

Mechanisms of Educational Inequality

Summer term 2020
Tuesdays, 4:15-5:45 pm
online

The seminar deals with the various factors that account for the emergence of educational inequality. We are going to review the most important theoretical concepts and explanatory models and link them to empirical findings. To this end, we will read and discuss selected empirical studies on specific mechanisms of social inequality in educational attainment. Furthermore, the seminar will provide the opportunity to conduct own empirical analyses through complementary exercises.

Programme

1	21/04	Introduction to the seminar
	28/04	<i>no session</i>
2	05/05	The concept of social mechanisms
	12/05	<i>no session</i>
3	19/05	Primary and secondary effects and beyond
4	26/05	Accounting for primary and secondary effects empirically
	02/06	<i>no session</i>
5	09/06	The emergence of primary effects (part 1)
6	16/06	The emergence of primary effects (part 2)
	23/06	<i>no session</i>
7	30/06	The emergence of secondary effects (part 1)
8	07/07	The emergence of secondary effects (part 2)
9	14/07	Factors beyond primary and secondary effects (part 1)
10	21/07	Factors beyond primary and secondary effects (part 2)
11	28/07	Additional session (if necessary)

Online learning platforms: Virtual Campus and Microsoft Teams

The seminar will be conducted completely online. The technical requirements are:

- Stable internet connection
- User device (PC, laptop, tablet, smartphone)
- Camera, headset/speakers, microphone

If you do not possess all technical equipment, please get in touch with the course instructor.

Virtual Campus (VC)

Literature, material and information about the seminar will be provided here. The VC will also provide upload areas for assignments. Seminar participants will be added to the VC course automatically after they have registered for the seminar via FlexNow.

Link to VC course: <https://vc.uni-bamberg.de/course/view.php?id=41106>

Microsoft Teams

We will conduct all seminar sessions through the platform *Microsoft Teams* as video conferences. Students can access the virtual meeting rooms with their (uni-bamberg) e-mail-addresses.

Students can also use *Microsoft Teams* for group work video meetings beyond the seminar sessions.

The virtual meeting rooms can be accessed through standard web browsers: <https://teams.microsoft.com/>. However, we recommend installing the app on your device. Installation files and further information are provided on the university computing centre's website: <https://www.uni-bamberg.de/rz/dienstleistungen/dateidienste/teams/> (in German only).

We will provide a brief instruction in the VC how to work with *Microsoft Teams* in this seminar.

Course objectives

- Getting familiar with theoretical concepts and empirical findings related to the generating factors of educational inequality
- Learn to provide sociological explanations by connecting social phenomena to underlying mechanisms and processes.
- Practise to link theoretically derived hypotheses to empirical data

Course requirements

- Regular and active participation
- Preparing the sessions by reading the session-related literature
- Accomplishing two individual assignments
- Contributing to one short group presentation
- Contributing to two consecutive thematic sessions designed in teamwork

Exam option: Portfolio

- Students who want to take the exam in this course have to complete their portfolio with a term paper in addition to the assignments listed above.
- The portfolio consists of the following elements:
 - individual assignments (10%)
 - short group presentation (10%)
 - design of thematic session (30%)
 - term paper (50%)

- Term paper
 - the term paper should be devoted to one specific mechanism of educational inequality
 - a comparison of different mechanisms is also possible
 - the paper should comprise a theoretical discussion of the role of the mechanism(s) and a complete yet concise overview of empirical findings
 - an own empirical analysis is optional
 - deadline: 30 September 2020

Sessions and students' contributions

Sessions and related literature

- Each session is devoted to a core topic
- As a basis for discussion, all students have to read the literature indicated on the seminar's schedule in advance

Assignments

- For two sessions, two small assignments will be handed out in advance
- Students have to work on these assignments individually and hand them in before the sessions

Group presentation

- For the discussion of decomposition methods in session 4, students have to team up in different groups and each group has to prepare a short presentation
- The groups will be formed in session 2

Thematic sessions organised by groups

- For the second part of the seminar, students have to team up in three thematic groups:
 - primary effects
 - secondary effects
 - factors beyond primary and secondary effects
- Students will be assigned to groups in session 2
- The groups' task is to design two consecutive sessions on the social mechanisms behind their thematic concept. This comprises the following tasks:
 - distribution of work tasks among the group members
 - literature review
 - development of a conceptual overview of relevant theoretical mechanisms
 - design of a session schedule and concept
- The two consecutive sessions should comprise the following parts:
 - conceptual overview and discussion of relevant mechanisms in the different stages of the educational trajectory
 - brief summary of empirical findings with respect to all relevant mechanisms that have been identified
 - more detailed presentation of studies on selected mechanisms
- Each group has to send a first draft of their session concept to the course instructor **at least 3 weeks in advance**.

Sessions and topics

Session 1 Introduction

- content:*
- course objectives and organisational matters
 - how to use Microsoft Teams
 - formation of thematic teams for the seminar

Session 2 The concept of social mechanisms

- content:*
- we will discuss the concepts of social mechanisms and sociological explanations
 - we will link these concepts conceptually to social inequalities in educational attainment

Session 3 Primary and secondary effects and beyond

- content:*
- we will discuss the strengths and limits of the concept of primary and secondary effects for the explanation of educational inequality
 - we will develop a conceptual framework for the analyses of social inequality in educational attainment that will serve as a reference for the remainder of the seminar

Session 4 Accounting for primary and secondary effects empirically

- content:*
- we will discuss the strengths and limits of different methodological approaches to the empirical explanation of educational inequalities
 - teams of students present the different methods

Session 5/6 The emergence of primary effects

- content:*
- the two sessions will be organised by the “primary effects” team
 - we will systematically identify the most relevant mechanisms that produce primary effects along the educational trajectory
 - we will discuss empirical studies on selected mechanisms

Session 7/8 The emergence of secondary effects

- content:*
- the two sessions will be organised by the “secondary effects” team
 - we will systematically identify the most relevant mechanisms that produce secondary effects along the educational trajectory
 - we will discuss empirical studies on selected mechanisms

Session 9/10 Factors beyond primary and secondary effects

- content:*
- the two sessions will be organised by the “beyond primary and secondary effects” team
 - we will systematically identify the most relevant mechanisms that produce educational inequalities beyond primary and secondary effects along the educational trajectory
 - we will discuss empirical studies on selected mechanisms
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