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**Developmental Paper**

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**Title of the project: Privilege, careers and the civil service: A comparative study of Britain and Turkey.**

**Abstract**

**Purpose:**

Inequalities are more extensive in managerial roles as organisational structures lead to power, task and wage differences between individuals and groups in favour of those who belong to dominant groups in the society (Acker, 2006). The power holders define the rules, norms and values to maintain their position and keep disadvantaged individuals or groups in their place (Hurtado, 1989). The aim of the PhD study is to explore the operation of privilege in careers in senior management civil service in Britain and Turkey through investigation of macro, meso and micro level dynamics. Situating privilege in understanding senior management careers in civil service with a comparative study, I aim to contribute to equality and diversity area from the perspective of privilege through presenting a multi-level framework.

**Findings if paper is empirical:** N/A

**Design/methodology/approach:**

The research philosophy of this thesis is informed by realism and is based upon a multilevel and multilayered analysis of reality (Layder, 1993). For this purpose, I will adopt Layder’s (1993) research map which situates history, social and organisational context, interpersonal relations and individual influences in a single framework as it allows employing a multi-level perspective and to temporally situate different levels of influence. I will be conducting my fieldwork in Britain and Turkey. There will be 60 interviews, 30 interviews in Britain and 30 interviews in Turkey with senior level civil servants. Doing these interviews, I intend to look at civil service senior managers’ demographic distribution, their experiences of privilege, and constraints and opportunities that they experienced throughout their careers.

**Research limitations/implications:**

The challenge of comparing two very different countries can be one of the limitations of the research on the other hand this is potentially constitutes strength as well. Although it is more challenging and less straightforward to conduct a comparative study compared to a single country study, it has a significant value because it helps us to more clearly see the historical and contextual nature of privilege mechanisms, structures and the contextually specific construction of who is privileged, in what ways and why.

**Originality/value of the paper:**

Studies in equality tend to focus on disadvantaged and marginalised groups. These are valuable in terms of exploring inequalities and discrimination however they leave under explored those who have the privilege. Investigating privilege and the privileged will provide new empirical and conceptual insights not only to our understanding of those who are deemed privileged (i.e. privileged access to resources or capitals) but also to our understanding of disadvantaged groups. Therefore, I will analyse privilege by looking at key actors’ interests, power and resources through interrelated levels of research map in order to offer suggestions for strategies to improve fairness at work.

**Keywords:** Inequalities, Career, privilege, disadvantage, multi-level analysis, intersectionality

**1. Introduction**

Actors who define the dominating assumptions and processes in organisations are members of privileged groups. Disadvantage is most of the time invisible to the privileged segments of the society (Acker, 2006).The object of the PhD project is to explore the operation of privilege in careers in senior management in civil service through a multilevel investigation. To this aim firstly, I will present the concept of career and a discussion on career inequality. Following that, I will look at the theories on privilege and present an extended discussion of privilege as it relates to careers. Intersectionality is embedded in the discussion of privilege as social divisions such as gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, disability and create intersecting inequalities in the organisations. Therefore intersectionality will be my lens to look at privilege. Finally I will present the methodological approach and design of the research.

**2. Literature review**

**2.1. The concept of career**

This section presents different approaches to career. It starts with different definitions of career including the discussion of objective and subjective career and stresses the importance of recognising the two-sidedness of the career concept. Then it continues with examining different approaches to career from a multi-level perspective. Most of the studies for example psychological studies looked at career from the point of individual, or other studies focused on career from the perspective of organisation or institutions. However, this section explains the importance of recognising the influence of micro-individual, meso-organisational and macro-contextual levels in careers.

The concept of career is used simultaneously in two directions as objective career and subjective career (Becker and Carper, 1956, p.289, Goffman, 1961, p.127, Hughes, 1937, p.403). In one hand careers referred to the objective properties which are more or less identifiable positions, offices, statuses, and situations which are structural, publicly observable and serve individual’s movement through their social milieu. And on the other hand careers reflected individual’s experience of the careers which are the meanings, individuals attributed to their career, the sense they made of their becoming (Gattiker and Larwood, 1990). One of the earliest definitions of the career concept comes from Everett C. Hughes in Chicago School (1937, p.404) who defined career as ‘‘the person’s sequence of role and realised status and office’’. Hughes recognised career as a formal concept in a social organisation and for him the critical property of a career was its ontological duality (Barley, 1989, p.47, 49).

The objective subjective dynamism reflects the structure agency debate facilitated in the career literature by sociological perspective. Layder stated that (1993, p.131) the two-sided nature of career makes it a conceptual tool to see both macro and micro sides however there is a tendency (Boudreau et al., 2001, p.54, Johnson and Stokes, 2002) in careers research which ignores the interconnectedness of choice and circumstances emphasises one over the other. For example, there is a tendency to have a micro individual level focus on careers and neglect the objective properties of career in favour of its subjective aspects (Layder and Layder, 1993, p.131). Particularly psychologically grounded studies in which the focus is usually the relationship between personality, behaviours, or attitudes considered the effect of subjective variables over objective variables (Arthur et al., 2005, p.191).

In contrast to studies arguing for micro level explanations to career there are numerous studies which tend to approach career from the side of the organisation. As Barley (1989, p.48) explained that modern career tend to view career as advancement along a hierarchy of power and prestige. The verticality is seen as necessary to understand career ladder, plateauing, promotion, demotion and lateral transfer. However, according to Chicago sociologists although vertical movement was necessary for an individual’s ability to formulate a meaningful career it is only one type of career movement. For example, vertical mobility was very important for certain occupations such as industrial organisations (Martin and Strauss, 1956, Goldner, 1965) however, several other occupations recognise meaningful careers that does not involve vertical movement. For example Becker (1952) focused on horizontal career movement in public schools in which the successful career move was the one that took them away from the schools in slum areas to more salubrious neighbourhoods, rather than a promotion.

Besides the studies which approached career from the perspective of individual or from organisational structures it is necessary to have a multi-level approach by understanding the macro contextual factors and their relationship with organisational level factors and individual level factors (Iellatchitch et al., 2004). At the national, societal and cultural level, demographic features of the population, communal societal ties and labour markets are influential in career development. Grandjean (1981, p.1057) by a study conducted in Federal civil service in the US suggests that career is conceptualised at the intersection of societal history and individual biography, and neither the experiences of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both. It is stressed that time in the life history of individual, the organisation, the society and circumstances affect each other (p.1062). He also states that social class structures, ethnicity, and gender might have an influence on the decisions made for advancement within a career line.

In this section I have presented different approaches to career together with muli-level focus of analysis. I find useful to conceptualise career as a dynamic concept which takes new forms in the relationship between self and circumstances in different contexts and history. Also the concept of career helps to engage with notions of privilege within a multi-level phenomenon (Iellatchitch et al., 2004). The next section will present the career inequality mechanisms experienced by different identity categories.

**2.1.1 Career inequality**

Acker (2006, p.443) define inequality in organisations ‘‘as systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organise work; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and benefits; pay and other monetary rewards; respect; and pleasures in work and work relations’’. The challenge of addressing specific inequalities brings about complexities of intersectionality particularly in identity politics at work. Acker (2006, p.443) seeks to use inequality regimes as a way to researching intersectionality and define them as ‘‘loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organisations. The components of inequality regimes are; the bases of inequality, the shape and degree of inequality, the organising processes that produce inequality, the visibility of inequalities and control and compliance. Intersectionality is based on scholarly works of black feminists (Browne and Misra, 2003). Their perception of multiracial feminism supports the view that gender and race as socially constructed and situationally contingent categories, penetrate into all aspects of social life. People experience privilege and disadvantage simultaneously through combined statues of gender, race and class. Gender and race do not only have an effect on individuals’ lives but they shape the principles of the organisation in a social system.

Therefore, adopting Acker’s inequality regimes is useful for conceptualising career inequality as its components are contextual (Healy et al., p.470). Acker (2006, p.444) argues that the bases for inequality in organisations vary whereas gender, race and class processes are usually present. The basis for inequality also includes other categories of difference which are; age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and ethnicity. While many studies looked at gender and race for inequality in careers, class is also served as a basis for inequality. Economic, social and cultural resources mostly held by people who come from highly educated, middle and upper-middle classes(Cooper, 2008). The shape and degree of inequality reflects to the work-life balance and hierarchy and job segregation which feed into horizontal and vertical segregation (Acker, 2006). Long working hours and other structural conditions of work which are originally designed around men’s lives continue to be barriers for women achieving career success and balancing their work responsibilities with their other responsibilities(Özbilgin et al., p.7).

The hierarchy which reflects the shape and degree of inequality involves segregation (Acker, 2006). Witz (1992, p.15) argues that job segregation is the primary mechanism in capitalist society that keeps men above women. Although organisations do not always intentionally set out agendas, there are certain patterns that define roles. Still persisting is the horizontal, vertical and institutional segregation that puts women in traditionally female dominated fields, such as arts and social sciences, nursing, health and community work and education sector, and even within these areas white women and men dominate senior positions (Jones, 2006). These traditional patterns restrict women’s power to be promoted to leading roles in organisations. Reskin (1993, p.241) explained segregations as a ‘‘fundamental process’’ in social inequality that subjecting groups to different reward systems. And the dominant group initiate segregation set its limits and sometimes permits exceptions.

Organisational practices has a role in creating the gender segregation of work, including the paid and unpaid work and income, status inequality between men and women and the cultural images of gender (Acker, 1990, p.140). For example, the performance evaluations which are based on masculinity or male-biased values to a large extent keep women in lower hierarchical levels, and affect negatively their career aspirations and lead many leaving the industry voluntarily earl in their career(Jonnergard et al., 2010, p.735).Segregation shows itself in task, wage and power differences(Acker, 2006). Women face both glass ceilings that prevent them from realizing their aspirations and glass walls that restrict their earnings and limit their access to operational roles which are at the heart of the corporations(Goode and Bagilhole, 1998).

Moreover, organising practices and processes that produce inequality include the general requirements of work which exclude women from work as attaching family responsibilities to women rather their male colleagues and techniques that set class hierarchies inside work organisations. Moreover, recruitment and hiring procedures which distinguishes women and men by attaching them to jobs also wage setting and supervisory practices are involved in the organising practices that produce inequality(Acker, 2006, p.448).Hiring through social networks is one of the ways in which gender and racial inequalities are maintained in the organisations (Acker, 2006, p.448). On the bases of both their gender and their race ethnic minority women are excluded from the powerful networks where promotions and main assignments are decided and allocated in the organisations(Fearfull and Kamenou, 2006).

After discussing different approaches on career and career inequality, my approach to career can be summarised as follows. The career is a product of a dialectical relationship between self and circumstances each transforming other. An analysis of career should involve both objective and subjective aspects of it as the two sidedness of the career concept makes it a useful tool (Layder and Layder, 1993). Careers of individual choice, freedom, and empowerment are important as well as the need for bringing structure and institutions. So it is required to look at agency and structure factors, their interplay and their effects on careers. Moreover, the analysis of career requires an understanding of multi-level perspective which looks at the micro-individual, meso-organisational and macro-contextual level factors considering the context and history (Iellatchitch et al., 2004).

Furthermore, inequalities which stem from individual, organisational and macro level influences still persist in careers. A solely focus on single identity categories such as gender, race, age, disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity is unrealistic and incapable to understand the complexity of inequalities in careers. Therefore, it is necessary to recognise the differences between and within groups through an intersectional analysis of inequalities an a concept addressing contextual and multi-level issues would allow an integration of different disciplines and contribute the interdisciplinary conversation (Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer, 2011). Finally, while social categories of gender, race, age and class are mostly examined in the career inequality literature the dynamics of non-visible social identities such as religion, disability, occupation, national origin, and sexual orientation are remained underexplored.

**2.2. Privilege**

One of the ways of looking at privilege is through access to capitals. So privilege can be defined as differential access to capitals in the society and the workplace. To make a point that different forms of capitals are important in people’s careers, I found useful to link privilege to Bourdieu’s theory of capitals (1998) which bridges the structural and agentic dynamics of the social life through the use of capitals. This theory contributes to understanding of career development because it maintains the view that the field of power, the space of relations between agents who hold different sorts of capital aids understanding of positions of individuals in the social and organisational hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1998).

Bourdieu (1987, p.4) mentions four types of capital; social, economic, cultural, and symbolic. Firstly, economic capital is referred to various kinds of tangible resources and assets. Secondly, cultural capital or informational capital in its various kinds is closely linked to social class background, attitudes or ways of thinking, or human capital which involves the skills, education and work experience. Thirdly, social capital is referred to network relationships and group membership. Finally, symbolic capital explains different forms of capitals translated to power and privilege so it is crucial in terms of people defining the legitimate value of other forms of capital.

The power holders define the rules, norms and values to maintain their position and keep the disadvantaged individuals or groups in their place. The position individuals occupy across the organisation determine the amount and composition of capital owned by them thus the career patterns are not simple outcomes of merit-based criteria of human capital presented by Becker (1993) in which the education, professional and vocational qualifications and skills are the basis of the measurement. It means career patterns are also the outcomes of ownership of access to different forms of capitals which are recognised as legitimate and valuable. Ownership and distribution of different forms of capitals between different groups and individual actors create intersecting inequalities and privilege in organisations. Intersectionality introduces a relationship among the categories and the ways in which they play a role together in forming political institutions and actors and across relevant categories (Goff et al., 2008). I discuss privilege by taking into account the processes of access to and ownership of power and resources and through social categories that become effective and salient in creating and sustaining privilege and disadvantage. I present them as the structures of privilege such as class privilege, gender privilege, age privilege, race privilege, able bodied privilege, heterosexual privilege etc.

Acker (2006, p.444) define class as ‘‘the enduring and systematic differences in access to and control over resources for provisioning and survival’’. People or groups holding power through different composition of various forms of capitals serves the bases for class privilege. Access to material resources is related to class structures and determine the life chances of individuals and in turn become the bases of social class formation. In class divided societies occupation or salary-scale in organisations are organised through power relations. Thus the powerful actors as social agents are the ones who produce classifiable acts as well as they are classified through the acts of classification (Bourdieu, 1984, p.469).

Power relations which can be described as capitalist or patriarchal generally place some groups in a superior to others (Bradley, 1999). According to Bourdieu (2001, p.12) biological sexes are used as the natural justification of the socially constructed difference between the genders and in particular of the social division of labour. Historically men’s advantage in access to career lines which lead to higher posts in the workplace allowed them to keep their economic dominance over women. Also, organisational rules and practices kept men’s status and power over women’s power (Bradley, 1999). Economic power involves not only the income level but also wealth of the individuals. Therefore the class comes into consideration and clashes with gender. Also in many organisations management positions which entail decision making were held by men as decisions are also made by men and mainly reflect male decisions, interests and this reflects the cultural capital, the culture of the organisation.

Acker (2006, p.444) refers race to ‘socially defined differences based on physical characteristics, culture, and historical domination and oppression, justified by entrenched beliefs’. Race, racism and discrimination serve the bases and mechanisms of hierarchical differentiation that shape ordering of social relations also the share of life experiences and life chances between individuals and groups (Bobo and Fox, 2003, p.319). Racial segregation still persist in organisations however, it is complex and varies by gender. Race and gender segregation of jobs is seen as complex because segregation is hierarchical across jobs at different class levels of an organisation, across jobs at the same level and within jobs (Acker, 2006, p.446). Hierarchies and the separation of genders and ethnic groups were habitually justified as part of a natural order (Bradley and Healy, 2008, p.142).

**3. Methodology**

**3.1. Research philosophy and research framework**

The research philosophy of this thesis is informed by realism and is based upon a multilevel and multi-layered analysis of reality (Layder, 1993). I will use Layder’s (1993) research map which situates history, social and organisational context, interpersonal relations and individual influences in a single framework. So it allows employing a multi-level perspective and to temporally situate different levels of influence. The part of the underlying principle for science is the attempt to know what is reality, and how do we know it. It is reminded that realism is not a social theory but rather is a philosophy (Sayer, 1992). Realist approach suggests that social scientific analysis should look beyond the mere appearances and examine the underlying structures and mechanisms that generate the observable phenomena (Keat and Urry, 1975). Because the world exists independently of our knowledge of it ([Sayer, 1992](#_ENREF_2)).

Layder (2005) suggested interrelated domains to understand reality and capture the multi-coloured nature of the social world. He suggested that social universe consist of four interconnected domains which exist in both vertical (depth ontology) and horizontal (space and time). The domains psychobiography, situated activity, social settings and contextual resources are interconnected through social relations of power which are also stretched out over time and space. Layder’s (1993) research map allows employing the social domains and serves a greater understanding of multifaceted nature of empirical world. Below, I present the research map which I adopted from Layder (1993). I utilized it to my research questions and separated each level by research element, research focus and data sources however, there are movements in between these research elements.

**Table1. Research map - adapted from Layder (**[**1993**](#_ENREF_1)**)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Research question** | **Levels of analysis** | **Research Element** | **Research focus** | **HISTORY** |
| 1. How does macro context influence the reproduction of privilege structures in senior management careers in civil service? | Macro-contextual level | *Context* | *Macro social forms (structures, forms and relations of power and privilege)* |
| 2. What are the organisational and institutional mechanisms that produce privilege in senior management careers in civil service? | Meso -organisational/institutional level | *Setting* | *Immediate environment of social activity* |
| *Situated activity* |
| 3. What is the role of agency of individuals considering the dynamics of privilege in their career? | Micro individual level | *Self* | *Relationship between the self and the social environment* |

* 1. **Data collection and analysis**

Both documentation and interviews will provide the main sources of data for this research. I will collect primary data through face-to-face life history interviews. There will be 60 interviews, 30 interviews in Britain, 30 interviews in Turkey with civil sector senior managers. With this sampling, in this research I do not claim to have a perfect scientific representation of management groups by gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation or disability. Rather, I aim to conduct an exploratory study of intersectional inequalities and privilege in career of civil service senior management. Therefore, I intend to choose similar civil service departments in both countries and contact the most senior people in those departments.

The main data analysis tool will be NVivo analysis, which is qualitative data analysis software. Coding will be the part of analysing my data. I also keep a research diary to aid the reflexivity in the research process. It is useful to inform methodological and theoretical decisions during the research process and to be aware of my position in the research and how it can influence my understanding.

**4. Conclusion**

Organisations are concentrations of power whether they are banks and businesses, armies or universities (Cockburn, 1991). As organisations are now made up of diverse populations in advanced economies, the level of awareness and interest in equality and diversity has considerably increased (Ozbilgin, 2008). Recently, many organisations have adopted policies and practices of diversity for business, legal or ethical reasons. however, multiple discrimination and multiple identities are not addressed (Jones, 2006, Rees, 1998).It is important to focus on privilege in careers since solely focus on minorities or the less advantaged individuals is not enough to examine the mechanisms that keep the disadvantaged segments of the workforce in their places and prevent them having a career in senior roles. Only few recent studies focused on privilege for understanding the actual mechanisms that render people disadvantaged and inequalities invisible.

I look at privilege by taking privilege as a critical perspective in a multi-level study, so I do not only look at individual level attributes or organisational level effects but I try to look at them in interrelated levels. So through a multi-level research this PhD project will make an original contribution in understanding the mechanisms that create inequality in the work society. As the study will compare privilege in careers in civil service senior management level in Britain and Turkey, I am offering original empirical evidence because by doing a comparative study I am actually doing a multi-level study which is situated in history and context firmly. A comparative study will provide insights on how the context and history affect the operation of privilege in careers.

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