ISS Research Colloquium
"Demography and Social Inequality"

Summer Term 2021

via Zoom
Wednesdays, 16:00 – 17:30

21.04.2021   Prof. Dr. Katrin Auspurg (University of Munich)

Has the Credibility of the Social Sciences Been Credibly Destroyed? Reanalyzing the 'Many Analysts, One Data Set' Project by Causal Reasoning and Multiverse Analysis

05.05.2021   Dr. Emanuela Struffolino (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin & WZB)

In-work poverty in Germany and in the US from a children perspective

19.05.2021   Prof. Dr. Herman G. van de Werfhorst (University of Amsterdam)

Early selection and social inequality of educational outcomes: reforms and mechanisms

23.06.2021   Prof. Dr. Stefan Trautmann (Universität Heidelberg)

***Noblesse Oblige*: Holding High-Status Individuals to Higher Standards**

14.07.2021   Dr. Sara Geven (University of Amsterdam)

Educational institutions and inequality in teacher expectations, and its repercussions for students

Please contact *sekretariat.soziologie(at)wiso.uni-koeln.de* for zoom link and password.

Abstracts

Has the Credibility of the Social Sciences Been Credibly Destroyed? Reanalyzing the 'Many Analysts, One Data Set' Project by Causal Reasoning and Multiverse Analysis.

Katrin Auspurg & Josef Brüderl

In 2018, R. Silberzahn and E. Uhlmann published a paper where 29 teams analyzed the same research question with the same data set: are soccer referees more likely to give red cards to players with dark skin tone than to players with light skin tone? The results obtained by the 29 teams differed extensively. The main conclusion from this widely noted exercise was that the social sciences are not rigorous enough to provide definitive answers. However, the crowdsourcing initiative did not explain the variation in results. We argue that the Silberzahn & Uhlmann finding was mainly due to a remarkably unclear research question: teams differed in their interpretation of the research question and therefore used diverse research designs and model specifications. We show by reanalyzing the data that with a clear research question, a precise definition of the parameter of interest, and theory guided causal reasoning, results vary only within a narrow range – even when one estimates hundreds of different model specifications in a multiverse analysis (allowing for different controls, functional forms, operationalizations). Thus, the broad conclusion of our reanalysis is that rigorous social science research is able to provide a consistent answer. In addition, we also argue and show that rigorous causal analyses should not stop with consistent results, but should continue with analyses of sensitivity to omitted variable bias: otherwise, results might seem very consistent, but nevertheless are biased. We conclude with lessons for modern, rigorous social research.

In-work poverty in Germany and in the US from a children perspective.

Emanuela Struffolino & Zachary Van Winkle

This study contributes to the analysis of in-work poverty by adopting a children's perspective: this is crucial to identify sources of intergenerational transmission of inequality beyond more traditional drivers such as poverty and unemployment. Focussing on the US and Germany, we first account for the in-work poverty risk among children of different age groups between the 1980s and 2015. Second, we explore heterogeneities by household's constellations and number of earners. Longitudinal data from the US and Germany allow us to consider if and to what extent the in-work poverty risk persists over children's life course. By comparing these two countries we gain insights on whether institutional arrangements can affect the association between household's constellations and the risk of in-work poverty, which might have implications for the cumulation of disadvantage within and across generations.

Early selection and social inequality of educational outcomes: reforms and mechanisms.

Herman van de Werfhorst

Drawing on a few comparative, experimental and longitudinal studies, I will analyse to what extent early selection in education magnifies inequalities, and through which mechanisms this happens. Analyses of educational reforms in Europe show that reforms towards later tracking reduce inequalities in educational achievement and attainment by socioeconomic background. Children of working-class origins perform better if selection in education is postponed, even after holding constant on egalitarian political climates. However, relative advantages are hardly affected for social groups that are strongly committed to education, such as children of tertiary educated parents and professionals. A longitudinal study on the Netherlands points to the fact that broader schools (offering multiple tracks) are not necessarily promoting equality of opportunity relative to single-track schools, suggesting that only region or nation-wide reforms may reduce inequalities. Experimental evidence on teacher expectations in three countries demonstrates that early selection (at least when based on strongly standardized information available on student performance) creates a more strongly predictive power of academic achievement for expected further school careers. These results are placed in a discussion on rational and cultural theories of sorting and categorization. I conclude that most of the negative effect of early selection on equal opportunities happens through sorting, not through mismatches with the cultural climate that may result from students being placed in schools a-typical for their social class.

Noblesse Oblige: Holding High-Status Individuals to Higher Standards.

Stefan Trautmann, Xianghong Wang, Yijie Wang & Yilong Xu

Although there is evidence for the generosity of high-status individuals, there seems to be a strong perception that the elites are selfish and contribute little to others' welfare, and less so than poorer people. We argue that this perception may derive from a gap between normative and empirical expectations regarding the behavior of the elites. In two large-scale survey experiments, we show that high-status individuals are indeed held to higher ethical standards in both the US and China. We then present direct evidence for a gap between people's normative expectations of how the rich should behave, and their empirical expectations of how they actually do: empirical expectations are generally lower than both normative expectations and actual giving.

Educational institutions and inequality in teacher expectations, and its repercussions for students.

Sara Geven

Teachers tend to hold lower expectations and give lower track recommendations to children from typically disadvantaged social and/or ethnic groups. These differential teacher expectations lead to disparities in students' day-to-day experiences in school, and are believed to contribute to the persisting inequalities in educational attainment in Western societies. Until now, research has largely ignored the role of the institutional context, at both the national and the school-level, in understanding inequalities in teacher expectations and track recommendations. However, at the national level, educational institutions, such as tracking procedures, may influence the extent to which teachers base their expectations on students' demographic traits. Within a national context of early tracking, the level of formalization and accountability of (tracking) guidelines and procedures in school could influence social inequality in teacher expectations. Using newly performed vignette experiments, I compare the impact of various student and family traits on teacher expectations in different national and school contexts. Teacher expectations and track recommendations can function as a signal to student, and may come to serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, 'high' teacher expectations and track placements may boost students' academic self-concept, expectations, and subsequent school engagement and performance; whereas 'low' teacher expectations and track placements do the exact opposite. More importantly, students from different backgrounds may respond to these tracking signals in diverse ways, thereby either exacerbating or reducing existing educational inequalities. Using German panel data, I examine how students from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds respond to their track placement in terms of their educational expectations.