Fueling the educational sorting machine
How tracking affects social reproduction twice

Malte Reichelt (NYUAD), Matthias Collischon (FAU), Andreas Eberl (IAB)

Idea
- Potential of individuals is not fully exploited if status relies on parental background (Piketty, 2000)
- But: Intergenerational mobility varies internationally (Breen and Jonsson, 2005)

Tracking and social reproduction
- Tracking should affect
  - Educational inheritance (O→E)
    - Parents’ strategic knowledge more important with earlier selection processes (Erikson and Jonsson, 1996)
  - Applicability of educational degrees (E→D)
    - Through vocational specificity and stronger ties between degrees and occupations (Bil and van de Werfhorst, 2016)
  - Effectively maintained inequality (O→D)
    - Positive: Less influence of ascriptive characteristics (Bil and van de Werfhorst, 2013)
    - Negative: Tight linkage to occupations reinforces qualitative educational choices (e.g. field of study)

Data
- European Social Survey 2012 / 2014
- 24 countries, N= 57,216
- Tracking: Index
  - Age at first selection
  - Length of the differentiated curriculum
  - Number of distinct school tracks for 15-year-olds
- Origin and education: ES-ISCED
- Destination: ISEI

Method
1. County-specific OLS regressions
   \[ D_{ij}^{\text{child}} = \beta_j + \beta_l O_{ij}^{\text{parent}} + \delta_j X_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij} \]
2. Effect decomposition
   \[ \beta_j = (\gamma_j + \lambda_j) + \delta_j \]
   \[ E_{ij}^{\text{child}} = r_j + \lambda_j O_{ij}^{\text{parent}} + \phi_i X_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij} \]
   \[ D_{ij}^{\text{child}} = \omega_j + \lambda_j E_{ij}^{\text{child}} + \delta_j O_{ij}^{\text{parent}} + \psi_i X_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij} \]
3. Correlation with educational tracking
   - between \( \beta_j, \lambda_j, \gamma_j, \delta_j \) and \( t \)

Results I
- \( \rho = 0.502^* \)
  - Controls: Female, Age, Partner, Partner’s education, Persons in Household, Migrant status

Results II
- \( \rho = 0.498^* \)
- \( \rho = 0.420^* \)

Conclusion
- Association between parental education and children’s status is significant and positive
- All mechanisms contribute to social reproduction
- Educational tracking is associated with stronger degrees of social reproduction
- Tracking affects social reproduction twice
  - Enhancing inheritance of education
  - Enhancing inheritance of status within educational groups
- Support for theories that ascribe an equalizing function to less-tracked education

Contact:
malte.reichelt@nyu.edu

Download working paper here: