

Globalization, Uncertainty and Men's Careers

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An International Comparison

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Preface

Profound social and economic transformations have taken place in the last two decades in modern societies. These changes can be subsumed under the term globalization, which is characterized by intensified competition, impact of new technologies, internationalization and decline of national borders, and the rising importance of and exposure to markets. This volume examines the relationship between globalization and the employment careers of mid-career men among 12 OECD countries. We address several pivotal problems. Does globalization lead to the erosion of men's standard employment patterns into patchwork careers? How does globalization impact on the employment careers of mid-career men across various employment and welfare regimes? How do the diverse domestic institutions across the different nations filter the transformations brought about by the globalization process? Finally, we address the individualization of inequality debate by asking: who are the winners and losers among men during these major transformations? Will there be increased uncertainty, inequality and instability for all or do we expect certain classic inequality patterns based on class and educational attainment to persist?

This volume is one of four compilations of the research stemming from the international and multidisciplinary research program 'GLOBALIFE – Life Courses in the Globalization Process,' funded by the Volkswagen Foundation (Hanover, Germany), which was established and directed by Hans-Peter Blossfeld. It began in September 1999 at the University of Bielefeld, Germany and ended in early 2005. Since September 2002, the project has been located at the Otto-Friedrich-University in Bamberg, Germany. GLOBALIFE studied the implications of the globalization process for the life courses of individuals in various OECD-type societies. The project examined how globalization impacts on four aspects of the life course: (1) the transition to adulthood, (2) men's mid-career mobility, (3) women's mid-career mobility and the work/family link; and (4) late careers and retirement. This volume represents the work generated in the second phase of this project.

An important goal of the GLOBALIFE project was to create and utilize an international research network that would collectively pursue specific substantive and methodological issues in the analysis of life courses in the globalization process. This volume would not be possible without the contributors to this volume, experts in their respective countries, who devoted time and energy to the project by traveling for workshops,

corresponding regularly over the course of several years, and above all producing top-quality research to illuminate the life courses of mid-career men. Our gratitude goes to Ruud Muffels, Ruud Luijkx, Matthijs Kalmijn, Karin Kurz, Steffen Hillmert, Daniela Grunow, Tomas Korpi, Michael Tåhlin, Søren Leth-Sørensen, Erzsébet Bukodi, Péter Róbert, Ellu Saar, Jelena Helemäe, Dana Hamplová, Martin Kreidl, Katrin Golsch, Aaron Johnston, Tom DiPrete, Emilio Parrado, Carles Simó Noguera, and Anunciación Soro Bonmatí for their enthusiastic, professional, and supportive teamwork during the entire process.

We would like to thank all of the authors for their collegiality, support and patience during this ambitious project. Our gratitude goes to Heather Hofmeister for special support and counsel in all phases of the research and manuscript preparation. Many student assistants were involved in the research at different phases whom we would like to thank, including Valerie Martin, Cordula Zabel, Nils Heyen, Wiebke Beckstette, Simone Bloem, Katrin Busch, Cathrin Conradi, Fabian Czerwinski, Melanie Flügel, Lena Gehringer, Eva-Maria Goertz, Daniel Halbritter, Karin Handke, Evelyn Hock, Stefan Kirsch, Juliana Körnert, Jens Kratzmann, Wolfgang Kraus, Kerstin Künsebeck, Jochen Landes, Alexander Lenz, Susanne Lindner, Nicole Maul, Sonja Meixner, Corinna Mergner, Jan Mewes, Ilona Relikowski, Monika Schmich, Susanne Stedtfeld, Anna-Maria Thomas, Joanna Urban, Pia Wagner, Ulrike Wolf, Dagmar Zanker, Markus Zielonka and Mirjam Klaassens.

We would also like to thank the many individuals who responded to our work when it was presented at various conferences and helped improve the final outcome. Our appreciation goes to Catherine Elgar, Felicity Plester, Jo Betteridge, David Vince and others at Edward Elgar Publishing for their enthusiastic and cooperative support for the publication of the volume. Finally, we would like to thank the Volkswagen Foundation in Hanover for its continued financial support that made this ambitious project possible.

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Foreword

Harry B.G. Ganzeboom

Comparative stratification and mobility research has developed rapidly since the 1950s (Ganzeboom, Treiman and Ultee 1991; Treiman and Ganzeboom 2000). It has moved through four distinct generations, which began with the post-war examination of national probability sample surveys that offered a first glimpse of stratification patterns across different societies in terms of observed percentages. The ‘openness’ of societies was measured by absolute upward and downward mobility in intergenerational (father to son) occupational mobility tables. The main observation was that mobility rates and patterns were roughly the same across industrialized societies (Lipset and Bendix 1959).

The second generation shifted the focus of research from bivariate intergenerational comparisons to multivariate models of transmission of status; both intergenerational and intragenerational, using newly developed hierarchically scaled occupational measurements (Duncan 1961; Treiman 1977). New statistical techniques also permitted the assessment of the relative importance of various paths to status attainment and separation of direct and indirect effects (for example, via education). Blau and Duncan (1967) established the central significance of education as a core mechanism that transmitted status from generation to generation.

The third generation returned to the analysis of bivariate intergenerational occupational mobility tables, this time armed with refined log-linear statistical techniques. Researchers were now able to disaggregate observed mobility patterns in order to show the shifts in the distribution of the underlying differences in the chances of success for people from different social origins. This generation of comparative mobility research culminated with Erikson and Goldthorpe’s (1992) *The Constant Flux*, drawn from the Comparative Analysis of Social Mobility in Industrial Nations (CASMIN) project. Using 12 large-scale national surveys, CASMIN researchers could draw upon highly comparable educational and occupational data to study mobility processes and develop much-used comparative measures (for example, the EGP class scheme and the CASMIN education scheme).

The main conclusion of *The Constant Flux* was that there was a core mobility pattern common to all industrialized countries, with small variations between nations attributed to idiosyncratic historical and political

circumstances. The book also claimed that there is little evidence that mobility has increased over time. However, since the project had access to data from only one point in time, the authors were forced to make the questionable assumption that there are no career effects on mobility and that age differences may be interpreted as cohort effects. The conclusion of no change was challenged by other comparative studies (for example, Ganzeboom, Luijkx and Treiman 1989), and has been disproved for a large number of countries rigorously by Breen (2004).

It can be maintained that the first three generations of stratification research constitute a clear case of growth of knowledge by using ever more rigorous data collection and data harmonization procedures, and by adopting ever more sophisticated statistical methods. Yet, this was at the cost of narrowing the research questions from more general questions about the determinants and consequences of status and mobility to a focus on the bivariate relationship between the intergenerational occupational mobility between fathers and sons.

Treiman and Ganzeboom (2000) therefore characterized the upcoming fourth generation of mobility research as a return to the broader questions posed by earlier generations of stratification research. Once again, this generation has the opportunity to be increasingly comparative both across time and between nations, by benefiting from improved data conditions and more sophisticated statistical tools, in particular for the analysis of complete careers and the life course. This current volume, which studies men's mid-career mobility, is indeed a return to some of the fundamental questions that have vexed comparative mobility research. Blau and Duncan's (1967) elementary model of occupational career differences examined the variation between an individual's first and last (current) job. This created the opportunity to ask questions such as: how strong are the connections between the first and last job? Do social origin effects primarily occur at entry into the labor market? To what degree and in what pattern do returns to education develop further after entry into the labor market? The classic work of Blau and Duncan studied these questions by examining only the difference between first and last job. Their evidence suggested that there is much mobility between first and last jobs. A surprisingly large part of the similarity between father's and son's occupation arises after career beginnings, that is, after educational attainment and the level of the first job has been taken into account. The same turned out to be true for returns to education: most of those arise after career beginnings, and current jobs may be more strongly related to education than first jobs.

The Blau-Duncan model currently appears to be somewhat primitive as we now have the data and methods to examine what happens in between. Blau and Duncan indeed demonstrate that much happens between labor market entry and last job – but not when and how. We need more information about where people build their careers and how they do it. We need to know how social background and educational differences rise or vary during all

occupational career moves. In other words, we miss the process of change when we examine only the differences between first and last job. For this reason, there is a clear relevance and need to study middle careers. More importantly, the study of status attainment processes has never fulfilled its comparative promise (but see Treiman and Yip 1989 and Rijken 1998), and we are still unable to answer these questions in a cross-nationally comparative perspective.

The cross-national analysis of men's middle careers presented in this volume not only takes major steps in that direction, but also sets new standards. Using standard occupational status scales from stratification research such as the ISEI (Ganzeboom, De Graaf and Treiman 1992) and the EGP schema, the authors are able to compare and understand how the occupational paths of mid-career men have evolved over time and relate cross-nationally. We see that indeed much occurs between men's entry into the labor market and their last job, including many vertical moves and entry into and exit from unemployment. It furthermore brings us closer to understanding how educational differences play out during the process of careers.

This volume also challenges us by connecting classic mobility research to new research questions within the field of globalization, thereby forcing us to think outside of the national context and to reconsider the underlying mechanisms behind basic predictors such as education. For example, this volume connects the impact of the knowledge-based economy and information and communication technologies (ICTs) with the generation of an upward skill bias and the higher demand, premium and returns for workers with tertiary educational qualifications. It also forces us to consider that not only nation-specific context is essential in creating the distribution of career prospects, but that regional and global regulation and transformations play a large role (for example, growing competition from low-wage countries).

This volume not only brings stratification researchers to the field of globalization research, but also empirically challenges some of the currently prominent theoretical literature in sociology on this topic (for example, Beck, 2000), which argues that individuals will increasingly experience 'patchwork' careers or that we are entering a 'post-class' society. It enters this largely theoretical debate with empirical evidence showing that inequality persists in accordance to occupational class and educational level. It also opens our eyes to consider how the occupational careers of individuals are positioned in a larger global context.

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