

# Sociological Analysis

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This is a core paper for MSc/MPhil students in sociology. Each week, we shall study one or two pieces of landmark research and the debate surrounding them. We will cover a wide range of topics and different ‘genres’ of sociological research. But our concern remains the same throughout. In relation to each topic, consider the following questions. What are the empirical regularities that the authors seek to establish and to explain? What assumptions have they made? What evidence have they gathered? Does the analysis address the research questions effectively? Are you convinced by the arguments and the evidence? Are there alternative interpretation of the results? What are the relative merits of the competing explanations? How could you improve the research design and the analysis?

In short, this is *not* a ‘theory’ paper or a ‘method’ paper, as these are usually understood. Rather, we are interested in how empirical analyses are brought to bear on theoretical arguments, and how the links between theory, data and analysis can be improved.

## 1 Practical arrangements

- Where: seminar Room G, Manor Road Building.
- When: we shall meet in two groups on Thursdays. Group A meets at 2.00–3.30pm, Group B, 3.30–5.00pm.
- Group A will discuss the topics in the normal order of 1, 2, 3, .... Group B will follow the order of 2, 1, 4, 3, 6, 5, 8 and 7.
- Most journals are available online, see <http://sfx7.exlibrisgroup.com/oxford/az>. Otherwise hard copies are available in the Social Sciences Library and other Oxford libraries.

## 2 What you are expected to do

Sociological Analysis is examined by a three-hour exam in Trinity Term. Coursework does *not* affect your grade of this paper. But you are expected to do the following.

- Read each week's readings *before* you come to the class, and take an active role in class discussion.
- Write a 1,500 words essay each week. These essay will be marked but *not* graded by a teaching assistant. Your essay is your *entry ticket* to the class.
- Write a 3,000 words term essay, due on Friday, 0th week of Hilary Term. Essay topics TBA. Again, it will be marked but not graded by a teaching assistant.
- Your essays should include proper citations and references. There are many citation and reference styles. The following are taken from a journal's 'instructions to authors'.
  - If author's name is in the text, follow it with the year in parentheses: "Duncan (1959) . . ."
  - If author's name is not in the text, enclose the last name and year in parentheses: ". . . (Gouldner 1963)."
  - Pages cited follow the year of publication after a colon: ". . . (Ramirez and Weiss 1979:239–240)."
  - Provide last names for joint authors: ". . . (Martin and Bailey 1988)."
  - For three authors, list all three last names in the first citation in the text: ". . . (Carr, Smith, and Jones 1962)."
  - For all subsequent citations use "et al." throughout: ". . . (Carr et al. 1962)."
  - For works with four or more authors, use "et al." throughout.

## 3 Background readings

Here are some articles and books on several general issues in sociological reasoning and inference. Please read them at your leisure over MT and HT.

- Lieberman, S. (1985). *Making It Count: The Improvement of Social Research and Theory*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

- Firebaugh, G. (2008). *Seven Rules For Social Research*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Hedström, P. and Swedberg, R., editors (1998). *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Hedström, P. (2005). *Dissecting the Social: On the Principles of Analytical Sociology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007a). *On Sociology*, volume 1. Stanford University Press, Stanford, second edition.
- Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007b). *On Sociology*, volume 2. Stanford University Press, Stanford, second edition.
- Lieberman, S. (1988). Asking too much, expecting too little. *Sociological Perspectives*, **31**(4), 379–397.
- Lieberman, S. (1992). Einstein, Renoir and Greeley: some thoughts about evidence in Sociology. *American Sociological Review*, **57**(1), 1–15.
- Lieberman, S. and Lynn, F. B. (2002). Barking up the wrong branch: scientific alternatives to the current model of sociological science. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **28**, 1–19.
- Elster, J. (2007). *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts For the Social Sciences*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Freedman, D. A. (1991). Statistical models and shoe leather. *Sociological Methodology*, **21**, 291–313.
- Morgan, S. L. and Winship, C. (2007). *Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Abbott, A. (2004). *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. Norton, New York.
- King, G., Keohane, R. O., and Verba, S. (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Stinchcombe, A. L. (1968). *Constructing Social Theories*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

## 4 Weekly meetings

### 4.1 Family formation, birth cohort and gender role

**Essay question:** Compare and contrast *two* theories of the change in the age of marriage in industrial societies.

#### Readings

- Easterlin, R. A. (1987). *Birth and Fortune: The Impact of Numbers on Personal Welfare*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, second edition.
- Berk, R. A. and Berk, S. F. (1983). Supply-side sociology of the family: the challenge of the new home economics. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **9**, 375–395
- Oppenheimer, V. K. (1997). Women’s employment and the gain to marriage: the specialization and trading model. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **23**, 431–453.
- Blossfeld, H.-P. and Huinink, J. (1991). Human capital investment or norms of role transition? how women’s schooling and career affect the process of family formation. *American Journal of Sociology*, **97**(1), 143–168.
- Oppenheimer, V. K. (1988). A theory of marriage timing. *American Journal of Sociology*, **94**(3), 563–591.
- Loughran, D. S. (2002). The effect of male wage inequality on female age at first marriage. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, **84**(2), 237–250.
- Pampel, F. C. and Peters, H. E. (1995). The Easterlin effect. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **21**, 163–194.
- Goldin, C. and Katz, L. F. (2002). The power of the pill: oral contraceptives and women’s career and marriage decisions. *Journal of Political Economy*, **110**(4), 730–770.

#### Supplementary readings

- Oppenheimer, V. K. (1994). Women’s rising employment and the future of the family in industrial societies. *Population and Development Review*, **20**(2), 293–342.

- Jeon, Y. and Shields, M. P. (2005). The Easterlin hypothesis in the recent experience of higher-income OECD countries: a panel-data approach. *Journal of Population Economics*, **18**(1), 1–13
- Ermisch, J. F. (2003). *An Economic Analysis of the Family*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

## 4.2 Job search, labour market and social networks

**Essay question:** In what ways do social networks matter in the labour market?

### Readings

- Relevant section on job search in any labour economics text, e.g. *Labor Economics* by G. Borjas.
- Granovetter, M. G. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, **78**(6), 1360–1380.
- Granovetter, M. G. (1995). *Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, second edition.
- Granovetter, M. G. (1985). Economic action and social structure: the problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology*, **91**(3), 481–510.
- Castilla, E. J. (2005). Social networks and employee performance in a call center. *American Journal of Sociology*, **110**(5), 1243–1283.
- Fernandez, R. M., Castilla, E. J., and Moore, P. (2000). Social capital at work: Networks and employment at a phone center. *American Journal of Sociology*, **105**(5), 1288–1356.
- Fernandez, R. M. and Weinberg, N. (1997). Sifting and sorting: personal contacts and hiring in a retail bank. *American Sociological Review*, **62**(6), 883–902.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, **94**, S95–S120.

### Supplementary readings

- Burt, R. S. (1992). *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone*. Simon & Schuster, New York.
- Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **24**, 1–24.
- Watts, D. J. (2004). The ‘new’ science of networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **30**, 243–270.

### 4.3 Inequality in educational attainment

**Essay question:** What explains the persistence of class inequality in educational attainment?

#### Readings

- Mare, R. D. (1980). Social background and school continuation decisions. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, **75**(370), 295–305.
- Mare, R. D. (1981). Change and stability in educational stratification. *American Sociological Review*, **46**(1), 72–87.
- Breen, R. and Jonsson, J. O. (2005). Inequality of opportunity in comparative perspective: recent research on educational attainment and social mobility. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **31**, 223–243.
- Gambetta, D. (1987). *Were They Pushed or Did They Jump? Individual Decision Mechanisms in Education*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (electronic copy is available from Gambetta’s webpage at Nuffield).
- Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007b). *On Sociology*, volume 2. Stanford University Press, Stanford, second edition (chap.2–4).
- Akerlof, G. A. (1997). Social distance and social decisions. *Econometrica*, **65**(5), 1005–1027.
- Willis, P. (1980). *Learning To Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working class Jobs*. Gower, Aldershot.
- Holm, A. and Jæger, M. M. (2008). Does relative risk aversion explain educational inequality? A dynamic choice approach. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, **26**, 199–219.

## Supplementary readings

- DiPrete, T. A. and Buchmann, C. (2006). Gender-specific trends in the value of education and the emerging gender gap in college completion. *Demography*, **43**(1), 1–24.
- Buchmann, C. and DiPrete, T. A. (2006). The growing female advantage in college completion: The role of family background and academic achievement. *American Sociological Review*, **71**(4), 515–541.
- Morgan, S. L. (2005). *On the Edge of Commitment: Educational Attainment and Race in the United States*. Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Shavit, Y. and Blossfeld, H.-P., editors (1993). *Persistent Inequality: Changing Educational Attainment in Thirteen Countries*. Westview Press, Boulder, CO (chap.1 & 15).
- Davies, R., Heinesen, E., and Holm, A. (2002). The relative risk aversion hypothesis of educational choice. *Journal of Population Economics*, **15**, 683–713.

## 4.4 Parental divorce and children's outcome

**Essay question:** Does parental divorce harm their children?

### Readings

- McLanahan, S. and Sandefur, G. (1994). *Growing Up with a Single Parents: What Hurts, What Helps?* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Cherlin, A. J., Furstenberg Jr, F. F., Chase-Lansdale, P. L., Kiernan, K. E., Robins, P. K., Morrison, D. R., and Teitler, J. O. (1991). Longitudinal studies of effects of divorce on children in Great Britain and the United States. *Science*, **252**, 1386–1389.
- Kiernan, K. and Cherlin, A. J. (1999). Parental divorce and partnership dissolution in adulthood: evidence from a British cohort study. *Population Studies*, **53**, 39–48.
- Jonsson, J. O. and Gähler, M. (1997). Family dissolution, family reconstitution, and children's educational careers: recent evidence for Sweden. *Demography*, **34**(2), 277–293.

- Sandefur, G. D. and Wells, T. (1999). Does family structure really influence educational attainment? *Social Science Research*, **28**, 331–357.
- Seltzer, J. (1994). Consequences of marital dissolution for children. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **20**, 235–266.
- NíBhrolcháin, M. (2001). ‘Divorce effects’ and causality in the social sciences. *European Sociological Review*, **17**(1), 33–57.
- Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007a). *On Sociology*, volume 1. Stanford University Press, Stanford, second edition (chap.9).
- Biblarz, T. J. and Raftery, A. E. (1999). Family structure, educational attainment, and socioeconomic success: rethinking the “pathology of patriarchy”. *American Journal of Sociology*, **105**(2), 321–365.
- Case, A., Lin, I.-F., and McLanahan, S. (2001). Educational attainment of siblings in stepfamilies. *Evolution and human behavior*, **22**, 269–289.

### Supplementary readings

- NíBhrolcháin, M., Chappell, R., Diamon, I., and Jameson, C. (2000). Parental divorce and outcomes for children. *European Sociological Review*, **16**(1), 67–91.
- Gähler, M. (1998). Self-reported psychological well-being among adult children of divorce in Sweden. *Acta Sociologica*, **41**, 209–225.
- Painter, G. and Levine, D. I. (2000). Family structure and youth’s outcomes: which correlations are causal. *Journal of Human Resources*, **35**(3), 524–549.
- Lang, K. and Zagorsky, J. L. (2001). Does growing up with a parent absent really hurt? *Journal of Human Resources*, **36**(2), 253–273.
- Morgan, S. L. and Winship, C. (2007). *Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Barrett, L., Dunbar, R., and Lycett, J. (2002). *Human Evolutionary Psychology*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Laland, K. N. and Brown, G. R. (2002). *Sense and nonsense: Evolutionary perspectives on human behaviour*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

## 4.5 Gangs, urban ghettos and organised crime

**Essay question:** What explains the growth, persistence and decline of gangs?

### Readings

- Friedman, D. (1995). Rational criminals and profit-maximizing police: the economic analysis of law and law enforcement. In M. Tommasi and K. Ierulli, editors, *The New Economics of Human Behavior*, chapter 3, pages 43–58. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Venkatesh, S. A. (1997). The social organization of street gang activity in an urban ghetto. *American Journal of Sociology*, **103**(1), 82–111.
- Venkatesh, S. A. and Levitt, S. D. (2000). “Are we a family or a business?” History and disjuncture in the urban American street gang. *Theory and Society*, **29**(4), 427–462.
- Levitt, S. D. and Venkatesh, S. A. (2000). An economic analysis of a drug-selling gang’s finances. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, **115**(2), 755–789.
- Akerlof, G. and Yellen, J. L. (1994). Gang behavior, law enforcement, and community values. In H. J. Aaron, T. E. Mann, and T. Taylor, editors, *Values and Public Policy*, chapter 7, pages 173–209. The Brookings Institution, Washington.
- Wilson, W. J. (1996). *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. Knopf, New York.
- Sánchez-Jankowski, M. (1991). *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Gambetta, D. (1993). *The Sicilian Mafia*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

### Supplementary readings

- Varese, F. (2001). *The Russian Mafia: Private Protection in a New Market Economy*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Venkatesh, S. A. (2000). *The American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

- Anderson, E. (1990). *Streetwise: Race, Class and Change in an Urban Community*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

## 4.6 Health inequality

**Essay question:** Is poor health due to low income or income inequality?

### Readings

- Wilkinson, R. G. (1992). Income distribution and life expectancy. *British Medical Journal*, **304**, 165–168.
- Judge, K. (1995). Income distribution and life expectancy: a critical appraisal. *British Medical Journal*, **311**, 1282–1285.
- Wilkinson, R. G. (1995). A reply to Ken Judge: mistaken criticisms ignore overwhelming evidence. *British Medical Journal*, **311**, 1285–1287.
- Gravelle, H. (1998). How much of the relation between population mortality and unequal distribution of income is a statistical artefact? *British Medical Journal*, **316**, 382–385.
- Kennedy, B. P., Kawachi, I., Glass, R., and Prothrow-Stith, D. (1998). Income distribution, socioeconomic status, and self-rated health: a U.S. multi-level analysis. *British Medical Journal*, **317**, 917–921.
- Rodgers, G. B. (1979). Income and inequality as determinants of mortality. *Population Studies*, **33**(2), 343–351.
- Deaton, A. (2003). Health, inequality, and economic development. *Journal of Economic Literature*, **41**(1), 113–158.
- Sapolsky, R. M. (2004). Social status and health in humans and other animals. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, **33**, 393–418.
- Lynch, J., Davey Smith, G., Harper, S., Hillemeier, M., Ross, N., Kaplan, G. A., and Wolfson, M. (2004a). Is income inequality a determinant of population health? part 1. a systematic review. *Milbank Quarterly*, **82**(1), 5–99.

- Lynch, J., Davey Smith, G., Harper, S., and Hillemeier, M. (2004b). Is income inequality a determinant of population health? part 2. US national and regional trends in income inequality and age- and cause-specific mortality. *Milbank Quarterly*, **82**(2), 355–400.
- Hemingway, H. and Marmot, M. (1999). Psychosocial factors in the aetiology and prognosis of coronary heart disease: systematic review of prospective cohort studies. *British Medical Journal*, **318**, 1460–1467.
- Lynch, J. W., Davey Smith, G., Kaplan, G. A., and House, J. S. (2000). Income inequality and mortality: importance to health of individual income, psychosocial environment, or material conditions. *British Medical Journal*, **320**, 1200–1204.
- Marmot, M. and Wilkinson, R. G. (2001). Psychosocial and material pathways in the relation between income and health: a response to Lynch et al. *British Medical Journal*, **322**, 1233–1236.

### Supplementary readings

- Bartley, M. (2004). *Health Inequality: An Introduction to Theories, Concepts and Methods*. Polity, Cambridge.
- Marmot, M. (2004). *Status Syndrome: How Your Social Standing Directly Affects Your Health and Life Expectancy*. Bloomsbury, London.
- Marmot, M. G. (2005). Social determinants of health inequalities. *The Lancet*, **365**, 1099–1104.
- Rodgers, G. B. (2002). Income and inequality as determinants of mortality: an international cross-sectional analysis. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, **31**, 533–538 (also comments by Wilkinson, Porta *et al.*, Deaton, and Lynch and Davey Smith).
- Schnittker, J. and McLeod, J. D. (2005). The social psychology of health disparities. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **31**, 75–103.
- Redelmeier, D. A. and Singh, S. M. (2001). Survival in academy award-winning actors and actresses. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, **134**(10), 955–962.

## 4.7 Neighbourhood, peer group and social interaction effects

**Essay question:** ‘Alleged social interaction, neighbourhood or peer effects are often the effects of unobserved variables in disguise’. Discuss.

### Readings

- Mayer, S. E. and Jencks, C. (1989). Growing up in poor neighborhoods: how much does it matter? *Science*, **243**, 1441–1445.
- Crane, J. (1991). The epidemic theory of ghettos and neighborhood effects on dropping out and teenage childbearing. *American Journal of Sociology*, **96**(5), 1226–1259.
- Brooks-Gunn, J., Duncan, G. J., Klebanov, P. K., and Sealander, N. (1993). Do neighborhoods influence child and adolescent development? *American Journal of Sociology*, **99**(2), 353–395.
- Entwisle, D. R., Alexander, K. L., and Olson, L. S. (1994). The gender gap in math: its possible origins in neighborhood effects. *American Sociological Review*, **59**(6), 822–838.
- Christakis, N. A. and Fowler, J. H. (2007). The spread of obesity in a large social network over 32 years. *New England Journal of Medicine*, **357**(4), 370–379.
- Manski, C. F. (2000). Economic analysis of social interactions. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, **14**(3), 115–136.
- Evans, W. N., Oates, W. E., and Schwab, R. M. (1992). Measuring peer group effects: a study of teenage behavior. *Journal of Political Economy*, **100**(5), 966–991.
- Katz, L. F., Kling, J. R., and Liebman, J. B. (2001). Moving to opportunity in Boston: early results of a randomized mobility experiment. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, **116**(2), 607–654.
- Ludwig, J., Duncan, G. J., and Hirschfeld, P. (2001). Urban poverty and juvenile crime: evidence from a randomized housing-mobility experiment. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, **116**(2), 655–679.
- Dietz, R. D. (2002). The estimation of neighborhood effects in the social sciences: an interdisciplinary approach. *Social Science Research*, **31**, 539–575.

- Sampson, R. J., Morenoff, J. D., and Gannon-Rowley, T. (2002). Assessing “neighborhood effects”: social processes and new directions in research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **28**, 443–478.
- Goux, D. and Maurin, E. (2007). Close neighbours matter: neighbourhood effects on early performance at school. *Economic Journal*, **117**, 1193–1215.

### Supplementary readings

- Sun, Y. (1999). The contextual effects of community social capital on academic performance. *Social Science Research*, **28**, 403–426.
- Ainsworth, J. W. (2002). Why does it take a village? The mediation of neighborhood effects on educational attainment. *Social Forces*, **81**(1), 117–152.
- Ginther, D., Haveman, R., and Wolfe, B. (2000). Neighborhood attributes as determinants of children’s outcomes. *Journal of Human Resources*, **35**(4), 603–642.
- Glaeser, E. L., Sacerdote, B., and Scheinkman, J. A. (1996). Crime and social interaction. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, **111**, 507–548.
- Solon, G., Page, M. E., and Duncan, G. J. (2000). Correlations between neighboring children in their subsequent educational attainment. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, **82**(3), 383–392.
- Datcher, L. (1982). Effects of community and family background on achievement. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, **64**(1), 32–41.
- Manski, C. F. (1995). *Identification Problems in the Social Sciences*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## 4.8 Altruism and cooperation

**Essay question:** Why do people cooperate?

### Readings

- Olson, M. (1965). *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts

- Macy, M. (1990). Learning theory and the logic of critical mass. *American Sociological Review*, **55**(6), 809–826.
- Axelrod, R. (1984). *The Evolution of Cooperation*. Penguin, London.
- Axelrod, R. (1997). *The Complexity of Cooperation: Agent-Based Model of Competition and Collaboration*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Camerer, C. F. (2003). *Behavioral Game Theory: Experiments in Strategic Interaction*. Russell Sage Foundation, New York (chap.1–2).
- Fehr, E. and Gintis, H. (2007). Human motivation and social cooperation: experimental and analytical foundations. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **33**, 43–64.
- Fehr, E. and Gächter, S. (1998). Reciprocity and economics: the economic implications of *Homo Reciprocans*. *European Economic Review*, **42**, 845–859.
- Henrich, J., Boyd, R., Bowles, S., Camerer, C., Fehr, E., Gintis, H., and McElreath, R. (2001). In search of *Homo Economicus*: behavioral experiments in 15 small-scale societies. *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings*, **91**(2), 73–78.

### Supplementary readings

- Sober, E. and Wilson, D. S. (1999). *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Gintis, H., Bowles, S., Boyd, R., and Fehr, E., editors (2005). *Moral Sentiments and Material Interests: The Foundations of Cooperation in Economic Life*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Henrich, J., Boyd, R., Bowles, S., Camerer, C., Fehr, E., and Gintis, H., editors (2004). *Foundations of Human Sociality: Economic Experiments and Ethnographic Evidence from Fifteen Small-Scale Societies*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Tuck, R. (2008). *Free Riding*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Thaler, R. H. and Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness*. Yale University Press, New Haven.