

**Report of the Evaluation Committee for Research Quality Assessment
2001-2006**

Faculty of Social Sciences

VU University Amsterdam

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Sociology: Comparative Stratification Research (CSR)

Starting date: 01-09-2002
Programme leaders: Prof. dr. H. Ganzeboom

In 2002, this programme was started as a one-man project by Prof. Ganzeboom, who was appointed a strategic chair in sociology. Ganzeboom, who clearly is one of the most distinguished social stratification researchers in the world, has built up a strong research group. In 2004, the Social Research Methods group was restructured and joined with the existing programme of the CSR. Some younger highly qualified people had left and got attractive jobs at other universities. Today, the group consists of 4.76 fte staff, including 3 PhD students. The CSR has a strong internationally oriented profile and is a world leader in social inequality research. Ganzeboom has attracted excellent young people and senior researchers such as Prof. Aart Liefbroer, who contributes a demographic dimension to the profile of the group on the basis of a part-time appointment. The stratification theme has a clear focus and is helpful in guiding the activities of the individual researchers. It also offers a joint theoretical and methodological perspective that is approached by each individual researcher in his/her own specific way. However, the research programme of the group could link the stratification and demographic dimensions a little more closely.

Quality

The committee evaluates the quality of this programme as excellent. The scientific originality is very high. CSR has a clear profile within sociology in Europe and the US. The leading members of the group are global players in the field of social stratification research. A comment that must be made is that this quality is highly dependent upon the publications of two researchers. The committee therefore recommends that the senior members of the group produce more joint publications with junior members and PhD students.

Productivity

The publication productivity is quite high but could be raised up to a higher level. Of course, the productivity of the group suffers from a considerable teaching load in statistics and methodological classes. The committee therefore recommends reducing some of the teaching obligations. However, the committee acknowledges that the productivity of this group should not be measured only in terms of international publications, but also in terms of the datasets built and disseminated to the scientific community. The group provides a very valuable service to the scientific community in the NL and the rest of the world. In this sense, this group has been very productive and influential. For example, in the period of review, a staff of 4.76 fte has produced about 100 citations.

Relevance

Social stratification research is the heart of all kinds of social sciences. It addresses very important topics in modern society. The particular strength of the group is its international cross-national comparative research focus and its unique methodological competence in quantitative social sciences. Comparing social inequalities in modern societies contributes to our understanding of the similarities and differences of social structures generating all sorts of opportunities. This topic is central for sociologies of all sorts and policy makers.

Vitality and Feasibility

The group is highly visible. Based on its unique database, its publication and citation record it is very viable. Ganzeboom has developed an often used International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI). He is also involved in the ISSP and ESS. Ganzeboom also has built up a unique database covering almost 50 countries. The CSR takes care of data harmonization of this cross-national dataset which is a very time-consuming effort. The CSR is well-connected to the central places in sociology all over the world. The CSR is a top research centre in sociology and has an effective group structure.

The committee has decided to give the following scores to CSR:

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| Quality: | 5 |
| Productivity: | 4.5 |
| Relevance: | 5 |
| Vitality/Feasibility: | 4 |