

Social Stratification Research Seminar 2008

The Changing Nature of Social Inequality: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and Age in the 21st Century

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Paper titles, authors, and abstracts

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(Comment: some multi-authored papers below are only listed under their first authors)

Erik Bihagen (SOFI, University of Stockholm)

Class origin and elite positions in Sweden, 1985-2000

Using Swedish register data we study the impact of class origin on being part of the Swedish business elite between 1985 and 2003. The business elite is defined as top wage earners within large firms and parent's class is measured both by standard class measures and for younger individuals; by their parents relative wage position within large firms.

We also use detailed information on educational attainment which gives us the possibility to measure elite educational tracks. Our hypothesis is that there is a considerable effect of parental characteristics on elite belonging, although being very small when controlling for detailed educational attainment measures. Over time we believe the working class penalty/non-elite penalty will be lowered.

Shirley Dex (Institute of Education, University of London)

Policy interventions on gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work

It is a well known fact that men and women have unequal pay and status in the labour markets across industrialised countries. There are many contributors to the disadvantaged positions most women find themselves in. But one of these is women's lower amounts of paid work experience compared to men's. This paper considers whether it is possible to devise realistic and effective policies that will equalise men's and women's contributions of unpaid work.

Sarah Dyer (Human Geography, University of Oxford)

Gender at work in a 'knowledge cluster': the case of Oxford, UK

The persistent role of gender in structuring scientific labour market is well established. There is a good business case for fixing this 'leaky pipe'. However, the growing emphasis of a business case for science

is impacting the employment conditions of scientists. As part of a wider 'knowledge economy', science has enormous strategic importance for post-industrial economies such as the UK. This reconfiguration of the relationship between science, government, and industry affects scientific labour markets and plays out differently for different scientists. The growth of spin-off companies and contract research organisations signals the rise of not only the entrepreneurial university but also the entrepreneurial scientist. Workers are needed to provide the flexible workforce, resulting in a burgeoning 'under-class' of contract researchers. Past research has shown the importance of both the national and institutional contexts in shaping scientific careers. This paper addresses a gap in the literature by investigating the role of locality. Such an approach recognises the 'clustered' nature of knowledge industries. Using data from interviews with scientists living and/or working in the Oxford area the paper describes and conceptualises the importance of place-based clustering in structuring scientific careers.

Vernon Gayle (Applied Social Science, University of Stirling); **Brian Francis** (Centre for Applied Statistics, University of Lancaster)

The changing nature of social inequality: How are young people's attitudes to school stratified, and how are they changing?

In this paper we examine young people's attitudes to school level education. Through pooled data from the Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales (YCS) we explore how attitudes to school are stratified. From preliminary analyses we have observed that there are interesting trends in pupil's attitudes towards their school and that these are stratified by school type and educational attainment, but also by gender, social class, and ethnicity. In this paper we present the results of exploratory analyses of the data spanning several decades. We attempt to develop more sophisticated analyses through the application of latent class statistical models.

Daiga Kamerāde (University of Manchester)

Changes in employment-related time-use and involvement in voluntary associations: a gender perspective

Voluntary groups have long been important in supplying social goods and services, facilitating democracy, and producing some beneficial effects for individuals. Although information about factors affecting individuals' involvement in voluntary groups has accumulated, very little attention has been paid to potential effects of employment conditions on this involvement. This paper examines whether changes in employment-related time-use are related to employed individuals involvement in voluntary associations and whether these relationships are gendered. In particular, this study focuses on changes in the number of working hours in the main and the second job, travel time to work, working schedules and special working hours' arrangements. Using longitudinal analysis of the data from the pooled sample of 33,012 employed individuals in the British Household Panel Survey for the period from 1993 to 2005, I show the relationship between gender differences in employment experiences and men's and women's involvement in voluntary associations. For both men and women, it is not just the quantity of time spent on employment, but also the stability in time-use patterns that is important for participation voluntary associations.

Yaojun Li (Institute for Social Change, School of Social Sciences, Univ. Manchester)

Socio-economic integration of immigrants in the US and the UK

The United States of America and the United Kingdom are generally regarded as the genotype of liberal capitalism. From popular myths to sociological representation, the US tends to be portrayed as a land of opportunity with relatively little socio-economic constraint whereas Britain is often seen as hopelessly hampered by entrenched class disparity and social sclerosis. This contrast is not only limited to the realm of class reproduction but has important implications on ethnic socio-economic integration. The US is a typical immigrant society with three to four hundred years of immigration history whereas successive waves of immigration in the UK only occurred in the wake of post-war reconstruction. Existing cross-national sociological research has focused on the class structure and social fluidity between the two countries but there has been rather little comparative research on ethnic fortunes in the two countries. Within each country, though, social scientists have in the past few decades paid considerable attention to the socio-economic fortunes of minority ethnic groups within their national boundary, more so in the US than in the UK.

In this paper, I will use the most recent and the most authoritative data available and make a comparative study on the socio-economic situation of minority ethnic groups in the two countries. The data used are the SARs from the British Census of Population 1991 and 2001, and IPUMs from the 1990 and 2000 US Censuses. All key variables such as ethnicity, education, age, marital status and generation status as well as labour market positions such as employment and access to salariat positions are standardised for direct comparison. The analysis is conducted for men and women, and for the US and the UK separately. Appropriate statistical models will be selected depending on the nature of outcome variables. Apart from presentation of model coefficients, predicted values from all models for selected subpopulations will be used in graphic presentation where the predicted values of the mainstream population in the two countries can be set at 100% and one can then look at the relative distances of the different minority ethnic groups.

Deborah de Luca (Univ. Milano Statele)

Gender (and age) differences in the Italian Prestige Scale

No abstract currently available

Cinzia Meraviglia (University of Eastern Piedmont)

Mothers' and Fathers' influence on occupational status attainment in Italy

This article examines mothers' role in the transmission of social position in Italy, as measured by the socio-economic occupational status. Mothers' occupation has not often been investigated as a factor on its own in the transmission of the social position to offspring, as it usually is subsumed into a single indicator of family background or merged with fathers' occupation, on the claim that women traditionally did not have a full commitment to the labor market. In the case of Italy this choice could also have its practical reason in the limited size of the samples available for mobility analyses. However, new pertinent data on Italy are now available, allowing us to assess mothers' contribution to the status attainment process. We first summarize the main position in the debate that developed across the 1970's and 1980's about the role of women in mobility studies. We intend to make clear the origin of one of the most popular ways of treating women's (and mother's) occupation in stratification studies, namely the dominance approach. We claim that this approach leaves unanswered some theoretical

questions concerning the role of mothers in the intergenerational transmission of social position. We then proceed by considering mothers' occupation as a separate source of influence on respondents' status. In our analysis we compare four different ways of considering mothers' influence on respondents' status, thus including into our models those cases that have a valid information on respondents', fathers' and mothers' occupation.

Our results show that both father's and mother's occupational status have a direct effect on respondent's occupational attainment. This is true for both men and women, although we do find significant sex-role modeling. The historical trends from mother's and father's effects are quite different: the influence of fathers is gradually decreasing and that of mother gradually increasing. Omitting mothers from the analysis of occupational status attainment in Italy severely misrepresents structure and trends of the Italian social mobility regime.

Susan Murray, Paul Lambert, Vernon Gayle (Dept. Applied Social Science, University of Stirling)

Social change for the 1975-1989 birth cohort: Evidence from the BHPS

No abstract currently available

Geoff Payne (Newcastle University)

“What do they mean, ‘more social mobility’?” A review of recent public discourse, and the problem of downward mobility.

The increasing frequency of ‘social mobility’ in pronouncements by politicians and media is usually seen as heightened public awareness. However, after reviewing some of this public discourse (e.g. the working papers and detailed briefing produced by the Cabinet Office (Aldridge 2001), the Department for Education and Skills (DfES 2006) and the Department of Work and Pensions (Nunn et al 2006, 2007), and numerous brief mentions in government ministers’ speeches) doubts are expressed about the evidence base of these statements, the selectivity of the rhetoric, the ‘invisibility’ of women and minority ethnic groups, and particularly the unmentionable problem of downward mobility.

Anke Plagnol and Jacqueline Scott (University of Cambridge)

Gender differences in well-being: the impact of life course events on individual definitions of quality of life

Most, if not all, people strive to be happy and direct their actions towards this goal. But are perceptions of what constitutes well-being – measured here as quality of life – the same across genders and do these definitions remain constant over the life cycle? Using data from the British Household Panel Survey, the present study analyzes how far individuals’ definitions of quality of life change after significant life course events, such as the birth of a child or entering retirement. We further relate changes in the perception of quality of life to changes in satisfaction with various domains of life.

Children and workless households: comparison across cohorts and ethnic groups

Lucinda Platt (University of Essex)

No abstract currently available.

Michael Smith (McGill University)

The structure of transfers in Australia and Canada

In Esping-Andersen's analysis of it, a key characteristic of the welfare state is the extent to which benefits are provided universally or are targeted to those thought to be most in need. There have been a number of criticisms of his analysis. Generally speaking, however, these criticisms have based themselves on the same sort of evidence used by Esping-Anderson - inferences about the structure of transfers drawn from program characteristics. Using microdata from two societies that he assigns to the 'liberal' welfare state category, in this paper I demonstrate the complexity of the structure of transfers and the challenges this poses to Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare states.

Peggy Watson (Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Cambridge)

Currently Causing Class: The Implications of Social Sector Transformation in Transitional Europe

Social sector changes in postcommunist Europe represent an integral part of the remaking of society in the transition to capitalist democracy after state socialism. This paper considers the implications for the social order of the transformation of health care in Poland. Comprehensive social sector reform – which included pensions, local government and education, in addition to health, was not introduced in Poland until 1999, by which time the privatisation of enterprises was virtually complete. While the transformation of ownership of economic enterprises met relatively little outward social protest, the battle over the privatization of health services has been fierce and has lasted around ten years. The aim of the paper is to highlight how health care transformation has contributed to the 'cumulative causation of class' in postsocialist Poland, while health care formally remains a constitutional right guaranteed for all. The paper draws on the findings of qualitative empirical research carried out as part of the Nowa Huta Study, a long-term research programme based in Cambridge.
