WORKERS’ MOVEMENT OUT OF DECLINING OCCUPATIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN, GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND

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1 Theory and Research Question

Macro-level trends:
- Rapid rise in high-skilled jobs
- Heavy losses in total employment for two broad job categories: Routine workers in manufacturing jobs and low-skilled, back-office administration (Oesch & Rodriguez 2011; Autor et al. 2008)

Micro-levels trends:
- Increased occupational switching (Kambourov & Manovskii 2008)
- Skill content of women’s jobs increasing faster than men’s as routine tasks fall (Black & Spitz-Gener 2010)
- Notion of ‘pushed’ mobility for men via job layoffs in contracting industries (DiPrete & Nonemaker 1997)

Q. Who leaves a declining occupation for a growing occupation, and how does such intra-generational mobility contribute to turbulent change in the employment structure?

2 Hypotheses

H1: (By Class)
Clerical workers are more likely to make smoother transitions from declining into growing occupations. For production workers, the route out of declining occupations should largely be through unemployment.

H2: (By Country)
Workers are more likely to move to growing occupations, and less likely to exit into unemployment in ‘individualised’ employment systems, such as Britain, than in ‘collective regimes’, such as Germany, while Switzerland stands as an intermediate regime.

3 Data and Methods

Longitudinal Data
Swiss Household Panel
Period of Analysis: 2000s

British Household Panel Study
& German Socio-Economic Panel
Periods of Analysis: 1990s-2000s

Construct occupational categories in 2 step procedure:
- Rank by relative change over 20yrs (10 years Swiss case)
- Split total working population in half: (1) declining (2) growing occupations
- Rank by median income -again split at 50%
- 82 Harmonised occupations (Jonsson et al. 2008)

Observe workers over ten years

Estimate transitions: Competing Risk Regression
Fine and Gray’s (1999) Semi-parametric proportional hazards models
Dependent variable: Single conditional exit

Declining
Growing
Office and clerical workers
Nursery school teachers and aides
Welders and related metal workers
Systems analysts and programmers

4 Results

Where do Workers from Declining Vs. Growing Occupations end up?

How many have exited by the 10th year?
Workers from declining occupations: 42% in Germany and Britain, 32% in Switzerland, whereas approx. 20% leave growing occupations across the 3 countries

Where have they moved to?
- Largest share of workers move to growing occupations from declining occupations in Britain at 30%, 24% Germany and 20% Switzerland
- Early retirement/ inactivity do not account for smaller proportion who remain in a declining occupation

Female clerks in Germany are most likely to exit a declining occupation for moves into a high paid growing occupation.

Male production workers are 3 times more likely than clerks to exit into unemployment after 5 elapsed years; and much less likely to exit a growing occupation.

5 Conclusions

Surprisingly large amount of intra-generational mobility from declining to growing occupations.

Intersection of occupational class and gender
Female clerks transition into growing occupations. In comparison, male production workers are more vulnerable to unemployment spells.

Movement out of declining occupation shaped by institutional context
- (a) Direct movement to growing occupations most visible in Britain
- (b) Higher risks of unemployment for production workers in Germany
- (c) Swiss workers show lower mobility, but are also less at risk of unemployment: Production workers switch to low paid growing occupations over either high paid or exits to unemployment.

References


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IP 4 – « Economic vulnerability: Towards pathways out of vulnerability »