

Bourdieu Study Group's

Mid Term International Conference 2025

Rising Complexities in Education: Opportunities and Inequalities

3-5 September 2025, Vienna

Conference Rationale

Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the wars in the Middle East and Ukraine (with a dramatic impact on energy and food prices), and extreme weather events in many parts of the world have accelerated social inequalities. This has contributed to widening educational inequalities, and the role of educational institutions in counteracting crises has become an ever more pressing question. In addition, an expansion and diversification of educational pathways has led to exclusionary mechanisms becoming more subtle. Educational opportunities have increased, but questions of who profits from this expansion, who is equipped to successfully navigate them and who is left behind arise. In this context, combating educational inequalities has become more complex and the intersectional interplay of various social relations (e.g. class, gender, race, and disability) creates new forms of both disadvantage and privilege. Therefore, to initiate meaningful change, it is crucial to understand the ambivalent role of the education system in creating opportunities and perpetuating inequalities.

More than 50 years ago, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron uncovered that educational practices and structures play a substantial role in perpetuating social hierarchies. Their studies demonstrated that while education is often seen as a tool for emancipation and progress, it also acts as an accomplice in reproducing inequalities. However, the ways in which educational institutions perpetuate unequal relations must be continually re-examined, locally contextualised and empirically explored in order to successfully tackle them. Bourdieu's work remains highly relevant today for understanding how education generates and transforms opportunities as well as inequalities. His relational perspective allows us to examine the contemporary challenges posed by the polarisation of opportunities, the expansion of educational pathways, the marketisation of education under neoliberal developments and the increasing diversity of both learners and educators.

The BSA Bourdieu Study Group wants to bring a community interested in unpacking educational inequalities together to create collective reflections on the contemporary mechanisms of reproduction and transformation. Particularly, we aim at discussing how Bourdieusian theory and its further developments can capture, analyse and potentially contribute to overcoming educational inequalities.

The fourth international biennial conference will convene at the Viennese Chamber for Workers and Employees, from 3 to 5 of September 2025, giving continuity to previous BSA Bourdieu Study Group Mid-term events (Bristol, 2016, Lancaster, 2018 and Barcelona, 2023).

Thematic areas

The objective of the International Conference is to bring together scholars interested in the critical, relational and reflexive analysis of educational inequality from a Bourdieusian perspective, comprising a wide range of areas of inquiry:

- **Theoretical approaches** to unpick the complexities of contemporary mechanisms of educational inequalities
 - Classical Bourdieusian conceptual tools to study educational inequalities (e.g. habitus, capital, field)
 - Expansion of less frequently explored Bourdieusian concepts (e.g. doxa, hysteresis, social magic)
 - Combination of Bourdieu's theory with other theoretical perspectives (e.g. intersectional approaches, postcolonial theories, affect studies)
- **Methodological approaches** to examine the utility of the Bourdieusian analytical tools for the study of educational inequalities
 - Relational thinking in the study of educational inequalities
 - Methodological challenges for the Bourdieusian study of experiences, practices and processes
 - Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches to study educational inequalities
- **Empirical approaches** to explore the relationships between educational and social inequalities across different national educational systems, political and institutional contexts
 - Experiences of educational opportunities and inequalities (e.g. subjectivities, embodiment, aspirations)
 - Practices of educational opportunities and inequalities (e.g. schooling, pedagogical practices, elite production)
 - Politics of educational opportunities and inequalities (e.g. policies, institutions, discourses)

Proposals can also combine theoretical, methodological, and empirical approaches.

Conference Structure

The conference will include keynote sessions, parallel sessions, and keynote semi-plenary sessions, as well as a book launch, and several social and academic events.

Keynote Speakers

- Prof. Ann-Marie Bathmaker (Emeritus Professor of Vocational and Higher Education in the School of Education, University of Birmingham)
- Steven Threadgold (Associate Professor in Sociology and Anthropology, University of Newcastle)

Submissions

The conference includes two main types of submissions: Individual Papers and Special Events (Symposia). The deadline for both types of submissions is Friday 31st January. To submit please go to <https://www.britsoc.co.uk/bourdieu25>

Individual Papers

Individual Paper presentations last 15-20 minutes, plus 5-10 minutes for questions. They will be scheduled in 90-minute sessions, which include 3 or 4 papers on similar themes.

The submission consists of an abstract of 300 words (incl. references) clearly indicating the object of inquiry, the methodology of the study, the expected outcomes and its relevance for the topic of the conference.

The title, the name and the affiliation of the authors, as well as 3 keywords, must also be provided. Abstracts will be reviewed and selected for presentation by the scientific committee of the conference and must be submitted online to the submission platform.

Special Event (Symposia)

Special Event (Symposia) consist of 90-minute conference sessions organised by the submitters. They include a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 4 papers per session plus a Discussant. The symposia need to be handed in as one submission with a description of the symposia (up to 300 words, incl. references) and abstracts for all papers linked to it (300 words abstract per paper, incl. references). You will also be asked to state 3 keywords and list presenting authors and co-authors with email addresses and affiliations. A chairperson and a discussant, who can offer a critique of the symposium, need to be named on the proposal. Symposia will be reviewed and selected for presentation by the scientific committee of the conference and must be submitted online to the submission platform.

Registration

Abstract decisions will be communicated against all submitted papers by Friday 14th March, the presenter booking deadline is Saturday 19th April.

Registration rates are the following:

BSA Members Full Conference	£200
BSA Concessionary Members Full Conference	£150
Non-Members Full Conference	£250

Registrations received after 1st June will be increased by £50 across all registration types.

Registration includes:

- Access to all conference sessions
- Access to all conference coffee breaks and lunches
- Free wine reception
- Book launch
- Conference online programme booklet
- Certificate of attendance to the Conference

The conference fee does not include access to the social dinner on September the 4th. When registering for the conference, delegates may also book their reservation for the social dinner.

Abstract submission deadline	Friday 31 st January 2025
Abstracts notification	Friday 14 th March 2025
Presenter booking deadline	Saturday 19 th April 2025
Initial programme sent to participants	Thursday May 1 st 2025
Final programme sent to participants	Thursday May 15 th 2025
Deadline for registration	Tuesday July 1 st 2025
Conference	September 3 rd -5 th 2025

Conference Venue and Organisation

The conference will take place at the AK Wien Bildungsgebäude.

Address: Theresianumgasse 16-18, 1040 Vienna

The conference is co-organised by the British Sociological Association's Bourdieu Study Group together with the research unit Education and Inequality at the University of Vienna, the Institute of Education at the University of Tübingen, the Department of Psychosocial Intervention and Communication Studies at the University of Innsbruck and the Viennese Chamber for Workers and Employees.

Organising Committee

Flora Petrik, M.A. (University of Tübingen)

Ass.-Prof. Dr. Franziska Lessky (University of Innsbruck)

Prof. Dr. Veronika Wöhrer (University of Vienna)

Scientific Committee

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