



# Revisiting the Debate on Inequality.

A Longitudinal Study Using the British  
Cohort Study 1970

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*Ph.D. Thesis defence on 13 July, 2012*

**Abstract:** This dissertation aims at reassessing of impact of family background, education and abilities on the educational and occupational outcomes of a British cohort sample (BCS70). This is pursued in three independent studies.

Chapter 2 has shed some light on the relative importance of the dimensions of concerted cultivation in accounting for the children's differences in reading ability and locus of control across socioeconomic groups. The results show that it is the engagement in cognitively stimulating and reading activities and not the participation in organized activities more generally that enhances children's reading ability and locus of control. The parent-child cultivation mediates the socioeconomic gradient in children's reading ability and locus of control, even after controlling for the previous level of abilities.

Using instrumental variable (IV) technique, chapter 3 detected both the upper bound and lower bound estimates in the range of variations of returns to education. The inclusion of pre-school ability and birthweight to detect the upper bound effect yielded higher estimates of the impact of education on occupation than did OLS models. The inclusion of the mother's smoking habit during pregnancy as an instrument to detect the lower bound effect yielded consistent estimates in some cases. These results are in line with a local average treatment effect interpretation of IV estimates which states that IV identifies the effects regarding only those who change their behavior as a response to the instrument-mechanism.

Chapter 4 has contributed to the research on the impact of so-called non-cognitive traits on socioeconomic outcomes. Drawing on strain theory, it confirms that the child's adaptive strategies as indicated by acceptance of school and goals of socioeconomic success capture key aspects of the non-cognitive processes in educational and occupation attainments. They also account for the bulk of the impact of parental background on the child's socioeconomic outcomes.



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Bio: Nicola Pensiero holds a MA in Sociology and a one-year post-graduate degree in Statistics from the University "La Sapienza", Rome. During his PhD he was a visiting fellow at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and participated, as an evaluation researcher, in the project "Praesidium IV" which aims at providing assistance to migrants debarking in southern Italy. He also participated, as a sociologist of education, in the research project "NEUJOBS" (7th Framework Programme) regarding the developments of the European labour markets. His research interests fall in the area of socioeconomic inequalities and their policy implications.