

Ethnicity at the University Heterogeneity and Inequality in Students' Trajectories

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Does heterogeneity among the university students result in inequalities?

Towards a research agenda

Context I: Homogenizing visions of national societies in high-modernity

Educational sites as vehicles of modernisation

High modernity and its assimilatory effects

Modernization project carried out
within and through the educational sites

One consequence:

visions of students as a homogenous body
embracing same national characteristics

Context II: Middle-class expansion and enhanced competition over status and resources

Growing number of persons enrolled in higher education

Differentiation of middle classes

“In and out of middle classes”: social mobility as a struggle over cultural, social and economic capital

Context III: Today - Increased visibility of students' heterogeneity

Transnationalisation

Minorities' mobilisation and self-assertion

Struggles for social justice and inclusion

The (Intersecting) Dimensions of Heterogeneity

Gender

Race

Religion

Ethnicity

Ethno-national background

Language

Bodily constraints

Sexual orientation

and last but not least **class**

The Classic Dimensions of Social Inequality revisited

Prosperity

Power

Prestige

+

Education

The Nexus Heterogeneity / Inequality

Perceptions of heterogeneities?

Perceptions of social (including ethnic) boundaries?

Do the processes of boundary-drawing translate into inequalities?

Through which mechanisms?

Social boundary-drawing as constraining as well as enabling (role models, resilience)

National variations in discourses on students' heterogeneity

Germany: migrant background (intersecting with class)

USA: race (intersecting with class)

UK: class

France (sporadically): habitus

India: reservations

(JNU, New Delhi: intra-Indian cosmopolitanism; socialism, inclusion)

Inequality in Education: main conceptual approaches I

- Conflict theory (e.g. A. Sears) : (class) struggle over scarce resources
- Habitus theory (P. Bourdieu): education as perpetuating / reinforcing social inequality
- Cultural capital (P. Bourdieu)
- Social capital (J. Coleman, A. Portes)
- Critique of meritocracy (H. Solga)
- Institutional discrimination (M. Gomolla and F.-O. Radtke)

Inequality in Education: main conceptual approaches II

‘Durable inequalities’ (C. Tilly)

‘Fitting’ into the educational settings (R. Crosnoe):

normativity and
normality (*doxa*)

Belonging: to and with (P. Mecheril; J. Pfaff-Czarnecka)
as a problem of social mobility

Theory of

social (M. Lamont) and
ethnic boundary-making (A. Wimmer)

What is a University?

- Organisation (formal structure)
 - Steering structure (vertical), faculties (horizontal), functions (division of labour)
- Network
 - External research and teaching exchange
 - Funding and dissemination
 - Social embeddedness: pol. parties, organisations, families
 - Links to future employers
- Organisation as Social Space
 - Social processes of organizing (K. Weick); making sense in organisations, recreating every-day-life's social orders

Studying as ‘going’ through universities (students’ trajectories; university parcours)

Studying as a process

Social life of learning and qualification undergoing change

Turning points and accelerations in the study course

Meaningful encounters with

teachers

administration

professional fields

student bodies

peers!

Multiple fields of interaction, inclusion and exclusion

Inside the university

class room

sport clubs: football vs. yoga

peer learning

student politics

Outside the university

polit. parties, civil society networks, (religious) organisations

internships

families

Belonging and social boundary-making in students' lives

Fitting in?

habitus vs. finding 'home' in mathematics

contested grounds of belonging: classroom (oral skills), leisure, living, (student) organisations

The price for fitting in

disciplining

loosing touch with former peers

Negotiating social boundaries

Tacit forms of normality as maintaining privilege

Boundary-drawing? Boundary-blurring? Transgressing of boundaries?

Collective social location and (diverse) professional choices (in Germany)

Legal studies

importance of language skills

anticipation of discrimination at the public-sector labour market

‘doing something for one’s own people’

Literature

Importance of language skills;

political alertness

‘doing something for one’s own people’

Becoming a teacher – status of civil servant in Germany; fitting (Muslim head-scarf)

Economics

enhanced selectivity of peers in the progressing study course

lesser importance of language

From University to Profession

- Experiences at the university as meaningful for personal orientations
- Anticipated social boundaries
- Importance of establishing social networks
 - teachers as possible gate-keepers or openers
 - peers as possible gate-openers and role-models
- Interrelation between the study course and professional aspirations and chances
- Diversifying students' cultures and cultural capital

Towards a research methodology

- Processual orientation
- Focus on mechanisms
- Importance of social constructions
- Multi-perspective approach
- Perceptions and self-exclusions
- Importance of comparisons
- Relationality, negotiations, boundary-work

Ethnicity at the university: an elitist problem?

Growing middle classes and their aspirations

Myths of open access and universality vs. social boundaries

University as a *black-box*: problems of élite introspection

Conclusions

Universities as socially embedded

Expanding middle classes: Need to uncover the mechanisms of social redistribution

Universities as
widening social horizons and strengthening capabilities, or
reinforcing glass-ceilings?

Late modern perceptions of heterogeneity (intersectionality): Formal recognition of difference - persisting inequalities

Creation of subjectivities in societies ongoing transformations

Thank you

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