Intersections of race, gender, and sexuality are drawn out in Silva's analysis of her participants' stories and linked back to questions of individualization and the emergence of a mood economy. Silva documents how time and again, young working-class people of differing races, genders, and sexual orientations get let down and individuated by institutions that would once have been routes to a stable adulthood—a good example being the military. She suggests that some institutions, however, continue to provide a safety net, and in some public services a route to a more traditional form of working-class masculinity prevailed. Moreover, there are, among all the distress, problems, and foreshortened opportunities, some stories of hope and success. But, as Silva notes, when success is bought through connections and networks, these are often rendered into stories of individual attainment by the young people. In the chapter "Hardened Selves," she paints a bleak picture of a neoliberal subject who emphasizes self-reliance and individualism to such an extent that I was left wondering it there could ever be or indeed will ever be an alternative. In the conclusion Silva does offer a prescription for change, including recommendations for a living wage, basic social protections, and the requisite skills and information needed to challenge whatever comes next. Furthermore, she offers a sliver of hope, as she says: "Their coming of age stories are still unfolding, their futures not yet written" (p. 156).

I enjoyed reading this book. It will stay in my memory long after it returns to my bookshelf, although I suspect it will not stay there long. For sociologists of youth and adulthood, like me, it contains many insights that spur the sociological imagination. But above all, the young working-class lives that Silva enables us to hear will continue to haunt me. They may be "coming up short" in an economic and social system that promises much, yet often delivers little, but to my mind and throughout Silva's book, they are adults with important messages to convey and lives to lead.

*Education, Social Background and Cognitive Ability: The Decline of the Social*. By Gary N. Marks. New York: Routledge, 2014. Pp. xii+292. $155.00.

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In *Education, Social Background and Cognitive Ability: The Decline of the Social*, Gary Marks forcefully argues that cognitive ability has much more impact and social background has much less impact on educational and career attainment than sociologists commonly profess—despite their own good evidence that supports Marks's position. His close review of this research largely supports key tenets of now-unfashionable modernization theory and challenges the presumptions of now-ascendant reproduction theory.

These "theories" represent competing analytical summaries of the balance between ascription and individual achievement in affecting socioeconomic outcomes—and the trajectory of this balance. As applied to social stratification, modernization theory argues that with economic development the impact of ascription declines and the impact of achievement, especially as represented by education and cognitive ability, increases.

In sharp contrast, the several strands of reproduction theory commonly claim that the intergenerational transmission of status has been strong and continues to be strong. Reproduction theorists often further claim that what appears to be the impact of achievement actually represents ascriptive processes at work (e.g., educational degrees merely certify cultural capital, not a productive capacity).

Marks usefully attends to the preliminary task of outlining how key variables have been conceptualized and measured. If the reader needed any reminder, this section highlights that family background has been measured in many ways and that the correlations between these measures are not always strong. Since the impact of education looms so large in subsequent chapters, I think it would have behooved Marks to give greater attention to how it should be conceptualized. Marks seems to uncritically accept the view that education reflects achievement, consistent with modernization theory and human capital theory in economics. I personally think this view is largely, not totally, right, but to make a fully convincing case for his overall argument, Marks should rebut the claim that education is essentially a marker for conformity to the cultural norms of privileged groups.

Marks's focus on the impact of cognitive ability will surely be contentious. It is fair to say that sociologists have tended to be ambivalent or even resistant to considering its impact, unlike psychologists and economists, who routinely demonstrate its consequence. Marks may have unnecessarily stirred up the waters by conflating cognitive ability with a particular, but prominently challenged, understanding of intelligence, namely that it is a relatively stable, unidimensional trait represented by *g*. In any case, only a few of the studies that Marks reviews incorporate direct measures of *g*.

In defending measures of cognitive ability, Marks valuably emphasizes that a large body of research consistently undercuts the common notion that test scores are proxy measures of social status. At the bivariate level, test scores are moderately, not strongly related to status, and, net of SES, the association between test scores and educational performance and attainment is substantial.

The core empirical chapters largely draw on research within the status-attainment tradition, including some of the author's original research. This analysis constitutes what Marks refers to as the "horse race" approach—that is, a comparison of the magnitude of coefficients—ascriptive factors versus achievement factors. For any specific topic, Marks cites many studies, indicating the data set, key measures, and specific size of the relevant coefficients. To be sure, this level of detail can have its tedious side for the reader, but its compensating virtue is underscoring the sheer weight of the evidence.

Skeptics will see how much prominent research they will have to "explain away."

By way of very quick summary of what Marks's review reveals: the intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status is moderate and is primarily accounted for by status differences in education and cognitive ability; cognitive ability is strongly associated with academic outcomes, much more so than SES; both education and to a lesser extent cognitive ability are associated with career success, net of SES; and the "balance" between ascription and achievement is generally trending toward the latter.

At the same time, Marks is duly attentive to the fact that for some outcomes different analytical approaches can yield different results. Have socioeconomic differences in educational attainment declined? Linear models generally indicate yes; analyses of educational transitions and log-linear models generally indicate no.

By specifying actual coefficients, Marks implicitly raises a crucial analytical point: How big is big? Consider that average correlation, across 53 societies, between father's and son's occupation (ISEI) is .324 (the United States is .302). There is no statistical answer as to how to substantively characterize the magnitude of this correlation, even if common rules of thumb would suggest that it is moderate. In Marks's judgment, the size of this correlation indicates considerable intergenerational occupational mobility, contradicting reproduction theory's claim of a strong association between origins and destination. While his judgment seems reasonable to me, others are not precluded from a different interpretation.

The major challenge to Marks's overall argument is the fairly substantial (in my judgment) relationship between parents' income and their children's adult income, especially in the United States and Great Britain. Economists' best estimates of the intergenerational elasticities for the United States seem to be just under 0.5; estimates for many other countries are much lower. Marks expresses some reservations about these estimates, but even if reasonably accurate, they only partly undercut modernization theory because the advantage of higher-income families may reflect the higher cognitive ability of their offspring, as well as the stronger relationship between education and earnings.

All in all, even as the evidence is not wholly consistent, Marks makes a strong case for the dominant and increasingly dominant role of achievement in the allocation process. This argument does not mean that this trend will inexorably continue, that ascription does not condition chances for achievement, or that there are no persisting and significant inequities. Gender? Race? Yet to those who deny the relatively large impact of achievement and the "decline of the social," the gauntlet is down.