

**Purpose and background of study.** In this project, I examine parental pressure as a potential mechanism behind intergenerational mobility in education. Specifically, the project studies how high school students in Germany adjust their postsecondary career choices beyond their own preferences and beliefs to more closely match their parents' preferences and how this impacts the socio-economic gap in college attendance. To study this question, I originally designed a field experiment in which I varied whether students were told that their stated career plans for potential advising sessions would be shared with their parents (as in the *public* condition) or not (as in the *private* condition). This experimental variation identifies the causal effect of increasing parental pressure on students' career plans. In my job market paper based on this field experiment, I find that students adjust their college plans when those plans are observable by parents, which widens the socio-economic gap in college plans.

The evidence is based on students' plans for the time after high school. A key question is thus whether students' adjusted plans under heightened parental pressure also translate into the final choices they make. Do students adjust their stated career plans and their actual career choices to their parents' preferences? To answer this question, I am re-surveying students in the coming months and plan to finish re-surveying by fall/winter 2022. Most students who participated in my initial field experiment should have graduated from high school by now and have chosen their first career path post high school (or should have made plans what to do soon or after a gap year). Re-surveying these students now to obtain information on what they ended up choosing (or are currently planning to do), I thus seek to answer the following main question:

- How predictive are students' plans in the *private* and in the *public* condition of their eventual college attendance (and their current plans to attend college)?

In addition, I'll also explore the following question:

- How predictive are students' and parents' aspirations of students' actual choices?

**Experimental Design.** I designed a field experiment about career planning in which ca. 1,200 students and more than 800 parents participated. I developed an extensive career planning module of up to 150 minutes that embedded standardized career advising tests and career planning surveys into students' career planning curriculum. I then invited students and parents at 47 high schools to participate. To make the elicitation of career plans incentive-compatible, I coupled the elicitation with a lottery of expensive career advising sessions and informed students that their stated plans determine what type of advising session they get. I experimentally varied parent pressure by randomizing the instructions to students between a *private* and a *public* condition. While I informed all students that I would send them a copy of their answers for their further preparation, I randomized whether I would also send a copy to their parents at the individual level.

Re-surveying students now, I can compare their chosen post-secondary paths (or updated plans) to their initial plans. Using the experimental variation between the *private* and the *public* condition, I can analyze whether students' plans in the *private* or the *public* condition were more predictive of their choices (and current plans).

**Proposed Analysis.** The most important question is whether students' plans to attend college or not are more predictive of their first choice after high school (and current plans) when their plans are shared with parents, as in the *public* condition, or when their plans were elicited in *private*. To test this, I create an indicator variable *FollowPlans* that indicates whether students ended up following their initial plans regarding attending college or not. Formally, this variable takes the value of 1 in following cases: a) a student initially aspired to college and did go to college as their first choice after high school (or is currently planning to do so, while still being in school or during a gap year), b) a student initially did not aspire to college and did not choose to go to college as their first choice after high school (or is currently not planning to do so, while still being in school or during a gap year). Otherwise, it takes the value 0. I will test whether students' plans in the *public* condition are more predictive of their first choices after high school (and their updated plans) by testing whether  $\beta_1 > 0$  in the following regression:

$$\text{FollowPlans}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Public Condition}_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

If  $\beta_1 > 0$ , this is evidence that students' plans under increased parental pressure are more predictive of their actual college attendance than their stated plans when elicited in confidentiality. This would further validate the findings in my job market paper and indicate that parental pressure affects students' plans and potentially their eventual career choices as well.

To understand in more detail whether and when plans in the *public* condition were more predictive, this can be broken down in auxiliary regressions by students' college plans or socio-economic background, e.g.,:

$$\text{FollowPlans}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Public Condition}_i + \beta_2 \text{College Plans}_i + \beta_3 \text{College Plans} \times \text{Public}_i + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

If plans in the *public* condition are more predictive both when students stated college aspirations as well as when they did not, this would imply that  $\beta_1 > 0$  (plans not to attend college are more predictive of not attending college in the *public* condition) and  $\beta_1 + \beta_3 > 0$  (plans to attend college are more predictive of attending college in the *public* than in the *private* condition).<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the additional question of how predictive students' and parents' aspirations are of students' eventual college attendance, I can use the following regression:

$$\text{College}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Student Plan}_i + \beta_2 \text{Parent Plan}_i + \beta_3 \text{Student Plan}_i \times \text{Parent Plan}_i + \epsilon_i \quad (3)$$

where  $\text{Student Plan}_i$  indicates whether a student aspired to college (yes or no) and  $\text{Parent Plan}_i$  indicates whether parent aspired to college or not. The following tests are of interest:

- $\beta_2 > 0$ ? Are parents' college plans predictive of college attendance?

<sup>1</sup>The same analysis can also instead be done with college attendance as dependant variable. Another analysis of interest is whether plans in the *public* condition are more predictive for low and/or high SES students, where high socio-economic status students are those with at least one college-educated parent. For this analysis, simply replace "College Plans" by "High SES" in regression 2.

- $\beta_1 > 0$ ? Are students' college plans predictive of college attendance?
- $\beta_2 > \beta_1$ ? Are parents' college aspirations more predictive than students' aspirations?

I will conduct these analyses for the whole sample as well as separately for students of low and high socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, regression (3) can be conducted separately for the *private* and the *public* condition to see whether the additional predictive power of parents' plans is diminished in the *public* condition (compared to the *private* condition).<sup>2</sup> While I will focus on students' decision to attend college or not, I can conduct similar analyses on how students' chosen major compares to students' and parents' initially preferred fields of study, in the *private* and the *public* condition. In addition to examining college attendance as main outcome variable (or following up with college plans) that does not include dual study programs as college aspirations or college attendance, as a robustness check I can repeat the same analyses including dual study programs as aspirations to attend college and college attendance itself.

**Additional Notes.** Assuming a response rate of ca. 66% to 80% for those in the experimental sample, I will check whether the tracking likelihood differs across the *private* and the *public* condition. Ideally, these will not differ. If the tracking rate does differ across these two conditions, I can calculate Lee Bounds for the key analyses, e.g., for following one's plans if initially in the *public* condition rather than in the *private* condition.

In addition, I can adopt an intensive tracking approach as taken by Kling, Liebman and Katz (2007) or Baird, Hamory Hicks, Kremer and Miguel (2016) if I am left with a significant subset of missing data. I would then invest more intensively in following up with the remaining non-respondents (or a representative (random) subset of them)), e.g. via additional calls and increased incentives. I can use respondents tracked in this "intensive" sample also to see whether key results differ for the respondents in this "intensive" sample compared to students in the "regular" sample. If they do not differ significantly, this increases the confidence that the results in the "regular" sample are not due to selective attrition.

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<sup>2</sup>These analyses regarding students' and parents' aspirations are not the main focus of the follow-up, but might reveal interesting patterns. Parents participated after their children did, so the *public* condition might have also affected parents' plans.