

# Comment on Paul Bernard's lecture "SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, LIFECOURSE, AND REGIMES"

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# Comments

- what is development?
- national accounts and the life course approach
- the life course approach as a policy instrument
- the empirical approach

## Development and well-being

- what is development? (social *or* economic)
- the advancement of human well-being . . .
- but what is human well-being?
- the advancement of human well-being involves the expansion of their capabilities
- it follows that having more things, or being more happy, may or may not be related to increased human well-being

## National life-course accounts

- is the appeal to national accounts economics envy?
- national accounts inherently cross-sectional, short-term concept
- theoretically well-structured notion but inhabits a far too central place in every day discourse
- things are getting worse: flash indicators, leading indicators, preliminary figures (based on predictions for last time periods...) ⇒ daily updates
- maybe we should *resist* these developments, rather than *emulate* them

- the risk of choosing analogies from economics is that we will get the wrong ones!

## Life-course policy

- a focus on the life course in social policy highly welcome
- but is the era of serious social policy in Europe over?
- a narrowly construed and “economistic” understanding of well-being is far too dominant
- serious research appears to rarely win over short-term policy rubbish
- cf. size of budgets allocated to policies and the size of budgets allocated to social policy research

## On the outcomes

- impressive work
- agree with need to cross-country evidence
- we need a more North-American approach to research and to data

## Pr(Offspring in lowest quintile group| Father in lowest group)

pm11	Estimate	Fi	No	Sw	UK	US
De	0.247 [0.240,0.254]	< (1.0)	< (0.0)	< <sub>ol</sub> (4.1)	< (0.3)	< (0.0)
Fi	0.280 [0.255,0.305]	.	< <sub>ol</sub> (48.1)	> <sub>ol</sub> (6.2)	< <sub>ol</sub> (17.0)	< (0.0)
No	0.281 [0.271,0.292]	.	.	> (0.1)	< <sub>ol</sub> (15.0)	< (0.0)
Sw	0.258 [0.248,0.267]	.	.	.	< <sub>ol</sub> (1.4)	< (0.0)
UK	0.303 [0.264,0.342]	.	.	.	.	< (0.0)
US	0.422 [0.362,0.481]	.	.	.	.	.



## Pr(Offspring in highest quintile group | Father in lowest group)

pm15	Estimate	Fi	No	Sw	UK	US
De	0.144 [0.138,0.150]	> (0.1)	> (0.0)	> (0.0)	> <sub>ol</sub> (8.0)	> (0.0)
Fi	0.113 [0.092,0.133]	.	< <sub>ol</sub> (25.7)	> <sub>ol</sub> (37.5)	< <sub>ol</sub> (31.0)	> <sub>ol</sub> (5.7)
No	0.120 [0.112,0.129]	.	.	> <sub>ol</sub> (2.2)	< <sub>ol</sub> (46.7)	> <sub>ol</sub> (1.4)
Sw	0.109 [0.101,0.116]	.	.	.	< <sub>ol</sub> (20.4)	> <sub>ol</sub> (5.4)
UK	0.122 [0.093,0.152]	.	.	.	.	> <sub>ol</sub> (3.5)
US	0.079 [0.044,0.113]	.	.	.	.	.

## Pr(Offspring in lowest quintile group| Father in highest group)

pm51	Estimate	Fi	No	Sw	UK	US
De	0.153 [0.146,0.159]	>ol (32.8)	>ol (8.4)	<ol (3.5)	> (0.1)	> (0.3)
Fi	0.148 [0.126,0.170]	.	>ol (43.4)	<ol (11.3)	>ol (1.3)	>ol (1.4)
No	0.145 [0.136,0.154]	.	.	< (0.2)	> (0.6)	> (0.9)
Sw	0.163 [0.154,0.171]	.	.	.	> (0.0)	> (0.1)
UK	0.107 [0.079,0.134]	.	.	.	.	>ol (32.2)
US	0.095 [0.055,0.135]	.	.	.	.	.

## Pr(Offspring in highest quintile group| Father in highest group)

pm55	Estimate	Fi	No	Sw	UK	US
De	0.363 [0.356,0.371]	>ol (16.9)	>ol (12.7)	<ol (10.4)	> (0.1)	>ol (48.2)
Fi	0.349 [0.321,0.376]	.	<ol (35.0)	<ol (6.9)	>ol (1.8)	<ol (38.3)
No	0.355 [0.344,0.366]	.	.	<ol (1.8)	> (0.2)	<ol (45.0)
Sw	0.371 [0.361,0.381]	.	.	.	> (0.0)	>ol (37.6)
UK	0.297 [0.259,0.335]	.	.	.	.	<ol (5.1)
US	0.360 [0.297,0.422]	.	.	.	.	.

## Conclusion

- the need for serious social policy work based on a longitudinal approach to human well-being is obvious
- the need to take this view in actual policy is also great, but will require even more serious work
- the economics analogy will lead us in the wrong, not the right direction