

Social Stratification

(Sociology 280G)

Fall 2015

Professor Daniel Schneider

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Class: Monday 12-2PM

Office Hours: Fridays 11:15-2:15 PM ([Sign-up](#))

Course Website:

Course Description

This course explores the extent, causes, and consequences of social and economic inequality in the U.S. The course begins with a discussion of two central concepts to the study of social stratification: inequality and mobility. In studying inequality, we ask how resources such as income and wealth are distributed in the contemporary United States, how this distribution has changed, and why? In studying mobility, we will seek a firm grasp of what inter-generational mobility is, the degree of contemporary mobility, and how it is changed.

Over the next seven weeks we will follow a life-course perspective to trace out the institutions through which inequality and mobility is structured, reproduced, and experienced in the contemporary United States. We examine the family, the neighborhood, the educational system, labor markets, and the criminal justice system, attending to the roles of race, class, and gender as axes of stratification in these domains.

This course does not do several things. First, this course does not delve deeply into the canonical sociological texts on stratification and class. Rather, the course takes a more policy-focused and empirical approach trading off theory against current in-depth empirical work. Second, many important topic areas are overlooked including research on welfare, political participation, immigration, health, and happiness. Finally, the interesting literature on Americans' perceptions of inequality and social policy is not included here. These topics are excluded primarily because of space constraints.

The study of social inequality spans multiple disciplines and we will read work from economics and demography in addition to Sociology. But, throughout, the focus of our readings will be on what sociologists in particular have to contribute to the study of social inequality. This focus is also designed to direct attention to how you, as sociologists, can make similar contributions to the study of social inequality. In that spirit, we'll read a number of papers that were written when their authors were graduate students.

Required Readings

There are no required books for purchase. All of the readings are posted on the bCourses site as .PDF files. The readings are drawn from articles and books and are a mix of review pieces and empirical studies. There is something like 200 pages of reading per week.

Course Assignments

In addition to completing the reading each week, there are two other requirements for the course: bi-monthly memos and a final paper.

Weekly Memos

Rather than writing a memo each week, students will alternate responsibility for memo writing with responsibility for serving as a respondent. Students will be divided into two groups. Students in Group A will write memos on odd numbered weeks (weeks 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11) and students in Group B will write on even numbered weeks (weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10). Memo writers will post their comments to the bCourses page by Sunday at 12pm. While we will not have formal presentations of the memos in seminar, I expect that writers will draw on their memos to offer comments and readers will have thoughtful responses to offer in addition to their own comments. These memos need not be highly polished or very long. The goal is really a few paragraphs that consider some of the readings synthetically and raise some interesting questions.

The memos may take up one (or more) of the following issues. First, students may choose to discuss the challenges of measurement and causal inference as evidenced by the week's readings. Second, students may opt to discuss the policy implications of the issues under examination. Third, students may discuss open questions for research. We will work out the groups at our first meeting.

Research Proposal

Students will develop a research proposal for the course. This proposal should focus on some aspect of stratification in the United States. While big ideas are encouraged and while students will not actually carry out their research plans for this course, students should confine themselves to realistic projects. This assignment will be most useful as a proposal for a project you may, or even likely will, carry out. The idea is to use this setting and these deadlines to write the front of a paper. What will remain is the actual analysis.

I expect that students in the class may be at very different stages of their graduate careers. That is fine. Some of you may feel unsure of what to write about. I'd encourage you to sign up for my office hours towards the beginning of the semester and we can figure something out. Others may be farther along and may even have data germane to the topic ready to analyze. While this assignment is designed to be a research proposal, I am also happy for you to write a full empirical paper. Please also sign-up for office hours to discuss this with me.

The final project will be due on December 14 at 5pm. However, there are several intermediate products due to help you remain on schedule.

Proposal:	Due 9/21
Literature Review:	Due 10/26
Data and Method:	Due 11/9
Presentation:	Delivered in class 11/23 or 11/30
Final Draft:	Due 12/9

As you'll see from our course readings, while academic papers can be varied with respect to topic, theory, and method, they are incredibly uniform with respect to structure. Your research proposal should fall in line! This project will be most productive if you craft your proposal following this standardized structure. Your final product should contain a title page, an abstract, a short introduction that overviews the project (2-4 pages), a review of the literature (5-10 pages), a statement of the open question (1-2 pages), and a detailed methods section (5-10 pages).

A short research proposal (just 1 or 2 pages) is due in class on September 21st. This document should state the question you intend to investigate and give some orientation to the relevant theoretical and empirical literature.

Next, a draft of your literature review is due on October 26th. This document will synthesize theoretical and empirical work related to your topic. This is not an annotated bibliography or a dry study-by-study listing of prior work. Rather, this is a synthetic and critical review of prior work with the goal of motivating your very own empirical analysis. The literature review should function to lead the reader, carefully and persuasively, to the very question that you will be asking in your empirical analysis. The sense of the reader will be that important questions remain unanswered or unresolved and then that this is indeed the analysis that will settle these pressing issues. The review will do this by reviewing the prior work and pointing out open questions, a puzzle, or perhaps a contest between two competing perspectives. This does not need to be a polished final product. Rather, I have asked you to submit this fairly early in the term so that I can give you feedback and you can revise it.

On November 9th, you should plan to submit a draft of the methods section of the paper. Here, you will pick up from the literature review to tell us how you will answer this pressing open question. Please consult some of the exemplary methods sections that we will read in this course. You will need to describe your data, the key variables, and your plan of analysis.

During the last two weeks of the semester, we will have student presentations. Each of you will have the chance to make a short "conference style" 15-20 minute presentation of your proposal in progress. This will be a chance for you to further advance your thinking in preparation for the proposal, get feedback from your peers and more feedback from me, and have the experience of presenting your work.

Finally, you will put revise your literature review and methods section and draft an introduction to create the front-end of a paper. This paper will also include a full properly formatted bibliography of works cited, a title page, and an abstract. A final draft of this paper is due in my mailbox in Barrows hall by 4PM on December 9th. Your grade will be based on this final product, but the final product will be better if you work contentiously on

the intermediate section drafts.

Class Format

The course will be run as a discussion. Please come to seminar having done the readings, written a short reaction memo (on your assigned weeks), and having read over your peers' memos. The readings area mix of review pieces and empirical articles. Our goal in discussion will be to understand the substantive content of this material and what it tells us about social stratification today. But, we will also be attentive to how the research we read is put together and what interesting open questions remain in this field (lots!). The last two weeks of the course will be given-over to presentations of your research proposals or projects.

Course Outline and Weekly Readings

Overview of the Course & Logistics (Week 1: Monday, 8/31)

Labor Day - No Class (Mon 9/7)

Income Inequality: Trends, Causes, and Consequences (Week 2: Monday, 9/14)

This week we will delve into the contemporary scholarship on income inequality. How is income inequality measured? How is inequality changed over time? What are the drivers of this change? What does sociology have to contribute to the study of income inequality? What, if any, are the effects of income inequality?

Piketty, Thomas and Emmanuel Saez. 2006. "The Evolution of Top Incomes: Historical and International Perspective." *American Economic Review* 96:200-205.

DiPrete, Thomas. 2007. "What Has Sociology to Contribute to the Study of Inequality Trends? A Historical and Comparative Perspective." *American Behavioral Scientist* 50(5): 603-618.

McCall, Leslie and Christine Percheski. 2010. "Income Inequality: New Trends and Research Directions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36: 329-347.

Martin, Molly. 2006. "Family Structure and Income Inequality in Families with Children." *Demography* 43(3): 421-446.

DiPrete, Tomas, Gregory Eirich, and Matthew Pittinsky. 2010. "Compensation Benchmarking, Leapfrogs, and the Surge in Executive Pay." *American Journal of Sociology* 115(6): 1671-1712.

Western, Bruce and Jake Rosenfeld. 2011. "Unions, Norms, and the Rise in U.S. Wage Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 76(4): 513-537.

Wilkinson, Richard and Kate Pickett. 2009. "Income Inequality and Social Dysfunction." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35: 493-511.

Burtless, Gary and Christopher Jencks. 2003. "American Inequality and Its Consequences." In *Agenda for the Nation* Eds. Aaron, Lindsay, and Nivola. Washington: Brookings Institution.

Wealth Inequality and the Black/White Wealth Gap (Week 3: Monday 9/21)

Sociologists have not typically studied wealth and wealth inequality. We examine some recent literature in economics and sociology on wealth inequality generally and then look at the small but influential literature on the black-white wealth gap. Is it important to consider wealth separately from income? Why does wealth matter? What explains black-white gaps in wealth ownership?

Saez, Emmanuel and Gabriel Zucman. 2014. "Wealth Inequality in the United States since 1913: Evidence from Capitalized Income Tax Data." NBER Working Paper 20625.

Keister, Lisa. 2014. "The One Percent." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40:347-367.

Conley, Dalton. 1999. "Wealth Matters" and "Forty Acres and a Mule." pp. 1-53 in *Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Killewald, Alexandra. 2013. "Return to Being Black, Living in the Red: A Race Gap in Wealth that Goes Beyond Social Origin." *Demography* 50:1177-1195.

Oliver, Melvin and Thomas Shapiro. 1995. "The Structuring of Inequality in American Life." (Pp. 127-170) In *Black Wealth, White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*. New York: Rutledge.

O'Brien, Rourke. 2012. "Depleting Capital? Race, Wealth and Informal Financial Assistance." *Social Forces* 91(2): 375-396.

Addo, Fenaba and Daniel Lichter. 2013. "Marriage, Marital History, and Black-White Wealth Differentials Among Older Women." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 75(2): 342-362.

Intergenerational Mobility (Week 4: Monday 9/28)

Intergenerational mobility, movement in socio-economic status between two or more generations of the same family, has been a central concern of sociological research on stratification. While attention perhaps waned for a time, mobility is now squarely back in the scholarly and public limelight. What is intergenerational mobility? How should we measure it? How mobile is the United States? How has mobility changed over time?

Beller, Emily and Michael Hout. 2006. "Intergenerational Social Mobility: The United States in Comparative Perspective." *Future of Children* 16(2): 19-36.

Blau, Peter M. and Otis Dudley Duncan. 1967. *The American Occupational Structure*. New

York: Wiley. Chapter 5.

Torche, Florencia. 2011. "Is a College Degree Still the Great Equalizer? Intergenerational Mobility across Levels of Schooling in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 117(3): 763-807.

Chetty, Raj, et al. 2014. "Is The United States Still a Land of Opportunity? Recent Trends in Intergenerational Mobility." *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings* 104(5): 141-147.

Mitnik, Pablo and David Grusky. 2015. "Economic Mobility in the United States." Pew Charitable Trusts and Russell Sage Foundation.

Pfeffer, Fabian. 2014. "Multigenerational approaches to social mobility. A multifaceted research agenda." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 35: 1-12.

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

Family Structure: Trends, Causes, and Consequences (Week 5: Monday, 10/5)

There are stark socio-economic and race/ethnic divides in family dynamics in the contemporary United States and family structure also may shape attainment. The family is both reflective of inequality and may perpetuate inequalities. What do we mean by "the family"? How have patterns of family formation and structure changed over time in the United States? Why? Does family structure in childhood matter for attainment? How can we be sure? What are the implications for the broader study of inequality?

Ellwood, David T. and Christopher Jencks. 2004. "The Spread of Single-Parent Families in the United States Since 1960." (Pp. 25-65) In Moynihan, Daniel Patrick, Timothy M. Smeeding and Lee Rainwater, Eds. *The Future of the Family*. New York: Russell Sage. (40)

Edin, Kathryn, Maria Kefalas, and Joanna Reed. 2004. "A Peek Inside the Black Box: What Marriage Means for Poor Unmarried Parents." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66: 1007-1014.

Schneider, Daniel. 2011. "Wealth and the Marital Divide." *American Journal of Sociology* 117(2): 627-667.

McLanahan, Sara, Laura Tach, and Daniel Schneider. 2013. "The Causal Effects of Father Absence." *Annual Review of Sociology* 39: 399-427.

Lee, Dohoon and Sara McLanahan. 2015. "Family Structure Transitions and Child Development: Instability, Selection, and Population Heterogeneity." *American Sociological Review*

80(4): 738-763.

Mare, Robert. 2014. "Educational Assortative Mating in Two Generations: Trends and Patterns Across Two Gilded Ages." CCPR Working Paper.

McLanahan, Sara and Christine Percheski. 2008. "Family Structure and the Reproduction of Inequalities." *Annual Review of Sociology*.

Parenting: Culture, Class, and Inequality (Week 6: Monday, 10/12)

Common wisdom, and lots of parenting books, suggest that what parents do matters a great deal for how children fare. We examine the research on parenting and child wellbeing with a particular focus on class-divides in parenting practices. Does parenting matter for child wellbeing? How do parenting practices differ by class in the United States? Have these differences changed over time? What are the roles of cultural differences and economic constraint in explaining class dissimilarity?

Sherman, Jennifer and Elizabeth Harris. 2012. "Social Class and Parenting: Classic Debates and New Understandings." *Sociology Compass* 6(1): 60-71.

Kalil, Ariel. 2015. "Inequality Begins at Home: The Role of Parenting in the Diverging Destinies of Rich and Poor Children." (Pp. 63-83) In *Families in an Era of Increasing Inequality* Eds. Amato et al. Zurich: Springer International.

Kalil, Ariel, Rebecca Ryan, and Michael Corey. 2012. "Diverging Destinies: Maternal Education and the Developmental Gradient in Time With Children." *Demography* 49:1361-1383.

Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67(5): 747-776.

Kornrich, Sabino and Frank Furstenberg. 2013. "Investing in Children: Changes in Spending on Children, 1972 to 2007." *Demography* 50: 1-23.

Guryan, Jonathan, Eric Hurst, and Melissa Kearney. 2008. "Parental education and Parental Time with Children." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 22: 23-46.

Neighborhoods (Week 7: Monday, 10/19)

The study of neighborhoods occupies a central place in sociological research. In this week we examine some canonical work on the origins of concentrated disadvantage and racial segregation in neighborhoods and then turn to a consideration of "neighborhood effects." Does where one lives matter for how one fares? Why would neighborhoods matter for wellbeing, over and above individual characteristics? How can we identify a neighborhood effect?

Wilson, William Julius. 1990. "Social Change and Social Dislocations in the Inner City." Pp. 20 - 62 in *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Massey, Douglas. 1990. "American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass." *American Journal of Sociology* 96(2): 329-357.

Sharkey, Patrick. 2008. "The Intergenerational Transmission of Context." *American Journal of Sociology* 113(4): 931-969.

Leventhal, Tama and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn. 2000. "The Neighborhoods They Live in: The Effects of Neighborhood Residence on Child and Adolescent Outcomes." *Psychological Bulletin* 126(2): 309-337.

Sampson, Robert J, Stephen W Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy." *Science* 277: 918-925.

Wodtke, Geoffrey T., David J. Harding, and Felix Elwert. 2011. "Neighborhood Effects in Temporal Perspective: The Impact of Long-Term Exposure to Concentrated Disadvantage on High School Graduation." *American Sociological Review* 76:713-36.

Sampson, Robert. "Moving to Inequality: Neighborhood Effects and Experiments Meet Social Structure." *American Journal of Sociology* 114(1): 189-231.

Schooling (Week 8: Monday, 10/26)

Educational attainment has long been seen as a crucial element of the process of intergenerational mobility. In this week, we take a broad view of schooling, first examining contemporary socio-economic divides in academic achievement and considering the role of school inequality in these divides. We then turn to the contemporary literature on higher education and examine how college is unequally accessed but may be an engine for mobility. How have socio-economic gaps in achievement changed over time? Do schools matter? Who goes to college? What affect does college have on later outcomes and who benefits the most?

Reardon, Sean. 2014. "The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations." (Pp. 91-115) In "Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances." Eds. Greg Duncan and Richard Murnane. New York: Russell Sage.

Heckman, James. 2006. "Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children." *Science* 312: 1900-1902.

Phillips, Meredith and Tiffani Chin. 2004. "School Inequality: What Do We Know?" Pp. 467-510 in *Social Inequality* edited by Kathryn Neckerman. New York: Russell Sage Found-

dation Press.

Downey, Douglas, Paul von Hippel, and B Broh. 2004. "Are Schools the Great Equalizer? Cognitive Inequality During the Summer Months and the School Year." *American Sociological Review*. 69: 613-635.

Bailey, Martha J. and Susan M. Dynarski. 2011. "Inequality in Postsecondary Education." Pp. 117-131 In *Whither Opportunity: Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Hout, Michael. 2012. "Social and Economic Returns to College Education in the United States." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38: 379-400.

Brand, Jennie and Yu Xie. 2010. "Who Benefits Most from College? Evidence for Negative Selection in Heterogeneous Economic Returns to Higher Education." *American Sociological Review* 75(2): 273-302.

Financial Precarity and Insecurity (Week 9: Monday, 11/2)

Much of the research we've read so far focuses on a few standard measures of economic status such as income, occupation, unemployment and even wealth. But, increasingly, scholars have turned to more nuanced portraits of economic standing that consider the overall quality of jobs and the broader financial security of households. What is a good job? What is a bad job? How do employment practices affect workers? Affect their families?

Kalleberg, Arne. 2013. *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s to 2000s*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. [Note: We will read several TBD chapters from the book. I have not uploaded a .PDF of the entire book. You may access the chapters through Muse <http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9781610447478> or you may purchase the book through your preferred seller.]

Lambert, Susan, Peter Fugiel, and Julia Henly. 2014. "Schedule Unpredictability among Early Career Workers in the US Labor Market: A National Snapshot." EINet Research Brief.

Presser, Harriet. 1999. "Toward a 24-Hour Economy." *Science* 284(5421): 1778-1779.

Luce, Stephanie, Sasha Hammond, and Darrah Sipe. 2014. *Short Shifted*. Retail Action Project and CUNY.

Gerstel, Naomi and Dan Clawson. 2014. "Class Advantage and the Gender Divide: Flexibility on the Job and at Home." *American Journal of Sociology* 120(2): 395-431.

Genntian, Lisa, Heather Hill, and Pamela Morris. 2015. "Intra-year Household Income Dynamics and Adolescent School Behavior." *Demography* 52:455-483.

The Gender Pay Gap (Week 10: Monday, 11/9)

Gender gaps in labor force participation and education attainment have narrowed considerably or even closed over the past several decades, but a significant gender pay gap remains. In this week we focus on sociological explanations for this gap in pay. What is the gender pay gap? What explains the gap? What is the relative importance of the “mother hood penalty,” the sex-segregation of jobs, and other factors?

England, Paula. 2005. “Gender Inequality in Labor Markets: The Role of Motherhood and Segregation.” *Social Politics* 12(2): 264-288.

Budig, Michelle J. and Paula England. 2001. “The Wage Penalty for Motherhood.” *American Sociological Review* 66: 204-25.

Correll, Shelley, Stephen Benard, and In Paik. 2007. “Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?” *American Journal of Sociology* 112:1297-1338.

Petersen, Trond and Laurie Morgan. 1995. “Separate and Unequal: Occupation- Establishment Sex Segregation and the Gender Wage Gap.” *American Journal of Sociology* 101:329-365.

Levanon, Asaf, Paula England, and Paul Allison. 2009. “Occupational Feminization and Pay: Assessing Causal Dynamics using 1950-2000 U.S. Census Data.” *Social Forces* 88(2): 865-891.

Criminal Justice (Week 11: Monday, 11/16)

Mass Incarceration - it’s contours, causes, and consequences - has been a central topic of sociological inquiry, public interest, and policy debate over the last decade. What is the scale of “mass” incarceration? How did the United States come to incarcerate so many and so unequally? What are the consequences of incarceration? Who is affected? How?

Western, Bruce. 2006. Pp. 11-66 in *Punishment and Inequality in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Western, Bruce and Becky Pettit. 2005. “Black?White Wage Inequality, Employment Rates, and Incarceration.” *American Journal of Sociology* 111(2): 553-578.

Pager, Devah. 2003. “The Mark of a Criminal Record.” *American Journal of Sociology* 108(5): 937-75.

Wildeman, Chris. 2008. "Parental imprisonment, the prison boom, and the concentration of childhood disadvantage." *Demography* 46(2): 265-280.

Haskins, Anna. 2015. "Unintended Consequences: Effects of Paternal Incarceration on Child School Readiness and Later Special Education Placement" *Sociological Science* 1: 141- 158.

Harris, Alexes, Heather Evans, and Katherine Beckett. 2010. "Drawing Blood from Stones: Legal Debt and Social Inequality in the Contemporary United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 115(6): 1753-1799.

Research Proposal Presentations (Week 12: Monday, 11/23)

Research Proposal Presentations (Week 13: Monday, 11/30)