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CROSS-CULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE RESEARCH OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

by

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Résumé. Recherche comparative trans-culturelle et internationale sur la mobilité sociale. Présenté initialement au Conseil de Recherche de l'Association Internationale de Sociologie en octobre 1988 à Ljubljana, Yougoslavie, cet article retrace en détail le développement et l'évolution des études de mobilité sociale, et leur comparaison entre pays, depuis leurs origines dans les années 1920 et à travers plusieurs "générations" avec leurs méthodes spécifiques telles que les taux entrées-sorties, la "path analysis", l'analyse log-linéaire, et les histories de vie. Mobilité sociale, Recherche comparative, Méthodologie, Histoire des méthodes.

Summary. Initially presented at the Research Council meeting of the International Sociological Association in October 1988 in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, this article traces in detail the development and evolution of social mobility studies, and their comparison between countries, from their conception in the 1920s and through successive "generations" with their concomitant methods which have included inflow-outflow rates, path analysis, log-linear analysis, and life history methods. Social Mobility, Comparative Research, Methodology, History of Methods.

The founding fathers of sociology, among others Karl Marx, Max Weber and Vilfredo Pareto, were highly interested in the processes of social mobility and in their role in the formation of social structure and in the functioning of the society (Goldthorpe, 1985). However, before the establishment of the International Sociological Association, relatively few national social mobility surveys were performed and the results of these surveys were not really comparable. This situation is well illustrated by the classical work of Sorokin on Social and Cultural Mobility in 1927, where the wide-ranging theories of mobility are based on relatively scant empirical findings.

This background of high interest among sociologists, relatively well developed, but often contradicting theories and lacking of comparable empirical data, led Geiger and Glass in 1951, at the establishment of the Research Committee of Social Stratification, to formulate the goal of conducting national surveys with identical methodologies and to compare their results. The social mobility survey by Glass in England, by Carlsson in Sweden and by Svalastoga in Denmark did not completely achieve the goal of providing strictly comparable data and of applying identical methods of analysis. Nevertheless, they were immensely important in stimulating surveys and research of social mobility in other countries, so that in the mid-1960's surveys existed in almost all advanced societies. As a characteristic example, the first Hungarian social mobility survey might be mentioned. It was born simply from the fact that one of the researchers of Demographic Research Institute of the Central Statistical Office found the book on mobility edited by Glass in a library, read it and proposed to make a similar survey through the apparatus of the Central Statistical Office.

The results of these first national surveys were compared by Lipset and co-authors (Lipset, Zetterberg, 1956; Lipset, Bendix, 1959; S.M. Miller, 1960). Lipset and co-authors compared mostly outflow mobility rates by three social categories (non-manuals, manuals

and farm population) and came to the main conclusion that social mobility rates are rather similar in all the industrial societies, independently from the finer characteristics of their social and political system. Lipset (1973) later extended the thesis to the European socialist societies. S.M. Miller compared some other mobility rates and found significant differences between individual countries, but failed to find correlations between social mobility rates and indicators of economic development (Miller, Bryce, 1961; Miller, Fox, 1965). The research tradition of comparing inflow and outflow rates, as well as global, structural and circular mobility rates continued in the next decades. Hazelrigg and coacuthors investigated correlations of social mobility rates with several indicators of
economic and social development and found, among others, positive correlations of the
global and the stuctural mobility rates with the level and rate of economic development,
and of the circular mobility rates with indicators of education, urbanisation, ethnic
homogeneity, etc. (Hazelrigg, 1974; Hazelrigg, Garnier, 1976; Hardy, Hazelrigg, 1978).
Connor (1979) who investigated the European socialist societies, concluded that the highmostly structural - mobility of the postwar extensive industrialization period contributed
significantly to the legitimation of the socialist system. But he predicted a decline of social
mobility as a consequence of the slowdown of structural changes and consequent social
problems.

The ambiguous and sometimes contradictory conclusions of these comparative analyses led researchers of social mobility to the idea that the analytical methods used in this "first generation" of social mobility surveys were too crude to provide reliable information in comparative studies. This disappointment was clearly visible at the meetings of the Research Committee (RC) Social Stratification at the Varna World Congress of Sociology in 1970 and resulted in new efforts to make comparable national surveys and to use more refined and reliable analytical tools. The work on "the second generation of national mobility studies" (Featherman, 1973) and their comparison began at the Konstanz meeting of the RC in 1971 and is still continuing in the present.

New social mobility surveys were performed in most advanced societies in the first half of the 1970's. They - and some surveys made in 1980's - provided the possibility of analyzing the changes of mobility in individual countries. These national studies will not be reported in this paper. I shall concentrate on the most important multilateral comparisons. These international comparative studies will be treated in the following by main research directions or schools, which in this case mean first of all different mathematical statistical methods. Each method is, however, more and less linked to a district theoretical background and to a group of researchers.

THE PATH ANALYSIS APPROACH

The path analysis approach started with the seminal book Blau and Duncan (1967) on social mobility in the United States. The leading "path analysers" were more or less linked to the University of Wisconsin, Madison (Sewell, Featherman, Hauser), although in the 1970's their example was widely followed in many countries (Girod in Switzerland, Pöntinen in Scandinavian countries, Safar in Czechoslovakia, Suranyi and Vita in Hungary). The method follows the logic of recursive econometric models and calculates coefficients expressing the influence of parental socio-economic position and education, of own education and own first job and present socio-economic position and their influence on each other. Many additional influencing factors, like the number of siblings, achievement in school, type of educational institution, type of place of birth can be included in the models. The essential requirement of the utilisation of the method is the respondent.

Two approaches of obtaining scales that might be interpreted as at least ordinal, but possiblely as interval, difference or ratio scales, were proposed: 1. prestige scales use the results of separate prestige surveys of occupations - in order to achieve international comparability of the national mobility surveys, the international prestige scale of Treiman (1977) is often used, assuming that the prestige order of occupations is similar or identical in all advanced societies or in all societies; 2. the socio-economic status scores calculated from the income and education levels of the occupation, proposed by Duncan (1961). The debate about the relative advantages of the two approaches does not seem to be

terminated in the RC (Featherman, Hauser, 1975). Both approaches are based on the theoretical assumption that the structure of advanced societies is better described by a model of many - 30 to 90 - small strata or occupation groups, rather than by a smaller number of classes or strata usally distinguished in the earlier studies and international comparisons of social mobilities. This assumption is, however, clearly questionnable. On this point the study of social mobility is closely related to the most fundamental views on social structure, which are continuously debated in the sociological world literature and where recently new theoretical schools seem to have appeared (differentiation, individualisation, new inequalities, etc.).

International comparison of social mobility by the path analysis is done by comparing identical path coefficients in different countries. Higher coefficients are interpreted as stronger influences in the given direction (e.g., from father's socio-economic position to son's education). However, as the hot debate about conclusions in the book of Jencks (1972) on inequality have demonstrated, path coefficients are usually low and seem to suggest that achievement is co-determinated by other factors not included in the path model. According to path-analysers, however, this interpretation is not valid (Sewell, 1973). The low value of the path coefficients nevertheless seems to cause headaches in international comparisons.

The great merit of path analysis is the possibility to include education in comparisons. Mobility researchers were able to demonstrate that influence of social origin on achieved socio-economic position is exerted in advanced societies to a very large and probably growing extent through education: the position of the parental family determines the achieved occupation or socio-economic position. This finding coincides very well with the works of Bourdieu on the role of educational institutions - and of inherited human and social capital - in the placement of persons of different social origin into clearly different social positions.

In spite of the above mentioned problems, path analysis and its more developed variant, the LISREL method, continues to be applied in international comparisons, such as in comparisons of social mobility in the Netherlands and in Hungary (Lohman et al., 1983; Peschar et al., 1986).

THE LOG-LINEAR APPROACH

The log-linear approach was introduced into the comparative study of social mobility by the main center of the path analysis approach, namely the sociologists at the University of Wisconsin, Madison (Hauser et al., 1975) It spread very rapidly all over the world among researchers of social mobility, superceding the method of path analysis.

The log-linear method approach might be considered as a certain return to the original "ISA paradigm" elaborated by Glass and other founders of the RC. It usually distinguishes less than 10 large social classes and strata and its main endeavour is to separate the mobility caused by structural factors - by the difference of the marginal distributions of sons and fathers - from the mobility caused by "exchanges" between different social categories, caused by higher or lower inequality of chances of mobility of persons of different social origin. The basic "inputs" of the log-linear models are so-called odd ratios which are assumed to be independent of the marginal distributions. Recently, however, Harrison (1988) questioned the full adequacy of the odds ratios. A "common fluidity" model is calculated by averaging the odds ratios of the countries compared and a hypothetical social mobility table is calculated for each country by this common fluidity model. The deviation of actual data from the hypothetical data calculated with the assumption of common fluidity point to the differences of the mobility regimes of the individual countries.

In the log-linear analyses of social mobility the original question of the studies of the first period of the RC, namely whether social mobility is similar in all advanced societies or do the differences of the social, political and cultural characteristics of the individual countries influence significantly their mobility regime. The famous FJH hypothesis (Featherman, Jones, Hauser, 1975), which was considered by the authors a reformulation of the Lipset-Zetterberg hypothesis, stated that the wide national variation observed in

national mobility data is caused by structural differences in marginal distributions of the indi-vidual countries and appears on the "phenotypical" level. However, the underlying relative chances of mobility or the inequality of chances of persons of different social origin, measured by odds ratios, are essentially identical in all advanced societies. They concluded that on the "genotypical" level these societies are essentially very similar at least in the field of social mobility. This hypothesis has clearly wider implications, as it seems to give support - at least partial support - to the theory of "industrial society" and to the "convergence" thesis.

By analysis the mobility data of first 16, later 22 countries, Grusky and Hauser (1984,1987), distinguishing three social categories (white collar, blue collar, farm), came to the conclusion that the relative chances of social mobility regime is very similar in all investigated advanced capitalist, socialist and developing societies. Therefore they suggested that "uniformity in mobility regimes is not limited to highly industrialized societies but may extend accross levels of economic development" and raised the possibility that "this uniformity in mobility patterns may be analogue to invariance in prestige hierarchies, in the sense that both may result from cross-national regularities in the resources and desirability accorded occupations".

The second major international comparative study, called the CASMIN project and centered at the University of Mannheim, used somewhat different theoretical viewpoints and concepts. The original survey data on magnetic tapes from 11 social mobility surveys performed in 1970's in 9 European countries [2 of them socialist), the United States and Australia were collected in Mannheim. A new schema of social classification was applied to all of the national surveys, distinguishing 10 classes (collapsed in some analyses into 7 classes): 1. higher grade professionals, administrators and officials, managers in large industrial establishments; 2. lower grade professionals, administrators and officials, higher grade technicians, managers in small industrial establishments, supervisors of non-manual employees; 3. routine non-manual employees in administration and commerce, sales persons, other rank-and-file service workers; 4a. small proprietors, artisans, etc. without employees; 4b. farmers and small holders, other self-employed workers in primary production; 5. lower-grade technicians, supervisors of manual workers; 6. skilled manual workers; 7a. semi and unskilled manual workers (not in agriculture etc.); 7b. agricultural and other workers in primary production. The more detailed social classification and unified recoding of the occupations was obviously a great step forward as compared to the earlier comparative studies.

The authors conceptualised the whole study in terms of "class formation": they intended to investigate the role of social mobility in the formation - or the lack of formation - of classes (Goldthorpe, 1985). In addition they specified parameters for each cell of mobility tables on the basis of theoretical considerations. These parameters were intended to express four different kinds of effect, namely: social inheritance, hierarchical divisions in social structure, sectorial divisions - separating agriculture from the other sectors - and special positive and negative affinities between selected classes. From the data of 3 countries they estimated parameters of a core fluidity model and then analysed the national deviations from this core model, trying to interpret the deviation of each country in each individual cell from the value estimated by the core model (Erikson, Goldthorpe, 1987a, 1987b).

The project is not yet over. Intergenerational mobility of men was extensively analysed (Erikson, Goldthorpe, 1987a, 1987b; Kurz, Müller, 1987), special analyses concentrated on selected countries (Erikson, Goldthorpe, 1985; Müller, 1986), two studies on intergenerational mobility of women were published (Portocarero, 1983,1985). Trends in intergenerational mobility of men were investigated in a working paper by comparing the social mobility by cohorts (Erikson, Goldthorpe, 1988) and another working paper analysed inter-and intragenerational mobility together (Erikson, Goldthorpe, 1987c). Comparative analyses of marriage mobility are proceeding. A working paper extended the analysis to the role of education in social mobility (Müller et all, 1988).

As the analyses are going on, it would be premature to formulate definitive conclusions from these studies. Taking into consideration the discussion on the CASMIN project conference in 1988 in Reisensburg, where the researchers preparing the international comparative analyses and the national researchers who were responsible for the data surveys and who earlier made national analyses met and discussed to present some impressions on the direction in which the ideas of the researchers are developing.

Their first comparative papers, in which they investigated only the three countries which later formed the "core" - England, France and Sweden - seemed to emphasize the existence of national peculiarities and explained them by the special social, cultural and political characteristics of individual countries, such as the higher fluidity in Sweden was interpreted as a result of the long period of Social-democratic government in Sweden. Thus they seemed to reject the FJH hypothesis. In their recent articles Erikson and Goldthorpe (1987b) seem to put greater emphasis on the common pattern of mobility in all the investigated societies. The similarities are really remarkable between the United States, the European capitalist societies and the socialist societies investigated. Thus it might be concluded that industrialization (and probably post-industrialization) or modernization are processes that fundamentally influence social processes independently of political systems or national cultures. In a certain sense in Eastern Europe the achievement of industrialization and modernization might be conceptualized as primary functions of the socialist systems (Kulcsar, 1984).

Erikson and Goldthorpe, however, continue to point to the role of state intervention through education policies, or agricultural policies, as through collectivization, in shaping the mobility regime. I would like to add that the impact of state policies on social mobility is often not at all intended, but simply the by-product of policies introduced to achieve other goals which, by the way, are often not achieved.

It also should be emphasized that the comparative analyses did not reveal an ideal typical "capitalist" and an other ideal typical "socialist" pattern of fluidity. Differences between the capitalist countries included were important. So were also the differences of the two socialist countries investigated, Poland and Hungary. As the latter is the most familiar to me, I would like to mention that these differences could very well be explained by the different agricultural policies (no collectivization in Poland, collectivization plus economic reform plus small-scale household-plot production in Hungary) and by the different relation of the political power and the "intellectuals" in Poland and in Hungary. This example might serve to illustrate the further possibilities of deepening the analysis in the next years.

It ought to be added that two other comparative studies using the log-linear techniques similarly demonstrated important differences in the fluidity regimes of a great number of different countries (Treiman, Kelly, 1986) and between three socialist societies (Vecernik, Mateju, 1983). The great number of two-country comparisons will not be enumerated in this paper, although they also contribute to the enrichment of our knowledge.

THE LIFE HISTORY APPROACH

The socio-economic position of individuals changes during their occupational career. In order to have a full view on social mobility, these changes ought to be investigated. Several social mobility surveys recorded the complete occupational life history of the interviewed individuals, so that the data for a life history analysis are available. The methods described recently by Tuma and Hannan (1984) and others were shown to be applicable to these life history data.

Recently several proposals were presented to begin international comparisons on the basis of these surveys and by these methods (Rogoff, Clausen, 1977; Rogoff, 1977; Featherman, 1983; Sorensen and Sorensen, 1983). This approach promises extremely interesting possibilities to link the career mobility of different persons and cohorts to historical events in given years.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I hope that it will not be considered an exageration if I express my personal opinion that the comparative studies of social mobility contributed to an important degree to the better understanding of the characteristics and of the functionning of different societies. In

addition the mobility of each society included in the comparisons is better understood on the background of the social mobility of the other countries.

In addition to this summary conclusion I would like to mention some problems that would need more detailed analysis than those published till now. These are first of all: the social mobility of women; the social mobility in developing societies, at different levels of development; intergenerational mobility through three generations (grandparents - parents children); mobility in terms of the level of living, of education and cultural level.

The comparative research of social mobility will in future hopefully also be tied more closely with the fields of research in social structure and stratification (inequalities). The RC always included into its conferences papers and discussions on wider subjects of structure and inequalities. The focus, however, was usually social mobility. The above described social mobility studies clearly demonstrated that in order to fully understand the causes and consequences of social mobility, social structure and stratification have to be included in the comparative research.

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