



# Unequal after all? Non-ethnic explanations of ethnic penalties in the labour market

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## Abstract

This thesis is a collection of three empirical studies on the impact of social origin on labour-market outcomes across migration status and ethnic-origin categories. The existence of immigrant and ethnic penalties in the labour market is a recurrent finding. Migration research has, however, drawn little upon social stratification literature, despite sharing common concerns, to explain them. In this thesis, I seek to contribute to bridging the gap between the two disciplines. I pose two overall hypotheses: (i) compositional differences in social background across ethnic-minority groups and natives are likely to explain an important part of labour market penalties; and (ii) the strength of the effect of social origin on destination and its mechanisms of transmission might differ across groups. These hypotheses are tested by first using log-multiplicative layer effect models followed by different specifications of multivariate analyses based on data from *Understanding Society*. The findings show that: (i) class overrides ethnicity in explaining intergenerational mobility, although the strength of the OD association differs by ethnic origin and gender; (ii) labour-force participation is a gendered process with significant differences across migration status and ethnic origin, which are partly explained by the work status of the mother-in-law transmitted through partner/spouse's characteristics; (iii) employment penalties are explained to a large extent by parental work status, education, and age, with variation in the strength of the effect of the last two factors across ethnic origin; and (iv) some groups experience more difficulties than natives with similar class backgrounds in employment as well as access to (and stable placement in) the salariat, although education exerts a compensatory effect. I conclude by arguing that future research should investigate further within-group explanations by deepening in the

role of different mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of social (dis)advantage at different levels of the labour market.



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## **Bio**

Albert F. Arcarons is a research associate at the International and European Forum on Migration Research (FIERI), and a visiting researcher at the Centre for Demographic Studies (CED). He is a PhD candidate in Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute, and holds an MPhil degree in Sociology from the University of Cambridge, and a MSc degree in Social Research Methods, with a second concentration in Social Policy, from the Methodology Institute at the London School of Economics. In his current research, he combines social stratification and migration theories to explain immigrant and ethnic penalties in the labour market with a particular focus on gender and age differences. He also does research on the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe, and on the development of new policies to improve it. More recently, he has also engaged in research on irregular migration and migrant smuggling.