

Changing Occupational Careers of Women and Men.

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This paper reviews the aims and content of our Gender Network proposal for the five-year period of the network based, of course, on our submission. We have supplemented our submission in places and given an overview of our initial plans and tasks. We end by adding some thoughts on the wider issues raised in our research project.

We saw this project as a response to the *Kingsmill Review* which was receiving much publicity at the time of our application to the ESRC. In this sense, its main motivation was as an input to the policy process. It seemed important to have some firm foundations against which to benchmark future progress in gender equality in the labour market that went beyond raw female/male hourly wage ratios into plotting out and analyzing longitudinal occupational and wage profiles of men and women. What was needed was a good understanding of occupational mobility, how it has been changing over time and what the main drivers of these changes have been. We responded by offering analyses of the British Birth cohort data which have been under-used in this respect. These longitudinal data offer us a picture of occupational mobility that is initially biased to the supply side emphasizing individuals' choices and preferences. These are important elements. But of course the demand side of employers' and workplace policies also have an important role to play in determining individuals' career progression. By examining successive cohorts and how occupational career progression has changed over time and over successive generations, we hope to get some handle on the relevance of some of the period changes that have been occurring.

Since submitting this Proposal, we have adopted another aim – which is to carry out some analysis that is comparable with earlier analyses of the 1980 Women and Employment Survey (WES) by Dex and Joshi for a 25th WES Anniversary conference (possibly Sept 2005) under the umbrella of this ESRC Gender Network. This conference is the subject of another Paper to be tabled for our Dec 2004 meeting.

Original aims of this project

Exploiting unique and valuable longitudinal data from the British birth cohorts this research will seek:

- To compare and explain women's and men's occupational mobility over the life course and identify the extent of men's and women's downward and upward moves.
- To analyse how occupational downward and subsequent upwards mobility over successive generations relates to women's and men's occupational choices and preferences, women's child bearing, hours of work, the availability of flexible working arrangements, working in organizations with a commitment to equal opportunities policies, along side a range of other factors.
- To examine the determinants of career success and failure over successive generations of men's and women's occupational histories.

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- To examine the occupational pay differentials between women and men in the light of their downward and upward moves.

Background

Recent decades have seen remarkable educational progress among British and other European women both in absolute terms and relative to men. The proportion of highly qualified women has grown enormously. However, while the wage ratio of women's to men's hourly rates of pay has improved, it has not reached levels of equality, after controlling for other influences. Also, it is not clear that the British economy is employing these valuable human assets at their maximum potential. The Kingsmill Review draw attention to these issues in 2001, and they are being taken up by the Women and Work Commission appointed by the Minister for Women in July 2004.. Up to the early 1980s, studies based on longitudinal data identified that women often suffered downward occupational mobility over a period of child bearing, and particularly if they returned to a part time job (Dex, 1987; Joshi, 1984). These early studies suggested that women's preferences for part time hours, and the characteristics of part time jobs in Britain at that time were important elements of the reason for downward moves at this point in the life course. Comparisons with women's experiences in other countries, at the same point in the life cycle, added other factors that were thought to help explain these experiences (Dex and Shaw, 1986; Dex, Walters and Alden, 1993). Britain, at that time, had low levels of provision of paid maternity leave for mothers while guaranteeing their return to work, and low levels of child care provision. Men's movements up and down the occupational scale have been researched to a much lesser extent.

Policy provisions, the infrastructure of child care and analysis of decision-making have all moved on since these early studies (Dex, 1999). Provisions for maternity leave and, since 1999, parental leave have all improved over the 1980s and 1990s in Britain. Since the accession to power of the Labour government in 1997, there have been a large number of new initiatives aimed at enabling parents to combine work and family life more easily. Child care provision has increased markedly, to the extent that Britain is no longer the poor relation of Europe on child care places, especially for 3-4 year olds. Organizations have also taken initiatives to improve the retention of women employees by offering more flexibility and incentives to returners (Dex and Smith 2002). New analyses have also been undertaken of issues that had previously been neglected. For example, there have been analyses of the role of travel-to-work distances and choices in adding to the explanation of wage differentials between men and women (see Anderson et al, 2001 for the Kingsmill Review); and the monopsony elements implicit in much part time wage setting.

There is room for further analysis of gender differences in occupational careers and indeed the need for a charting of such longitudinal careers over time to get a better sense of the extent to which changes have been occurring at certain points in the life course of men and women. As the Kingsmill Review objectives get implemented through British organizations, it will also be useful to see, through future waves of British birth cohorts the difference this makes to women's and men's occupational and organisational careers, against the benchmark of earlier generations.

Key research questions

Using valuable longitudinal data this research will examine a number of key research questions:

1. How have women's and men's occupational trajectories changed over time?
2. How do these changes relate to child bearing and family formation, the availability of flexible working arrangements, organizations' equal opportunities policies, parents' choices, and new policy initiatives?
3. How do the gendered contexts of specific occupations, purposely selected on a number of dimensions; such as whether they are traditionally female (eg. teaching, nursing) versus traditionally male (eg. IT, management) relate to the life course outcomes revealed by quantitative analyses (eg. wage rates; occupational choices and status; numbers of children; mental health, and hours of work combinations of parents)?
4. What are the main drivers of men's career success? To what extent is there a pay penalty for men who have breaks in employment and how has this changed over successive generations?
5. Do women's and men's career paths differ according to whether they are employed in public compared with private sector organizations, since opportunities to work flexibly and the equal opportunities environment vary between these sectors. Is it easier to combine work and family life while working in the public sector?
6. Do women choose to have more children or alter the timing where conditions for combining work and family life are more favourable?
7. Has the implementation of the Part time work Directive in Britain led to an improvement in the pay ratios between part time and full time employees, and a decline in the part time pay penalty for those who choose to work part time?
8. Do the effects on subsequent employment and earnings from career interruptions differ according to when they occur and their durations?

The research intends to consider careers in terms of both occupational status and earnings. The research will also explore, if possible, the effects of geographical relocation, for partnership and household production reasons, on earnings.

Methods and data

These questions can be addressed using the detailed work and family history data contained in the successive British birth cohorts from 1946 onwards. The team is fortunate to have access to all of these data (in the case of the 1946 courtesy of Prof. Michael Wadsworth) and have vast experience of exploiting to the full, through secondary analysis, the unique and valuable qualities of these longitudinal data. The 1946, 1958, 1970 and recently the Millennium cohorts offer a large-scale and nationally representative window on the changing experiences of women and men over the life course. They are a valuable national resource, containing huge amounts of information from which social change can be charted. The earlier cohorts contain employment and fertility histories. These can be analysed to provide benchmark career profiles, as necessary background for an examination of the effects of the changing policy environment in the late twentieth and 21st centuries. Against this background, the evolving Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) data will reveal how the latest generations of mothers' and fathers' careers vary from earlier cohort parents at the same stages of their child's development. Data are provided on the employment and child care choices made by parents. The Millennium cohort data (Sweep 1 data in 2001 at 9 months; Sweep 2 data planned for 2003 at age 3; Sweep 3 data planned for 2005 age 5) contains the experiences of mothers over childbirth and details of their return to employment and subsequent career progress. Over the life of

this Network, these MCS mothers experiences may be charted until the child cohort member is age 5. For some of these mothers, this is their second or later child.

Cohort data offer unique possibilities for analysis. We can distinguish what factors in a person's history affect their life chances. We can also compare how people with similar characteristics take different routes through time. With more than one cohort dataset we can make comparisons of the experiences of lifecourse transitions of successive groups of people as well as for the same people over time.

The data will be analysed within a life course framework where individuals' choices and experiences are expected to be influenced by, at least, their background characteristics and experiences, their current circumstances, organisational context and support, infrastructure support and other resources including partners and wider family support. In the case of the Millennium Cohort Study, because of its design, it is possible to think of multilevel modeling of individuals within a ward area and to think of using neighbourhood labour market indicators as one of the potential influences on individuals' job and career choices.

Central concepts this project are the ideas of an occupational profile and a career history. The data sets provide an accurate picture of what the individuals are doing at particular points in their life, recording various types of career and earnings progression. The research will document how the routes of occupational progress, stability or downgrading differ between men and women, in different cohorts and between gender within cohorts. In the case of all data sets, it is possible to distinguish between different sorts of men and women by class of origin and educational attainment. In the case of MCS it is also possible to analyze ethnic origin as one of the characteristics of these men and women. (MCS over-represents individuals from ethnic minorities with one quarter of the sample in England being non-white.)

The project will aim to map career and employment profiles for men and women and analyse, using multivariate modeling, the determinants of men's and women's career successes and failures in the light of a wide range of life experiences, support, infrastructure and constraints.

We will use data on earnings as outcomes of interest in their own right and also to help organize information on individual occupations into a hierarchy so that upward and downward mobility may be identified. The detailed data on occupational histories will be summarised in terms of the sex segregation of each occupation to distinguish between people likely to be working in female-typical, male-typical or integrated jobs. A number of other characteristics in the work situation – employer training, supervisory responsibility and pension coverage will also be taken into account.

This project will employ multivariate econometric modelling techniques to identify the strongest determinants of particular outcomes, from the many possible influences on men's and women's labour market success. The modelling will pay attention to period and cohort differences in parents' experiences. Modelling of pay differentials will follow well-established techniques (Joshi and Paci, 1998), although the focus on part-time pay differentials will introduce further challenges to the techniques of analysis. It has become standard in econometric estimations, although not often on sociological analyses, to pay attention to issues of jointly determined outcomes. (For example, family formation and hours of work can be jointly determined). Similarly, attention will be given to

selection issues. For example, analyses on employed women may only give a biased picture of women in general, where some are not employed at the time of data collection. Repeated data about the same individuals makes it possible for unobserved differences between individuals to be controlled. In these ways, best practice econometric methods of analysis will be used to ensure that the findings are robust.

Having established the various trajectories and the determinants of making progress or having setbacks, we will elaborate the implications of different occupational attainment for the pensions of men and women and for the equal opportunities among more recent generations still at the outset of their careers.

Key initial tasks

1. Our first set of tasks relate to organizing the data, which is not a trivial task. It breaks down into a set of sub-tasks. We will need to :
 - assemble the occupational and wage histories of cohort members across the 1946, 1958 and 1970 cohorts;
 - draw up a specification from the 1946 cohort and liaise with Michael Wadsworth about the data;
 - review the comparability of the occupational classifications; In order to provide analyses and update comparable to earlier WES analyses, a recoding of occupational codes into the unique occupational codes used in WES will be required.
 - examine the occupational classifications by their wage rate hierarchy in order to rank and thus define downward and upward occupational mobility;
 - assemble the other relevant data from earlier studies eg. MacRae on maternity leave and maternity rights.
2. Focus in on some of the key decision points for some initial analysis and comparison with other earlier data.
 - Here we have in mind, in the case of women, the point of childbirth and return to work which was explored in earlier work by Dex for the Women and Employment Survey and MacRae for maternity leave and maternity rights' surveys. We can examine the family formation period as a whole in comparison with women who do not have children and in comparison with different profiles for men; the return to full or part time work; the duration of time spent out of work.
 - Whether there has been any change in the implications for future career of taking a part-time job at re-entry into the labour force after child birth is important background and benchmarking information for the evaluation of the part-time work directive and the need to avoid discrimination against part timers.
 - Another area of comparison is the entry into the labour market and whether this entry point, and what happens at this point, has declined or increased in importance over time.
3. Start to chart out sequences of lifetime occupational moves for men and women using individuals' data. Classify some of these moves and compare their frequencies over time. Identify changes in the types of occupational mobility that has taken place over time.

Key Project Milestones and Outputs (part of submission)

The following papers will be natural outputs from this project:

1. One early paper will document the changing career profiles up to 2000 of successive generations of mothers and fathers.
2. Other papers will report on the examination of differences in career profiles between parents and non-parents of both genders.
3. Effects on career outcomes of flexible working and equal opportunities policies in organizations that employ the cohort parents.
4. Models to explain the occupational status of women and men over their life course.
5. Models to explain the factors that lead to downward occupational mobility and subsequent recouping of lost status.
6. Analysis of part-time pay differentials in 2000 between women employed part-time compared with full-time and female part-time compared with male part-time employment, all compared with earlier generations. There are some indications from research on other datasets that the full-time premium may have lessened in the new century, but this needs to be investigated in a consistent manner.

In addition, we have now added two more objectives:

7. Producing a paper for the 25th Anniversary conference of the Women and Employment Survey, Sept. 2005.
8. Submitting written evidence to the Women and Work Commission before their deadline on Feb 11 2005. This will be on gender wage rates.

Wider issues

Clearly, our project provides insights into the wider workings of the labour market in Britain and how this has been changing over time. There has been much discussion about needing flexibility in labour markets in order to compete in the global marketplace. We will see whether and how this flexibility, whether at the macro level or in workplaces is reflected in men's and women's lifetime occupational moves, bearing in mind that we know that certain types of flexible jobs do not offer training to their holders.

We can also see how changes in gender segregation and the extent of part-time jobs of certain occupations over time is impacting on men's and women's lifetime occupational moves. In fact whether gender segregation is evident in lifetime occupational movement of men and women to the same extent over time, is another area of interest which this study will uncover. In some ways, this is a measure of labour market flexibility, in itself, if there are more transitions across occupational and gender segregated boundaries in recent cohort experiences than in earlier ones. Earlier theorizing about segmented labour market suggested there would be few transitions between the segments, defined in part by their gender profile. These analyses will give the opportunity to review earlier theorizing about segmented labour markets and chart out, through the examination of occupational transitions, the extent to which segmentation is a relevant concept and how part time

jobs fit into this. Sociological analyses of occupational closure cover the same ground and are relevant to our analyses.

Human capital theory and its development into capability theories is also relevant as are long standing debates over the relevance of choice versus constraints and more recent discussion of agency.

We hope to provide insight into the glass ceiling. Earlier work by Booth and Francesconi found men improved their wages and career profile within internal labour markets, possibly by threatening to quit in order to lever their pay up, whereas women gained more earnings increases by leaving one job to go to another, possibly because they did not wish to threaten their employers or seek alternative jobs just for the sake of it.

The role of state intervention in the labour market is also relevant to our analyses. Clearly, improvements over time in maternity, parental and paternity leave have come through state involvement. Such policy provisions have been located at the point of childbirth in parents' lifecourses. Improvements in the extent of childcare in Britain are also marked, especially since 1998 from state involvement, but earlier from private sector initiatives. These relevance of initiatives are spread over children's early years. The extent to which we can map some of these developments onto our cohort parents' lifecourses remains a challenge.