Occupational Analysis – Issues and Examples

Grid Enabled Occupational Data Environment
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The Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales

Concentrate on one social survey
Youth Cohort Survey of England and Wales (YCS)

* Major Longitudinal Study
* Began in the Mid 1980s
* Designed to monitor behaviour of young people as they reach the minimum school leaving age and either stay on in education or enter the labour market
The Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales

* UK Government survey
* Originally Department of Education and Science – then inherited by various successors
* Overall the survey is a monitoring instrument for Government – but has obvious social science potential

The UK’s Missing Birth Cohorts

The YCS is particularly important as a source of [nationally] representative information on young people

Helps to fill the data gap left by not having new cohorts of large-scale birth cohort data in the UK

(Gayle 2005)

General Structure of the YCS

* Postal Survey
* Study contacts a sample from an academic year group (cohort) in the spring following completion of compulsory education
* The sample is designed to be representative of all Year 11 pupils in England & Wales
* Originally sample are tracked for 3 waves (called sweeps) of data collection
YCS – Sampling

* Sample was multi-stage cluster until wave 5
* Simplified sample (approx 10%)
* Documentation states SRS but Systematic Sample of days in the month of birth (e.g. 5th, 15th etc.)
* YCS3 (1987) +16K young people

YCS – Change and Stability

* The questionnaire designed to be broadly comparable
* External changes and shifts in policy interests have brought about changes
* Changes – Major and Minor!

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### YCS – Change and Stability

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### YCS – Complexity

- Less in terms of sampling and individual survey design
- More in terms of comparing cohorts

### Social Class and Education

- The relationships between family background (social class) and education have been a policy for over 100 years in Britain (e.g. Foster Act 1870)
- "In the past education has been fairly extensively analysed in terms of social class" (Reid 1998 p.157)
- Research on social background typically measures social class as some function of parental (historically father’s) occupation - Examples are legion
Problems Relating to Occupational Information in YCS

* Generic problems to collecting, coding and translating occupational information in surveys

* Some specific to the YCS

Examples from Questionnaires

* Parental information is collected

* Although the exact information collected has changed

* Usually information on job title and self-employment

Examples from Questionnaires

* Remember that this is a postal questionnaire survey

* Asking a 16/17 year old about their parent’s job

YCS 1 approx 6130 Dads working full-time

approx 5524 occupational codes (approx 10% missing)
Examples from Questionnaires

* Documentation is very poor especially in the older cohorts – usually handwritten annotation on questionnaires (pdf)

* Compare this with the BHPS for example

Examples from Questionnaires YCS1

Examples from Questionnaires YCS10
Examples of Analyses

* Drew et al. (1992) analyses earlier data constructed a measure (Professional; Intermediate; Manual)

* Gayle et al. (2000 & 2002) analysis of YCS 3 constructed a measure of family social class (highest - father or mother) using Registrar General

* Raffe et al. (2006) undertaking cross-cohort analyses harmonised a variable based on NS-SEC (Managerial/Professional; Intermediate; Manual)

* Connolly (2006) analysing YCS 9 & 10 relied on a modified version of Registrar General deposited with the data and a version of SEC for YCS11

What is there?

* Some early cohorts often code parental occupations using C080

* Later cohorts use SOC90

* Some cohorts do not included detail occupational codes

* Generally there is self-employment information - but not detailed employment status information (e.g. Employers; Managers; Supervisors etc.)

What is there?

* Some cohorts include a SEG measure (e.g. standard 16 categories in YCS 7 – but there is no clear information on how these are derived)

* Cohort 9 reports SEG but in practice this is a modified version of the Registrar General Schema with (Class I and Class II merged)

* Parental occupation is normally asked in sweep 1 – YCS3 asks in sweep 2 and there is approx. 24% sample attrition

* Later YCS cohorts – more thought into collection of appropriate data but data coding (and therefore translation) is still problematic
What is the problem?

* Varying quality of occupational information
* Compared to some other surveys little attempt to sort out occupational information
* Raffe et al. tried to work up a ‘time-series’ data set with a harmonised family social class measure – see also team member Croxford (2004)

Can Geode help?

* In principle yes – overall task of harmonisation
* Definitely for YCS data depositors!
* In practice Gayle et al. could have been helped directly in the construction of their family RG Social Class measure
* In the talk only mentioned family social class – but there is also occupational information on young workers
* In principle the GEODE idea could extend to qualifications – harmonising qualification is equally problematic in the YCS