Family Dynamics and Social Inequality

Prof. Fabrizio Bernardi and Prof. Martin Kohli

Second Term Seminar – Winter 2012

Thursdays 11:00-13:00 – Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana

(Please register with Paivi.Kontinen@eui.eu)

This seminar provides an introduction to contemporary research on family dynamics and social inequality. In doing this, the seminar will discuss cross-cutting contributions from the sociology of the family and social inequality research, with a focus on the contemporary changes in the developed world.

While the family has been largely overlooked and neglected in classic social stratification research, since the 1990s it has increasingly been recognised that changes in demographic behaviours and different patterns of relationships within and across household play an important role in the structuring of economic and social inequality. On the other hand, social and economic resources may affect demographic behaviours, contributing to a further differentiation across households. The aim of the seminar is then that of studying both types of relationships: how family dynamics contribute to the reproduction of social inequality in contemporary society, and how social inequality affects demographic behaviours.

The seminar takes a broad view of family dynamics, examining divorce, fertility, homogamy, siblings, and parent-child relationships. Inequality is mainly studied in terms of educational and occupational attainment, building on the traditional studies on inequality of educational opportunities and of occupational attainment.

The sessions will be based on readings. Participants are required to prepare brief comments on the general readings for each session. Moreover, each participant will be required to critically present the additional readings of one of the sessions and lead the discussion on how they contribute to the key questions of the seminar.
1st session (12/1/2012):
Inequality in educational opportunities: explaining the effect of the family of origin

General readings

Additional readings
2nd session (19/1/2012):
Inequality in educational returns: explaining the direct effect of the family of origin

General readings

Additional readings
3rd session (26/1/2012):
Siblings and month of birth

General readings
http://www.sciencemag.org/content/316/5832/1717.full

Additional readings
Härkönen, J. (2010), Birth order and educational transitions in West Germany. Working paper.
Fertig, M. and Kluve, J. (2005), The Effect of Age at School Entry on Educational Attainment in Germany, IZA working paper 1507.
4th session (2/2/2012):
Fertility: trends and mechanisms

General readings

Additional readings
5th session (9/2/2012):
Family formation and structure: trends and consequences

General readings

Additional readings
6th session (16/2/2012):
Homogamy and couples’ careers

General readings

Additional readings
7th session (23/2/2012):
The social and economic routes to divorce

General readings
http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol23/10/

Additional readings
8th session (1/3/2012):
The consequences of divorce

General readings

Additional readings
Kalmijn, M. (2010), Racial differences in the effects of parental divorce and separation on children: Generalizing the evidence to a European case, Social Science Research, 39: 845–856
9th session (9/3/2012):
Adult intergenerational relations and grandparenthood

General readings

Additional readings
10th session (15/3/2012):
Gender inequality and the changing role of women

General readings

Additional readings