# Article information:

The role of higher education stratification in the reproduction of social inequality in the labor market - ScienceDirect  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0276562413000048?via%3Dihub=>

# Article summary:

1. The study analyzes the impact of social origins on labor market outcomes for recent graduates and finds that those with tertiary educated parents are more likely to have highly rewarded occupations, except in Germany.

2. The type of qualification obtained (program length, field of study, and institutional quality) plays a role in reproducing social inequality in the labor market, with Norway showing the strongest mediation effect and Italy showing the weakest.

3. The expansion of higher education has led to a reduction in selectivity and an increase in heterogeneity among graduates, making additional factors such as field of study and institution type important for employers when selecting candidates for high-ranking positions.

# Article rating:

Appears moderately imbalanced: The article provides some useful information, but is missing several important points or pieces of evidence that would be required to present the discussed topics in a balanced and reliable way. You are encouraged to seek a more balanced perspective on the presented issues by exploring the provided research topics and looking at different information sources.

# Article analysis:

The article titled "The role of higher education stratification in the reproduction of social inequality in the labor market" discusses the relationship between social origins, educational qualifications, and labor market outcomes for recent graduates. The authors analyze data from the 2005 Reflex survey on European graduates in four countries (Germany, Norway, Italy, and Spain) to examine whether social background affects occupational status and wages.

The article begins by highlighting the well-established finding that there is a positive association between social origin and status attainment in modern societies. However, it also acknowledges that previous research has shown that this relationship is not solely mediated by educational attainment. The authors aim to update and extend knowledge on this topic by focusing specifically on college graduates and examining whether a higher education degree represents a "liberation" from social background or if resources associated with social origin continue to play a role even after graduation.

The article presents two main explanations for the null effect of social origins on occupational returns among college graduates. The first explanation is based on meritocratic recruitment criteria prevailing in labor markets for tertiary graduates. According to this perspective, employers primarily consider educational qualification and skills when selecting candidates for positions, rather than ascriptive characteristics or other resources associated with social background. The second explanation focuses on social selection at earlier school stages, suggesting that lower-class students who reach higher levels of education become more similar to upper-class students in terms of unobserved characteristics such as ability and motivations.

The authors argue that these explanations may not hold for the cohort analyzed in their study due to changes in participation rates in higher education and increased heterogeneity among graduates. They suggest that obtaining a tertiary degree may no longer be sufficient to secure high-ranking positions, leading employers to consider additional factors such as field of study, type of institution, or program level. They also propose that upper-class families may strategically choose better quality educational options within higher education to maintain their relative advantages.

While the article provides an interesting analysis of the relationship between social background, educational qualifications, and labor market outcomes, there are several potential biases and limitations to consider.

Firstly, the article focuses on a specific cohort of graduates from four European countries in 2005. This limits the generalizability of the findings to other contexts and time periods. Additionally, the article does not provide a comprehensive discussion of the broader literature on social stratification and labor market outcomes, which could provide important context for interpreting the results.

Secondly, the article relies on self-reported data from a survey, which may introduce biases such as social desirability bias or recall bias. The authors do not discuss potential limitations or sources of error in the data collection process.

Furthermore, while the article acknowledges that social origin has relevant effects over and above what is mediated by education, it does not explore these direct effects in depth. The focus is primarily on how educational qualifications mediate the relationship between social background and occupational outcomes.

The article also lacks a thorough exploration of counterarguments or alternative explanations for the findings. For example, it does not consider factors such as discrimination or unequal access to resources that may contribute to social inequality in labor markets.

Additionally, there is limited discussion of potential risks or negative consequences associated with stratification within higher education. The authors primarily frame institutional stratification as a strategic choice made by upper-class families to maintain their advantages.

Overall, while the article provides some valuable insights into the relationship between social background, educational qualifications, and labor market outcomes for college graduates, it has several limitations and biases that should be taken into account when interpreting its findings. Further research is needed to fully understand the complex mechanisms underlying social inequality in labor markets.

# Topics for further research:

* Social stratification and labor market outcomes: A comprehensive review
* Factors contributing to social inequality in labor markets
* Discrimination and its impact on occupational status and wages
* Unequal access to resources in higher education and its effects on social mobility
* The role of field of study
* type of institution
* and program level in labor market outcomes for college graduates
* Risks and negative consequences of institutional stratification within higher education

# Report location:

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