

Research stay at Berkeley Autumn 2018

Denmark is traditionally considered as a country where people have equal rights. There is little difference between rich and poor and the welfare state makes it possible for all to have equal opportunities. This is a truth with modifications and if you look at other things than income, the picture is not so clear. In Denmark there is relatively large difference in expected life age depending on your social status.

My research project investigates this inequality in health from a broad perspective. It is not easy to define what health is, but it can be measured with e.g. mortality and number of hospitalizations. My different research projects try to view the problem from different, but complementary angles. One thing that I investigate is to how great extent children inherits their parents' health status. It is relatively complicated to measure, but it is very important for public discussions about the state's responsibility versus the individual. An important question is whether people in full awareness chose an unhealthy life style with related health problems, or if they, because of their family background are hopelessly caught in a bad spiral.

In a related project I investigate to which degree education, causing e.g. changed habits or higher income, leads to a healthier life. If it is the case, you can argue that the state has a reason to encourage young people, especially from less privileged backgrounds, to get an education. Partly because a long and healthy life can be a value in itself, but also because sickness benefit and absence from work is a large burden on the public finances in a welfare system as the Danish one.

The stay at Berkeley is part of my three-year Ph.D. course in economy at Aarhus University. The purpose of the research stay at Berkeley is to get a qualified input to my preliminary results. At Berkeley there is a strong research environment focusing on, among other things, the relation between children and the parents' status.