

Subject Teaching Guide

1. Name and introduction to the subject : Social Stratification

Profesores: Esping-Andersen, Polavieja y Sarasa

Introduction

The industrial order is giving way to a service economy: do post-industrial, knowledge economies alter the social bases of inequality and class? One thing is clear: we witness a significant rise in primary inequalities everywhere. These are, in the first place, related to the changing world of work, changing skills premia, rising precariousness, and the growing importance of 'new' skills. To sociologists, the household (and not the individual) is usually the key analytical unit for understanding inequalities and herein we find the second major source of new social inequalities. We are witnessing a revolution in the economic role of women and this affects the distribution of household welfare. Are households polarizing? Should women now be considered independent class actors? What is the new emerging relationship between the family and working life? Also, the conventional nuclear family is eroding and changing into novel 'a-typical' and far less stable household units, and this goes together with a growth of at-risk households. These are the questions that guide this course.

The course is intended to cover recent debates, controversies, and research on social inequality. It will concentrate on recent theoretical and empirical developments in the sociology of social stratification and social inequality in the advanced industrial and postindustrial societies. Conventional stratification studies focused either on 'static' distributions (such as identifying the size and composition of social classes) or on inter-generational social mobility (mainly father-son comparisons in occupational attainment). One of the great new developments in sociology is the capacity to reconstruct individuals' life biographies --an exceptionally powerful way to examine what affects peoples' life chances.

2. Prerequisites

This course assumes that students are familiar with the classical writings of the discipline (e.g. Durkheim, Weber, de Tocqueville, etc.). It also assumes command of English since readings, presentations and final paper must be done in English.

3. Competences to be achieved in the subject

General competences (Instrumental, Interpersonal and Systemic):

- Ability to analyze and synthesize different approaches to the study of inequality
- A thorough understanding of basic conceptual framework of inequality research
- Familiarity with measurement and methods of examining inequalities and poverty
- The ability to write well reasoned reflections in English on related topics
- The ability to present orally
- Cooperation and communication with fellow students

Specific competences:

- Ability to evaluate research on inequalities from both sociology, demography and economics.
- Familiarity with state-of-the-art research in the field

4. Assessment

Final mark will depend on three major components:

- 1) Active participation in class: 20%
- 2) One oral presentation of the week's topic: 20%
- 3) A final paper: 60%

Participation in class will be encouraged and highly valued. The quality of interventions will increase if the student covers not only the core reading but also the optional one. In addition, each student will have to make a presentation during the course.

5. Contents

- Content blocks or modules

The content of the course is divided in two major parts. The first block of lectures and readings deals with the study of stratification and social inequality in general, as it has developed during the last decades. The focus in this part is on the traditional approaches to the study of stratification and the identification of new sources of inequality in post-industrial societies. The second part of the course will focus on the analysis of the mechanisms producing social inequalities, in particular to those new forms and sources of inequality that had been identified in the first block.

In the following paragraphs, we present a short description of the topics that will be dealt with during each of the ten sessions.

Week 1. Sociology and The New Inegalitarian Challenges (Esping & Sarasa)

In this introductory meeting, the aim is to examine how contemporary sociology and economics attempt to come to grips with the emerging postindustrial social order: what are the leading questions? How can we conceptualize the forces of change? What are appropriate methodological and theoretical approaches? And, most importantly, are we able to identify the core elements of socio-economic change?

Week 2. Analyzing Social Stratification. Social Origins, Education and Meritocracy (Polavieja)

In this week, the course presents an overview of the main concepts, debates and empirical research on the impact of class origins on destinations and the mediating role of education. We will especially examine whether advanced societies have become more meritocratic, i.e whether the opportunity structure has become more equal. We will also examine key methodological issues related to the study of inter-generational mobility.

Week 3. Postindustrial Social Stratification (Jorge Rodriguez)

The consensual view of class and stratification that predominated in postwar sociology received, by the 1970's, growing criticism from both the Marxist tradition and also from sociologists working in the Weberian tradition. An important issue in this wave of critics and revisionism has to do with what exactly are the key criteria that define whether or not 'classes' actually exist. Sorensen's contributions, strongly influenced by modern micro economics, have been especially provocative -challenging both marxists and non-marxists by insisting that there can only be class closure if we can empirically demonstrate that some groups systematically are able to gain a 'rent' from either their authority, ownership, or skill monopoly.

Equality of opportunity implies that life chances are un-coupled from effects of social origin. In recent years, both sociologists and economists have made substantial progress in terms of arriving at robust estimations of inter-generational mobility, both with regard to historical change and cross-national variation. Research findings seem to come down to two sets of conclusions. One, there has by and large been no genuine decrease in inheritance effects over the past half century in the majority of countries, but in a few cases opportunities do seem to be equalizing. Two, economists identify substantial differences in income mobility correlations between countries.

Today's popular culture is producing a new class language: the two-thirds society, the 'A-team' and the B-team, insiders and outsiders. Official institutions, such as the EU, see a possible future of social exclusion. Such expressions may signal the arrival of a new stratification order, new social divisions and inequalities. Will these simply be a mirror of

earlier stratification patterns, or is a new order evolving? Van Parijs, in a very influential article, theorizes a future of a mass of excluded from working life.

The key issues have, in part to do with the long-term occupational trends. Even if change is dominated by skilled, professional and technical jobs it may still be the case that a parallel growth of low-end 'Macjobs' evolves into strong polarization. The key issues also have to do with career mobility in the new economy, especially with the risks of life-time entrapment in low-end jobs. A final key issue has to do with the impact of women's integration in work.

Week 4. Poverty and Social Exclusion. (Sebastian Sarasa)

Here, the course turns to the purely empirical issues raised by the preceding controversies. What is social exclusion and which are the emerging new inegalitarian profiles? What do we actually know from research in terms of trends in earnings, incomes, unemployment duration, or poverty? And, equally important, how do we study and measure inequalities?

Part II. Searching for the Causal Mechanisms

The central question that guides sociological research on stratification has to do with the mechanisms that produce inter-generational status inheritance. In a perfectly meritocratic society, the principal variables behind life chances should be motivation, talent and other non-ascriptive attributes. Yet, the impact of class origins remains systematically overwhelming -both in terms of educational and, later, career and income attainment: Why? This has, until recent years, been somewhat of a 'black box'. Standard economic theory, following Becker, favours a 'money' theory – parents are unequally able to invest in their children's fortunes. Sociology has traditionally emphasized the importance of family structure and value internalisation, such as good behaviour, but recent work places increasing emphasis on social and cultural capital or on the social circumstances that underpin parents' decision making process.

Week 5. Family Effects

The revolution in women's economic status constitutes one of the defining elements of the new socio-economic order. In many countries, women's employment levels are now close to men's. But does this genuinely change women's traditional status? This, as Hakim's study argues, has a lot to do with the internal composition of women and with their life-time priorities. That women work does not imply that this is their principal life priority. Therefore, in order to understand women's role in the occupational and class structure, we need to understand their double relation to the family and to careers.

Week 6. New demography and changing skills demand

While employment and skill changes figure most prominently in debates on the new social inequalities, there is growing recognition that changes in household structure and family formation may have powerful effects on overall distributional outcomes and on individual life chances. Changes in household form and composition have effects on overall income distribution and patterns of social exclusion. Marital instability leads to more fragile and often economically weak households. Marital homogamy may reinforce concentrations of welfare and risks within households.

Week 7. The New Role of Women

The changing role of women has, over the past decades, provoked intense debates on its demographic consequences, in particular with regard to household structure, family instability, and fertility behaviour, and on its labour market consequences. There is also a growing debate on the overall impact of women's employment on household income distribution.

A related, and hotly debated, issue has to do with what motivates the surge in women's employment. This may simply mirror households' strategies to maximize joint income, but it might also reflect women's rising educational attainment and demand for economic independence -which, in turn, may be a strategy against the increased instability of contemporary families. Hence, we cannot divorce women's labor market status from an understanding of emerging family patterns.

Week 8. The gender division of homeproduction

The changing economic position of women affects, on one hand, their bargaining power within the family and, on the other hand, the ability to reconcile careers and family production. How have these forces affected the division of unpaid work? Does bargaining power and career dedication trump traditional gender norms? What do we know about trends in time allocation and the division of tasks? And, what effects does increased gender equality have on societal inequality?

Week 9. Gender segregation and the gender wage gap.

We will review theories of sex segregation and gender differences in earnings, both from economics and sociology. And we will review existing evidence and explore the mechanisms behind segregation and earnings inequalities.

Week 10The Welfare state and Inequality

We examine the degree to which welfare states have a major egalitarian effect, both in terms of the income distribution, poverty exclusion and unemployment but also in terms of peoples' life chances. We review the evidence and examine the rather formidable methodological difficulties in measuring the exact welfare state effect.

6. Methodology

Each session will be organized as follows:

- 1) Lecture by the professor (about an hour)
- 2) A short break
- 3) Presentation by one of the students (15 to 20 minutes)
- 4) Debate and discussion of the main points raised during the lecture and presentation (about an hour).

7. Sources of information and didactic resources

Readings by week:

Week 1. (January 9). Sociology and the New Inegalitarian Challenges (G. Esping)

Core Reading

Esping Andersen, G. 2005. "Sociological explanations of changing income distribution", *American Behavioral Scientist*

Optional

Kenworthy, L. 2005. Inequality and Sociology,
available at <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~lkenwor/inequalityandsociology.pdf>

Part I. The Study of Social Stratification

Week 2. (January 16) Social origins, education and meritocracy (Javier Polavieja)

Core reading

R. Breen and J. Jonsson, Inequality of opportunity in comparative perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 31: 223-44

Optional

R. Breen and J. Goldthorpe, 'Class mobility and merit'. *European Sociological Review*, 17: 81-101

Week 3. (January 23). Model's revision. Postindustrial Social Stratification (Jorge Rodriguez)

Core readings:

Contributions by Bowles et al., Erikson and Goldthorpe, Gottschalk, and Solon in *Journal of Economic Perspectives* Vol. 16 (2002)

Optional

Van Parijs, Phillippe 1998. "A revolution in class theory", in *The Debate on Classes*, Uwe Becker, Erik Olin Wright (Ed.), pp. 213-243

Additional

- J. Polavieja, 2003 'Temporary contracts and labour market segmentation in Spain'. *European Sociological Review*, 19, 5

- Oesch, Daniel 2006. Remodelling the Class Measure to Make Sense of Service Employment: Evidence for Britain and Germany

Week 4. (January 30). Exclusion and Poverty (Sebastian Sarasa)

Core reading

Whelan, C. et al. 2004. "Understanding the mismatch between income poverty and deprivation", *European Sociological Review*, 20, 4:

Additional:

Wilson, W. J. *When Work Disappears : The World of the New Urban Poor*

Part II. Searching for New Causal Mechanisms

Week 5. (February 6). Family Effects (Esping)

Core reading

Esping Andersen, G. 2007. "Family, governments and skills". *International Taxation and Finance* (manuscript available at Aula Global)

Optional

Carneiro, P. and J. Heckman, 2003. "Human capital policy", in *Inequality in America*, J. Heckman and A. Krueger (Ed.), pp. 77-241.

Week 6. (February 13). The new demography and its effects on inequality (Sebastian Sarasa)

Core reading

Karoly, L. and Burtless, G. 1995. "Demographic change, rising earnings inequality and distribution of wellbeing", *Demography* 32 (3): 379-405.

Optional

De Graaf, P. and Ultee, W. 2000. "United in Employment, united in Unemployment?" in D. Gallie and S. Paugham (Eds.), *Welfare Regimes and the Experience of Unemployment*

Week 7. (February 20). The New Role of Women (Jorge Rodriguez)

Core reading

Hakim, C. 1996. *Key Issues in Women's Work: Female Heterogeneity and the Polarisation of Women's Employment*, London: Athlone/Continuum Press. Chapter 6

Optional

Esping-Andersen, G. 2008 'Families and the revolution in women's roles'. (to be distributed).

Week 8. (February 27). The Gender Division of Household Production (Esping)

Core readings

Evertsson, M. and Neramo, M. 2004 'Dependence within families and the division of labor'. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 66: 1272-86

Bianchi, S., Milkie, M., Sayer, L. And Robinson, J. 2000 'Is anyone doing the housework? Trends in the gender division of household labor'. *Social Forces*, 79: 191-228

Optional

J. Bonke and G. Esping-Andersen 2007 'Parental investments in children. How educational homogeneity and bargaining affect time allocation'. *DEMOSOC Working Paper*.

Week 9. (March 5) Gender segregation and the gender wage gap. (Javier Polavieja)

Core reading

Blau, F. Ferber, M and Winkler, A 2001 *The Economics of Women, Men and Work*. (especially chapters 5, 6, 7 and 11)

Optional

J. Polavieja, 2006 'The effect of occupational sex composition on earnings: job specialization, sexual attitudes and the division of domestic labor in Spain'. *Demosoc Working Paper*, 2006-18.

Week 10. (March 12). Why Inequality Matters (roundtable debate)

Jorge Rodriguez: Inequality and Democracy

Gosta Esping-Andersen: Inequality and Economic Efficiency

Javier Polavieja: Inequality, meritocracy and equity

Sebastian: Why worry about social exclusion?