

Cohort Shifts in the Structure of Life-cycle Inequality: Methods, Findings, and Perspectives.

Traditional inequality and mobility research simplifies individuals into single points of observations, overlooking variations in a person's socioeconomic attainment across the life course. This project, instead, combines a cohort perspective with the life course perspective to examine whether and how different cohorts of population in the United States have experienced different patterns of economic inequality over their life courses. Using over 40 years of national representative data from CPS and PSID, I found that inequality increases over the life course for all cohorts born between 1941 and 1970. Growth curve modeling and counterfactual simulations suggest that a growing amount of intragenerational growth of inequality is attributable to education-based cumulative advantage. In addition, residual variance has increased from earlier to later cohorts, driven first by rising instability among mid-career workers, and then by rising instability among young-age workers. I will discuss implications of these findings for social demographic research in the end of the talk.