Britain, the meritocratic society?

Middle-class children are three times as likely as their working class peers to enter middle-class occupations. Nevertheless, claims Pete Saunders, Professor of Sociology, the UK is relatively meritocratic.

According to a controversial study Pete is currently undertaking, ability is far more important than social background in influencing children’s career prospects. This contradicts the conventional view that children’s success in the occupational system is largely determined by factors associated with the social class of their parents.

The ESRC-funded study assesses the lives of nearly 17,000 people born in the same week in 1958. It demonstrates statistically that ability is three times as powerful as parental class and five times stronger than private education in predicting a child’s class membership at age 33.

Lack of domestic amenities, overcrowding at home, and parental education are shown to have negligible significance on the job success of working class children. “If you want to predict where a child will end up on the social ladder,” Pete argues, “you can make a reasonable prediction on the basis of just three pieces of information – ability, education motivation and qualifications.”

His research forms the first empirical challenge to received sociological wisdom on class. It claims that middle-class children win middle-class jobs on their merits, not thanks to structural inequalities. “All the evidence indicates that recruitment into the middles classes is much more meritocratic than generally believed,” he concludes.

CHAMPION WINDSURFER

“Talk to any windsurfer and you’ll find they give up absolutely anything to go surfing. If the wind picks up, that’s it. Surfing rules your life.”

First-year maths student, Rob Claesse, will face an early morning lecture after a night on the town – and still fit in an hour of training beforehand. All those dawn starts paid off this December when Rob became the World Youth Windsurfing Champion for slalom racing. Held in South Africa, the Championships attracted the best young blood from Europe, the US and Australia. As well as fighting off the slalom competitors, Rob was second in the overall youth competition.

The 6’5”, 14-stone giant has come a long way since surfing his first wave aged nine: “As soon as I’d got the hang of it for the first time, I was so freaked out that I jumped straight off into the water.”

Rob follows in the footsteps of his older brother John, himself ranked tenth out of the country’s windsurfers. As a maths finalist, John is perfectly placed to help Rob catch up on his missed classes. The brothers train and compete together – healthy sibling rivalry could be the secret of their success.

PUBLIC LECTURE

A Celebration of Migration

Russell King’s lecture celebrates the positive aspects of human migration. Migrants are too often viewed as desperate, marginalised people, and politicians too ready to make political capital out of the ‘immigration problem’. Russell will reveal migration to be a constant thread running through human history, often enriching rather than threatening cultures. He will link migration to cycles of landscape change, and examine some of the new forms of migration in the world today.

The lecture will conclude with a manifesto for studying migration in a more creative, comprehensive and positive way.

The lecture is on Tuesday 30 January at 6.15 pm in Molecular Sciences Lecture Theatre. Everyone is most welcome to attend.
Have you considered becoming a Residential Adviser next year?

Residential Advisers (RAs) are second and third year undergraduates (plus some postgraduates) who live in University-managed residences both on and off campus. Each RA is involved in assisting about 25 new students at the beginning of the Autumn Term with practical help and information to enable them to settle into university life. They are advisers, not prefects, still less any sort of warden - and there are benefits:

- Guaranteed University-managed housing either on or off campus for the full academic year.
- Guaranteed RA rebate, for a job well done, paid termly in arrears.
- Guaranteed a good non-academic reference which could be used for employment applications.

If you are interested in becoming an RA from October 1996, pick up an application form and information sheet from York House 24-Hour Reception from Monday 1 February. Applications should be returned to Residential Services Reception, York House by 5 pm on Monday 29 February. Interviews and selection will take place between 9 March and 21 April. Further information is available from current RAs (list at York House reception) and from Ann Ryan, RA Co-ordinator, York House, tel: 3992.

New Faces

Michael Stern, BIOLS

When it comes to cockroaches, Michael Stern is the man to talk to. The new arrival in BIOLS is an expert on creepy crawly nervous systems. Knowledge gleaned from simple insect systems can be applied to the more complex human system, so Michael’s research has wide implications for medicine.

His love of bugs inspires amateur insect photography, a field in which patience is the ultimate virtue: “I have hundreds of photos of flowers where the insect has just flown off,” he says ruefully. For Michael, canoeing is the perfect way to enjoy nature and the countryside. In his home state of Germany, he would travel thousands of miles a year by kayak, sometimes with his two-year old daughter sitting in front of him. “It’s quite safe,” he says. “She knows not to stand up.” For Michael, on the other hand, there’s the buzz of white water: “I like going to the limits. It’s such a good feeling to come home after a hard ride on white water.”

Richard Black, AFRAS

Human Geographer Richard Black arrives in AFRAS after a stint in the field in rural Guinea. The expert in refugee studies admits to getting itchy feet only months after arriving in any one country. He’s been investigating environmental issues in an area of Guinea hosting over half a million refugees from Liberia.

Before that, at work in Rwandan refugee camps, his research was the subject of a BBC2 Horizon documentary. Richard’s interest in refugee issues arose as an undergraduate when he travelled to Southern Sudan for his geography dissertation. He arrives at Sussex after teaching at King’s College London. A one-time mountaineer, his hopes for the high life have been thwarted by Brighton’s low-lying location.

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Your readers will be aware of the disruption caused by the fire at the Refectory. What they may not be aware of was the inconvenience caused to students due to collect their grant cheques from Level One on Tuesday 9 January.

Despite the damage to our records and the fact we were due to open from 9.15 am, students were able to collect their cheques from 10.45 am in Sussex House. I am very grateful to those students who queued with such patience and understanding in the corridors of Sussex House.

My thanks are also due to the staff of the financial accounts office who worked under extreme pressure to enable students to collect their cheques throughout Tuesday ensuring that no student suffered because of the unfortunate events of Monday night.

Noel Sladen
Senior Assistant Finance Officer

Dear Editor,

What a shame that in her self-appraisal (Bulletin 12 January), Norma Binnie chooses to rubbish the efforts of her predecessors at the Gardner Centre. “Yes, it’s true,” she claims, “the heating hadn’t worked for years and years … double blankets were particular popular. Everything looked shabby - the place had the air of a neglected community centre.”

How extraordinary, then, that in the twenty years prior to the arrival of Ms Binnie, the Gardner managed to establish itself as a lively and vibrant Arts Centre with a large and diverse following - and not a blanket in sight!

It seems a little ungrateful to label the Centre ‘shabby’, when the University had completely refurbished the auditorium just a year or two before her arrival, and Estates were already discussing plans to improve the heating and renew the asphalt roof.

To denigrate in this way the enormous contribution to the development of the Gardner Centre made by people like Walter Eyslink, Nigel Stannard, Valerie Thackery, Nigel Cutting, Hilary Lane and others seems somewhat ungracious.

Robin Street, Sussex House

Correction

The leading industrial scientist who received an honorary degree from Sussex this week is Trevor Martin and not Trevor Mann, as was stated in last week’s Bulletin. We apologise for this mistake.
Student Peace Summit

CULCOM postgrads, Niamh Moore and Stephanie Donald, represented Britain and Ireland at the World University Students' Peace Summit in Kyoto this December. Stephanie reports on their experiences:

"The Summit was funded by UNESCO and a group of Japanese universities. One of them, Ritsumeikan, provided the main conference site. It also houses the Kyoto Peace Museum, a small, sane account of the cruelties of twentieth century triumphalism. There were 500 delegates from 47 countries. The summit was thoroughly organised, rather to the disappointment of many delegates who had hoped for less ceremony and more debate. However, it was never going to be possible to save the world in three days anyway, so perhaps the kind of debate that did take place in the nooks and crannies of the schedule was more useful. The many concepts of democracy and democratic procedure - representative, participatory, cosmopolitan, nationalist, paternalistic, autocratic - which complicate global organisation and international relations, were all at issue. In a particularly fierce discussion on a point of procedure, Guyana, Namibia, Australia, Britain and a Japanese splinter group argued it out with Singapore, the USA, Samoa and a different Japanese splinter group. The first group carried the day, mainly because the USA retired to bed at 3am.

The majority of participants were from Asia and the Pacific Rim. The balance and emphases of the discussions were therefore particularly illuminating, although it was a shame that China did not allow exit visas to their expected delegation. Delegates were concerned that much modern democracy does not entail public debate or participation. The cure for this was deemed to be a strong emphasis on access to education and on a global commitment to democracy that eschewed discrimination and the arrogance of post-colonial money-making. These general points were put together in a statement which was read out at the closing ceremony and party - an occasion that confirmed the sweetness of joint action and sudden unexpected friendships."

FUTURE FOCUS ON CAREERS

The Career Development Unit has been inundated with applicants for its Future Focus project. Over 420 second years wish to register for this term's four week programme. Designed to encourage students to broach the question of 'career' well before the final year, Future Focus was launched as a pilot last year with Sussex Enterprise Unit funding. "It saved me months of final year anguish," said one participating student. The programme helps students become more aware of their skills and interests, better informed about career options, more able to make career decisions and more positive and goal-directed about the future. Project co-ordinator, Mary Jordan, has obtained funding from the Sussex Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise to ensure the programme's continuation. Given the strength of student interest, it will be repeated in the summer term.

GREEN NEWS

Many thanks to all of you who took the trouble to bring in your old Christmas cards to the recycling point in the Library - two large sacksful were collected. A few people made the effort to bring in their old Christmas trees, but the response was not as large as expected. However, I understand that the Council collection points in Brighton were extremely full so let's hope your tree was amongst them!

The office paper recycling scheme, Project Paper Chase, is working well. According to Maggie Recycling Co-operative, they are now collecting between three to four tonnes of paper every week from the campus. Only four months ago there was less than a tonne a week collected - what progress! However, there is still room for improvement - in fact it is estimated that we could be collecting twice as much. Keep up the good work and thanks to everyone, in particular porters and cleaners, who are helping to make this scheme such a success.

ELM ACTION

Estate staff kicked into action last week to preserve the University's elm trees from the ravages of Dutch Elm Disease. Elm stumps on campus were ground out to prevent them attracting the disease-carrying beetle, *scolytus scolytus*, later on in the year. When a tree is infected by the Elm Disease fungus, it can die within the week. Last year there were five outbreaks of the disease among the twelve elms on campus, but prompt action by Estates managed to save all of the infected trees.

"The University is home to some of the country's last remaining English elms," says John Higgins, Grounds Superintendent. "Later this year, as part of our campaign to ensure the elms' survival, we will be organising an exhibition to teach the public how to spot the first signs of infection."

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

For more information, call Mylene Powell in the Research Office, ext. 3812 (mornings only), email: M.G.Powell@sussex.ac.uk

INNOVATIVE RESEARCH: Sir Henry Wellcome commemorative awards. Applications invited for "high risk" research proposals (innovative, speculative, adventurous and novel) in the biomedical sciences. Up to £50,000 for one year. Closing date: 29 February 1996.

ISRAEL/UK TRAVEL AWARDS 95/96: The Academic Study Group offers grants for the latter half of 1996. Any field of enquiry acceptable. No closing date given, but meeting scheduled for late March.

WELLCOME SHORT-TERM TRAVELLING RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS 95/96: to allow tenured scientists to travel to and from the UK for visits of between 3 and 6 months to carry out a defined piece of research in any branch of the natural or clinical sciences. No closing date given.

MATHEMATICAL BIOLOGY RESEARCH TRAINING STUDENTSHIPS: Wellcome Trust scheme for individuals to develop a career in research, applying mathematical disciplines to biomedical problems. Closing date: 26 February 1996.

SUPPORT FOR MAJOR EQUIPMENT FOR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH: Wellcome Trust scheme to provide funds for the provision of equipment to be used for biomedical research in universities. No closing date given.

WELLCOME TRAVELLING RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS 1995/96: applications invited from postdoctoral scientists and medical graduates who wish to gain further research experience by working in laboratories in the UK. Any country acceptable, except New Zealand and the USA. No closing date given.

EU: ACCOMPANYING MEASURES: Funding for Euroconferences, summer schools, training courses bringing post-docs and senior researchers together on a specific research theme. Deadline 1/4/96.

EU: INDUSTRIAL & MATERIAL TECHNOLOGIES: Funds available projects under: area 1: Production Technologies; Area 2: Materials Technologies for product innovation; Area 3B: Technologies for Surface Transport (vehicle, ship).

FULBRIGHT SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS: to enable British lecturers and post-doctoral research scholars to spend a minimum of 3 months in the US. Closing date: 4 April 1996.
Monday 29 January - Sunday 4 February

Lectures, Seminars, Colloquia

- **Monday 29 January**
  2pm Feminism and... Lecture: Becoming a Feminist and Researching Women's History. G. Holloway, Arts C133.
  2pm Particle Physics Seminar: Lattice QCD - an Overview. C. Parrinello (Liverpool), PB2A1.
  4.15pm Chemistry Colloquium: The Chemistry of Sexual Attraction. D. Kelly (Cardiff), MSLT, MOLS.
  4.30pm Neuroscience Seminar: Molecular Basis of Cell Contact-Dependant Axonal Growth. P. Doherty (Guy's Hospital), Biology Lecture Room.

- **Tuesday 30 January**
  3pm Sussex European Institute Seminar: Balkan Reconstruction. M. Kaldor, I. Veijvoja, V. Bojicic, A71, SEI.
  4pm COGS Seminar: Minimal Paranoid Logic. R. Poli (Birmingham), PBSC11.
  4.15pm Biochemistry, Genetics & Development Seminar: The unfolding story of colicin input into Escherichia coli. J. Lakey (Newcastle), Biology Lecture Room.
  5pm Social Anthropology Seminar: Challenging biases in otherness: search for double heritages. S. Heath (Stanford), Arts E419.
  5pm German Colloquium: Homosexuality and Judaism. R. Mariner (Belsize Square Synagogue), Arts A155.
  5pm International Relations Seminar: Food and Global Agriculture. J. Sainur, Arts A71.
  5pm Media and Culture Seminar: The Singer and the Criminal: Political Friendship in Contemporary China. S. Donald, Arts D640.
  7.30pm Institute of Science Technology Lecture: The Lives of Robins. Dr David Harper, Biology Ancillary Lecture Room.

- **Wednesday 31 January**
  2pm Queeny: Savage Nights. Mandy Merck, Arts D440.
  2.30pm South African Studies Seminar: Financing ten years of basic education in S. Africa: the major education challenge for the new government. C. Collough, Arts C337.
  4pm South Asia Seminar: The Black Hole of Calcutta: fashioning an imperial myth. K. Telscher (London), Arts C337.
  5pm English Colloquium: Identity and difference in contemporary theory. A. Easthope (Manchester), Arts D630.

- **Thursday 1 February**
  5pm Geography Research Seminar: Dangerous Geography: Geopolitics and the state in Fascist Italy. D. Atkinson (Lampeter) Arts D610.
  5pm History and Gender Seminar: Writing Feminist History. B. Caine (Monash), Arts A155.
  5pm French Seminar: Confession and pornography in the mid-18th-century novel: the case of Mary Catherine Cadiere. M. Pearce (York), Arts A55.

**Film at the Gardner**

- **Monday 29 January**
  7.45pm Toaki Boshi

- **Wednesday 31 January**
  7.45pm Ed Wood

- **Thursday 1 February**
  7.45pm La Haine

- **Friday 2 February**
  7.45pm Goldeneye

- **Sunday 4 February**
  6pm Goldeneye

9pm Small Ads

**ACCOMMODATION WANTED:** by female academic for 2-3-weekend nights on irregular basis. Non-smoking. Brighton/Hove. Tel: 0181 748 1942 (answer phone).

**HOUSE WANTED:** Newly arrived professor looking for 3 or 4 bedroom house in Brighton to rent unfurnished. Tel: 0784 081 or 553129, email: e.a.hinds@sussex.ac.uk.

**FOR SALE:** Rowing machine. 1 year old, hardly used. Cost new £70, accept £45 ono. Tel: Frances x8048 or 478549 (eves).

**FOR SALE:** contemporary wardrobe plus 2 dressers, 36" wide, pine and white excellent condition. £25. Pine chest of drawers, £20. Tel: 474795 after 5.30pm.

**BIKE FOR SALE:** Raleigh Extreme, green, suit 8-10 years, £50. Tel: x8421 or 301426.

**HOUSE TO LET:** in old Spanish village in mountains behind Benidorm. Sleeps 5, c. comfortable and well-equipped. Lovely views. £100 pw, tel: Seahorse 899587.

**MATHS TUTING:** Offered by maths doctorate with experience in teaching and individual tuition. Tel: Paul Courtney, PhD 556999.

**FOR SALE:** Canon Wordstar 70 Wordprocessor. Built-in disk drive and inkjet printer, back-lit display. Excellent condition, 1093, 2575 ono. Tel: x3414.

**CAR FOR SALE:** Montego Saloon, 1990, metallic grey, excellent condition, 1.6L, pw steering, electric windows/mirrors/sun roof, r/cassette, 60,000 miles, MOT June 96, £1800. Tel: Liz 687657 or 812829.

**BIKE FOR SALE:** Ladies mountain bike, almost new, 15 speed, rear luggage carrier, £80. Tel: Liz as above.

**COLOUR TV FOR SALE:** 20" remote control, £50. Tel: Liz as above.

**Computer Conferencing**

A new Computer Mediated Conferencing (CMC) pilot has started, funded by the Teaching and Learning Development Fund. CMC will enable teaching faculty to offer electronic office hours, to provide course materials for study electronically, and to encourage extended discussion of course topics. To receive progress reports or participate in the CMC Working Group, contact the project coordinator, Richard Inskipp, Richard@cogs, x8579.

**Bulletin**

The Bulletin appears every Friday of term with copy deadline the preceding Friday lunchtime. We welcome suggestions for news, details of events, letters and small ads. Please contact the Information Office, Sussex House on ext. 8209 or email: Bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.