratification (Ekert-Jaffe et al. 2002) and measures of attainment (Simpson et al. 2006). This paper examines these competing empirical explanations for childbearing outcomes whilst adding to our understanding of the nature of childbearing in Scotland. In this respect two general research questions are posed: How does occupational status affect age at first birth by region? How does (educational) attainment affect age at first birth by region?

The research thus examines two hypotheses: (1) Regional differences in occupational status and attainment accounts for variability in family sizes; (2) People of the same occupational status and educational attainment have different family sizes by region.

Pia Schober (Dept. Sociology, University of Cambridge)

Can some women have it all? Social group differences in the parenthood effect re-examined.

Various studies by demographers and economists find significant differences between mothers with high and low levels of education in their return to work rates after the first birth and their long-term pay penalties over the life course in the UK. There is also some evidence on the importance of women's potential earnings for the opportunity costs of paid work. However, less is known about how social class differences are exacerbated across the transition to parenthood through effects on the division of housework and childcare within couples.

This research investigates how men's and women's contributions to paid work, housework, and childcare after becoming parents differ by education and to what extent these educational resources seem to be translated into greater gender equality through economic advantages in terms of each partner's earnings or through more egalitarian gender role attitudes.

The analysis is based on statistical analyses of the British Household Panel Study (1992 to 2005). The findings show that educational differences are larger for mothers' paid work hours and their childcare responsibility than for both partners' time spent on housework. The more advantageous situation of highly educated British mothers seems to be at least as much due to their own and their husbands' gender role attitudes as to their higher earnings. Overall, it seems to be the combination of higher earnings, more bargaining power and egalitarian identities which helps highly-educated British women to narrow the pay gap with men and childless women.

Sarah Smart (University of Reading)

Pupil evaluations of educational stratification

Quantitative evidence suggests that there is considerable stratification in the English education system. The largest attainment gap is by socio-economic status, but there are also attainment gaps between ethnic groups and boys and girls, and interaction effects between the different categories (Strand 2008). School intakes in England are segregated by socio-economic status, ethnicity and ability (Burgess, Wilson et al. 2005; Allen and Vignoles 2006; Gibbons and Telhaj 2006). Much of the segregation is related to residential segregation, and is moderate in comparison to other schools in Europe (Jenkins, Micklewright et al. 2008). Although we have some knowledge of how pupils experience segregation within schools (Boaler, William et al. 2000; Reay 2007) we know little about how they evaluate the existence of stratification within schools. In this paper I will use data collected from 16 group interviews in five very different schools (a school for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties, a school for girls with moderate learning difficulties, a secondary modern school, a grammar school and an independent school). The interviews were about the characteristics of a fair and just school system. I will present the explanations that pupils gave for differences in experience and outcome for rich and poor pupils, for pupils of professional parents and pupils of manual parents, for pupils from different ethnic groups and for boys and girls.

Michael Smith (McGill University)

Pay differences by gender of university faculty

[No abstract currently available].

Gindo Tampubolon (University of Manchester)

Intergeneration and intrageneration social mobility in Britain

New methods for analysing longitudinal data, the mixture latent growth models, can provide new answers to enduring interest in inter-generational and intragenerational social mobility. The methods with their broad embrace can speak to wider social scientists who couch social mobility in terms of income, categorical social class, or other social position. The methods with their more flexible variance structure can also directly capture substantive concerns about increasing variability of achieved social positions today. Finally, the methods which depict parsimonious trajectories of social positions over many decades could uncover causal pathways of social mobility, thus contribute to a more theoretical concern of intergenerational transmission of advantages.

As a running application the methods are used to examine the social mobilities of the National Child Development Study 1958 cohort. Though an emerging and vigorous literature on the life course should

also benefit from the method. Outstanding problems in the application of the method particularly attrition and local optima are highlighted. Syntax in two different softwares MPlus and Latent Gold are given to encourage further applications of the method in the social sciences.

Richard Zijdemans, Ineke Maas (Dept. Sociology, University of Utrecht)

Beyond the local marriage market. The influence of social background and modernization on spatial homogamy

Studies of spatial homogamy in Europe in the nineteenth century show an increase in the size of marriage markets. Furthermore, these studies show that marriage partners born in different regions originate foremost from higher social strata. In an attempt to provide an explanation for the decrease in spatial homogamy, researchers refer to modernization processes, such as the increased means of mass transport, like steam trams and trains. Furthermore they argue that the appearance of mass communication increased the marriage market. Unfortunately few studies actually provide evidence for these claims. Besides, these studies are often restricted to a short period in time or a small number of municipalities. Using marriage data on 100 municipalities in a Dutch province over more than a century we provide a more general test of these claims. But above all, using municipality-specific information, such as the presence of train stations and post offices, we provide a direct test of whether the increase in the size of marriage markets can be related to modernization processes. Finally, we will be able to show, whether these modernization processes increased the possibilities of those from the lower strata to find a marriage partner outside the local region.
