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Project title: SHaping Unequal Futures through Inherited Networks (SHINE)

Keywords: social capital, social networks, intergenerational transmission, intergenerational inequality

Project description:

This project aims to investigate to what extent social network connections and network resources are transmitted from parents to their children. Children from advantaged families often get a lasting head start in life, while those from disadvantaged backgrounds face persistent barriers that limit their opportunities. This persistent inequality has been a central concern in the social sciences as it challenges the ideal of a meritocratic society and undermines equal opportunity. Even against a backdrop of relatively widespread intergenerational mobility, parental background continues to shape key life outcomes, including educational and occupational attainment. While previous research has extensively documented the intergenerational transmission of cultural and economic capital, the extent and mechanisms of social capital transmission across generations remain relatively underexplored. By integrating perspectives from social capital theory, network sociology, and stratification research, this project aims to better understand to what extent parents' and children's networks show similarities, in which aspects, and under which conditions this intergenerational transmission is stronger or weaker. In addition, the project seeks to uncover the mechanisms through which network connections and resources are inherited, by examining parents' (un-)successful transmission strategies, and assessing whether these vary across socioeconomic status groups. The project contributes to theoretical and empirical knowledge on intergenerational inequality by focusing on social networks as a key, yet understudied, mechanism through which (dis-)advantage is reproduced across generations.

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