The Teacher and the 'Ghetto' – Investigating the Influence of School Class and Neighbourhood Contexts on Teachers' Evaluations of Primary School Students

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We apply the *Model of Frame Selection (MFS)* (Esser & Kroneberg, 2015, Kroneberg, 2014) to identify mechanism of how the formation of primary-school teachers' expectations of their students is influenced by school class-level and neighbourhood-level context.

It is well-known that teachers' expectations of students ground on individual-level factors such as achievement, but also social, and ethnic background. Moreover, evidence suggests that teachers take contextual-level factors (e.g., school or school class) into account. However, empirical analyses mostly lack a theory-based concept that integrates contextual-level explanations. We aim to close this gap in research by utilizing the MFS to deduce hypotheses about the *variable rationality* of teachers' expectations on the level of *frames* (mental models of social situations), *action scripts* (mental models of action sequences), and *action* (actual decision or activity). We test this approach empirically by making use of data from the German National Educational Panel Study (NEPS-SC2).

On the level of *frames* we expect a less advantageous neighbourhood to *automatically* reduce teachers' expectations in students' capability. Furthermore, framing effects of neighbourhood contexts should vary by the link between *situational objects* and *the frame*. Hence, framing effects should be stronger for more visible neighbourhood characteristics (e.g., ethnic composition, housing conditions).

Moreover, framing effects of neighbourhoods on teachers' expectations depend on the *chronic accessibility* of the *script* they activate. They should therefore be moderated by teachers' beliefs about the impact of social and ethnic context on student ability. Additionally, the *temporal accessibility* of this script is triggered by teachers' perception of school and classroom composition.

Finally, the extent to which the script determines the *action* of an automatic evaluation depends on the *type* of teachers' expectations (e.g., short-term vs. long-term evaluations).

NEPS-SC2 is a rich teacher-student panel data set, currently covering approximately 7,000 primary school students from grade 1 to 4. Teachers' evaluation is measured as the recommendation teachers make for each student assigning him/her to one of the three secondary school tracks. The final recommendation in grade 4 is highly relevant for the actual attended track (in some federal states even binding). This information is queried from 2nd grade until the final recommendation in 4th grade (three time points). Information on teachers, students, parents, and school classes is linked to contextual-level information on the socio-economic and socio-cultural composition of the schools' neighbourhoods (*microm* data).

First empirical results of multilevel linear probability and logit models indicate notable changes over time in what influences teachers' evaluations away from an automatic-spontaneous mode (*as-mode*) towards a more rational evaluation (*rc-mode*). Moreover, we find stable and independent influences of class rooms' and neighbourhoods' socio-economic composition and strong interactions between contextual and students' individual characteristics. However, teachers' beliefs and neighbourhood characteristics seem not to interact. Hence, while there is an overall framing effect of contexts on teachers' expectations, its' salience for individual teachers depends more on actual student characteristics than on teacher attitudes.

References:

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