

Plenary abstracts

Monday 10 September – 3.30pm

Father's role in the development of children's diverging destinies

Professor Renske Keizer (Erasmus University)

In the last decade, the scholarly focus on understanding what childhood conditions matter most for mitigating or widening inequality in child outcomes has changed. Traditionally, scholars have focused on poverty and, somewhat more recently, family structure as key explanations. However, there is increasing awareness that the intergenerational transmission of (dis)advantages is often filtered through intra-familial dynamics, in particular parenting practices. Recent studies that have examined the role that parenting plays in inequality in child outcomes have mainly focused on mothers. The role that fathers play in their children's development, and in specific how inequalities in children's outcomes evolve via fathers' involvement in parenting has often been neglected. Research that sheds light on fathers is, however, urgently needed, because current demographic trends have led to a polarization in fathers' involvement with their children. In this keynote I will provide a brief overview of the literature on fatherhood, and will devote attention to studies on linkages between father involvement and children's developmental outcomes. In addition, I will discuss the (potential) role fathers may play in the intergenerational transmission of social inequality. Finally, I will discuss the importance of national context, showing how laws and policies may influence not only father involvement, but also how they may either strengthen or mitigate the role that fathers play in the development of children's diverging destinies.

Tuesday 11 September – 3.30pm

Linking mortality to the last: Solving the geographical problems

Professor Danny Dorling (University of Oxford)

In 1994, as an overconfident postgraduate researcher, roughly half the age I am now, I gave a talk with this arrogant title at the annual BSPS conference in Durham. I thought it was then possible to explain the UK north/south divide in mortality by looking at lifetime migration patterns. In short, people in the South of England lived longer because those that did not were more likely to migrate to the North before they died, and the South attracted more healthy migrants than the North did. In this talk I want to expand on that idea to consider the importance of migration from and to the European mainland for trends in mortality within the UK. To what extent have mortality rates in the South of England been kept low because of the arrivals of so many young mainland Europeans, mostly in better health than the incumbents, and how has the outflow of more elderly people from the South of England, especially to the European mainland for retirement contributed to the relatively good health of Southern England? The lecture will be illustrated, but is largely speculative, including speculation over what we might expect in future trends in infant and neonatal mortality across Europe and possible effects of the restriction to the movement of midwives and others who help maintain the social reproduction of society. I am hopeful that there might be someone in the audience, possibly now in the mid-twenties, who might think these questions are worth looking into in greater depth and better than I am able to.