



# UCD Geary Institute INSIGHT

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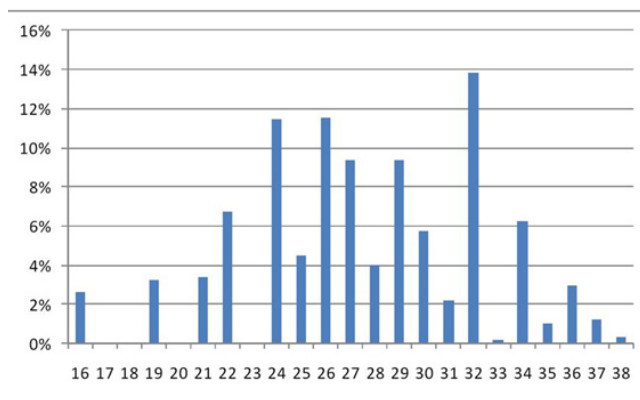
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### Mailing List /Queries

If you would like to receive regular information about UCD Geary Institute research and activities or if you have any queries on items in this newsletter, please contact [geary@ucd.ie](mailto:geary@ucd.ie) or call 01 716 4615. Alternatively, check out our website at <http://www.ucd.ie/geary>

Figure 1: Distribution of Years of Parental Education



A newly published paper analyses the interaction between socio-economic status and higher education, focusing on the entry mechanism into higher education, the academic performance of students in university, and finally, the expected future returns from attending university.

The paper by Geary researchers Liam Delaney, Colm Harmon and Cathy Redmond uses data from the Irish Universities Study which is funded under the auspices of the Strategic Innovation Fund of the Irish Higher Education

Authority. The authors analyse the various mechanisms through which intergenerational transmissions of grade attainment and expected earnings occur, incorporating personality measures, institutional and subject choice, and prior academic performance.

The current university admissions process was found to be predictive of academic performance in university, and the relationship is robust to the addition of socio economic status (SES) controls. This is an indication that the current admissions system is efficient in allocating places in university based on academic aptitude. A small, but significant and positive, gradient was observed between academic achievement in university and SES - on average, 10 years of additional combined parental education is associated with a one-percentage point higher university grade outcome. The relationship between SES and grade attainment in university is much stronger for males than for females. Additionally, maternal education level is more important than paternal education level in predicting educational attainment in university for male students.

Importantly, despite the lack of robust evidence of a persistent socio-economic penalty during university, there is a large, significant and persistent differential in terms of the earnings expectations of different socio-economic cohorts. The difference in long-run expected earnings is €2,241 per year of additional parental education, or approximately two percent of the long-run expected income level. Given an average return of approximately eight percent to higher education (Walker and Zhu 2003), the expected earnings return from parental education is around 25 percent of the actual individual return from higher education.

While some of this differential is mediated by our extensive set of demographic, education and personality controls, nearly half of the total effect persists as a direct or unexplained effect. This differential might be interpreted as evidence that low SES students are anticipating discrimination upon entry into the labour market, or alternatively are genuinely underestimating their returns. This poses a problem for policy makers - students make educational choices partly based upon the expected returns from education, and since low SES students have lower expected returns from higher education, unequal participation of low SES cohorts in higher education may reflect rational behaviour on their part based on their own expectations. A further issue is that lowered earnings expectations might result in lower realised earnings due to self-fulfilling expectations.

An important direction for further research is to examine the extent to which expectations are self-fulfilling and the extent to which this can explain intergenerational transmission of income, or whether they are a function of anticipated discrimination in the labour market. The results of this paper rule out many traditional explanations of why lower SES students would expect to earn less but still leave open the possibility that they are rationally embedding labour market discrimination into their expectations. In countries with increasing college participation, such effects take on increasing relevance in examining the processes of intergenerational transmission and social mobility.

The full paper can be downloaded from <http://ideas.repec.org/p/ucd/wpaper/201035.html>

## Preparing for Life

On the 21st September 2010 the Preparing for Life (PFL) implementation team held a host of events to celebrate reaching the milestone of recruiting our target of 200 families into the programme. PFL is a five year school readiness programme which provides support to families with



Fergus Finlay, Chief Executive of Barnardos, speaking at the event

young children in disadvantaged areas of North Dublin. The programme is being evaluated by the UCD Geary Institute using a randomised control trial design.

The celebration day was designed to thank the families for taking part, the community and service providers for their support and the boards, sub boards and funders for their continued commitment to the programme. The keynote speech at the evening event was given by Fergus Finlay of



The Preparing for Life Evaluation Team

Barnardos. The baseline report describing the recruitment process and the PFL sample is currently being prepared by the evaluation team at the Geary Institute and will become available shortly.

## Mothers strongest influence on children's educational attainment.

Mothers are now the key to a family's social mobility and the strongest influence on children's educational achievements, according to new research by Ian Walker, Lancaster University and Geary Fellow, Colm Harmon, Geary Director and Arnaud Chevalier, Royal Holloway and Geary Institute Fellow. The researchers found the strongest correlation was between the level of education of mothers and their daughters. There was a weaker link between that of mothers and sons, but no statistically significant influence from a fathers education.

With women continuing to retain the lead role in the upbringing of children, and with the advancement of opportunities and education for women, they have now become the main educational role models in households, even if their incomes still remain lower than men's.

**“It seems the mother daughter relationship is now the transmission mechanism for social mobility”**, says Ian Walker, Professor of Economics at Lancaster University and Geary Institute Fellow. “It used to be said that the father was the breadwinner and that would dictate household education decisions. If the father was richer, you could afford to stay on at school rather than go out to earn a living. That is clearly no longer the case”.

The researchers reached their conclusions after analysing the number of years for which teenagers stayed on in full time schooling after the age of 16. They studied data from the UK Labour Force Survey (LFS) for 43,000 teenagers who had been questioned between 1993 and 2006 and compared them with the schooling of their parents. They found that for every extra year a women stayed in full time education, the likelihood of her daughter staying an extra year increased by 20%, the corresponding figure for a son was only 10%. For fathers there was no consistent or significant effect.

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The paper can be downloaded at <http://www.ucd.ie/geary/static/publications/workingpapers/gearywp201032.pdf>

## Mapping the Irish State - Launch of the Irish State Administration Database

Dublin Innovation 2010 - Newman House, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Thursday 11 November 2010, 2 - 5.30pm



The economic crisis has raised old questions in new ways: How effectively are we governing ourselves? Are our state institutions fit for

purpose? Where do we need to concentrate our efforts at reform? The Mapping the Irish State project, located at Geary and funded by the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS), has developed a database through which we can track the evolution of the Irish state over time, from 1922 to the present ([www.isad.ie](http://www.isad.ie)).

This conference will ask provocative questions about how we exercise public power in Ireland and will indicate where some of the key problems are. It highlights the work of UCD researchers committed to translating academic research into findings that are not only interesting in their own right, but of practical relevance to Irish public policy.

Speakers at this conference include Professor Christopher Hood, Gladstone Professor of Government and Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford, an internationally renowned scholar, who will provide a keynote address on the dynamics of public sector reform. The interactive panel sessions involve both academic and senior public sector discussants.

A demonstration of the database will be given on Thursday 18 November from 3-5pm in G5 of the UCD Daedalus Building, which will allow participants to explore its various applications.

## Children's Rights Alliance and Geary Institute Think-In

The Children's Rights Alliance and the Geary Institute hosted a forum for expert advisors in developing the concept of Smart Budgeting for Children at a 'think-in' on Friday 15 October, at Newman House, Dublin.



Smart Budgeting means taking policy and budgetary decisions for children that are efficient in

their use of resources and effective in their ability to improve children's outcomes.

The 'think-in' brought together an advisory group from the fields of economics, policy making, research and evaluation to work to develop a strong economic basis for children's policy.

The day was facilitated by Professor Colm Harmon, Director, Geary Institute and Jillian van Turnhout, Chief Executive, Children's Rights Alliance.

## Two Geary Researchers receive Fulbright Scholarships

Two Geary researchers have been awarded scholarships by the Fulbright Commission for 2011-12., in recognition of their outstanding academic merit and leadership potential. Mr. David Comerford is a third year Doctoral student of Economics, based at the Geary Institute. David will undertake research as part of his PhD in the area of Consumer Judgment and Decision Making at Duke University, North Carolina. Dr Liam Delaney is currently Lecturer in Economics and Public Health/Population Sciences. Dr. Delaney will undertake research at Princeton University in the area of Historical and Policy Determinants of Irish Health and Well Being.

We wish Liam and Dave all the best for their time in the US and continued success in their research careers.

The Fulbright Scholarships and Awards are presented on an annual basis to Irish students, scholars and professionals to undertake postgraduate study and research at higher education, cultural and related institutions in the United States. Applications are encouraged in all disciplines. These scholarships will provide Irish and EU students, scholars and professionals with the opportunity to study, lecture and research at top universities and institutions in the US.



UCD Fulbright awardees pictured with front row (l-r): Minister Dick Roche, Minister for European Affairs, Dan Rooney (US Ambassador to Ireland) and Patricia Rooney, Government and Public Affairs Director, Hewlett Packard Ireland; and Colleen Dube, Executive Director, The Fulbright Commission in Ireland.



## New Website

The new Geary Institute website ([www.ucd.ie/geary](http://www.ucd.ie/geary)) went live in February 2010. The site plays an important part in our research dissemination and contains detailed information on all ongoing research, grouped under four headings - health, education, labour markets and institutions and behaviour. In addition, the website incorporates a comprehensive Google calendar of events, featured research snapshots, enhanced registration for updates; selected podcasts and blog feeds. For updates via Twitter see <http://twitter.com/ucdgearyinst>.



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