

Boudon Reexamined

Nuts and Bolts for Contemporary Sociological Science

Gianluca Manzo (Ed.)



Boudon Reexamined presents a selection of short essays by leading scholars from several generations who critically engage and enter into dialogue with the work of Raymond Boudon. Each chapter focuses on a specific topic from his extensive writings. Readers will follow this intellectual trajectory through analyses of early correspondence with Lazarsfeld and Merton, his typology of sociological styles, and his contributions to contemporary analytical sociology, including the notion of middle-range theory. In addition to already well-discussed aspects of Boudon's work, namely his understanding of methodological individualism and the theory of ordinary rationality, the book also explores less frequently discussed topics, including his early interest in formal modeling in sociology and his understanding of the link between interdependence structures and social change. Included in the following pages are new assessments of Boudon's well-known analyses of the inequality of educational opportunity and intergenerational social mobility, as well as his lesser-known substantive contributions to the study of relative deprivation and his early dialogue with game theory. The book also outlines Boudon's study of classical authors, especially Tocqueville, before two final chapters conclude by examining how Boudon's works can be used to teach sociology at the undergraduate and master's levels. Our hope is that *Boudon Reexamined* provides readers with a fresh assessment of his legacy – how his work can be applied to conduct theoretical and empirical research in contemporary sociology, as well as to promote high-quality scientific standards for new generations.

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Chapter 7

Inequality of Educational Opportunity

L'Inégalité des chances

Fifty Years Later

Richard Breen

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L'intelligence
du social

**Book series directed
by Pierre Demeulenaere**

The great books of the sociological tradition are either works of theory and epistemology or empirical studies structured by a profound theoretical or epistemological reflection. Émile Durkheim's first three books, *The Division of Labour in Society*, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, and *Suicide*, each fall into one of these three categories. This heritage represents an impressive growing legacy of authors and works that foster an understanding of social life through the formation of new concepts, models, and interpretations, thereby providing a pathway to deciphering the thickness and chaotic nature of human societies.

Gianluca Manzo (Ed.)

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for Contemporary Sociological Science

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INEQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY: *L'INÉGALITÉ DES CHANCES* FIFTY YEARS LATER

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Reading the English translation of *L'Inégalité des chances* 50 years after its publication affords a number of insights into the changing situation of sociology as a discipline. The book appeared at what seems to have been a high point in post-war sociology when the discipline was much more central to intellectual debate than it has been since. French thinkers, in particular, enjoyed an enviable position: structuralism, exemplified by Levi-Strauss, was enjoying a surge in popularity in the English-speaking world, as was the Marxism of Althusser and his followers. As for Boudon's book, great excitement surrounded it, as even Robert Hauser, in an otherwise highly critical review, acknowledged:

Not since the publication of Jencks's *Inequality* has a book so clearly captured the interest and attention of students of social stratification. At the Eighth World Congress of Sociology in Toronto, the hallways fairly buzzed with favorable anticipation. Moreover, in S. M. Lipset's laudatory foreword, we read, "In this volume, sociological theory comes of age" (Hauser 1976, p. 911).

I believe that a large part of the attraction of the book was that, on the one hand, it presented a puzzle, and, on the other, it saw the solution to this puzzle in understanding society, or, in this case, parts of society, as a system, a set of inter-related parts, which were thought of as the product of a set of simpler, basic relationships and processes. Thinking about society as a system was in vogue at this time. It took a range of different forms: Levi-Strauss's structuralism and Althusser's structural Marxism are examples, but so is work derived from von Bertalanffy's (1968) general systems theory. Boudon's work, although obviously of a very different kind to these examples, analyses educational and occupational inequality as elements of a system, and this systemic approach is one of the major contributions of the book. Rather than analysing inequality of educational opportunity (IEO) and inequality of social opportunity (ISO)

separately, he asks what relationship they have and, in particular, how we might explain the apparent puzzle with which he begins the book: why has ISO remained unchanged even though IEO has declined? An interesting contrast here is with the contemporary approach of scholars such as those of the Wisconsin school. They were concerned with explaining individual-level educational and occupational attainment in terms of sets of individual-level predictors. In contrast, Boudon was interested in the aggregate properties to which the underlying processes generating IEO and ISO, and their interaction, give rise. Boudon (1974, p. 18, n. 8) himself writes, "This 'system approach' to social mobility is hardly new. It can be found in Sorokin (1927) as well as in Kahl's (1957) work."

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Much modern sociology has moved away from this sort of systemic thinking. We have become at once more modest and more specialised in our ambitions: the days of grand theory, for example, are certainly long gone; empirically minded sociologists do not speak about society as a whole, but, rather, prefer to address specific questions, often ones of relevance to policy makers. This might be sensible, but it probably makes the discipline seem less exciting to would-be students. Further, to lay people, it is often sociologists such as Bauman (2001) and Castells (2000) or writers such as the Korean-German commentator Byung-Chul Han (2015) that seem more compelling because they claim to capture the fundamental dimensions of the age in which we live (even though frequently devoid of empirical support). Writers like this are producing what Boudon (2002, p. 372, 375) later called "expressive or aesthetic" sociology, whose aim is to provoke an emotional recognition in the reader of the conditions and circumstances that the author brings to light.

Another lesson the book teaches us about sociology is how far it has advanced methodologically, especially in terms of the quality and amount of data available. Boudon repeatedly seeks evidence for his claims, but the data he uses is often fragmentary and not well-suited for his purposes.

In this paper, I shall focus on the early chapters of *Education, Opportunity, and Social Inequality*, which deal with IEO. However, I want to begin by making some remarks concerning Boudon's overall motivation for the book.

THE PUZZLE

Boudon (1974, p. XIII) begins with a puzzle that he sets himself to solve: "all Western industrial societies have been characterised since the end of World War II both by a steady decrease in IEO and by an almost complete stability of ISO. Why is that so?"

Boudon (1974, p. xi) defines IEO as “differences in level of education and attainment according to social background”. He defines ISO as “differences in social achievement according to social background”. The former term is still widely used, but in both cases, how they are measured has changed in consequential ways. Boudon measures IEO and ISO mostly using differences in the percentages achieving a given outcome (educational attainment or adult social status) among those from different social backgrounds. This would probably not be the preferred measure today. At much the same time that Boudon was working on his book, Leo Goodman (1969) and others were developing log-linear models for the analysis of contingency tables, which mobility researchers very quickly adopted. So today we would probably examine odds ratios rather than differences in proportions or percentages, and this is usually justified by the margin-insensitivity of the former.

Boudon’s solution to the puzzle was that, while education is free to expand through the choices of individuals and families, the availability of achieved statuses is limited by economic constraints; hence, the supply of well-qualified people exceeds the supply of commensurate positions. The main problem with this conclusion is that there is plenty of empirical evidence, some of which would have been available to Boudon at the time, that his puzzle did not really exist: as Hauser (1976) pointed out in his review of the book, Boudon ignored a lot of relevant work, especially from the US. Did IEO decline? In some countries, it did, but one of those that Boudon mentions several times, namely the US, runs contrary to his claim. It has now been well established that IEO in the US has remained largely stable for the past century (Featherman and Hauser 1978; Mare 1981; Hout and Janus 2011; Hertel and Pfeffer 2020). Whether IEO declined elsewhere has been much disputed by scholars of stratification. In the 1990s and 2000s, there was a consensus that, in the words of Shavit and Blossfeld (1993), there was “persistent inequality” in educational attainment in developed countries over the 20th century. More recently, the contrary view has been advanced: in work with Walter Müller, Reinhard Pollak, and Ruud Luijkx (Breen et al. 2009, 2010), I have argued that there was a decline in many European countries in IEO in the third quarter of the 20th century.

Was ISO constant? It is difficult to understand why Boudon would have thought it was, given that, at the time he was writing, France was enjoying *les Trente Glorieuses* and that economic growth and upward mobility were common throughout the developed world in the thirty years after the end of the Second World War. As Breen and Müller (2020, p. 289) concluded in their study of social mobility in Europe throughout the 20th century:

Perhaps our most striking finding is the sharp contrast between the fortunes of people before and after the 1950s. Among those born in the second quarter

of the 20th century, rates of intergenerational mobility increased: more people came to occupy a place in the class structure different from the one into which they had been born. In particular, upward mobility rates increased as positions at the top of the class structure, in the service class or 'salarariat', became more numerous, with a growing surplus of service class destinations over service class origins. At the same time, social fluidity increased: the chances of entering a more desirable class, and avoiding a less desirable one, became more equal between people of different class backgrounds.

THE MODEL

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In speaking of "all Western industrial societies ... since the end of World War II" Boudon explicitly supposes that IEO and ISO are generated in these places by "mechanisms that are, broadly speaking, common to all" and thus he presents a single, ideal type, in the form of a model which simulates sets of tables which, he argues, capture the most important empirical aspects of IEO and ISO. Boudon treats ISO and IEO and their relationship as an example of what he called "cognitive" sociology. This is sociology which seeks to explain a puzzling phenomenon, and it stands in contrast to much research on education and inequality that is fundamentally "cameral" – that is, driven by the desire to be "useful" and, particularly, to have relevance to policy. Boudon does not entirely eschew policy, but it is far from central to the book.

Chapter 1, "Level of Educational Attainment and Mobility," presents an example of his expository and explanatory strategy through the use of a set of simulations that link social background, educational attainment, and attained social status, or, as we would say today, origins, education, and destinations. The immediate motivation is what Boudon refers to as two puzzling findings, both of which relate to the same problem: how can it be that some men who are more educated than their father nevertheless end up in a lower social position than their father? Specifically, he refers to the low observed correlation between son's educational level relative to his father's and son's status relative to his father's (the "Centers-Anderson structure", CA, as Boudon terms it) and the low correlation between son's educational level and his social status relative to his father's (the "Boalt-Anderson structure," BA). How can these be, Boudon asks, if, as is generally accepted, industrial societies are largely meritocratic and education is a major determinant of realised status?

He tries to answer this question by building a model of the mobility process, based on some simplifying assumptions. The first is that "achieved social status depends only on educational level" (Boudon 1974, p. 10) and not directly on

origin status. Encoding this assumption in the form of a directed acyclic graph, DAG, makes it transparent:

Figure 1: Directed Acyclic Graphical Presentation of Boudon’s Model of Intergenerational Mobility via Educational Attainment



Using this and other assumptions, Boudon’s simulation generates mobility tables that capture the main features of observed mobility tables and replicate these paradoxical results. The simulation shows that, despite meritocratic selection into achieved status, neither higher absolute nor higher relative (to one’s father) education ensures that a person will achieve a higher status than their father.

He then presents three fictitious tables which he claims capture the main features of mobility tables in Western societies; they show the relationship between sons’ social background (which is the same as their fathers’ achieved social status) and their educational attainment (OE), between sons’ educational attainment and their own achieved social status (ED), and between their fathers’ education and achieved social status (say, FO where O from a son’s point of view is also his father’s D). Given Boudon’s assumption encoded in the DAG above, these three tables are sufficient to generate the sons’ mobility table showing their social origin by their achieved status.

In generating these tables, Boudon makes a number of assumptions concerning the marginal distributions of the four variables. He assumes three categories of education and three of status, with the numbers in each category increasing as we move from highest (status or education) to lowest. He assumes that, comparing fathers and sons, the lowest category declines while the other two increase with the largest absolute increase in the middle and high categories, but with greater growth in education than in status.

He generates two-way tables from the marginal distributions via an algorithm that biases the allocation of more educated persons to higher status outcomes according to a single parameter (Boudon 1974, pp. 8-9). In the OE tables, this is a “bias parameter” because it tells us how far people from

higher status origins are advantaged in the competition for higher educational positions. However, in the ED table, it is called a “meritocratic parameter” because it tells us how advantaged the higher-educated are in terms of access to higher status destinations. This is set to 0.8 for the background-to-education tables for fathers and sons and to 0.7 for the education-to-status table for sons.

Boudon shows (Boudon 1974, Tables 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, Figure 1.1) the resulting two-way tables and also the four-way table (fathers’ education by fathers’ status/ sons’ origin by sons’ education by sons’ status) implied by these and the DAG. In Table 1.8, he shows the generated CA table, and in Table 1.9, the generated BA table, both of which have the paradoxical features he earlier noted in the work of Anderson and others. The paradox they show can be summarised as follows: despite meritocratic selection into achieved status, neither higher absolute nor higher relative (to one’s father) education ensures that a person will achieve a higher status than their father. Boudon points to two features that lead to this outcome: first, because education depends on social origin, ceiling effects limit how many of the highest educated can acquire a status higher than that of their father, and second, the discrepancy between the sons’ educational and sons’ status distributions ensures that many highly educated sons cannot acquire a high status position. In fact, it is apparent that these findings are mainly driven by the different marginal distributions of fathers’ and sons’ education, and of sons’ education and status. These discrepancies ensure that, no matter how large the bias parameters, there will always be cases of downward mobility, whether this is of the CA type (relative status compared to relative educational attainment) or the BA type (relative status compared to absolute education). The only circumstances in which neither would be observed would be if the various tables displayed marginal homogeneity and there was a perfect association between the pairs of variables in each table. This would place all the cases on the main diagonals of the tables. That there is not marginal homogeneity in these tables, Boudon argues, is because the distribution of social status is determined by exogenous factors, whereas an individual “can go to college if he wants to, provided he is qualified” (Boudon 1974, p. 21).

Nowadays, we would be less concerned with tables of relative position and would look directly at the origin-destination mobility table. I have generated the mobility table from Boudon’s data,¹ and a striking feature of it is that the OD

1 Because Boudon assumes that the son’s destination status depends on his origin only via his own education, the origin by destination status (O by D) table is the product of the origin by education (O by E), and education by destination (E by D) tables. Boudon presents the OE table (Boudon 1974, p. 8, Table 1.5) but one can generate it from the marginal distributions of O and E and the bias parameter by

association is not independent of the bias parameter in the OE relationship. Using the intrinsic association parameter from the OD table as our measure of ISO (Bouchet-Vallat 2022), Boudon's parameters yield a value of 19. However, if we reduce the bias parameter (leading to less IEO), the value falls: for a bias parameter of 0.7, the intrinsic association parameter takes the value 16.7, for 0.6, it has the value 13.9, and for 0.5, 11.3. So, in fact, Boudon's own model suggests that reducing IEO also reduces ISO (bearing in mind that this means IEO and ISO as we would probably measure them nowadays).

In chapter 2, Boudon begins his analysis of change over time in IEO. After a review of different approaches to explaining educational differences by social origin, he presents his own theory, which sees IEO as a function of primary and secondary effects. Primary effects: "the lower the social status the poorer the cultural background – hence the lower the school achievement". Secondary effects: school continuation decisions will vary by social background, even with primary effects held constant. Here he draws heavily on Keller and Zavalloni (1964) to argue that more advantaged children will choose more ambitious educational options because the benefits to this choice increase in family social status and the costs correspondingly decline. In chapter 3, he draws on a wide range of what he terms "school bookkeeping data", largely from the OECD, and argues that it supports his theory.

In chapter 4, he presents "A Dynamic IEO Model", the idea of which will be familiar to contemporary sociologists of educational inequality, in that he presents the educational career as a sequence of binary decision points at which a student must decide whether to remain in education or leave or whether to take a more or a less ambitious educational option. He bases this on several assumptions. First, he assumes three social classes, c , whose educational decisions are to be compared. He assumes that their initial educational attainment, a , is taken to be a function of their social origins (call these conditional probabilities $q|c$): these capture primary effects. He further assumes that their probability of choosing one or other of the options at each decision point depends on both their social class and their initial attainment (call these $p|c, a$). These are secondary effects. The $p|c, a$ apply unchanged to all decision points and in Boudon's model there are eight of these.

From these basic assumptions, Boudon can generate a set of what we now call hazard rates and survivor functions for the educational career of students from different social classes. In chapter 5, he implements this model and draws

following the algorithm he presents on pages 8 and 9. The same applies to the ED table (given in Table 1.6, p. 9). Transforming the two tables of frequencies to outflow tables and multiplying them yields the OD mobility table.

attention to a number of results. In particular, it is striking that class differences in the probability of reaching a given educational level widen as one moves to higher levels. Using his measure of class disparities (the proportion reaching an educational level among students from the highest compared to those from the lowest social class origin), inequality in at least gaining entrance to college is 1.8 (the former have a probability 1.8 times greater than the latter). For graduating from college, the disparity is 3.7, while the disparity for attaining less than high school is only 2.

128 Boudon also wonders whether primary or secondary effects have the greater impact on these disparities, and he investigates this by running a simulation in which students from all class origins are assigned the same distribution of $q|c$, implying that there are no primary effects. The disparities are quite substantially smaller: for entry to college, 9.8 compared to the original 1.8, for college completion, 1.9, and for high school completion, 1.6. Boudon's interpretation of these results, however, strikes me as rather odd. He focuses on the fact that disparities in the simulation still remain high, rather than on the magnitude by which they have been reduced and writes: "we must also accept that the secondary effects of stratification on IEO are, other things being equal, probably much more important than their primary (cultural) effects" (Boudon 1974, p. 84).

Surprisingly, Boudon does not simulate the opposite scenario – no secondary differences by class while preserving the initial primary differences. However, if one does this (as I have), one finds support for Boudon's argument: at all points in the educational career, the class disparities are less than 2.

Finally, Boudon uses this sequential model to simulate changes over time, increasing the probabilities of making each educational transition by 10 percent. He claims that these simulations show IEO declining over time, but, as Hauser (1976, p. 922) pointed out, "the main results of Boudon's variation in survival rates across cohorts are an upward shift in the educational distribution for everyone and an increase in its dispersion. Boudon's fictitious data do not show substantially more equality of opportunity in later cohorts".

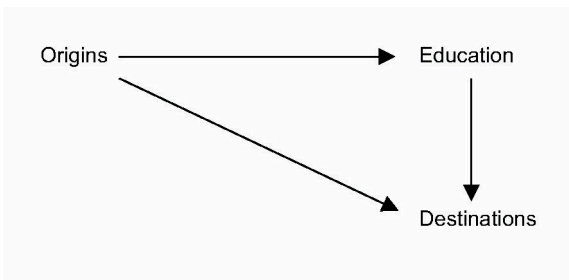
In chapter 6, Boudon draws together some conclusions from his models. The two most important are the following. First, as we have just seen, he argues that secondary effects are much more important than primary effects in generating IEO, and, following from this, his second conclusion is that society, not school, is chiefly responsible for IEO (Boudon 1974, p. 114). Even if schools reduced primary effects, high IEO would still be found. Therefore, greater equality of condition is needed to reduce IEO: "the best strategy seems to lie ... rather than inside schools, in social and economic change rather than in educational change" (Boudon 1974, p. 115).

ASSESSMENT

Turning first to Boudon's (1974, p. 11) simulation model of O, E, and D, he claims that the conclusions of his simulations do not depend on the exact parameter values chosen and that the same conclusions would be reached given other values "not too remote from the ones given here". Although this is likely true, he does not demonstrate it, either by using data to justify his choice of parameter values or by varying their value to examine the robustness of his results.

Boudon's (1974, p. 10) main assumption, in his simulation model, is that "achieved social status depends only on educational level". He admits that this does not accord with empirical findings, but argues that the "residual influence of social background is very often weak in comparison to the influence of social background on level of education or of level of education on achieved status" (Boudon 1974, p. 10). It is difficult to see how even he could have justified this conclusion, given that he was writing after the appearance of Blau and Duncan's *The American Occupational Structure* (1967) and Christopher Jencks et al.'s (1973) book, *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effects of Family and Schooling in America*. Certainly, this assumption would not be considered tenable nowadays when there is a whole sub-branch of the study of educational inequality concerned with what it terms "DESO" (direct effects of social origin: see Ballarino and Bernardi 2016). Figure 2 adds this edge, directly linking origins and destinations, to Figure 1. In some cases, the DESO has been found to be larger than the indirect effect of social origins mediated via education. While agreeing with Boudon that education is the most important single factor shaping social status, researchers nowadays would place much greater weight on the role played by other factors related to social background.

Figure 2: Directed Acyclic Graphical Presentation of the Origin – Education – Destination (OED) Triangle, Including the Direct Path from Origins to Destinations



Boudon, in several places, claims that the data support his simulation results when, in fact, they would also have supported a range of possible models of IEO. DESO is a case in point. The full OED triangle shown in Figure 2 suggests an alternative explanation for why declining IEO does not lead to declining ISO. While IEO causes the indirect effect of origins on destinations to weaken, the direct effect strengthens as the more advantaged seek to use other channels by which to preserve their advantages (see Goldthorpe 2016).

Boudon's ideas about primary and secondary effects have been important for later scholars, especially since Goldthorpe and others adopted them at the start of the 2000s. There have been a number of empirical analyses of their role in accounting for IEO in single countries as well as a cross-national study edited by Michelle Jackson in 2013 (Jackson 2013). Most of them have found that, for most educational transitions, Boudon's claim that secondary effects are more important than primary effects has been upheld. My sense, however, is that this approach never really took hold in the US and that, recently, interest in it in Europe has waned somewhat. One reason for this may be the realisation that it is difficult to identify primary and secondary effects given the data available to us (as pointed out by Morgan 2012; Morgan, Spiller and Todd 2013).

It is Boudon's explanation of secondary effects that has proved to be the most influential element of his analyses of IEO. He argued that students from different origins make different educational choices as a rational response to the circumstances in which they are situated, rather than being a consequence of class differences in preferences or time discounting. This rational choice approach has been adopted by sociologists, including Gambetta, Goldthorpe, Erikson, Jonsson, Esser, and many others. The model of educational decision-making that I published with John Goldthorpe (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997), for example, now has almost 4000 citations – a fact I mention not to blow my own trumpet but to show the enormous popularity of a model that is heavily inspired by Boudon's writing. Although Boudon took the idea (which Goldthorpe and I termed "relative risk aversion") from Keller and Zavalloni (1964), it seems unlikely that without Boudon's book it would have spread so widely or been so influential.

Boudon's modelling of education as a sequence of binary decisions was also not an original idea. It can be found in US sociology of the 1960s and as far back as the work of Gunnar Boalt in Sweden from the 1940s. However, contemporary applications of the approach owe much more to the work of Robert Mare (1979; 1980) than to Raymond Boudon. Mare used data to estimate the transition probabilities from a transition model rather than simulate them. It is this approach that has been taken up by the field and has become the standard way in which we analyse educational progression.

To summarise, the influence of Boudon's book on contemporary students of educational inequality has been limited both by factors related to the book itself and by external factors related to the way in which sociology has changed over the past 50 years.

There is no doubt that Boudon's interpretations of data and of his own simulation results are sometimes puzzling. As Hauser (1976, p. 913) pointed out in his review, the "relationship between evidence and conclusions is often weak, is sometimes artefactual, and in a few instances is contradictory. The analytical and observational evidence is frequently flawed by errors of fact, of method, and of logic". In particular, Boudon claims in several places that the data support his argument, when in fact they do not, or his findings are such that they would have supported a range of possible models of IEO, not just his own. There is also the question of the puzzle that motivates the book: Is it really a puzzle? That is to say, did IEO decline while ISO remained unchanged? Even when Boudon was writing, it was far from clear that there was such a puzzle, and, with hindsight, it seems apparent that there was not. Furthermore, although Boudon is concerned with change over time – how does a decline in IEO affect ISO? – his simulations are, with the exception of the material in chapters 4 and 5, entirely cross-sectional.

The improvement in the availability of data and the advent of better statistical models have contributed to making the study of IEO much more empirically sophisticated. However, at the same time, it has also become more descriptive, and studies are often justified by their policy relevance. Theory has not been entirely absent (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997; Erikson and Jonsson 1996; Raftery and Hout 1993; Lucas 2001), but the study of IEO is predominantly what Boudon later called "cameral" sociology. This trend has been exacerbated by the causal revolution. Now the questions we address are more likely to be of the form "does *X* affect *Y* and by how much" rather than "why does *X* affect *Y*" or "what explains *Y*". The design of causal research increasingly comes to try to mimic a true experiment, and in this context, there is little or no room for systemic simulations of the kind Boudon proposed. With some notable exceptions (and excluding the ad hoc theorising one typically finds at the end of an empirical paper seeking to explain its results or the equally ad hoc "hypothesising" that one finds at the start of many papers), the emphasis is on the empirics and not on explanatory theory.

CONCLUSION

There is much to criticise in Boudon's book (and not only with the benefit of hindsight), but there is also much to admire. The major strength of the

book, and its enduring relevance, lies in its overall approach rather than in its implementation. In particular, the idea that macro-level outcomes (in Boudon's case the relation between IEO and ISO) should be explained by reference to a set of simpler processes that have a wide applicability and can be readily understood (the different degrees of constraint on the expansion of higher education and the expansion of higher status positions) is now widely accepted, especially by analytical sociologists and other proponents of mechanism-based explanations. It is ironic that, with some exceptions, this approach has proven to be much less influential among sociologists of social stratification and educational inequality.

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This remarkably well-structured volume accomplishes two feats at once. It offers a critical engagement with the multiple facets and contributions of Raymond Boudon's sociological oeuvre, for example: the modeling of relative deprivation, the generative approach to social stratification, the plea for methodological individualism, the analysis of unintended consequences and social change, the epistemology of sociological investigations, and the reflection on rationality and belief formation. Through this critical engagement – here is the second feat – this volume tackles substantive and methodological issues central to contemporary developments in the discipline of sociology, whether the focus is on formal models, simulation work, counterfactual reasoning, social mobility and its measurements, the significance of Rational Choice, or our understanding of processual dynamics.

Ivan Ermakoff, Professor of Sociology,
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Without indulging in praise, this collective volume – bringing together 18 substantial chapters – aims to shed light on the enduring legacy of Raymond Boudon's sociology. It addresses a notable gap: the lack of a detailed, multifaceted examination of the work of one of the foremost figures in both French and international sociology. The reader will find not only an assessment of Boudon's intellectual contributions but also a critical appraisal of their limitations and the avenues they open for further research into contemporary issues. The book will appeal both to specialists familiar with the evolution of Boudon's thought over time and to those wishing to discover it, explore it in greater depth, or draw upon it for teaching purposes.

Gérald Gaglio, Professor of Sociology,
Université Côte d'Azur

This book is a splendid tribute to Raymond Boudon, one of the most important sociologists of the second half of the 20th century. The contributions, in their appreciative and critical aspects alike, clearly bring out the intellectual depth and challenging nature of Boudon's work and its continuing relevance in the study of modern societies.

John H. Goldthorpe, Emeritus Fellow,
Nuffield College, University of Oxford

This collection of papers, expertly curated by Gianluca Manzo, is as wide-ranging and thought-provoking as Raymond Boudon himself. It is sure to stimulate interest in a now-sometimes-forgotten giant of French sociology.

Neil Gross, Charles A. Dana Professor of Sociology,
Colby College (Maine)

This Memorial Festschrift honors Raymond Boudon (1934–2013) by considering his contributions to conceptualization, theory, and empirics, as well as their associated methods, across foundational topical domains in sociology and guided by expert commentators. It is not only a superb assessment, and its value will grow in three main ways. First, like most Festschriften, it provides a portrait of the growth and trajectory of Boudon's ideas, embedded in his relations with other scholars, both teachers, peers, and students. This portrait will grow over time. Second, as the historian David Knowles wrote about the *quaestiones quodlibetales* of the medieval university (especially the University of Paris) and the debates held during Advent and Lent when anyone could ask any question of any master, Festschrift discussions are a valuable index to what is “in the air” – in this case both when Boudon was working and now. Third, Boudon believed in the promise of mathematics, and it will be possible to trace over time the progress of the $X \rightarrow Y$ relations in the book, as they travel from general functions to specific functions.

Guillermina Jasso, Professor of Sociology,
Silver Professor of Arts and Science, New York University

This book is not a hagiography. Unusually, its title truly reflects its content. Twenty-two sociologists from different countries and different generations take a fresh look at the work of Raymond Boudon. In keeping with his approach but without complacency, they highlight the theoretical and methodological contributions of his sociology, its limitations, its errors, its relevance for teaching sociology to the new generations, and the perspectives that remain open in several thematic areas.

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