

**“Understanding the Mechanisms Behind Intergenerational Persistence:
A Comparison Between the US and UK”***

Jo Blanden (Surrey University, UK)
Kathryn Wilson (Kent State University, US)
Robert Haveman (University of Wisconsin-Madison, US)
Timothy Smeeding (University of Wisconsin-Madison, US)

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Abstract

International comparisons of intergenerational mobility provide a useful starting point in understanding intergenerational mobility, but the obvious next step is to look at international comparisons of the mechanisms by which mobility is transmitted. In this paper, we create comparable data sets for the U.K. and U.S. and estimate the relative importance of different mechanisms in producing patterns of generational mobility in each nation. We find that major mechanisms associated with intergenerational mobility (and its antithesis, intergenerational persistence) such as education, occupation, health, marriage and labor market attachment differ between these two nations in systematic ways. While we are not terribly far along in this work, the differences and similarities we find suggest that the economists have it right for the United States with low and barely advancing educational attainment severely limiting mobility; while the sociologists' views of occupational prestige and professional standing seem to dominate in the United Kingdom.

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