



## Social Stratification and Social Mobility

**Seminar, 1st term 2019-2020**

**Organised by Fabrizio Bernardi**

Please register [online](#)

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### Course Outline

How does social background affect the social position a person ultimately attains in life? How is inequality reproduced from one generation to the next? How has social mobility changed over time and across countries? What role does inequality in education play for social mobility? What are the main theories to explain inequality in education and social mobility (and lack of it) and its changes over time? These are the core overarching questions that will be addressed in this seminar. The focus therefore is on social background (social class of origin, parental education or parental socio-economic status) although gender and ethnic inequalities will be considered in the last meetings. In the seminar, we will discuss a mix of classic readings and more recent contributions.

The aim of the seminar is:

- to establish some basic facts (trends and patterns in social mobility and in inequality in educational outcomes)
- to scrutinize main theories
- to identify open questions and generate new ideas for term papers or thesis chapter

### Requirements

In order to obtain the 20 credits, participants, in addition to attending regularly, are required to make a presentation, to write short response papers (when they don't present) and to be prepared for discussion in class. The articles for discussion in class are marked with \*, while those for the response papers with #.

### Presentation

As from class 2 there will be participants' presentations. The presentations will be more than a simple summary of the selected readings. On some occasions, the presenters will be asked to look for some additional (limited) evidence, to read additional texts and to summarize and present their view on some open questions. I will provide guidance on the possible content of the presentation and on how to structure it.

### Response papers (length: about one page)

When you don't present, you are asked to prepare brief comments (about 1 page) on one of the indicated readings. In the response paper you can make critical remarks on the article (what you don't find convincing) and/or suggest ideas for replication and extension and/or discuss how ideas presented in the reading might inform your own research. These comments should be posted on the course folder by 14:00 of the Sunday preceding the Monday class. A selection of these comments will be discussed in class.

Prior to this course participants should acquire some basic conceptual tools used in classic studies of social mobility:

- Class schemes (what is the EGP?)
- Mobility tables
- Relative vs absolute mobility
- Odds ratios/Unidiff model

In preparation for the seminar, participants not familiar with these notions should read: Breen, R., ed. 2004. *Social Mobility in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1 The comparative Study of Social Mobility and 2. Statistical Methods of Mobility Research p. 1-35.

### Schedule

The seminar takes place on Mondays at 11:00-13:00, in Seminar Room 2 at the Badia, and will run from Monday 30 September to Monday 2 December. The overview and full list of the seminar sessions is the following:

<b>Basic facts: trends and patterns</b>			
Session 1:	General framework to study social mobility	Monday 30 September	11:00 – 13:00
Session 2:	Educational inequalities	Monday 7 October	11:00 – 13:00
Session 3:	Direct effect of social origins	Monday 14 October	11:00 – 13:00
<b>Theories</b>			
Session 4:	RAT	Monday 21 October	11:00 – 13:00
Session 5:	Cultural Capital	Monday 28 October	11:00 – 13:00
Session 6:	MMI and EMI	Monday 4 November	11:00 – 13:00
Session 7:	Cumulative/Compensatory advantage	<b>Friday 15 November</b>	11:00 – 13:00
<b>Other bases of inequalities</b>			
Session 8:	Ethnic inequality	Monday 18 November	11:00 – 13:00
Session 9:	Gender Inequality	Monday 25 November	11:00 – 13:00
<b>Normative and policy issues</b>			
Session 10:	Normative theory and public policies	Monday 2 December	11:00 – 13:00

**SYLLABUS** (please note that the reading list may still be subject to change)

## 1. Triangles and arrows: A general framework to study social mobility:

In this class I present and expand a general framework to study social mobility (the OED triangle), summarize the main findings of a recent comparative project on social mobility (Breen 2019) and discuss some open questions in the field.

### *Classic reading*

\*Erikson, Robert and John H. Goldthorpe. 1993. Cap 11. Conclusions, Pp. 365-379; 389-397 in *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

### *Trends*

Breen, Richard and Walter Müller, eds. 2019. *Educational and Intergenerational Social Mobility in Europe and the United States*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Chapter 11 (seminar folder)

OECD. 2018. *A Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility. Overview and Main Findings*.

<https://www.oecd.org/social/soc/Social-mobility-2018-Overview-MainFindings.pdf>

### *Patterns or Inequality and social mobility*

\*Corak, Miles. 2013. Income Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, and Intergenerational Mobility. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27 (3): 79-102.

\* Hertel, F. and Groh-Samberg. 2019. The Relation between Inequality and Intergenerational Class Mobility in 39 Countries, *American Sociological Review*, forthcoming.

Bukodi, Erzsebet, and John H. Goldthorpe. 2018. "Social Inequality and Social Mobility: Is There an Inverse Relation?" SocArXiv. October 5. doi:10.31235/osf.io/jkqne.

<https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/jkqne/>

Mitnik, Pablo A., Erin Cumberworth, and David B. Grusky. 2016. "Social Mobility in a High-Inequality Regime." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 663:140-184.

<http://ann.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/663/1/140>

Questions for discussion in class:

What are the main trends in social mobility? Is there a link between inequality and social mobility?

**Requirements** for all participants:

Read all \* marked articles/chapters (but nothing prevents from reading also the other readings if you are interested in the topic..).

## 2. Inequality in educational opportunity: persistent or declining?

We focus on trends in inequality in educational attainment and achievements by class of origins, and discuss some key concepts (primary/secondary effects)

### *Classic reading*

Blossfeld, H.-P. and Y. Shavit. 1993. "Persisting Barriers. Changes in Educational Opportunities in Thirteen Countries." in *Persisting Inequality. Changing Educational Attainment in Thirteen Countries*, edited by Y. Shavit and H.-P. Blossfeld. Boulder: Westview Press. 1-23.

### *Trends over time*

\* Hadjar, A.. 2019, Educational expansion and inequalities: how did inequalities by social origin and gender decrease in modern industrial societies?, in Becker, R (eds). *Research Handbook on the Sociology of Education*, Edward Elgar.

Barone, Carlo and Lucia Ruggera. 2018. "Educational Equalization Stalled? Trends in Inequality of Educational Opportunity between 1930 and 1980 across 26 European Nations." *European Societies* 20(1):1-25.

Breen, R., R. Luijkx, W. Müller and R. Pollak. 2009. "Non-Persistent Inequality in Educational Attainment: Evidence from Eight European Countries." *American Journal of Sociology* 114(5):1475-521.

#Reardon, S.F. 2011. "The Widening Academic Achievement Gap between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations." in *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances*, edited by G. Duncan and R. Murnane. New York: Russel Sage Foundation.

### *Primary and secondary effect*

\*Erikson, R, Goldthorpe, J., Jackson, M., Yaish, M. and Cox,D. (2005). "On class differentials in educational attainment." *PNAS* 102: 9730-9733.

Questions for discussion in class:

For which *cohorts* and *educational level* do we observe a reduction in IOE? Can you find additional evidence/studies for your own country? How would you update/improve these studies? The concepts of "primary" and "secondary effects": useful or harmful?

Requirements for non-presenters:

**Response paper** on Reardon

### 3. Education, labour market and DESO

We discuss:

- the classic distinctions of stratification and standardization of educational systems.
- direct effect of social origins (DESO)
- skilled biased technological change
- recent debate on whether college education is the great equalizer

#### *Classic reading*

\*Walter Müller, Yossi Shavit. 1998. The Institutional Embeddedness of the Stratification Process: a Comparative Study of Qualifications and Occupations in Thirteen Countries Pp. 1-48 in: Shavit, Y. and W. Müller, eds. 1998. *From School to Work: A Comparative Study of Educational Qualifications and Occupational Destinations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

#### *DESO*

\*Bernardi, F. and G. Ballarino. 2016. " Introduction: Education as the Great Equalizer: A Theoretical Framework." in *Education, Occupation and Social Origin. A Comparative Analysis of the Transmission of Socio-Economic Inequalities.*, edited by F. Bernardi and G. Ballarino. Cheltenham, Glos.: Edward Elgar.

#### *Skilled biased technical change*

David Card and John E. DiNardo, 2002. "Skill-Biased Technological Change and Rising Wage Inequality: Some Problems and Puzzles," *Journal of Labor Economics*, University of Chicago Press, vol. 20(4), pages 733-783, October.

#### *Empirical applications*

#Bernardi, F. and C. Gil. 2019 The direct effect of social origin: Measurement, heterogeneity and micro-class foundations, unpublished manuscript (R&R in ESR).

Bernardi, F. 2012. "Social Origins and Inequality in Educational Returns in the Labour Market in Spain." *SPS working paper* EUI SPS; 2012/05.

#### *Is university education the great equalizer?*

#Zhou, Xiang. 2019. "Equalization or Selection? Reassessing the "Meritocratic Power" of a College Degree in Intergenerational Income Mobility." *American Sociological Review* 84(3):459-85. doi: 10.1177/0003122419844992.

#Karlson, K. B. (2019). College as equalizer? Testing the selectivity hypothesis. *Social Science Research*, 80, 216-229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2018.12.001>

Questions for discussion in class:

How can one test the suggested mechanisms underlying DESO? Are university students positively selected? How to deal with this issue?

Requirements for non-presenters:

**Response paper** on one of the # marked articles

## Theories

### 4. RAT and the explanation of IOE

In this class we examine Breen and Goldthorpe RA theory of educational inequalities and discuss its empirical tests.

#### *Classic reading*

\*Breen, Richard, and John H. Goldthorpe. 1997. "Explaining Educational Differentials: Towards a Formal Rational Action Theory." *Rationality and Society* 9: 275-305.

Stocké, V. 2019. The rational choice paradigm in the sociology of education, in Becker, R (eds). *Research Handbook on the Sociology of Education*, Edward Elgar.

#### *Tests of the Breen and Goldthorpe's model*

#Barone, Carlo, Moris Triventi and Giulia Assirelli. 2018. "Explaining Social Inequalities in Access to University: A Test of Rational Choice Mechanisms in Italy." *European Sociological Review* 34(5):554-69. doi: 10.1093/esr/jcy028.

Stocké, Volker. 2007. "Explaining Educational Decision and Effects of Families' Social Class Position: An Empirical Test of the Breen-Goldthorpe Model of Educational Attainment." *European Sociological Review* 23(4):505-19.

#Page, Lionel, Louis Levy Garboua and Claude Montmarquette. 2007. "Aspiration Levels and Educational Choices: An Experimental Study." *Economics of Education Review* 26(6):747-57.

Breen, R. and M. Yaish, 2006, "Testing the Breen-Goldthorpe Model of Educational Decision Making," S. L. Morgan, D. B. Grusky and G. S. Fields eds., *Mobility and Inequality: Frontiers of Research in Sociology and Economics*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 232-58.

Gabay-Egozi, Limor, Yossi Shavit and Meir Yaish. 2009. "Curricular Choice: A Test of a Rational Choice Model of Education." *European Sociological Review* 26(4):447-63.

#Holm, Anders, Anders Hjorth-Trolle and Mads Meier Jæger. 2019. "Signals, Educational Decision-Making, and Inequality." *European Sociological Review* 35(4):447-60. doi: 10.1093/esr/jcz010.

Requirements for non-presenters:

**Response paper** on one of the # marked articles

Questions for discussions in class

What are the core assumptions of the BG model? How can one empirically test this model? How can one summarize main results from the literature that has tested the BG model?

## 5. Parenting styles/ Cultural capital

In this class we examine the notion of cultural capital, Lareau's distinction (concerted cultivation vs accomplishment of natural growth) and discuss its empirical tests.

### *Classic readings*

\*Bourdieu: Cultural Capital

<http://www.socialcapitalgateway.org/sites/socialcapitalgateway.org/files/data/paper/2016/10/18/rbasicsbourdieu1986-theformsofcapital.pdf>

\*Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67(5):747-76. doi: 10.2307/3088916.

### *Empirical tests*

#Sullivan, A. 2001. 'Cultural Capital and Educational Attainment' *Sociology*. 35(4) 893-912.

# Mads Meier, J. 2011. "Does Cultural Capital Really Affect Academic Achievement? New Evidence from Combined Sibling and Panel Data." *Sociology of Education* 84(4):281-98. doi: 10.1177/0038040711417010.

#Mancini, Anna Laura, Chiara Monfardini and Silvia Pasqua. 2017. "Is a Good Example the Best Sermon? Children's Imitation of Parental Reading." *Review of Economics of the Household* 15(3):965-93. doi: 10.1007/s11150-015-9287-8.

#Phillips, Meredith. 2011. "Parenting, Time Use and Disparities in Academic Outcomes." in *Whiter Opportunity?*, edited by G. J. Duncan and R. J. Murnane. New York: Russel Sage.

Requirements for non-presenters:

**Response paper** on one of the # marked articles

## 6. Maximally Maintained Inequality and Effectively Maintained inequality

We examine theories of changes over time in educational inequality: Maximally Maintained Inequality and Effectively Maintained Inequality and discuss their empirical tests.

### *Readings*

\*Raftery, Adrian E. and Michael Hout. 1993. "Maximally Maintained Inequality: Expansion, Reform, and Opportunity in Irish Education, 1921-75." *Sociology of Education* 66(1):41-62.

\*Lucas, Samuel R. 2017. "An Archaeology of Effectively Maintained Inequality Theory." *American Behavioral Scientist* 61(1):8-29. doi: 10.1177/0002764216682989.

Lucas, Samuel 2001. "Effectively Maintained Inequality: Education Transitions, Track Mobility, and Social Background Effects." *American Journal of Sociology* 106(6):1642-90.

### *Empirical tests*

#Boliver, V. 2011 Expansion, differentiation, and the persistence of social class inequalities in British higher education, 61:229–242

#Ayalon, Hanna and Yossi Shavit. 2004. "Educational Reforms and Inequalities in Israel: The Mmi Hypothesis Revisited." *Sociology of Education* 77(2):103-20.

#Marks, Gary N. 2013. "Evaluating Effectively Maintained Inequality: School and Post-School Transitions, Socioeconomic Background, Academic Ability and Curricular Placement." *Social Science Research* 42(6):1635-49. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2013.07.004>.

Requirements for non-presenters:

**Response paper** on one of the # marked articles



## 7. Cumulative advantage and compensatory advantage

We examine two micro mechanisms for inequality dynamics: *cumulative advantage* and its complementary notion of *compensatory advantage*.

### Readings

\*DiPrete, Thomas A. and Gregory M. Eirich. 2006. "Cumulative Advantage as a Mechanism for Inequality: A Review of Theoretical and Empirical Developments." *Annual Review of Sociology* 32(1):271-97.

\*Bernardi, Fabrizio. 2014. "Compensatory Advantage as a Mechanism of Educational Inequality: A Regression Discontinuity Based on Month of Birth." *Sociology of Education* 87(2):74-88. doi: 10.1177/0038040714524258.

### Early years

#Torche, Florencia. 2018. "Prenatal Exposure to an Acute Stressor and Children's Cognitive Outcomes." *Demography* 55(5):1611-39. doi: 10.1007/s13524-018-0700-9.

### Compensatory advantage in educational transition

#Bernardi, Fabrizio and Moris Triventi. "Compensatory Advantage in Educational Transitions: Trivial or Substantial? A Simulated Scenario Analysis." *Acta Sociologica* 0(0):0001699318780950. doi: 10.1177/0001699318780950.

### Occupational/Class career

#Bukodi, ErzsÉbet. 2017. "Cumulative Inequalities over the Life-Course: Life-Long Learning and Social Mobility in Britain." *Journal of Social Policy* 46(2):367-404. doi: 10.1017/S0047279416000635.

Requirements for non-presenters:

**Response paper** on one of the # marked articles

Idea for a term paper/presentation:

Make a search in ESR with key words "cumulative advantage/ disadvantage" and "Saint Matthew". How is the notion of cumulative disadvantage tested in the article?

## 8. Ethnic inequality

We focus on ethnic inequalities in educational and (labour market) attainment and discuss their main explanations (selectivity, discrimination?)

### *Readings*

Nauck, Bernhard 2019, Ethnic inequality in educational attainment, in Becker, R (eds). *Research Handbook on the Sociology of Education*, Edward Elgar.

\*Kao, Grace and Marta Tienda. 1995. "Optimism and Achievement: The Educational Performance of Immigrant Youth." *Social Science Quarterly* 76(1):1-19.

### *Empirical applications*

#Tjaden, Jasper Dag and Christian Hunkler. 2017. "The Optimism Trap: Migrants' Educational Choices in Stratified Education Systems." *Social Science Research* 67:213-28. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2017.04.004>.

#Dollmann, Jörg. 2017. "Positive Choices for All? Ses- and Gender-Specific Premia of Immigrants at Educational Transitions." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 49:20-31. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2017.03.001>.

#Polavieja, Javier G, Mariña Fernández-Reino and María Ramos. 2018. "Are Migrants Selected on Motivational Orientations? Selectivity Patterns Amongst International Migrants in Europe." *European Sociological Review* 34(5):570-88. doi: 10.1093/esr/jcy025.

### *"Lateral" reading*

Ichou, Mathieu and Matthew Wallace. 2019. "The Healthy Immigrant Effect: The Role of Educational Selectivity in the Good Health of Migrants." *Demographic Research* 40(4):61-94.

Requirements for non-presenters:

**Response paper** on one of the # marked articles

## 9. Gender, educational attainment and STEM

We focus on changes over time in gender inequality in educational attainment and gender differences in the choice of field of study.

### *Readings (trends over time)*

Buchmann, Claudia and Thomas DiPrete. 2006. "The Growing Female Advantage in College Completion: The Role of Family Background and Academic Achievement" *American Sociological Review* 71: 515–541.

\*DiPrete, Tom and Buchmann, Claudia 2013 .*The Rise of Women. The growing gender gap in education and what it means for American School*. Russel Sage, New York. Chapter 9, p.200-212.

\*Barone, Carlo. 2011. "Some Things Never Change: Gender Segregation in Higher Education across Eight Nations and Three Decades." *Sociology of Education* 84(2):157-76. doi: 10.1177/0038040711402099.

### *Empirical applications*

#Legewie, J., and T. A. DiPrete. "School Context and the Gender Gap in Educational Achievement." *American Sociological Review* (April 4, 2012).

#Hyde, J. and J. Mertz 2009. "Gender Culture and Mathematics Performance" *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 6(22): 8801–8807.

#Delaney, Judith and Devereux, Paul J., 2019. "It's Not Just for Boys! Understanding Gender Differences in Stem". IZA Discussion Paper No. 12176. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3390163>

Requirements for non-presenters:

**Response paper** on one of the # marked article

## 10. Social mobility, normative theory and public policy

We discuss some key normative issues linked to empirical research in social mobility and policies proposed to favour social mobility.

### *Normative Issues*

\*Jencks, C. 1988 "Whom Must We Treat Equally for Educational Opportunity to be Equal?" *Ethics* 98(3): 518-533.

Bills, D. 2019. The problem of meritocracy: the belief in achievement, credentials and justice, in Becker, R (eds). *Research Handbook on the Sociology of Education*, Edward Elgar.

Swift, Adam. 2004. "Would Perfect Mobility Be Perfect?". *European Sociological Review* 20(1):1-11. doi: 10.1093/esr/20.1.1.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 2018, The Myth of meritocracy: who really gets what they deserve? <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/oct/19/the-myth-of-meritocracy-who-really-gets-what-they-deserve>

Marshall, Gordon, Adam Swift and Stephen Roberts. 1997. *Against the Odds? Social Class and Social Justice in Industrial Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### *Public Policy*

#Bukodi, E. and J. Goldthorpe. 2019. Conclusions, in *Social Mobility and Education in Britain*, Cambridge University Press, : Cambridge, 207-224.

#OECD. 2018. *A Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility. Overview and Main Findings*.

Requirements for non-presenters:

**Response paper** on one of the # marked articles