Debating Economic Inequality in Germany 2011–2021

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von

Bank, Julian Joel

aus

Köln

1. Gutachter: Prof. Dr., van Treeck, Till

2. Gutachter: Prof. Dr., Truger, Achim

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AMCE	*Average Marginal Component Effect*
C21	*Capital in the 21st Century*
CEO	*Chief Executive Officer*
FAS	*Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*
FAZ	*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*
FT	*Financial Times*
GCEE	*German Council of Economic Experts*
INSM	*Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft / Initiative New Social Market Economy*
ISSP	*International Social Survey Program*
IW (Köln)	*Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln / German Economic Institute*
NDR	*Norddeutscher Rundfunk*
PSE	*Paris School of Economics*
RQ	*Research Question*
SZ	*Süddeutsche Zeitung*
taz	*taz - die tageszeitung*
WEF	*World Economic Forum*
WID	*World Inequality Database*

Code abbreviations of the framing analysis in Chapter 3 are listed in Table 3.2 (p. 43).
Treatment codes of the survey experiment in Chapter 7 are listed in Table 7.2 (p. 118).

Acknowledgements

Quem não é visto, não é lembrado [Who is not seen, is not remembered]

Mural, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 2003

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For Jesse, Mattis and Yuna.

That their future be in a world where everyone counts, including the many invisible.

1 Introduction

More than six million domestic workers in Brazil, mostly women, spend all their working time in the household of others doing those people's housework, the large majority of them as 'mensalistas', working in one household only (ILO, 2022). Apart from images of extreme poverty and extreme wealth, it is this one of the starkest illustrations of the huge economic inequalities of our times. Someone earns or owns so much as to be able to pay someone else to spend all their working time at the other's service.[1] Although less pronounced, inequality in Germany is also striking: The 90:10 income differential has been around 3.5 in recent years (Grabka, 2021).[2] So if it were common practice, rich Germans could also afford paying poor Germans to be at their service, full time – which they do, but indirectly and hidden in the division of labour of modern capitalism. Across borders, this is the very direct reality of a substantial share of care work for the elderly (Leiber, Matuszczyk, & Rossow, 2019; Lutz, 2008). Economic inequality shows up in many other dimensions, for instance in the daily financial worries of Germans (Roth, Hahn, & Spinath, 2017). At the lower end of the distribution, many are worried about making ends meet towards the final days of the month, or paying for the school materials of their kids, while others at the middle-to-upper end are worried about finding the right real-estate to invest their savings and inheritance – or do not share financial worries at all. Meanwhile, the global super-rich may think in terms of political investment decisions or even planning an extra-terrestrial voyage.

Inequality can be disturbing and troubling, stirring our sense of justice. This is for good reasons, consider the substantive works of egalitarian philosophy elaborating why economic inequality may in many instances rightly be seen as unjust (e.g. Arneson, 1989; Cohen, 1989, 2008; Dworkin, 1981). But inequality can be seen as harmful for other reasons, too. It affects the distribution of freedom (Cohen, 2011)[3] and threatens to undermine the democratic principle of political equality (Cagé, 2020; Elsässer, 2018; Page & Gilens, 2020). Moreover, it may cause macroeconomic instability (Behringer & van Treeck, 2018) and become self-reinforcing, increasingly shifting the dominant source of wealth ownership (and with it high incomes) from labour income to inheritance or marriage (Piketty, 2014). Epidemiologists show that greater inequality correlates with a host of social problems, from lower life expectancy and other worse health outcomes to higher levels of violence and

[1] Strictly speaking, some *household* earns so much – however, income inequality in Brazil is so extreme that a well-off household could without trouble afford several domestic workers at their service. The 90:10 disposable household income ratio (see fn. 2) according to the OECD was 9.7 in Brazil in 2016, cf. OECD (2022).

[2] The 90:10 ratio describes the distance of the value at the lower bound of the 90th percentile divided by the value of the upper bound of the 10th percentile. For disposable household incomes, Grabka (2021) reports a 90:10 ratio of 3.2 for the early pandemic crisis year of 2021 (mainly due to the collapse in top-incomes for self-employed. During the previous decade it revolved around 3.5-3.6. For hourly market wages of the regularly employed he reports a similar order of magnitude of values around 3.8. Strictly speaking, for our thought experiment, a *disposable* income would have to be large enough to pay for the *market* income of the other.

[3] G. A. Cohen (2011) calls money an *inus* condition of freedom, i.e. an "insufficient but necessary part of an unnecessary but sufficient condition" (Cohen 2011, p. 177). In other words: lack of money may not be the only source of restrictions on freedom, but it is – given the reality of our social arrangements – an important and effective one.

imprisonment, pointing at inequality induced status anxiety as a key driving force of other social and health problems (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Arguably, inequality driven status-concerns also fuel xenophobic and anti-democratic resentments and undermine (supposedly) post-materialist policy challenges such as combating climate change (Chancel, 2020; Schumann, 2011).

The rise in economic inequality[4] in most countries is well documented (Chancel, Piketty, Saez, & Zucman, 2021). Particular attention has been drawn to the rise of top incomes (especially pronounced in the US) and to the rise in wealth inequality in many countries (Alvaredo, Atkinson, Piketty, & Saez, 2013; Chancel et al., 2021). Germany is no exception. Income inequality markedly increased during the late 1990s and early 2000s, reaching a plateau around 2005. While by 2015 the top decile had seen an increase of real disposable household incomes by about one third since reunification, the bottom decile was *worse* off in real terms, despite yearly real economic growth in almost the entire period (Grabka, Goebel, & Liebig, 2019). The last decades, especially the early 2000s, were marked by a substantial rise in managerial pay, a more than six-fold increase between 1985 and 2015 in total pay for executives of DAX-listed companies (Göx, 2016; R. Schmidt & Schwalbach, 2007). This development seems to have stalled more recently (Beck, Friedl, & Schäfer, 2020). At the same time, the low-wage-sector[5] grew substantially, with an increase of about seven percentage points during the late 1990s and the early 2000s, comprising almost one-fourth of total employment since then (Grabka & Schröder, 2019). The introduction of the minimum wage seems to have stabilized incomes at least at the bottom end of the wage distribution (Kalina & Weinkopf, 2021).[6] As concerns wealth inequality, Germany is amongst the most unequal countries in international comparison, with the top one per cent owning about 35 per cent of net wealth (C. Schröder, Bartels, Göbler, Grabka, & König, 2020).[7] The recent development in wealth inequality also shows a marked increase in concentration. Since reunification, the distance between the average wealth of the top ten per cent of wealth owners in Germany to the bottom half has doubled to a 100-fold (Albers, Bartels, & Schularick, 2018). Bönke et al. (2015) document a long term increase in lifetime earnings inequality from labour incomes in Germany, further substantiating the increase in economic inequality. Taken together, economic inequality in both income and wealth has been on the rise in Germany, due to a higher concentration of resources at the top as well as stagnating (or even falling) incomes at the bottom.

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[4] I follow the convention of using *economic* inequality as the inequality of control over resources in terms of both income and wealth and I specify where appropriate. Further specification of distinct conceptions of economic inequality is elaborated in section 3.2.2 of Chapter 3. Although income demarks a *flow*, while wealth is a *stock*, the two are naturally interrelated, as flows change stocks and stocks typically generate flows – a relationship that plays a key role in the analysis of capital returns in Piketty (2014) – compare section 2.3.2 in Chapter 2. There are even magnitudes that merge both concepts such as cumulated life incomes, as estimated in Bönke, Corneo, and Lüthen (2015), mentioned below.

[5] Defined as the share of employment whose market wage is below two-thirds of the median wage of all employed, cf. Grabka and Schröder (2019).

[6] Note however that the short term effect of the minimum wage on low wages may have been partly overestimated due to adjustments in (formal) working time, cf. Caliendo, Fedorets, and Schröder (2018).

[7] It has been pointed out that different structures of housing markets and pension systems should make us cautious about international comparisons of wealth inequality. See also Chapter 4.

Inequality has not only been problematized and measured by researchers. It is also widely discerned and condemned by a large majority of the population. Research on attitudes on inequality shows that across countries, most people share concerns about inequality and a sizeable majority is in favour of redistributive policy aimed at reducing inequality. According to the *ISSP* survey of 2019, 91.8 per cent agreed to the statement that differences in income in Germany were too large (with roughly the same, 89.6 per cent, ten years earlier in 2009); a majority of 73.2 per cent (up from 65.5 per cent in 2009) agree to the statement that 'it is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high and low incomes' (see Chapter 7).[8] Recent opinion polls suggest that support for a wealth tax is above 70 per cent (Dallinger, 2021). In 2014 an international survey showed that in most parts of the world, inequality was seen as one of the main 'threats to the world', with inequality being the top choice in most of Europe and the US at the time, besides religious and ethnic hatred, environmental issues, nuclear weapons and health diseases (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Following on from these elaborations on the political relevance of economic inequality, I will now first outline what motivates my research (1.1) and then introduce my research focus (1.2). In the subsequent section, I expand on my overall analytical approach including its advantages and limitations and I will also clarify important overarching conceptual issues (1.3). Finally, I give a brief overview of all chapters (1.4).

1.1 Research Motivation: Understanding the Policy Gap on Economic Inequality

Given the multiple reasons to care about inequality, the increasingly precise documentation of its rise, and the widely shared inequality concerns and support for redistributive policy, scholars of inequality research have moved on to make concrete policy proposals on how to effectively reduce economic inequality. Explaining the rise in inequality is complex, depending on specific institutional circumstances and path dependencies, technological conditions as well as the role of globalization, sectoral specialization and the degree of integration in international production chains, to name a few important factors.[9] Accordingly, there is no one size fits all approach towards policy. Some focus on the role of progressive taxation of incomes and wealth (Atkinson, 2015; Diamond & Saez, 2011; Piketty, 2014) and the broadening of the tax base by reducing tax evasion (Zucman, 2015). Atkinson (2015) has added a range of ideas for social policy and labour market reforms, including an extension of child benefits, a public job guarantee, higher minimum wages and policy directed at encouraging

[8] Note that the item on redistributive policy only measures agreement to government redistribution *in general*, without specification whether this should be increased. However, in our own data measured in 2021, we find a large majority of 75.3 per cent agreeing to the statement that 'the government should *do more* [my emphasis] to reduce the differences between rich and poor', see Chapter 7.

[9] See for example Bosch and Kalina (2018) for a discussion of the complex explanations of the rise of income inequality in Germany.

job-friendly innovation. He also suggests competition policy should include consideration for distributional issues and favours a set of policies directed at supporting both public and mass wealth accumulation. Similar proposals taking inequality reduction as a cross-sectoral task specifically designed for the German situation have been made, for example in G. A. Horn, Behringer, Gechert, Rietzler, and Stein (2017).

In light of the variety of policy proposals, it seems clear that governments have not been reluctant to take action to reduce inequality for a lack of ideas. In fact, some measures have been implemented, for instance the (cautious) introduction of the minimum wage in Germany in 2015. However, as the development of inequality shows, measures have so far not been sufficient to substantially reduce inequality, while people continue endorsing further redistributive measures, as our survey showed as recently as December 2021 (see Chapter 7). So we continue to obverse a situation of increased inequality, which is disapproved by a large majority of people, for which there is a wide range of proposals that would reduce inequality. And still, there is no sign of a substantial change in the situation in the near future. We continue to face a ‘policy gap’ on economic inequality. It is this puzzle that has motivated my research on economic inequality debates in the German media.

Explaining the policy gap on inequality is complex and reaches beyond the analysis of electoral majorities. Research on the responsiveness of policymakers has shown for the United States (Gilens, 2012) as well as for Germany (Elsässer, Hense, & Schäfer, 2017) and other European countries (Schakel, 2021), that political systems may more generally lack responsiveness to middle-income and poor citizens’ demands if these demands diverge from the preferences of the rich. To explain this, several complementary channels are discussed, such as private party and election campaign financing (Gilens, 2015), a self-enforcing downward spiral of low participation and representation (Elsässer et al., 2017),[10] or underrepresentation of lower social classes in political institutions (Elsässer & Schäfer, 2022; Mansbridge, 2015). Another important factor may be unfavourable constellations in the political economy of the social partnership, as was long the case in Germany concerning the minimum wage, and a change of which removed obstacles to its introduction (Bosch, 2018). More generally, structural imbalances in the democratic process may explain the lack of progressive policies on inequality. Hacker and Pierson (2010) argue that in the US large scale trends in weakening trade unions, professionalization of business interests and changing media landscapes, may have tilted the political playing field towards the organized interests of the rich, trends that may despite all differences also apply to the German situation. Others have pointed at structural constraints, especially in the European multi-level political setting (Scharpf, 1999). A partial explanation may also lie in the perceptions of feasibility of policy-makers themselves, who reflect (upon) and see themselves constrained by an interplay between lobbying campaigns, public

[10] That is, politics ignoring the interests of those who turn away from participation when disappointed with the lack of representation, fuelling further disenchantment, leading to further disregard for these political interests, and so on.

discourses and public opinion, but also by party-internal processes and conflicts (Fastenrath, Marx, Truger, & Vitt, 2021).

What is important to note is that in many of these causal channels described above, public debates play at least an intermediary role. Consider, for instance, the perceptions of policy-makers. As Fastenrath et al. (2021) point out, a key constraint is seen in organized interest groups and their public campaigns:

> The alleged influence of lobbyists on media reporting already points to public opinion as a key mechanism in tax politics. Indeed, almost all left-wing politicians problematize the role of public opinion and media reporting. (Fastenrath et al., 2021, p. 7)

Similarly, public debates may play a catalysing role in the above mentioned downward spiral of low participation and representation, affecting perceptions both of parties and the electorate, thus reinforcing their alienation. Hacker and Pierson (2010) argue for the US that the media – itself under pressure from deep transformations in technology and business models – played a crucial (but imperfect) role to compensate the loss of the "erosion of traditional interest organisations", which once had additionally provided political information to their base (Hacker & Pierson, 2010, pp. 155–156). And even in the discussion of trade unions and the removal of barriers to the introduction of the minimum wage, Bosch (2018) points out the importance of public debates:

> Without this embeddedness in political networks and the public debate on the increasing social inequality in Germany, the manufacturing trade unions might not have found the strength to break out of their path-dependent thinking. (Bosch, 2018, p. 27)

More fundamentally, the media and public debates[11] play a crucial role in agenda-setting and framing[12] of the issue of economic inequality. The way inequality is discussed in public can be decisive for how urgent political action is seen to be. Scheufele (1999) underlines the role of framings, in "constructing social reality" and interacting with "people's information processing and interpretation", which in turn are "influenced by pre-existing meaning structures or schemas" (Scheufele, 1999, p. 105), both in the audience amongst policy-makers as well as in the wider public. Public debates can be seen as one important part of the 'cultural supply side' of collective understandings of inequality (McCall, 2013, p. 18, 55). Given this key role that public debates in the media play in determining the salience of inequality and the 'opportunity space' of redistributive policy, it seems a natural and worthwhile endeavour to capture and understand the discourse on economic inequality by exploring German public debates on the issue.

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[11] On the relationship between the concepts of 'public debates', 'media' and 'discourses', see section 1.3 below.

[12] The concept of framing is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3, section 3.2, following the definition by Entman (1993), who stresses the two aspects of 'salience' and 'selection'. Throughout the rest of my analysis I employ a pragmatic understanding of framing as the way an issue – inequality and redistributive policy in our case – is presented in the public debates and the media.

1.2 Research Focus: Inequality Debates in Germany 2011–2021

In my research I closely examine public economic policy debates in Germany as one possible explanatory factor of the policy gap on inequality, trying to understand in four explorative studies how economic inequality and redistributive policy are evaluated and framed, by which rhetorical mechanisms inequality is possibly played down as a problem, and what kinds of justifications of income inequality more specifically are presented. Having explored various aspects of public inequality debates in Germany in the last decade in the first five chapters, I then in a final study conclude by linking this qualitative explorative research to research on inequality attitudes in the general public employing a survey experiment. I ask: What is the effect of different ways of presenting inequality and its justifications in the media on people's inequality acceptance? In my analyses, I show that the downplaying of inequality has a strong position in public debates in the German media and that such relativizing framings can have a substantial effect on its recipients. But I also show that the justificatory motifs that are typically used to legitimize income inequality in the media are – in theory – much more flexible and could well be inverted to egalitarian narratives without substituting the normative principles that are already widely available in public debates. Thus, my research also shows that in a way, the situation of inequality debates is far less deadlocked in a discourse of 'inequality denial' than it may seem.

My analyses focus on the past decade from 2011 to 2021.[13] This decade marks a particularly interesting period because it is the decade following the marked increase in inequality in Germany. It is also the decade following the Great Recession of 2007-2009 and the decade starting with the eurozone crisis – two macroeconomic events that might have substantially shaken the economic policy paradigms of 'economic liberalism' as the dominant ideology of economic policy in recent decades. As Arthur Goldhammer, the translator of Piketty's work *Capital in the 21st Century* puts it:

> Among mainstream economists it therefore became respectable again to speak of the systemic inequities of capitalism – a theme that had become quasi-taboo in the period of neoliberal ascendancy (1980–2008), when talk of inequality was sometimes contemptuously dismissed as fomenting "class warfare" and the existence of inequality was justified as an incentive to intensified effort, innovation, and growth. (Goldhammer, 2017, pp. 33–34)

It is a time, when inequality has been put on the agenda by social movements, such as the Occupy Wall Street movement, which emerged in 2011 with the slogan 'We are the 99 percent'. Political leaders like the Democratic US President Barack Obama at the time and Senator Elizabeth Warren accordingly took up the issue in their speeches (Goldhammer, 2017). Even at the global elite summits of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, traditionally committed to deregulation and economic liberalization, inequality emerged as a "leading issue" in 2010 (World Economic

[13] My explorative analyses of discursive events stretch from 2012-2017, but the wider focus of interest is on the decade of the 2010s, with analysis of inequality reporting starting in 2011. The final survey experiment has been carried out in 2021, which is why I include this year in the denoted time period.

Forum [WEF], 2011, p. 23) and as a “key challenge for the global agenda” in 2014 (WEF, 2015, p. 7), having been ignored in almost all of the years before.[14]

In Germany during that decade, the stark rise in inequality seen during the 2000s prove its persistence on a new, more unequal level as the new distributional reality. The issue of inequality gained salience in German public debates, as shown in quantitative analyses of news reporting (M. Schröder & Vietze, 2015, p. 48), possibly constituting a new “phase of inequality perception” (Gajek & Lorke, 2016, p. 7). This is exemplified in public debates on managerial pay (see Chapter 5) and the heated election campaign of 2013, where redistributive tax policies were a prominent issue when both the Green party and SPD found themselves in a moment of tentative progressive realignment after the era of the Schröder governments, encountering strong opposition by employer-financed campaigns (see Chapter 4). Further debates emerged around the regularly published ‘Report on Poverty and Wealth [Armuts- und Reichtumsbericht]’ to the federal government (Smith Ochoa & Yildiz, 2019), but also about wealth and inheritance taxation (Theine & Grisold, 2022).

To grasp the state of German economic policy debates on inequality of the time, I use the early reception of Thomas Piketty’s work *Capital in the 21st Century* in 2014 for a case study (Chapter 2). The research question addressed in this chapter is how participants of the German economic policy debate received the book that had caused such a great stir in the English-speaking world. I focus on those contributions that deal with Piketty’s analysis in more detail and show that the German reception is marked by an extraordinary hostility towards Piketty’s work. Starting from this observation, I go on to ask how the issue of ‘economic inequality’ as such is framed in the quality press in subsequent years (Chapter 3). Does the media frame inequality as an issue of concern or is it geared towards relativizing such concerns? How is redistributive policy presented? Is it endorsed as a potential problem solution or is it rejected? Based on the findings of this framing analysis I take a closer look at those sources that have featured a large share of relativizing framings and try to identify specific rhetorical mechanisms of ‘inequality denial’ (Chapter 4). In a final explorative step, I seek to identify justification patterns of income inequality. By analysing the discourse on managerial pay, I ask by which argumentative patterns income inequality is justified or delegitimized (Chapters 5 and 6). Finally, I aim at understanding how such framings and argumentative patterns found in the media resonate with ordinary people (Chapter 7). Does the framing of inequality affect inequality attitudes and does it depend on the specific arguments used and the consistency of signals about inequality concerns?

[14] My analysis of all annual reports of the World Economic Forum shows that the term ‘inequality’ did not appear in any but one report between 1998-2009, while it appeared in eight of eleven reports between 2010-2020, and uninterruptedly since 2014, see Table A.1 in Appendix A.

1.3 Analytical Approach and Conceptual Clarifications

Similar but somewhat differently coined questions have been asked in other research about the public debates and the media in Germany (see Table 1.1 for a stylized overview). The main strand of research also takes an *explorative* approach to the analysis of media content (mainly text content from print and online media). More quantitative corpus-linguistic and text mining approaches use large corpora typically of longer time periods (Petring, 2016; M. Schröder & Vietze, 2015; Theine & Grisold, 2022), seeking to unveil larger patterns across time or distinguishing different sub-discourses across media outlets. They show recurring patterns of interest in the issue of 'social justice' (Petring, 2016; M. Schröder & Vietze, 2015) as well as on specific policy issues such as wealth taxation (Theine & Grisold, 2022), while interest in the abstract issue of 'inequality' and 'poverty' in fact seems to have increased since the 1990s and 2000s (Petring, 2016; M. Schröder & Vietze, 2015). More qualitative, close-reading approaches, like my first five chapters (Chapters 2-6), seek to gain a more interpretive understanding of specific framings and argumentative patterns (Dziggel, 2022; Rieder & Theine, 2019; Schinke, 2015; Volkmann, 2006), while some approaches mix large scale analysis with qualitative analysis of subsamples (Diermeier & Niehues, 2021; Smith Ochoa, 2020). They help to document specific sub-discourses in different outlets and concerning different issues, spanning from tabloid framings of deservingness of different social groups (elderly, unemployed, migrants) to discussions of Piketty or inequality during the pandemic. I review some of the studies in more detail in Chapters 3 and 5. My research fills a gap here for a combination of reasons. First, it focuses on the issues of *'economic inequality'* and *'redistributive policy'* as such, without further narrowing to subthemes of inequality debates, such as specific reform proposals (e.g. inheritance taxation) or specific aspects of inequality (e.g. poverty). Second, I take a *qualitative* close-reading approach to specific discursive events during the past decade. And finally, I put a special focus on *general framings*, *mechanisms of inequality denial* as well as *justificatory arguments*, thus focusing on the legitimatory dimension of inequality.

Table 1.1: Approaches to inequality debates – a stylized overview

Approach to public debates / media content	**Methodological perspective**	**Inequality-related focus**
Explorative	Quantitative content analysis / co-occurrence analysis / large corpora / long term *Qualitative content analysis / small corpora / short term*	Social justice Poverty Wealth *Economic Inequality* *Redistributive policy* Specific policies (e.g. wealth tax)
As explanatory variable (e.g. framing effects)	*Experimental, causal analysis*	
As dependent/mediating variable	Comparative political economy, regression analysis, media content as a 'black box'	

Approaches of my research emphasised (italic and underlined).

In contrast to those rather explorative approaches, other more *explanatory* research approaches also deal with inequality debates.[15] For one, researchers have attempted to experimentally examine the effects of framing inequality and redistributive policy attitudes, finding support for susceptibility of recipients of those framings (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007; Hopmann, Skovsgaard, & Elmelund-Præstekær, 2017; Kuziemko, Norton, Saez, & Stantcheva, 2015; Slothuus, 2007), while research motivated by system justification theory shows that information alone does not need to affect people in their evaluation of inequality (Trump, 2018). Complementing this, comparative research on media ownership structures, which treats media content itself as a 'black box', shows that high concentration in media ownership is associated with lower support for redistribution (Neimanns, 2021). The final part of my analysis links the findings of the previous explorative parts of the analysis to these more explanatory strands of research (see Chapter 7).

It is important to note that my approach to inequality debates is agnostic about the field of *actors* within public debates, both the role of individual journalists, specific outlets and their owners, and the role of interest groups and other political actors participating in the debates. In contrast to other approaches,[16] I do not focus on the (likely) possibility of journalistic activism, the (apparent) agenda of certain outlets and their owners, nor do I analyse the strategies, intentions or influence of participants of these debates, although in the subtext of my analysis, especially in Chapter 4, this will show up as incidental observations.[17] My main interest, however, remains focused on the more modest but also the more solid goal of mapping the *content* of inequality debates to understand the *discursive* political opportunity space. This discursive opportunity space is structured along the lines of these debates, but it is, so I suppose, only a part of the overall *effective* political opportunity space,

[15] Note that my distinction between 'explorative' and 'explanatory' research is a stylized distinction of approaches, that does not do justice to all *interpretive* approaches, which may also claim explanatory power, cf. Nullmeier (2018).

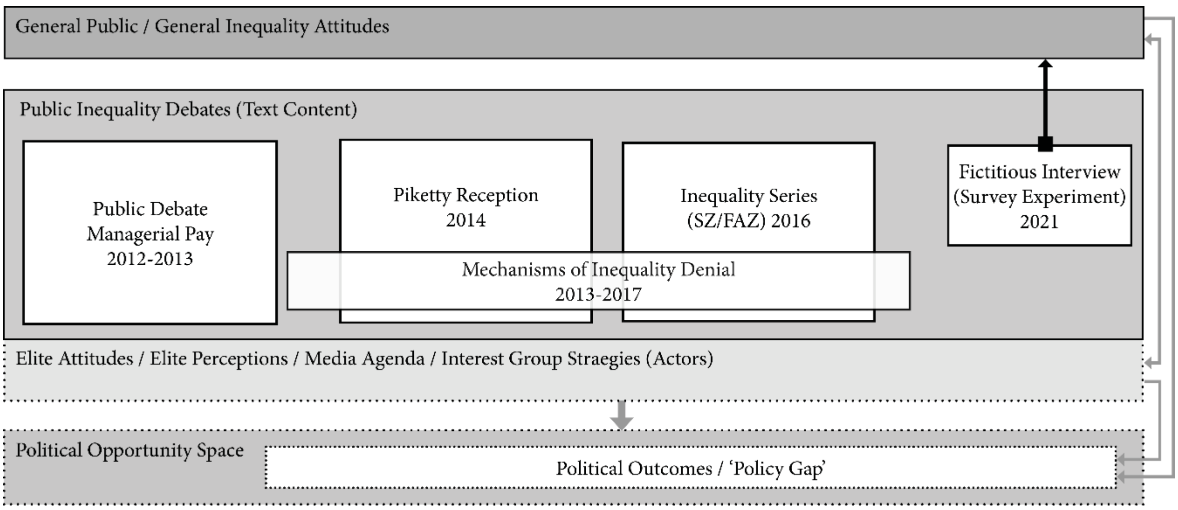
[16] For example, Smith Ochoa (2020) explicitly includes an analysis of *discourse coalitions* in his approach to reconstructing the inequality discourse in Germany, following the methodology of Hajer (2006).

[17] In Chapter 4, I expand on this question of including an analysis of actors as important *contextual* information required to interpret the text content, without shifting the focus of analysis from the text content to the actors.

which will also depend on other factors like the institutional setting and politics, therewith including the dimension of agency.

Accordingly, I am also partly agnostic as concerns the *causal channels* of how debates exactly determine the frontiers of the effective opportunity space, in which political outcomes can materialize. In Chapter 7, I seek to analyse the impact of framings on the general public, the mass of recipients of media content. Understanding this causal link is a precondition to further arguing that media framings impact political outcomes mediated through their reception in the general public. However, I find it plausible that a complementary causal channel from media debates to political outcomes is through its reception amongst the elite (including policy makers)[18] or even via the reception in the general public *as perceived* or *projected* amongst members of the elite, as the analysis by Fastenrath et al. (2021) indicates. By excluding these complex relationships from the analysis, I can focus on more thoroughly understanding the content of debates, which I think is an important precondition to further analysis.[19] Figure 1.1 illustrates my analytical approach schematically.

Figure 1.1: Framework of analysis – public debates, general attitudes and political outcomes



Schematic illustration of the framework of analysis showing the focus of analysis on public debates and general attitudes, denoted by solid rectangles and black causal arrow. Punctuated rectangles and grey arrows denote assumed contextual relationships outside the framework of analysis.

Another important conceptual clarification should be made between the concepts of 'public debates' as 'discursive events' and the underlying 'discourse'. I take various discursive events as opportunities to reconstruct the general *inequality discourse* in Germany of the past decade. What does this mean? Each analysis (see Table 1.2 in section 1.4 below) has a slightly different focus as concerns the time period, the thematic focus and degree of depth of analysing the material. While one allows to set the scene and illustrate the broad panorama of the economic policy debate

[18] See below for a brief discussion of the concept of elite.

[19] In Nullmeier's 'six-stage model of interpretive explanation', my analysis might be said to correspond to stages one through four, which are the descriptive part, while the last two stages perform the explanatory part, relating descriptions of the discourse to the knowledge systems of actors, cf. Nullmeier (2018). Note that Nullmeier focuses on explaining *discursive* change, however, I think the logic can (and is meant to) be extended to the explanation of political outcomes.

concerning inequality (Chapter 2), the other allows a more formalised mapping (Chapter 3), while the next one builds on more profoundly and more closely analysing an identified subsample with regard to rhetorical mechanisms (Chapter 4). Conversely, widening the perspective to all possible justificatory arguments concerning income inequality in the fourth case study (Chapters 5 and 6) allows grasping the argumentative breadth of legitimizing discourses. This way of casewise (and methodological) 'triangulation' allows me to reconstruct the larger, more timeless discourse on economic inequality and redistributive policy of that decade. It also allows me to reveal important abstract mechanisms of framing and the generalized normative space of legitimating (income) inequality. Note, however, that the notion of an underlying discourse is not a static one, but an understanding of 'discourse' as *constituted* by its recurring updates in the form of specific discursive events and thus a continually evolving collective meaning-making of the issue of inequality. The point is, that one discursive event does not merely stand on its own feet, but always implicitly or explicitly refers to other past discursive events, and more generally, to an abstract and more timeless discourse.[20]

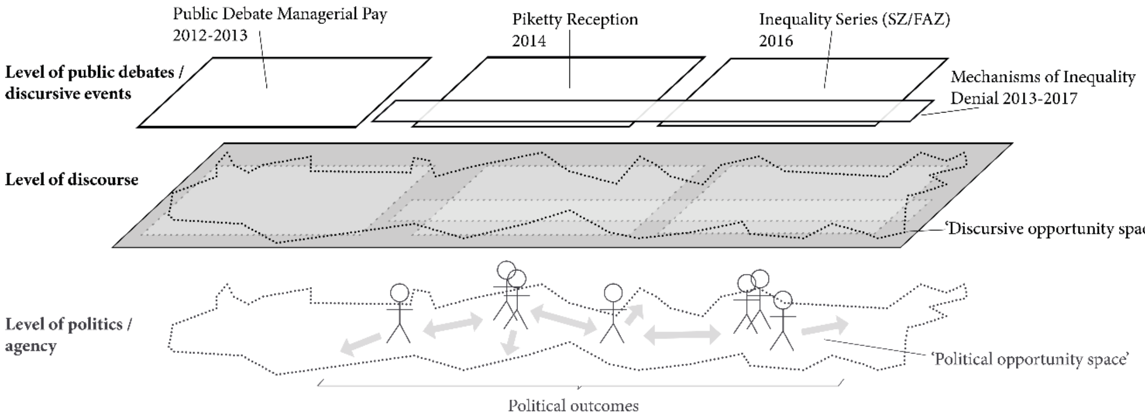
As pointed out above, I do not analyse the role and influence, interests, intentions and strategies of actors, but I regard the textual data they provide as reflective of collective processes of normative and factual (re)construction of reality. In fact, my analysis throughout chapters 2-6, is an analysis of 'elite debates', as represented in public debates and the media. My definition of elite is pragmatic as counting those participating in the public debates through their role as either journalists, politicians or representatives of interest groups.[21] Note that I regard the news media as the main arena of public debates, but in some parts of the analysis (mainly Chapter 4), I also include direct public contributions by interest groups and policy advisors, independently of their appearance in media reports. Thus, strictly speaking, *media* debates are a subset of *public* debates – although this distinction remains irrelevant throughout most of my analysis.

To summarize: the discourse on economic inequality, which I reconstruct from specific public elite debates, can be seen as the *discursive* dimension of the political opportunity space. It is, so to say, the landscape on which the politics of redistribution is then played out by the relevant actors. My analysis shall contribute to the cartography of this discourse which in turn may serve to understand the politics of inequality (see Figure 1.2 for a schematic illustration).

[20] See Chapter 5 section 5.2 for further theoretical background and elaboration of the conceptual distinctions between *debate / discursive events* and *discourse*.

[21] In Chapter 3, I distinguish internal and external contributors to the inequality series under investigation; in Chapter 5, Table 5.1, I provide a breakdown of participant roles in the debate on managerial pay in 2011-2012.

Figure 1.2: Conceptual levels of analysis – public debates, discourse and agency



Schematic illustration of three conceptual levels relevant to the analysis. The first two levels – public debates as discursive events and discourse are in the focus of the analyses of Chapters 2-6; the third level is excluded from the analysis – but remains an important implicit reference point motivating the analysis, and Chapter 7 then takes a targeted dive to the level of 'agency' by analysing the causal effects of media framings on general attitudes.

On a further note, I regard the public debates about economic inequality and the discourse they represent as part of the larger field of *economic policy debates*, which corresponds to my research motivation in understanding the policy gap on inequality. Therefore, in my analyses, the theme of 'redistributive policy' is always closely tied to these inequality debates, as it were in a 'conceptual backpack', and I explicitly conceptualize it where appropriate (for example in the formal analysis of framings, Chapter 3, and in the survey items measuring inequality acceptance in Chapter 7), and in other parts, it emerges more naturally within my analysis (as in the analyses of the Piketty reception, Chapter 2, and the 'mechanisms of inequality denial', Chapter 4).

The understanding of redistributive policy is pragmatic as any kind of 'interventionist' policy directed at reducing inequality. Hence, this may both imply progressive tax policy as well as labour market policies or other reforms that affect the political economy of inequality, such as the strength of trade unions or the regulation of international markets. In the framing analysis in Chapter 3, these differences are explicitly coded. This simplified notion of 'interventionist' redistributive policy contrasts with 'economic liberalism' as the simplified alternative position in economic policy debates, a dichotomy well established in comparative political economy analysis (Beramendi, Häusermann, Kitschelt, & Kriesi, 2015; Kitschelt, 1995). It should be clear that 'economic liberalism', also coined as 'neoliberalism' or in the German case also referred to as 'ordoliberalism', is like its 'interventionist' counterpart by no means a homogenous ideological or political field, but instead building on a complex history of ideas and internal controversies (Bank, M., 2013; Plehwe & Slobodian, 2020).[22] Differentiating about these internal controversies and more nuanced positionings would be imperative for the analysis of actors and networks of the debate, as in

[22] One recent example is the emergence of the extreme right Party AfD in Germany, co-founded by German ordoliberals (Pühringer, Beyer, and Kronberger (2021)), and the parallel split up of the Hayek Foundation, cf. Pennekamp (2021). These developments showed clear dividing lines between more culturally liberal ordoliberals and nationalist and culturally conservative ordoliberals.

Pühringer (2020), or the analysis of 'storylines' and 'discourse coalitions', as in Smith Ochoa (2020).[23] But since I refrain from an analysis of actors, my focus allows employing this dichotomous understanding to keep the analysis clearer and more focused. With my interest in understanding framings and argumentative patterns about inequality and redistributive policy, the key point is in capturing *alignments* as either problematizing inequality or relativizing it, and as either supporting interventionist redistributive policy or rejecting it.[24] According caution should only be applied when interpreting the findings in terms of 'economic liberalism'.

Finally, I would like to point to a more fundamental analytical perspective, which is not directly addressed with my research but represents a further motivational background for analysing the German inequality discourse. As pointed out, my analysis of public debates is primarily motivated by the interest to understand the lack of policy action on inequality. But it also contributes to the growing field of research on the 'cultural processes' as an important complementary dimension of determinants of inequality, embracing, but also reaching beyond institutional politics and (conventional) economic mechanisms. Lamont, Beljean, and Clair (2014) theorize cultural processes as an important causal channel in explaining inequality, where the realm of discourses as a form of 'intersubjective meaning-making' is one possible 'causal pathway to inequality'. Their conceptualization however is more general in the sense that it reaches beyond a focus on politics and political outcomes as the place where inequality is constituted, by also moving more local, everyday practices (for example, hiring procedures) into the focus of analysis.[25] Understanding the way inequality is legitimized or problematized might in this sense also be relevant for an analysis of 'value' and, with it, economic inequality – a view that reaches beyond neoclassical economic analysis of marginalism or more institutionalist explanations. It is yet outside the scope of this research project to follow this promising path of analysis, although I provide relevant groundwork for such analysis.

1.4 Overview of the Chapters

As noted above and shown in Table 1.2, this work consists of five empirical studies, four of which explore public debates about economic inequality in Germany (Chapters 2-6) and one which examines the effects of media framings on inequality attitudes (Chapter 7). While the first two studies set the scene of 'inequality debates' in Germany and give us a general picture about the treatment of inequality, the subsequent two analyses take a more close-reading interpretive approach that allows

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[23] Smith Ochoa (2020) accordingly distinguishes the 'ordoliberal' storyline of 'achievement' and the 'third way' / 'equal opportunities' storyline of 'achievement' as opposed to more progressive storylines, thus allowing for more nuance than a dichotomous distinction of redistributive policy alignments.

[24] Note that 'economic liberalism' may, from a theoretic point, even be indifferent to distributional outcomes per se. Its defining feature, as applied in my analysis, is its rejection of redistributive policy; but economic inequality is usually at least accepted as a side effect or even a supposedly useful means; and inversely, its rejection of redistributive policy typically relies on relativizing the problem for which redistributive policy is designed. Compare ft. 76 on p. 58.

[25] For a discussion of studies in this tradition (e.g. Hecht (2021) and Kuusela (2020) both on the legitimacy of inequality and top incomes), see Chapter 5.

for a more nuanced and more political understanding of the discourse on inequality, revealing specific arguments, their rhetorical context, and their premises and function.

Table 1.2: Overview of empirical analyses in this work

Empirical analysis (chapter)	Sample period/time frame	Data sample	Method of analysis	Focus of interest
Piketty reception (Ch. 2)	January-November 2014	27 out of 58 articles in 12 out of 29 outlets of German language quality press	Explorative content analysis	*Elite debate*: Reception of landmark publication on economic inequality by Thomas Piketty in German language Quality Press; economic policy debate inequality and redistributive policy
Framing Inequality (Ch. 3)	February-October 2016	62 articles in *SZ* and *FAZ* newspapers	Mixed qual.-quant. content analysis / framing analysis	*Elite debate*: Framing of economic inequality: affirmative of or rejecting inequality concerns, affirmative of or rejecting redistributive policy
Mechanisms of Inequality Denial (Ch. 4)	2013-2017	FAZ (various articles 2014-2017); *IW Köln* and *INSM* (various publications 2013-2017); *GCEE* annual reports (2013-2016)	Explorative content analysis	*Elite debate*: Actors and forums of inequality and the employed discursive mechanisms of inequality denial
Justification Patterns of Income Inequality (Chs. 5 and 6)	2012-2013	132 out of 538 articles out of three quality papers, the tabloid *Bild*, weekly *Der Spiegel*, as well as transcription of one public TV talk show	Qualitative content analysis / typological discourse analysis	*Elite debate*: Justification Patterns of Income Inequality in public debate on Winterkorn record salary
Survey Experiment (Ch. 7)	December 2021	Online survey, 6100 participants from Germany aged 18-65, representative (age, gender, income)	Multifactorial survey experiment	*General Public*: Effect of framing of merit-related justifications of income inequality

Chapter 2 sets the scene by taking the reception of Thomas Piketty's landmark publication *Capital in the 21st Century* as a case to study how the work was received in Germany. It analyses 27 out of 58 articles from German print and online media in the period between January-November 2014. It shows that overall, Piketty's work is received with extraordinary hostility showing German economic policy debates as hardly fertile ground for concerns about economic inequality and redistributive policy demands.

In *Chapter 3* I exploit the opportunity of two almost simultaneous series on inequality in the two main quality papers, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (*SZ*) and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*FAZ*) and its Sunday offspring *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* for an analysis of framing of the issue of economic inequality and redistributive policy. The analysis reveals mixed patterns of framing with more relativizing framing of inequality and rejective stances on redistributive policy in the *FAZ* newspapers.

Building on the findings in the previous two chapters, I take a closer look at 'rhetorical mechanisms of inequality denial' in *Chapter 4*. To that end, I have analysed text material from the *FAZ* newspapers, the business financed think tank *IW Köln* and campaign platform *INSM*, as well as the *German Council on Economic Affairs* as actors or forums of such inequality denial, revealing a diverse set of rhetorical devices that serve to talk down the issue of inequality and suggest redistributive policy was unnecessary.

The next two chapters comprise an analysis of justification patterns of income inequality, based on a qualitative content analysis of the discursive event of the public debate on managerial pay surrounding the record salary of *Volkswagen* CEO, Martin Winterkorn, in 2012 and the subsequent year. *Chapter 5* sets out with the empirical analysis of 132 newspaper articles and the transcription of a TV talk show, identifying a diverse set of justification patterns legitimizing or criticizing managerial pay.

In a second step, I develop a typology of justification patterns in *Chapter 6* that generalized the empirically identified arguments to five types of justification patterns and several cross patterns. The analysis makes cursory reference to the normative theory about inequality, illustrating how the legitimatory discourse on income inequality is mirrored in the history of political thought.

Finally, *Chapter 7* links the findings from the previous analyses of elite debates to research on inequality attitudes in the general public. Using a survey experiment with a fictitious expert interview on merit-related justifications of income inequality, it is possible to show that while single signals of more criticizing or more legitimizing statements seem to have an at most negligible effect relative to ideological and socio-economic determinants, in the aggregate, especially when presented in consistently criticizing or legitimizing interview types, a clear and substantial effect of framing can be observed, underlining the importance of framings in the formation of inequality attitudes and possibly also distributive outcomes.

In *Chapter 8* I draw general conclusions from the findings of my studies on debating inequality in Germany in the past decade, pointing out in which ways they help us understand the policy gap on inequality in Germany, where restrictions of the analysis lie and which routes of future research seem especially promising in the light of my findings.

2 Debating Inequality and Economic Policy in Germany: The Piketty Reception

> French economist Thomas Piketty has written an extraordinarily important book. Open-minded readers will surely find themselves unable to ignore the evidence and arguments he has brought to bear.
> *Martin Wolf, Financial Times, 15 April 2014*

> [T]he whole edifice of thought is shaky. There is a lot of rubbish in the new Marx.
> *Kolja Rudzio, Die Zeit, 5 June 2014*

This chapter takes the reception of Thomas Piketty's book *Capital in the 21st Century* (henceforth *C21*) as an example of the German economic policy debate concerning income and wealth inequality.[26] It analyses the reception of the book in the year 2014 up until the publication of the German translation in October that year. Specifically, I take a closer look at five themes raised by Piketty's landmark publication, spanning from theory over methods to policy recommendations. The analysis shows that in contrast to the reception in the English-speaking world, the German debate was clearly one-sided and mostly lacked recognition of Piketty's impressive contribution. The chapter concludes with some generalized reflections on the role of the media, the economics discipline, political parties and interest groups in Germany, laying the foundation for the subsequent analysis of inequality debates in Germany in the following chapters.

2.1 The Piketty Reception as an Opportunity for a Case Study

Piketty's landmark publication on economic inequality marks an exemplary case to approach the theme of inequality debates in Germany. Its fits this purpose for a conjuncture of reasons, which lie in (1) the person of Piketty, (2) the work he has presented with *C21*, (3) the extraordinary success of *C21*, and (4) its timing – all obviously being interconnected.

Let me start with the protagonist: Thomas Piketty is an exceptional figure among international economists. Born in 1971, the inequality researcher helped establish the Paris School of Economics (PSE), now amongst the top economics schools worldwide,[27] as director in his mid-30s, and he published widely in top economics journals (Piketty, 2021). Yet, Piketty maintains a critical distance

[26] This chapter is based on sections three and four of Bank (2016a), which are an extended version of Bank (2015a). With kind permission by *SE Publishing*.

[27] The PSE is ranked amongst the top five economics departments worldwide according to the RePEC research database as of November 2021, IDEAS/RePEc (2021).

to ‘mainstream economics’[28]: He criticises a “childish passion for mathematics” (Piketty, 2014, p. 32) that prevailed in economics and whose “immoderate use” was often “masking the vacuity of the content” (Piketty, 2014, p. 574). Instead, he calls for a more interdisciplinary orientation of economics that also considered economic questions in their historical, social and political dimensions.

Similar to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Piketty sees the role of social scientists as one of ‘public intellectuals’, as researchers who engage in public debates instead of locking themselves up in an academic ivory tower (Piketty, 2014, p. 574). In that spirit, he regularly writes columns in the main French quality newspaper, *Le Monde*, and comments on current issues of economic policy (Piketty, 2021, p. 10).[29]

Even so, Piketty is first and foremost an inequality researcher. He sees his work on inequality in the tradition of the economist Simon Kuznets, who presented an extensive study on the development of inequality in the United States in the middle of the 20th century.[30] However, Piketty rejects Kuznets’ optimistic theory according to which the development of inequality in a country followed a bell curve in the course of economic development: that after a temporary increase in inequality, inequality automatically decreased again. Against this, Piketty’s book warns that the mechanics of the development of inequality were instead tending towards growing inequality of wealth and income and that targeted political countermeasures must be taken (Piketty, 2014, pp. 25–27).

This particular stance, which Piketty represents and which to some extent evades the prejudice of attribution to a certain camp in both political and disciplinary fields, might partly explain the broader attention and success of his book, and it also makes it a promising case for analysis apart from the fact of providing extensive material for examination. This is because *ex-ante* it was less clear how discourse participants would position themselves, thus potentially providing more *nuanced* material for examination.[31]

Thomas Piketty’s *C21* secondly constitutes a milestone in inequality research. It is not simply a voluminous book on the issue, eloquently peppered with quotes from literary classics like Honoré de Balzac and Jane Austen. It most importantly synthesises (i) decades of aggregating and refining

[28] I understand “mainstream” here in pragmatic terms as the dominant methodological and theoretical orientation within the discipline. For a more nuanced discussion of the concept of “mainstream” economics and its demarcation from orthodox, pluralist or other non-mainstream conceptions, compare Kapeller, Pühringer, and Grimm (2021), Dobusch and Kapeller (2012) and Colander, Holt, and Rosser (2004).

[29] When Piketty was awarded the prize for the “Political Book of the Year” at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in 2015, instead of giving a feel-good speech, he did not miss the opportunity to criticize the social democrats present because of their party’s questionable role in the Greek crisis and the austerity policy demanded of the country. He argues that Germany and France had sensibly and successfully avoided similar impositions to reduce their own national debt after the Second World War, cf. Piketty (2015, p. 15). There is a dash of historical irony that the laudatory speech was given by Olaf Scholz, at the time First Mayor of Hamburg, who was in 2021 elected as German Chancellor.

[30] Cf. Kuznets and Jenks (1953)

[31] Today, Piketty is often described as a left leaning inequality researcher, cf. Koch (2021). But note that this ascription was not as clearly set at the time of *C21*’s publication. It can rather be seen as a result of Piketty’s more normative positioning with his policy recommendations such as a global wealth tax put forward in *C21* and by the subsequent attribution of being a ‘leftist’ put forward by participants of *C21*’s reception (see section 2.7).

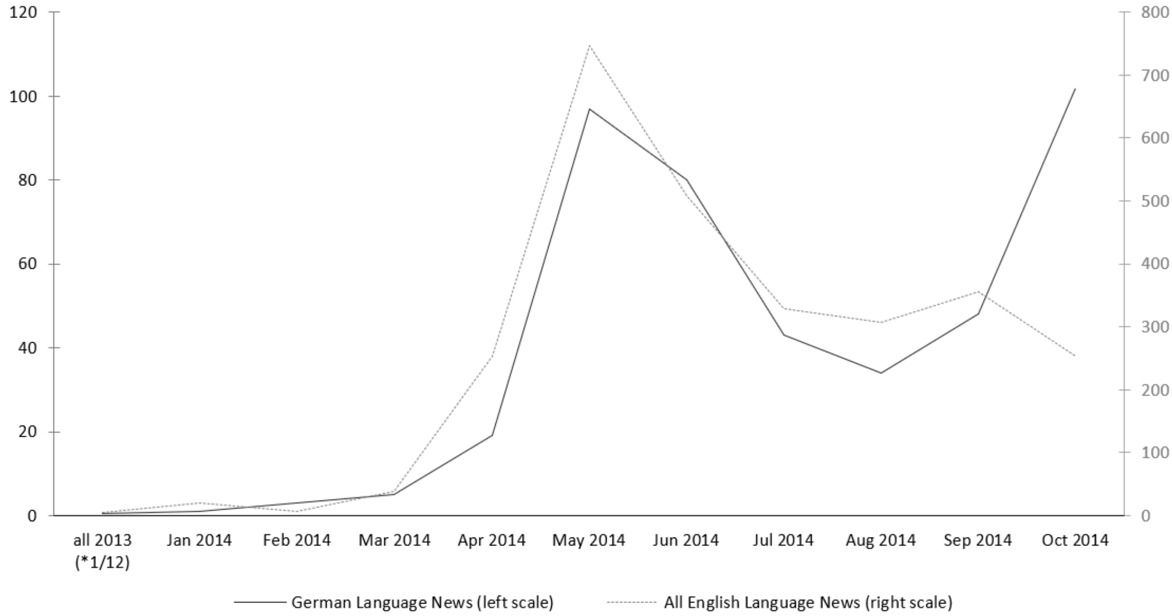
inequality data with (ii) a formal analytical framework and (iii) policy recommendations to go with it (Bank, 2016a, pp. 4–11). The project of data collection later developed into the *World Inequality Database* (*WID*), arguably the most important source of income and wealth inequality data nowadays. So *C21* was not just some publication on inequality by the right person at the right time, but it substantively represents a landmark in its field of research.

Beyond that, *C21* thirdly marks a phenomenon in terms of publishing success (Goldhammer, 2017). In the English-speaking world in particular, Piketty's work set sales records – and it flooded newspapers and economics blogs with numerous enthusiastic as well as critical reviews (Wade, 2014). On Amazon.com, the book was the top bestseller for a while – among all English-language books (Washington Post, 2014). It stayed on the New York Times bestselling list for hardcover non-fiction for 22 weeks (Harvard Magazine, 2014). Well fittingly, the *Bloomberg Business Week* magazine spoke on its cover of a "Pikettymania" and a "wealth inequality fever" that had gripped the USA (Bloomberg.com, 2014). In the meantime, the book has been translated into more than 40 languages and sold more than 2.5 million times (Kennedy, 2021).[32]

Reception in the English-speaking world was marked by early euphoric reviews (for example by Branko Milanovic 2014) and more generally an open-minded, respectful and interested attitude in leading outlets. For example, the *New York Times* published a review as early as January 2014, pointing out the importance of Piketty's contribution in a very balanced account (Edsall, 2014). *The Economist*, known for its economic liberalism and critical stance towards redistributive policy, also published a surprisingly appreciative review early on (Economist, 2014). Even the *Financial Times*, which later attacked Piketty's data (see 2.5), published a review hailing *C21* as an "extraordinarily important book" (Wolf, 2014). The US economist and Nobel Prize winner Paul Krugman described Piketty's tome as perhaps the most important economic book of the decade (Krugman, 2014b) and the influential economist Larry Summers called Piketty's contribution "Nobel Prize-worthy" (Summers, 2014). According to Piketty's English translator, Arthur Goldhammer "initially the most hostile reviews came from the left rather than the right, where the reaction was at first rather muted" (Goldhammer, 2017).

[32] For detailed sales numbers, see Table B.1 in Appendix B.

Figure 2.1: Frequency of news articles mentioning "Piketty"



Source: Nexis Database, own analysis. See Appendix B.1.

The broader reception of the book in Germany took place in two waves. First, in spring 2014, it consisted of reports about the "Piketty phenomenon", especially in the United States, and later in autumn, a second wave of reviews and reports on the publication of the book appeared when the German translation was published (Figure 2.1).

As Goldhammer (2017) notes, part of *C21*'s success may be explained by its emergence at a "propitious moment", not long after the emergence of the *Occupy Wall Street* social movement and the ideological tremors in economic policy debates following the Great Recession.[33] It is hard to disentangle in how far *C21* represents an important causal factor or merely the result of economic inequality becoming an international megatopic. In any case, it coincided with this development, as also becomes clear with the analysis of the annual reports of the World Economic Forum (see fn. 14 above and Appendix A). Although the German reception of *C21* was in part driven by the meta-dimension of reporting the phenomenon of C21's success, especially in the USA, it was also reflected an increasing trend of attention to the issue of economic inequality in German media. So a fourth and key reason to take the reception of *C21* as an exemplary case is its timing as the outset of an increasing attention towards the issue of economic inequality in German public debates (see also section 3.2).

[33] Goldhammer (2017) goes so far as to speculate whether Piketty's joint work with Emmanuel Saez (2003) on the rise of inequality in the USA with its focus on top incomes contributed to the emergence of the Occupy Wall Street Movement known for its slogan "We are the 99 percent!".

2.2 Data and Methods

The following analysis is explorative. The focus is on the reception of Thomas Piketty's book *C21* in the German-speaking public in the year 2014 until the end of October.[34] The selection of articles was taken from results of a Google News search, complemented by a search in the Nexis news database and the archives of the main quality papers of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ). Results comprised 58 articles from 29 German-speaking outlets (see selection in Table 2.1):

Table 2.1: German news outlets with articles on C21, Jan-Oct 2014 (selection)

News outlets	Type
Berliner Zeitung, FAZ, Frankfurter Rundschau, Hamburger Abendblatt, Kölner Stadtanzeiger, Rheinische Post, Stuttgarter Zeitung, SZ, taz, Welt	Daily newspapers
Cicero, Der Spiegel, Deutschlandfunk, Die Zeit, Le Monde Diplomatique, Manager Magazin, NDR Info, Ökonomenstimme, Stern, Wirtschaftswoche	Other outlets (weekly/monthly publication / online magazine, all countries)

The sample thus comprised relevant quality outlets, including the two main national daily papers *SZ* and *FAZ* (which are followed by *Die Welt*, *Handelsblatt*, and *taz* in terms of circulation, all included in the analysis) as well as key German weekly magazines with sections or even main focus on business and economics issues such as *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit*, *Wirtschaftswoche* and *Manager Magazin* (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Landesmedienanstalten [ALM], 2015, 201; 220, 2018, p. 132).

The reporting can be roughly divided into two waves: A first wave consisted of Piketty's early discoverers and those who carried the debate from the English-speaking world into the German-speaking media landscape. It was precisely these 'translators' of the international debate who were mainly astonished by the phenomenon of Piketty – their reports, however, were also overlaid by the first substantive disputes, which continued into the second wave later in October (Figure 2.1).

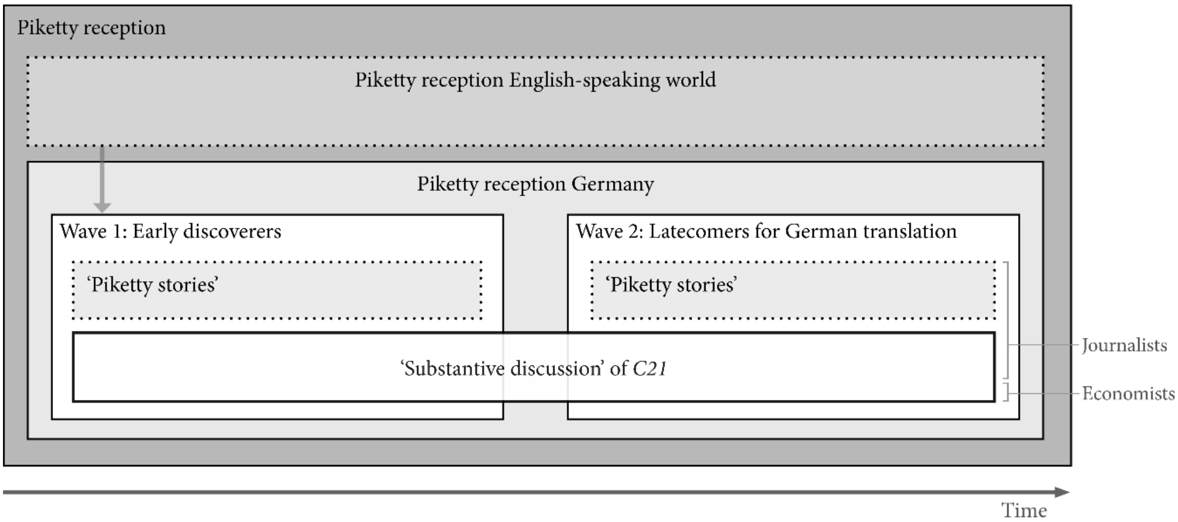
Piketty's reviewers in Germany could thus be divided into different types. On the one hand, they could be divided into the early discoverers, the astonished observers and translators of the English debate, and the latecomers who reviewed the book at the occasion of the appearance of the book in German. Moreover, the authors typically differed in their roles: as journalists or economists; and the group of journalists in turn split into the 'feature writers' and the economics editors.

Accordingly, the contributions to the debate also differed: On the one hand, some articles could be described as 'Piketty stories' about the "rock star economist" (Kachka, 2014), which discussed the phenomenon of Piketty's success on a meta-level. On the other hand, other articles primarily attempted a more substantive engagement with the contents of the book. Of course, hardly any

[34] The book was published in Germany on October, 7, 2014.

discussion of the content of the book could do without reference to “Pikettymania”, just as even the most general ‘Piketty stories’ at least tried to break down the content of the book to one or a few core theses. Incidentally, it should be noted that the German Piketty debate – quite typical for an economic topic – was almost an all-male debate. Among the authors of the reviews considered, there was only one woman: *taz* economics editor Ulrike Herrmann.

Figure 2.2: Schematic illustration of the Piketty reception in Germany



In the following discussion of the various reviews, I focus exclusively on the subset of substantive discussion of Piketty’s contribution (compare Figure 2.2), which I identified after fast-reading all articles. The subset comprises 27 articles from 12 outlets, the main sources being *FAZ* (6 articles), *SZ* (5), *Die Zeit* (3), *Welt* (2) and *taz* (2) and the economics blog *Oekonomenstimme.org* (3). Sources thus included both more left-leaning and conservative outlets (Eilders, 2004).[35] I elaborate five strands of substantive criticism of *C21* in the German reception, which emerge from an analysis of the reviews within the two waves of reviews and discussion. The criticism of the book revolves around Piketty’s “fundamental force of divergence” r > g (2.3), the concept of capital used (2.4), Piketty's data (2.5), his methodological approach (2.6), and his policy recommendations (2.7).

2.3 r > g – Piketty’s “Fundamental Force of Divergence”

At the centre of many criticisms is the aforementioned inequality $r > g$, which Piketty uses to rhetorically sharpen his argument. The expression $r > g$ states that the return on capital is greater than the overall economic growth rate of national income. According to Piketty, this has always been the case historically, except in the decades after the Second World War, and there is much to suggest that this will also be the case in the future, unless the after-tax rate of return is relevantly lowered again through taxation. Piketty calls this relationship a “fundamental force of divergence” (Piketty,

[35] See also section 3.2 on the alignment of different outlets.

2014, pp. 25–27) and a “central contradiction of capitalism” (Piketty, 2014, pp. 571–573). According to the typical interpretation, $r > g$ means that total economic wealth increases relative to annual national income and thus – in the case of already existing wealth inequality – also wealth and income inequality.

This “fundamental inequality driving force” or this “fundamental contradiction” is renamed a “fundamental *law* [emphasis added]” in many critiques, although Piketty has actually reserved the term *law* for two other formal relationships[36] and regularly emphasises that $r > g$ is an empirical *tendency* but in no way determinate.

Beyond this conceptual question, the discussion about $r > g$ refers to various aspects: First of all, it is about the question of what exactly r stands for (2.3.1). The central theoretical debate revolves around the question of whether $r > g$ should actually be interpreted as an inequality driving force or not (2.3.2). Furthermore, it is discussed whether $r > g$ is at all questionable from a theoretical (2.3.3) and a normative point of view (2.3.4). The criticism of $r > g$ as a ‘law’ is also a topic in the discussion of Piketty’s methodology (section 2.6).

2.3.1 Pre- or Post-Tax Return?

What exactly is meant by r, the return on capital? For Piketty, does it refer to capital gains before or after taxes? The economic liberal and conservative economist Stefan Homburg[37], for example, implies in his critique that Piketty was talking about the *pre-tax return on capital* when he considers the relation between r and g as an inequality driver. This was because wealthy people also paid taxes on the return on capital, which Homburg cites as an argument against Piketty’s analytical framework (Homburg, 2014a).[38]

Peter Bofinger, on the other hand, suggests in an interview in *Der Spiegel* that Piketty was talking about the *after-tax rate of return with* $r > g$. However, Piketty's data for the most recent decades then prove an $r < g$, which contradicted his thesis of an increase in inequality because of $r > g$ (Bofinger, 2014). Kolja Rudzio makes a similar point in his review in *Die Zeit*: even the Romans levied taxes, which Piketty ignored. In the age of modern capitalism, of all things, the formula did not work (Rudzio, 2014).

This puzzle might be resolved by Fabian Lindner, who states that Piketty always referred to the *pre-tax rate of return* when he considered $r > g$. The implications for the development of inequality however would then always depend on the *after-tax rate of return*. Only then Piketty’s detailed

[36] Piketty's so-called two “fundamental laws of capitalism” are nothing more than a definitional equation and an arithmetic principle, which in themselves should be quite uncontroversial: (1) $\alpha = r \times \beta$, where α is the share of capital income in national income, r is the rate of return on capital, and β is the ratio of capital to national income; and (2) $\beta = \frac{s}{g}$, where s is the savings rate and g is the growth rate.

[37] Note that Stefan Homburg has recently turned into a controversial public figure during the Corona pandemic, spreading conspiracy myths and making manipulative use of facts about the pandemic, cf. Brinkmann (2020).

[38] Newspaper articles and internet documents are referenced separately in the References section. Additionally, a list of sources quoted in the analysis can be found in Appendix B.

explanation of the temporary decline in inequality in the course of the 20th century and his insistence on the necessity of redistributive policies through taxes would become comprehensible (Lindner, 2014).

2.3.2 Is r > g an Inequality Driving Force?

Some reviews aim in their criticism at the fact that $r > g$ only logically implies an increasing inequality of wealth if the capital gains are entirely reinvested and there is no consumption from these capital gains. Stefan Homburg, for example, points this out in his critique. However, since in reality wealthy people also pay taxes from their capital gains, consume, donate and exercise political influence, this assumption would be unrealistic according to him (Homburg, 2014a). Hans-Werner Sinn (Sinn, 2014a) and other liberal economists have taken a similar position.

Dirk Niepelt (2014) is somewhat more cautious in his criticism of the consequences of $r > g$ for the relative importance of wealth as elaborated by Piketty:

> [Q]uantitatively, Piketty is likely to overestimate the impact of a decline in the growth rate on the wealth-to-income ratio because he implicitly – and hardly tenably – assumes that the aggregate savings rate keeps increasing with rising capital intensity.[39]

In contrast, Till van Treeck (2014c) argues that *individual* savings rates play a decisive role. A central source of inequality was the empirical fact that savings rates were higher for richer households than for poorer ones:

> Because the rich are rich, they can save more than poor households, and therefore they accumulate higher wealth, earn a higher return on their wealth, can save even more and so on. In addition, the rich usually earn higher returns on their assets because they can diversify their portfolio better and be more risk-loving. Moreover, the higher the return on capital, and the lower the economic growth, the easier it is for rich households to further improve their relative wealth position and bequeath it.

Van Treeck shows based on some simulations with realistic orders of magnitude that $r > g$ does not necessarily have to lead to an infinite increase in the capital-income ratio and income and wealth inequality. However, even an increase in beta of a similar magnitude to that described by Piketty for the past decades, especially with heterogenous savings rates across positions in the distribution, could bring about strong inequality-increasing dynamics (van Treeck, 2014b).

Mark Schieritz also defends Piketty in *Die Zeit*: Piketty did not claim that wealth always and automatically grew faster than income, but only in certain historical constellations, which he empirically elaborated in his book and the tendency of which for the coming years he sought to analyse (Schieritz, 2014).

[39] All quotes from German-language sources in all chapters are my own translations.

2.3.3 r > g: Self Evident Neoclassical Knowledge or Provocation?

Another strand of the discussion about $r > g$ relates to the role of this inequality concerning long-term growth processes. Neoclassical[40] economists emphasise that $r > g$ was a neoclassical matter of course, according to which the refrain from current consumption was rewarded, but that it was not a formula that implied a long-term divergence of capital and labour income (Paqué, 2014). Hans-Werner Sinn explains that, according to neoclassical growth theory, r tended towards a level above g in the long term. The relationship between r and g, however, would level out in such a way that wealth and income developed proportionally to each other, because part of the returns on wealth would not be saved (Sinn, 2014a). Stefan Homburg also justifies this as normatively desirable, since an inverse ratio, $r < g$, meant "dynamic inefficiency": one could make one generation better off without making others worse off (Homburg, 2014a).

Karl-Heinz Paqué (2014) explains why it was efficient from a neoclassical point of view if $r > g$:

> In economic [*sic!*] growth theory, $r > g$ is not a magic formula, but an almost self-evident assumption: In a world where people are impatient and prefer to consume the fruits of their labour today rather than save tomorrow, they must be compensated by investors for their sacrifice, over and above the mere growth rate of value-added.

Till van Treeck (2014c) for that reason calls Piketty's attempt to condense his argument into $r > g$ a "provocation" to the neoclassical orthodoxy. According to van Treeck, the decisive thinking error of neoclassic theorists was that they sought to explain the saving behaviour of individuals solely from their *time preferences* and not also from *relative income positions*.

While the majority of neoclassically inspired reviewers of Piketty initially raise no doubts about $r > g$, in some contributions this theoretical commitment is relativised by an argument to the contrary. Niepelt (2014) writes: "One would normally expect a rising capital intensity to be accompanied by falling interest rates; accordingly, the share of capital in income could rise, remain constant or even fall." It should be noted that Niepelt – like many other reviewers – uses interest and capital income synonymously, although Piketty does not focus on interest alone but on income on all capital forms in his analysis. Karl-Heinz Paqué (2014) also sees signs of a "trend break" in contemporary capitalism caused by changing scarcity conditions, in which returns on capital (also used synonymously with interest) would decline.

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[40] Neoclassical economics can be seen as the dominant school within economics, often contrasted with Keynesianism. However, there are numerous other schools and also Keynesian-inspired strands within neoclassical economics, cf. Dobusch and Kapeller (2012); Kurz (2016). Central building blocks of neoclassical economics are the basic assumption (however precisely defined) of rational behaviour by individuals, and typically the view that markets – subject to a number of other assumptions (such as functioning price signals) – tend towards equilibria. Standard macroeconomic models (so called DSGE models) even exclude inequality in their basic versions: They typically assume so-called "representative agents" endowed with equal resources, cf. Stiglitz (2018).

2.3.4 Are the Rich in Piketty's View Only Accumulation Machines?

A *normative* critique of Piketty ties in with the questioning presented in section 2.3.2 that $r > g$ implied rising inequality: This is only *necessarily* true if capital income is fully reinvested. Then, however, according to this line of criticism, the rich are no longer to be envied: "Is it not rather the inequality of consumption than that of wealth that runs counter to social notions of justice, and how much is this consumption inequality growing?" asks Dirk Niepelt (2014) rhetorically. And Stefan Homburg (2014a) observes: "If wealth owners claimed to be pure accumulation machines who do not consume anything and also abstain from political influence - why should they be envied?"

We should not that these accounts fail to mention that between these rhetorically cleverly juxtaposed extreme positions – pure accumulation and no consumption from capital income vs. consumption from capital income and no increase in inequality – there are very well scenarios with empirically realistic orders of magnitude in which savings rates from capital income are not 100 per cent and yet, especially among the richest, are high enough for accumulation in which their wealth grows faster than the annual national income. However, this is exactly what Piketty is talking about. Furthermore, they fail to mention the freedom and opportunities provided by non-spent wealth, a fact a consumption view on welfare by definition overlooks.[41]

2.4 Piketty's Concept of Capital

One criticism voiced in some of the reviews is directed at the underlying concept of capital or wealth. Piketty uses the two terms synonymously and, for example, does not distinguish between productive and non-productive capital. This is discussed by Andreas Zielcke (2014) in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Piketty had good reasons for using a broad definition of capital – on the one hand, because this does better justice to his data sources, and on the other hand, more fundamentally, because otherwise important sources of return on wealth would have to be left out of his distribution analysis (Piketty, 2014, pp. 45–47). In doing so, however, he exposed himself to theoretical reproaches from the left and the right alike.

Zielcke argues that whether wealth consisted of real estate ownership or entrepreneurial capital might not be relevant for the inequality analysis itself, but it might be relevant for the democratic problems resulting from inequality. The resulting dependencies and possibilities for social and political influence differed depending on the form of capital.

But even from a narrower economic perspective, Piketty encounters criticism of theoretical imprecision using such a generalized concept of capital. In his analysis of the "laws of capitalism", Piketty has to fall back on insights from neoclassical models – and thus somewhat inconsistently on a narrower concept of capital. For example, Stefan Homburg (2014a) criticises that a large part of the increase in the capital-income ratio (called *beta*) described by Piketty "does not reflect an

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[41] On the freedom provided by wealth, compare the brilliant treatment of this issue by G. A. Cohen (2011).

accumulation of additional machines, etc., but a mere increase in land prices”. This was “diametrically opposed to Piketty’s subtext that ‘sophisticated robots’ [...] are replacing workers and capitalists are ‘appropriating’ ever-larger shares of national income”.

Unsurprisingly, neo-Marxist and left-wing critics also feel provoked by Piketty’s book, whose title obviously flirts with Marx, especially when it comes to the concept of capital. Ingo Stützle (2014) accuses Piketty of bigotry: Piketty simply had “no concept of capital”, as he equated capital and wealth. The economic form in which certain property positions existed played no role for Piketty. Thus, he might be able to analyse the dynamics, but not the origin of inequality.

Similarly, Ulrike Herrmann (2014) criticises Piketty for falling into a typical economists trap:

> It presupposes what it would have to explain. With capitalism, the central question is: How does growth come about? Because capitalism is the very first social system in human history that is dynamic. But with Piketty, growth lands like a UFO in the world and is then only measured in percentages.

Thomas Steinfeld (2014) also expresses this criticism in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

2.5 The Debate About Piketty’s Data

Relative to the other strands of the reception, it can be said that Piketty’s empirical work received comparatively positive recognition, in contrast to the theoretical reception and the debate about Piketty’s political conclusions. Nevertheless, many critics were also sceptical and some even scathing about Piketty’s data.

In particular, the prominent critique of Piketty’s data put forward by *Financial Times* (*FT*) journalist Chris Giles was widely received. On the front page of its weekend edition of May 24, 2014, the *FT* had published a criticism of Piketty’s data as being inaccurate under the headline “Piketty did his sums wrong in bestseller that tapped into the inequality zeitgeist” (Giles, 2014b). In the end, the *FT* turned out to have looked at inferior data to support part of their criticism and that their critique was overblown,[42] which was of course not published on their front page,[43] leaving a “fog of doubt”[44] about Piketty’s data in the public. relatively

Whiley the *FT*’s original critique was mentioned prominently in the German reception, its sharp rejection by Piketty and the *FT*’s meek attempt to row back, on the other hand, were hardly mentioned – leaving the original critique in the *FT* as the ‘last word’ on Piketty’s data in many German outlets. Nikolaus Piper (2014b) in the *SZ* ran an article entitled “Entzaubert (Demystified)”.[45] The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* ran a major piece “Piketty und die verdammten Zahlen

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[42] Compare for example the reporting by Irwin (2014) in the New York Times.

[43] Instead, there was a rather defiant response in the FT blog, compare Giles (2014a).

[44] This term has been coined by Paul Krugman in his contribution to the debate along with his reference to “inequality denial”, which he compares to “climate change denial”, compare Krugman (2014c)

[45] The Süddeutsche Zeitung at least ran an article in its culture section ‘Feuilleton’ (Meyer 2014) that briefly followed up on Chris Giles’ rather unsuccessful critique.

[Piketty and the Damned Numbers]" (Von Petersdorff, 2014) with a photo of Piketty poking his hair back in a brooding manner.

Kolja Rudzio (2014) in *Die Zeit* lists several supposed problems with Piketty's data. He also refers to the *FT's* critique and judges sharply: Piketty was taking it too easy with his reaction to the criticism. "Because in fact the small increase in wealth concentration measured by him in recent times already turns into a decline with minor changes – or no trend is discernible at all anymore." However, Rudzio fails to mention that the *FT* had referred to voluntary survey data, which underestimates top-end wealth (Vermeulen, 2016). Rudzio's overall criticism, as outlined in section (2.3.1), is that Piketty did not discuss taxes sufficiently. He also failed to consider after-tax incomes in income data and then called for "new, redistributive taxes. That is absurd." (Rudzio, 2014)

Stefan Homburg (Homburg, 2014c), in addition to the aforementioned criticism of Piketty's interpretation of the capital-income ratio (section 2.4), expresses two further points in which Piketty's data contradicted his own narrative: Concerning the functional income distribution, Homburg accuses Piketty of having made a manipulative selection of the time period under consideration, which made the increase in the profit share look larger. Moreover, he argues that the development of top incomes in Germany, France and Japan contradicted Piketty's theses.

Peter Jungen (2014) accuses Piketty, like many others, of not taking into account "entitlements and statutory, collectively agreed and private pensions" in wealth analyses. If these were included in an analysis for Germany, one would arrive at a "clearly more equal" distribution of wealth. Apart from the fact that pension entitlements cannot be equated with wealth, not least because they can neither be sold nor be spent freely, this arguably fails to recognise the sheer extent of wealth inequality (compare Chapter 1).[46]

Étienne Wasmer (2014) criticises Piketty's data for distorting the capital-income ratio by including house prices at overvalued market prices. It was better to look at rents as the more accurate future stream of income (or saved costs in owner-occupied properties).

Apart from the frequent, rather general praise of Piketty's "tedious work" (2014), however, there are surprisingly few appreciative statements about the massive contribution of Piketty and his colleagues' to the field of inequality research. Especially through their focus on tax statistics, they made information on the distribution at the top end of income and wealth accessible for the first time, which van Treeck (2014c) reminds us of in his contribution.

2.6 Piketty's Methodological Approach

Two types of criticism in the German-language reception can be summarised under the heading 'methodological criticism'. On the one hand, reviewers criticised Piketty's style. Furthermore, some authors took offence at Piketty's 'laws' and 'prognoses'.

[46] Note that reference to pension entitlements is a common way to relativise wealth inequality in Germany, compare 4.3.2.

Stefan Homburg (2014b) is the most outspoken critic of Piketty's style: Piketty had written a "dialectical book" in which he "retracts almost every statement he makes somewhere else, or at least restricts it to such an extent that any criticism of it comes to nothing." This largely precluded an "analytical engagement with the material." Or, in Kolja Rudzio's (2014) words, Piketty has the "strange tendency [...] to always assert the opposite of what he suggests elsewhere."

Mark Schieritz (2014), one of the few authors who otherwise discuss Piketty very favourably and defend him against other reviewers in the German debate, also says that Piketty was not entirely innocent of his "misreception". His book was an "imposition" because it lacked a clear structure, terms were not always clearly defined and, above all, the role of actually existing redistribution was not worked out clearly enough.

Another critique of Piketty's method in the narrower sense is expressed by Karl-Heinz Paqué (2014). In line with ordoliberal tradition, he attacks Piketty with Karl Popper. Piketty's approach was "historicist": He proclaimed "iron laws" of capitalism and ventured forecasts into the distant future. This was unscientific because – as put forward by Popper – hypotheses had to be falsifiable. Similar to Paqué, but more drastic in tone, Stefan Homburg (Homburg, 2014c) claims that Piketty could be compared to a meteorologist who dared to make long-term weather forecasts: a projection of the development of inequality far into the 21st century was "dubious" and "useless". This had "nothing to do with science."[47]

It should be noted though that Piketty does not proclaim any "iron laws" at all and that there has been a general confusion between Piketty's mathematical definitions ("fundamental laws of capitalism") and the empirical tendency $r > g$ ("fundamental force of divergence") described by him, possibly caused by the same attribute 'fundamental'. Moreover, Piketty emphasises at every point that he is incapable of any prognosis for the future. Rather, he describes plausible scenarios and explains why he considers some to be the more realistic. If anyone has invoked "iron laws", it is rather someone like Paqué, who argues with neoclassical 'laws' of scarcity and equilibrium assumptions to justify why he considers Piketty's empirically-based expectations improbable.[48] This reveals that some protagonists of the German Piketty reception maybe did not read the book with the attention and openness required to note these important distinctions.[49]

[47] There is historic irony in this accusation given Homburg at least recently seems to have largely abandoned scientific standards and integrity in his comments on the Corona pandemic, as becomes apparent for example in fact-checkings by the watchdogs *Correctiv.org* (Weinmann (2020); Thust (2021)) and *Volksverpetzer.de* (Orlik (2021)).

[48] I have made this point in Bank (2014a).

[49] More generally, in terms of method, it is no surprise that Piketty's account is criticized by adherents of neoclassical economics for not being analytic enough, as his empirically based, economic-historical perspective, can hardly meet the aesthetic expectations of formally neat equilibrium analysis if it is to account for the complexities of the real world.

2.7 Piketty's Policy Recommendations

Overall, the debate on Piketty's policy recommendations is largely superficial and does not discuss Piketty's proposals in detail – and it thus turns out the most telling part of the German reception. It reveals an economic liberal view of economic policy that is dominant in the reception of Piketty – and as I will try to corroborate in the next chapters, in German economic policy debates on inequality of that time more generally. This is most succinctly summed up by Philipp Bagus (2014): "While he [Piketty] calls for more state, higher taxes and more redistribution, we see the solution in less state."[50] Karl-Heinz Paqué (2014) writes that Piketty overestimated the power of politics. For Gerald Braunberger (2014), Piketty is a "typical French utopian". And Daniel Stelter (2014) writes that inequality was a necessary part of our economic order.

Stefan Homburg (2014c) falsely claims that Piketty was a member of the Socialist Party. He had written blueprints for France's "failed policies" and "the country is in ruins [liegt darnieder]". Accordingly, Piketty's book was out of date (Homburg, 2014b). Similarly, Lars Feld (2014) refers to French economic policy in his critique of Piketty. Piketty provided the "next excuse for 'more state'". A stronger progression in income tax affected private companies, a wealth tax burdened the substance of companies – only concerning the inheritance tax Germany had been too generous so far.

Hans-Werner Sinn (2014a) surprisingly agrees with Piketty that wealth could grow much faster than income "temporarily" and therefore a progressive tax system should limit increases in net income at the top end. However, he sees no need for action in Europe. Progressive taxation had "already assumed considerable proportions". Like Marx, Piketty catered for "popular demands [eine Sehnsucht der Bevölkerung]". If there really was a danger of growing inequality, Sinn sees the solution in improving equality of opportunity. He writes: "The more dishwashers become millionaires, the smaller the distribution problem."[51] And he seriously adds: "It also helps if the rich have more children than the poor because by dividing the inheritances the distribution problem would solve itself."

As a more fundamental argument against Piketty's policy recommendations reviewers regularly put forward the supposed negative effect on economic dynamism by redistributive policy. For example, Nikolaus Piper (2014a) writes that Piketty's policy proposals "would deprive the economy and society of their dynamism and therefore exacerbate the problem that needs to be solved." Peter Jungen (2014) argues almost in the same words and adds that only investments in education were a sensible demand put forward by Piketty.

[50] Note that Bagus curiously speaks in the first person plural, although he writes alone, uncommon for a newspaper opinion piece. His short statement though is part of a collection of six voices put together by Philip Plickert, editor in the business and economics section of *FAZ*, cf. Plickert (2014). With Peter Bofinger, there is one "progressive" voice, the other five being "economic liberals". All six harshly reject Piketty's work, so that the text reads almost as a collective statement.

[51] In that rhetorical form it may seem difficult to take Sinn's point seriously at all, but assuming he is trying to make a substantial point about equality of opportunity and upward mobility, this argument is brilliantly dealt with by Goldthorpe (2016); see also Bank (2016c).

Among the few reviewers who express positive views on Piketty's policy proposals, Robert Misik (2014) regrets that Piketty underestimated the planning and constructive element of the social reformist policies of Roosevelt, social democrats, trade unionists and progressive economists of the 1920s to 1950s, given the simultaneous historical catastrophes.

Jakob Kapeller (2014) praises Piketty's policy recommendations as a "milestone" in the economic policy debate. He welcomes Piketty's focus on tax policy and emphasises that it was not only after-tax distribution that he had in mind. In the case of incomes, high top tax rates did not primarily serve to generate tax revenue. Rather, they were aimed directly at primary distribution, because – similar to minimum wages at the lower end – they introduced effective limits in the highest income segment.

2.8 Conclusion

In summary, it can be said for the reception of Piketty in Germany that it stands in remarkable contrast to the euphoria with which the book – despite all the criticism in detail – was received in the English-speaking world. For sure, there were outright critical accounts in the reception internationally as well. But the tone of key reviews in leading quality outlets was far more respectful and open-minded, if not praising. In comparison, it is astonishing to see how many reviewers in Germany tore down with a stroke of the pen the impressive research project of years of data collection on inequality, by an internationally recognized economist. At the same time, this harsh criticism was hardly met with any opposition. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in particular was conspicuous for giving the criticism of Piketty a large forum, while making practically no space for opposing voices or at least for later relativisations of accusations.

Those who had read Piketty's book and knew his biography had to rub their eyes in Germany. One read that "Piketty's theory is not correct" and that he "whitewashes" his thinking mistake "with captivating language" (Sinn, 2014b). "As a theorist, Piketty can be ticked off" (Herrmann, 2014). "[T]he whole edifice of thought is shaky. There is a lot of rubbish in the new Marx" - he seems "obsessed with the topic of inequality" (Rudzio, 2014). One could also call his research "envy research" (Homburg, 2014c). The list could easily be continued.

Even the *German Council of Economic Experts* (*GCEE*), the so-called five economic experts, dismissed *C21* as a contribution of limited significance because it supposedly focussed only on functional distribution (Sachverständigenrat zur Begutachtung der gesamtwirtschaftlichen Entwicklung [SVR], 2014, para. 518) – a position that should raise doubts whether the authors had dealt with *C21* in-depth at all (compare section 4.2.3). In any case, its statement marks another example of the hostility of the German reception of *C21*.

There should be no doubt that there are enough reasons to criticise *C21*. But the vehemence with which Piketty's book has been slammed in Germany arguably says more about German economists, economic journalists and economic policy debates than about Thomas Piketty and his work.

A study by Christoph Schinke (2015), a researcher at the *ifo Institute*, comes to a similar conclusion. He writes:

> Reviews, essays, and comments often revealed more information about the attitudes of the individual journalist or guest author and the publishing newspaper than they did about the book. Piketty (together with his co-authors) made a major contribution to economic science by gathering new historical data on inequality and providing explanations. However, if people relied on only one or several very similar news sources, ideological bias made it difficult for readers to acknowledge this contribution.

The reception of *C21* reveals that a relevant share of participants of the German economic policy discourse in 2014 was not ready to openly discuss economic inequality as put on the agenda by Thomas Piketty. It is telling both of the state of the economics discipline in Germany and of the economic policy discourse as represented in the quality press. The analysis is particularly relevant, as it deals with more analytical treatments of the issue of economic inequality. While the appearance of the theme of inequality in the media always partly consists of mere reporting on new inequality measurements, the articles that have been analysed here represent substantive discussions of the issue, by reviewing *C21* and the inequality dynamics it problematizes. Thus, the analysis gets more closely to the heart of those parts of the debate that define the political opportunity space for redistributive policy – which necessarily involves discussing the questions of problem definition and corresponding policy recommendations.

The role of the media is to have set the stage for the overly hostile reception, especially in conservative newspapers, most prominently the *FAZ*, but also complemented by harsh criticisms from the centre-left to left, such as in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Der Spiegel* or *die tageszeitung*, the latter group with a mixed picture both appreciative and dismissive reviews. It is important to recall that per definition, a review seeks to point out weaknesses as well. However, as elaborated in the analysis above, the character of the German Piketty reception went well beyond that in large parts. It seems to reflect a dominant economic policy doctrine that rejects concerns about inequality as well as demands for redistributive policy. The Piketty reception once again reveals that parts of the media landscape seem to have internalised the one-sidedness of German economic policy debates.[52]

Ultimately, this dominant economic policy view cannot be understood without consideration of the tradition of the German economics discipline.[53] There has been an ongoing debate about German exceptionalism in the ideological and doctrinal formation of German economics (Caspari & Schefold, 2011; K. Horn, 2021; Kapeller et al., 2021; Wren-Lewis, 2015). Arguably, the peak of an

[52] Another example is the German media coverage of the Eurocrisis, as for example Otto, Köhler, and Baars (2016) have shown with regard to the reporting of public broadcasters on the Greek debt crisis.

[53] Interestingly, a later academic review symposium by *historians*, rather unnoticed in the media debate, revealed a far more friendly approach to *C21*. Cf. Ahrens and Hohls (2022).

economic liberal ‘constriction’ of the discipline is marked by the so-called *Hamburger Appell*, a document signed by more than 250 German economics, that posits that millions of mostly low qualified workers in Germany were jobless due to too high wages and that the “uncomfortable truth” was that improvements in the situation at the labour market could only be achieved by even lower wages at the bottom end of the income distribution (Funke, Lucke, & Straubhaar, 2005). At the outset of the 2010s, a shift towards a more empiricist and less (explicitly) normative international mainstream was underway, as documented by intradisciplinary debates and public calls (Caspari & Schefold, 2011) as well as an emerging student-led movement calling for more pluralism in economics (Fattinger & Guttmann, 2016). Given however that economic editors of the 2010s have been mostly educated in the decades before and that established expert voices in the economic policy debates had the peak of their career in earlier times, it may not surprise, that even at the time of the publication of *C21*, the debate mirrored an earlier disciplinary state.[54]

This exemplary analysis of the Piketty reception in Germany sets the stage for a more thorough analysis of German inequality debates in the 2010s. It shows that German economic policy debates seem to be an exceptionally unfertile ground for weighing inequality concerns and redistributive policy options, even though such concerns are widely shared. In what follows I will more systematically examine the framing of inequality in German quality press – and I will set out to identify mechanisms of inequality denial by economic liberal actors and forums of the German economic policy debate. Furthermore, I will closely examine the general discourse on justifications of income inequality as a complementary piece of analysis serving to explore inequality debates in Germany.

[54] For an analysis of the pluralism in the courses and training leading to careers in economic journalism, see Sagvosdkin (2021). He shows in his analysis that “there are clear deficits in the qualification of economic journalists with regard to the balancing of economic perspectives.”, cf. Sagvosdkin (2021, p. 103).

3 Framing Concerns About Inequality and Redistribution in the German Quality Press

> Those who howl with the zeitgeist, according to which the gap between poor and rich was ever-widening, and thus the world getting ever more unjust, have understood little, but are getting a lot of attention.
>
> *Editorial, Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, 21 February 2016*

I now turn to a more systematic analysis of the treatment of the issue of economic inequality in the German media. In this chapter, I focus on the framing of economic inequality in the two main quality papers in Germany, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (*SZ)* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, as represented in two series on the issue in 2016.[55] I exploit the opportunity of two almost simultaneous series on inequality in the two newspapers and assess (1) the specific thematic focus of articles in the series, (2) in how far inequality is presented as a relevant problem, (3) the way redistributive policy is presented as a potential problem solution and (4) if and in which way possible conceptual ambiguities and data problems are discussed. I find diverging patterns of framing depending on the newspaper, thematic context and author type, with the *FAZ* newspaper more often rejecting inequality concerns and endorsing economic liberalism.

Some observers have voiced concern about "inequality denial" in public debates on inequality (Krugman, 2014c). Similar concerns have been raised about the German print media (Arlt & Storz, 2013). As has become clear in the analysis of the Piketty reception in 2014 (see previous chapter), a relevant part of participants in the economic policy debate in the media seem to disregard concerns about economic inequality and decline that there is any need for redistributive policies.

On the other hand, recent studies have shown that, overall, coverage of inequality in German print media has been steadily increasing. Based on a quantitative content analysis, Schröder and Vietze (2015) argue that the German newspaper coverage of social inequality, poverty, and social justice since 1946 was – in quantitative terms – responsive to the material developments of income inequality, with an overall trend of rising coverage of inequality. They do not, however, analyse how the media discusses the issue. Yet salience alone does not suffice for an understanding of the discourse surrounding the issue; *how* inequality is framed matters enormously for the argumentative space in which distributional policy approaches are discussed.

Petring (2016) argues based on text mining methods that newspaper discourses on inequality and social justice have become increasingly divergent. Using co-occurrence analysis comparing

[55] This chapter is based on Bank (2017a).

patterns between the periods 1959–79 and 1992–2011, he finds that "two worlds of justice journalism" have emerged, with a shift in justice evaluations toward a "neoliberal paradigm" in the centre-right newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), while reporting in the centre-left and left newspapers *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) and *die tageszeitung* (taz) has remained unchanged. However, regarding reporting on material inequality rather than social justice, Petring (2016, p. 390) remarks no such paradigm shift.

Although these studies are based on large corpora with long sample periods and thus help to shed light on general patterns and long-term trends, they do not discuss how economic inequality is evaluated in individual articles and they cannot be backed by an interpretive and understanding approach at that scale.[56] Though Petring voices optimism concerning the future development of text-mining methods (Petring, 2016, p. 392), so far, the only option available to us, if we want to grasp the specific framing of economic inequality in print journalism, is qualitative analysis based on a close-reading of texts. In this spirit, Volkmann (2006) has found in a qualitative content analysis of 179 articles from two quality papers – *FAZ* (centre-right) and *Frankfurter Rundschau* (FR) (social-liberal) – in 1970 and 2000 that newspapers were marked by distinct "semantics of legitimation" of inequality, representing the respective mindsets of their readership at these two points in time. She argues that newspapers did thus not serve as mediators in one unified public discourse. Volkmann's analysis however focuses only on the justice dimension of inequality, while at the same time extending the analysis to the field of employment relations and the welfare state rather than the more narrow field of economic inequality.

This chapter puts the treatment of economic inequality itself at the centre, regardless of whether it is discussed as a topic of social justice or, say, one of macroeconomic instability. Furthermore, although the thematic scope is wider (economic inequality, as such), the methodic focus is more close-up than that of quantitative large corpus analyses. I seek to identify elements of framing that determine how the issue is presented in the respective publications. To that end, the analysis exploits two inequality series, one in each of the two leading national quality newspapers, *FAZ* and *SZ*. The analysis is based on a qualitative content analysis with a mixed deductive/inductive approach. The next section discusses the specific research questions in more detail (3.1). The Data and Methods section describes the selection of data and the applied methods (3.2), followed by the section Empirical Findings (3.3), and then a short conclusion (3.4).

[56] The reception of Piketty's *C21* in the German quality press, as recounted in Chapter 2 above, marks a case where coverage of an inequality theme is abundant in quantitative terms, while in qualitative terms its general tendency is one sided if not defamatory toward Piketty. Absurdly, one of the most hostile newspapers, centre-right FAZ, reported under the headline "German Media Like Thomas Piketty" (Bernau (2014)), that Piketty was the third most quoted economist in Germany in the first semester of 2014 – falsely implying that frequency of quotation was an indicator of sympathy (unless we are willing to interpret the "like" in the headline as "liking to quote" rather than "liking, full stop," in which case the remaining ambiguity was still misleading).

3.1 Research Questions

The general interest of this chapter is to explore the way economic inequality has been framed in the German broadsheet media, an objective I pursue by analysing its treatment in two leading quality newspapers. The overall guiding research question (RQ) is as follows:

RQ1: What is the framing of economic inequality in the explored data?

As further expounded in the Data and Methods section, I pursue the aim of capturing the framing of economic inequality by analysing the various specific focuses, evaluations, and definitions provided concerning economic inequality. I regard all these as elements of framing that, together, constitute specific patterns of framing. These elements of framing are captured with the help of the following four research questions:

RQ2a: What specific thematic focuses do editors choose when dealing with the general theme of economic inequality?

RQ2b: Is economic inequality presented as an issue of social or political concern, or are such concerns rejected or relativised?

RQ2c: Are redistributive policies endorsed or not? How are such policies defined?

RQ2d: Which specific conceptions of economic inequality are employed, and how far are complexities concerning inequality data mentioned?

Building on this basic analysis of framing, I will also discuss the differences between the two newspapers I analyse in terms of their overall series design, focus, and composition. My comparative research question is:

RQ3: In what ways does the composition of series—in terms of RQ1–RQ2d—differ between the two analysed newspapers?

In the next section, I describe the choice of data and methods applied to answer these research questions. Special attention is given to the design of codes and the concept of framing.

3.2 Data and Methods

The following empirical analysis is based on data from the business and finance sections of the two leading national quality newspapers in Germany, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*FAZ*) and *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* (*SZ*). These two have the highest circulation among national quality newspapers, with 352,573 and 239,946 copies in 2018, respectively (ALM, 2018, p. 132).[57] They can be regarded as leading newspapers among quality media outlets, being most frequently read by other journalists and most frequently quoted by other newspapers (Jandura & Brosius, 2011, pp. 195–

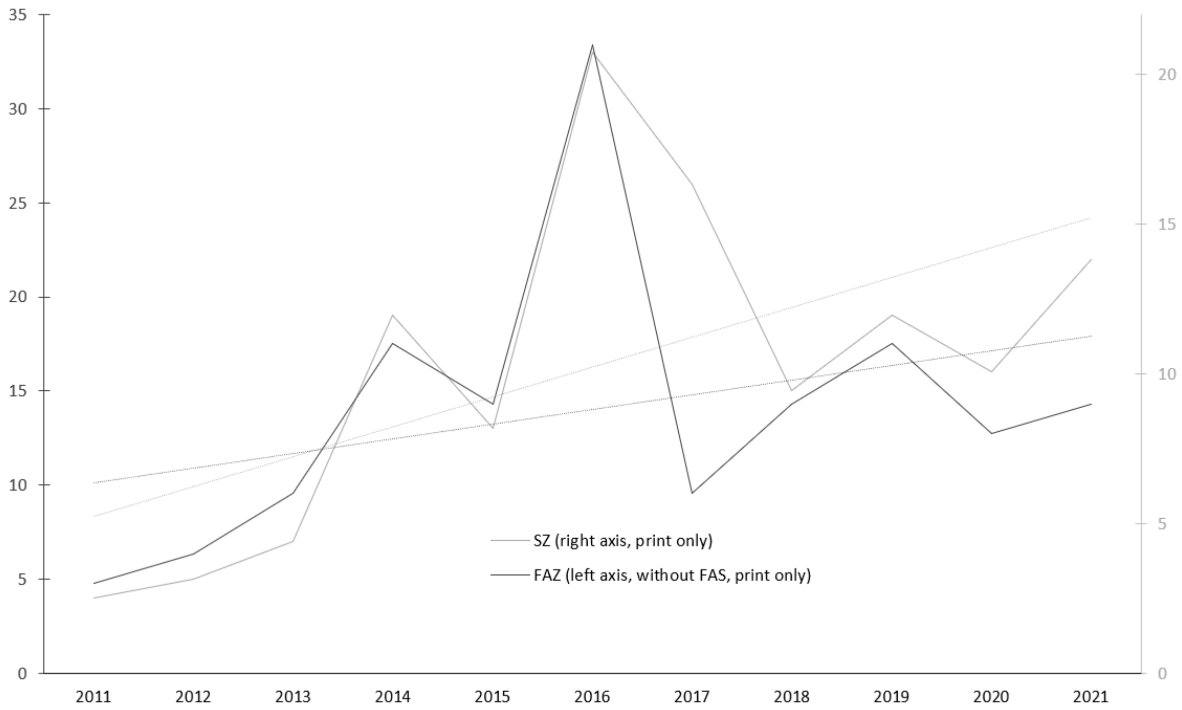
[57] Down from 397,033 and 306,779 in 2014, Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Landesmedienanstalten (2015, p. 201).

196). While the *FAZ* can be regarded as a conservative newspaper, marked by a tradition of economic liberalism in its business and finance section (Kutzner, 2014), the *SZ* is a more centre-left newspaper (Eilders, 2004).[58] So a focus on these two leading quality newspapers is an evident choice, especially when it is important to restrict the number of articles to a manageable size for qualitative analysis and it has been employed in other analyses of German leading papers (e.g., Kantner, 2014). In my case it is additionally motivated by the opportunity of two series on inequality.

Both newspapers, *FAZ* and *SZ*, published a series on the issue of economic inequality in their business and finance sections in 2016, which marks a peak in their reporting of economic inequality in the decade 2011–2021 according to a quantitative analysis of the papers print headlines (Figure 3.1). The series offered me the unique opportunity to methodologically "delegate" the process of article selection to the newspaper editors – and to make the result of their editorial choices an explicit part of the analysis. It is important to note the statistical implications of including the complete series. Instead of being a sample of articles, the articles I analyse constitute the entirety of the "population" (i.e., the respective series) under study. This eliminates concerns about selection bias and a small sample size on the article level of analysis. Note that the data were treated as one corpus representing "inequality series in the two leading quality papers" in the more general parts of the analysis. In contrast, in the comparative parts, the two series each constituted one corpus on their own, so that they could be compared despite the unequal number of articles (see Table 3.1). At the same time, concerns about representativeness remain valid on the levels of journal selection and time period as well as concerning the question of whether the series are representative of the treatment of economic inequality in the two papers more generally. I return to these questions in the concluding section.

[58] Note that Eilders (2004) shows that in its political commentary section, *SZ* tends more towards the right / economic liberal end of a left-right scale as concerns economic policy issues than its overall positioning in all policy fields, but still more to the left relative to the *FAZ* both in economic policy issues as well as overall. This observation is based on an analysis of 8.946 commentaries in five German quality newspapers between 1994 and 1998, including *FAZ* and *SZ*. On a scale between 1 (left), 2 (ambiguous) and 3 (right), *SZ* scaled 1.9 on average across all policy fields, whereas in the fields of "market economy" and "state financing" it scaled 2.0 and 2.4 respectively, as opposed to an average of 2.5 for *FAZ*, with 2.5 and 2.9 respectively. *SZ* still scaled centre-left of the weighted average across all five newspapers on both fields and overall.

Figure 3.1: Inequality reporting in SZ and FAZ, 2011-2022



Number of articles with "Inequality" in the headline per year, print only. Linear trends shown with punctuated lines (dark: FAZ, light grey: SZ). Source: SZ and FAZ online archives. Own analysis, for details, see Table C.1 in Appendix C.1.

The *SZ* series was part of a special format in that newspaper called “Die Recherche” (“The Investigation”), in which readers could vote on a topic of concern that would be investigated over a couple of months and then be published in a series of articles (Ebitsch, 2016). In September 2016, *SZ* published “Die Recherche” on the issue of inequality.[59] It consisted of 20 articles, of which six were published in the business and finance section of the print newspaper. Two short additional video clips have been added to the online dossier but were not included in this analysis. In its announcement of the series in June, the editor wrote that, among others, the series would ask questions such as, “Are we better off than previous generations?”, “Are we, outside the executive floors [*Teppichetagen*], not that well off?”, “Are the poor getting ever poorer, and the rich ever richer?” and “What can be done against this?” (Ebitsch, 2016).

The *FAZ* series differed in that it has been an ongoing series since March 2016 – still being continued at the time of carrying out this analysis. Like the *SZ* case, it has been published in the business and finance sections of both the traditional daily *FAZ* as well as its weekly Sunday offspring, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* (*FAS*). Additional articles have been published online, but were excluded to keep the sample size manageable. There were 42 print articles between the beginning of March and the end of September 2016 that were all included in the analysis.[60] In the

[59] In the readers’ voting, the question for investigation was termed “Ever Richer, Ever Poorer—How Can Germany Come Back Together,” Ebitsch (2016). On its series website, the headline was “Inequality in Germany”, cf. SZ (2016).

[60] Note that in August 2016, a subseries on urban inequality including nine articles has been published as part of the general series. The overall series was formally continued until the end of 2016 but only three more articles appeared after September, which were not included as the main part of the analysis was performed during November/December 2016.

opening editorial to the series, editors wrote that the issue of inequality was “complicated” and that those “who howl with the zeitgeist, according to which the gap between poor and rich was ever-widening, and thus the world getting ever more unjust, have understood little, but are getting a lot of attention” (FAS, 2016 para. 1). The series was meant to discuss “normative issues as well as questions of statistics,” and to invite “prominent guest authors” to “present controversial views.” The aim was “to instigate a serious debate on inequality and justice” (FAS, 2016, para. 2). It is apparent that while the *FAZ* proclaimed aiming for plurality and rigour, the editorial introduction to the series had a clear normative stance and criticized parts of the inequality debate. Table 1 summarizes the distribution of sources.

Table 3.1: Framing Analysis – Sources

Sources	**No. of articles**		**Percentage**	
FAZ/FAS	42		68	
FAZ		22		35
FAS		20		32
SZ/Süddeutsche.de	20		32	
SZ		6		10
Süddeutsche.de		14		23
Total	**62**		**100**	

With both series being published in 2016, the analysis captures only a specific period. Also, it is restricted to the realm of the business and finance sections, where the series were located in the newspapers (although not all authors belong to these sections). Yet, as these series were published in exceptional formats, it is plausible to assume that editors have sought to ensure the series’ relevance beyond daily current affairs. Still, it should be clear that, ultimately, the series reflect choices made in 2016 and thus do not speak for a longer time horizon.

As pointed out in the previous section and especially in RQ1, the overall aim of the analysis was to identify framing patterns. *Framing* is a term much used in content analysis, but in many cases, it is not clearly defined, and it is employed in a variety of methodological approaches (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). According to Entman (1993):

> Framing essentially involves *selection* and *salience*. To frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described. (p. 52, emphasis in original)

Research on framing can focus on a wide range of aspects of political communication, especially with a focus on media effects, treating framing either as an explanatory variable or as the dependent variable. Furthermore, framing research may as much focus on the production of frames as it may look at their audience (Scheufele, 1999). Note that although this research is motivated by the assumption that framing in leading quality papers plays an important role in the formation of economic policy debates, the approach of this analysis is merely explorative, analysing framing in media outcomes. In Chapter 7, I undertake the further step to examine the causal effects of framing and also review other literature on framing effects.

Two major methodological concerns arise regarding the (explorative) analysis of framing, especially in qualitative content analyses (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). A first worry concerns reliability (and thus replicability). How can we ensure that coding is not biased by the mindset and specific previous knowledge of the researcher? A second worry concerns validity, as the extraction of codes should not only be transparent and derived according to clear criteria, but codes should also measure what they are supposed to measure. The first worry concerns mainly "hermeneutic" and "manual holistic" approaches, as Matthes and Kohring (2008) call them. The second worry tends to be a concern in more automated, computer-based procedures that presumably mitigate against the first methodological concern.

This analysis applied a manual, close-reading approach – so the main methodological worry was about reliability of the coding of framing. To avoid biased coding, two measures were taken. First, I have provided clear definitions of the codes used in the analysis. Second, rather than coding framing as such, the concept of framing was split into its several elements, thus reducing room for interpretation. Entman (1993) calls these framing elements "problem definition," "causal interpretation," "moral evaluation," and "treatment recommendation," which then in variously combined manifestations constitute specific patterns of framing. Hence, rather than directly identifying certain framings of the debate, the content analysis coded several clearly defined aspects as elements of framing (see subsections below). It sought to analyse patterns of these framing elements in a second interpretive step only, by drawing conclusions about the overall framing of the inequality debate from these previously analysed elements of framing. This is similar to the approach Matthes and Kohring (2008) suggest to deal with the aforementioned methodological concerns, though their unit of analysis is restricted to the article level rather than extending to the level of text segments.

Coding took place on two levels of analysis: article level and text-segment level. Whereas on article level, unique codes were assigned in each coding category, text segments were coded whenever applicable, with double coding and overlaps being possible. An intermediary level between main article codes and segment level codes assessed articles with at least one segment code in the respective category (see Figure 3.8 in the Empirical Findings section, 3.3). Coding on different levels allowed for a necessary degree of fine-tuning of the assessment while allowing for an overall interpretive judgment concerning each article.

Four main groups of codes were applied in a mixed deductive/inductive approach, supported by a software package for qualitative data analysis (MaxQDA).

3.2.1 Inequality Focus

First, inequality focus (IF)[61] was coded inductively, tackling RQ2a. Codes assessed the specific thematic area articles about economic inequality deal with. Every article was assigned one overarching thematic code, whereas within each article, segments could be coded with several different inequality focuses. As these codes were being created during the coding process, they will be discussed in the Empirical Findings section.

3.2.2 Inequality Concerns

Second, a centrepiece of the analysis—as pointed at by RQ2b—consisted in the investigation of what I call "inequality concerns" (IC). These concerns were coded with predefined codes. Inequality concerns were defined as evaluations according to which economic inequality is too large (for whatever specific reason). The analysis thus identified whether a piece of data (text segment or article) affirmed these concerns or dissented from them. Dissent could either mean that concerns were rejected outright or that the worry about inequality was at least relativised. Accordingly, codes were applied in binary terms, either "affirmative" (AFF) of inequality concerns, or "dissenting" (DISS), which means they deny or relativise the concerns that are being referred to. Two additional codes captured cases where the evaluation was unclear or neutral (IC-U/N), or, on article level, where coding evaluations of inequality concerns was not applicable (IC-NA).[62]

Besides coding the evaluation of inequality concerns, codes assessed in what terms economic inequality was discussed in the respective segment or article. Throughout the analysis, economic inequality was pragmatically defined as income and wealth inequality, acknowledging that these are distinct yet interrelated categories.[63] To keep the number of codes small while accounting for the different facets of economic inequality, the analysis applied four codes: A first code (IC1) identified inequality concerns in terms of income, including both household incomes and wage incomes. A second code (IC2) coded economic inequality in terms of wealth. A third code (IC3) was designed to identify cases where one of the above dimensions was discussed at the exclusion of the other. A fourth code (IC4) captured cases where economic inequality was not specified and was understood more broadly as individual control over economic resources, which of course would in some way be determined by both income and wealth.

Note that various considerations can give rise to concerns about inequality (e.g., the worry about the state of democracy, the endorsement of a certain theory of justice, or the expectation that it

[61] Code abbreviations of this chapter are listed in Table 3.2 and not in the list of abbreviations on page viii.

[62] On article level, codes were obligatory; on segment level, only relevant segments were coded so that by definition this fourth category was obsolete.

[63] Compare fn. 4 on p. 2 on the relationship between income and wealth as the two main dimensions of economic inequality. Note that Sen (1997) rightly points out that mere control of resources is scarcely a satisfactory definition of economic inequality, raising the question about the welfare dimensions of economic inequality and the issue of "capabilities". For my purposes though, it shall suffice to consider economic inequality in the above mentioned, more narrow standard notions of income and wealth.

negatively affects the economy or social cohesion, to name a few). Codes about thematic focus helped capture this dimension, although it has not been explicitly coded.

3.2.3 Redistributive Policy

Third, codes assessed the definition and evaluation of redistributive policy (RP). This was an important additional aspect to include in the analysis, because it allowed me to reach beyond the problem analysis and general normative evaluation (as captured by the IC evaluations codes), and also cover the realm of treatment recommendations. One might well agree on what the problem is but disagree on the solutions.

Defining redistributive policy is a challenging task. In a sense, almost all policy areas can be regarded as areas of distributive policy, both in their immediate fiscally redistributive effects as well as qua institutional and economic supply-side effects on distribution. A policy to improve public education may be expected to have effects on the distribution of household incomes just as much as a rise in the top income tax rate.[64] To operationalize RQ2c, asking about the evaluation of policy recommendations, I used a simplified dichotomous understanding of economic liberalism as opposed to interventionist or redistributive economic policy approaches.[65]

Economic liberalism was understood as a position rejecting state interventions in market processes aimed at changing the distribution of incomes or wealth in society. In pure form, this view praises competitive markets and price signals unharmed by state distortions as the best means to achieve an efficient allocation of resources, as proposed in one of its most classic variants by Hayek (1969a), while it typically rejects "end-result" principles of justice as a guide to distributive policy (in classic form, see Nozick, 1974). In contrast, redistributive policy consists of measures toward more progressive taxation, expansions of the welfare state, reforms of the institutional setting aimed at strengthening the bargaining position of trade unions in wage negotiations, or in a reregulation of international trade and investment flows. For proponents of one or several of these measures, see, for example, Atkinson (2015), Piketty (2014), and Stiglitz (2012), or, specifically for the German case, see, for example, G. A. Horn et al. (2017).

Codes assessed whether redistributive policy recommendations were endorsed (END) or rejected (REJ). Note that this binary distinction does not mean policy recommendations were considered to be pure forms at either end of the continuum sketched above. Rather, it assessed whether the favoured economic policy change was directed toward the redistributive end or the economic-liberal end of the spectrum, thus capturing *alignments* concerning the desired direction of change from the status quo. As with evaluations of inequality concerns, additional codes were used

[64] Note that in both cases the policy may change market and net incomes: As Piketty (2014, p. 505) points out, top income tax rates have historically played an important role in flattening the distribution of market incomes. Likewise, educational policy will most likely not only change the distribution of market incomes by affecting the supply of qualified labor, but it may well affect the distribution of fiscal burdens in complex ways, too.

[65] This dichotomy is employed as one key dimension for economic policy preferences in comparative political economy analysis, for example, in Kitschelt (1995) and in Beramendi et al. (2015). See also section 1.4 in the Introduction.

for cases where the evaluation of redistributive policy was unclear or neutral (RP-U/N), or, on article level, where it was not applicable (RP-NA).

Besides coding how redistributive policies were evaluated, I also coded what specific redistributive policy was being discussed, among them raising taxes on high incomes and wealth (including yet untaxed wealth in tax havens) (RP1), transfers to the poor (RP2), providing progressively financed public services (RP3), and reforming institutional settings to enhance redistributive forces in the political economy arena (RP4). Where one or more of RP1 through RP4 were specified but not uniformly endorsed, this was included as a special case (RP5). Where not specified, it was assumed that “redistribution” mainly meant RP1 through RP4, but that it was embedded in a more general view favouring redistributive state interventions in the economy (RP6). Note that I did not conceive the main economic liberal proposal for reducing inequality, ‘investments in education’, as an interventionist measure, unless it was explicitly coined as being financed by progressive taxation.

3.2.4 Inequality Concepts and Data

The discussion of economic inequality often hinges on the presentation of data and their underlying conceptualization, even where it is made clear whether it is income or wealth data that is being looked at. For example, income inequality trends among households in Germany appear in a completely different light depending on the base year used. Whereas the Gini coefficient of household inequality has not increased since 2005, it has risen substantially since the 1990s. On the other hand, a more complete picture of the recent stagnation of inequality at the time of the analysis might emerge when presenting this development against the backdrop of the business cycle and lower levels of unemployment (Grabka, Goebel, & Schupp, 2012, p. 7). Some have argued that the rise of household inequality had temporarily been interrupted by the fall of capital incomes – which disproportionately go to top-earning households – during the global financial crisis (Schmid, Peichl, & Drechsel-Grau). Looking at wages rather than household incomes also makes the rise of inequality appear more drastic, especially when looking at life incomes where the inequality has sharply increased across generations, even within the relatively homogenous group of full-time employed men with stable employment biographies (Bönke et al., 2015). A code (AMB) was used when at least one of these or other *ambiguities* is acknowledged when inequality data is presented.

Additionally, the issue of *data sources* adds further complexity. Most inequality data circulating in the public debate rely on survey data, which are well known to underestimate inequality, especially at the top of the distribution. For this reason, modern inequality research uses, where possible, administrative tax data and national accounting (Piketty, 2014, pp. 16–20). However, in Germany, relying on this kind of data is a problem due to the suspension of the wealth tax since 1997 and due to anonymous taxation of capital income since 2009 (Behringer, Theobald, & van Treeck, 2014). On top of that, a sustained accumulation of retained earnings in the corporate sector might further hide a rise in top incomes in Germany in the last decade, also referred to as the “corporate veil” (Behringer et al., 2014). Articles or segments that refer to such problems of incomplete data were coded accordingly (INC). As with codes for inequality concerns, additional codes assessed whether we were dealing with data concerning income inequality (ID1), wealth inequality (ID2), or economic inequality broadly understood (ID3).

3.2.5 Additional Codes

In addition to the content-related codes presented above, I assessed furthermore whether articles were written by internal or external authors, or were interviews. Also, codes for article style captured analytical/fact-reporting versus protagonist-oriented/reportage styles of articles (with a residual category for “other”).

The system of codes is presented in Table 3.2. Recalling Entman’s (1993) definition of framing, we can now see what elements of framing the codes capture: The dimension of inequality focus can be regarded as the dimension of problem definition. Additionally, inequality data codes capture either aspects of problem definition or causal attribution. The codes for inequality concerns identify normative evaluations of our issue of interest, whereas redistributive policy deals with treatment recommendations.

Table 3.2: Code system: Elements of framing in inequality debates

Dimension	**Inequality Focus (IF)**	**Inequality Concern (IC)**	**Redistributive Policy (RP)**	**Inequality Data / Concepts**
Definition	Inductive	• IC1 (income) • IC2 (wealth) • IC3 (IC1 and not IC2 or IC2 and not IC1) • IC4 (broad economic inequality	• RP 1 (raising progressive taxes) • RP2 (transfers to the poor) • RP3 (extending public services) • RP4 (reforming institutional setting) • RP5 (RP1-4 diverging +/-) • RP6 (unspecified redistribution, against economic liberalism)	• ID1 (income) • ID2 (wealth) • ID3 (unclear / general)
Evaluation		• AFF (affirmative) • DISS (dissenting) • IC U/N (unclear/neutral) • IC NA (not applicable)	• END (endorsed) • REJ (rejected) • RP U/N (unclear/neutral) • RP NA (not applicable)	• AMB (ambiguity) • INC (incomplete data)
Framing Dimension (Entman, 1993)	Problem definition	Moral evaluation	Treatment recommendation	Problem definition / causal attribution

3.3 Empirical Findings

The empirical analysis of 62 articles from the two inequality series in the newspapers *FAZ* and *SZ* has yielded a total of 1,752 codings for segments and articles. Of these, 310 were codes on the article level.

Most of the articles were written by internal journalists—that is, regular (hired or freelancer) authors of the newspapers. The *SZ* series did not include any guest authors, whereas in the *FAZ* series almost a fourth of the articles was written by external authors. A majority of articles were written in an analytical or fact-reporting style in the *FAZ* newspaper, while the smaller *SZ* series consisted of more protagonist-oriented articles and reportages than analytical or fact-reporting articles (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Author type and article style

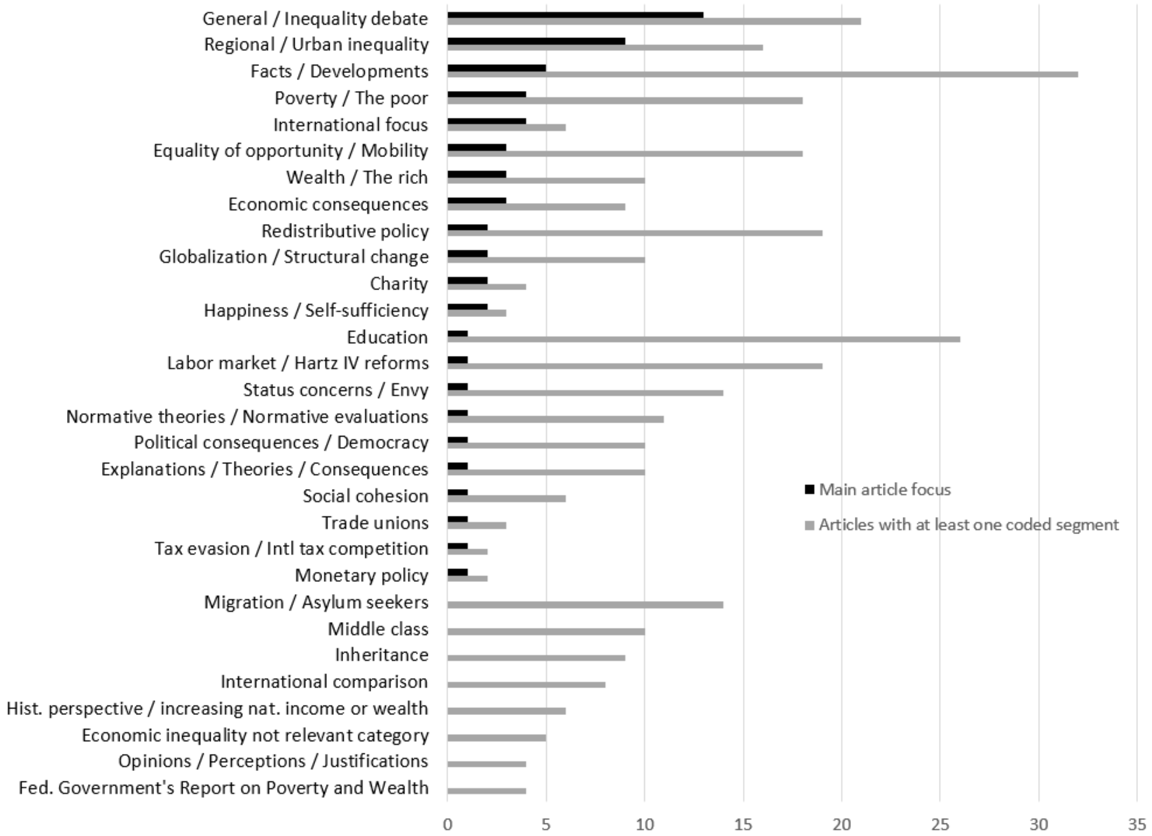
	All		FAZ		SZ	
	No. of articles	Percentage	No. of articles	Percentage	No. of articles	Percentage
Author type						
Internal	48	77.4	29	69.0	19	95.0
External	10	16.1	10	23.8	0	0
Interview	4	6.5	3	7.1	1	5.0
Total	**62**		**42**		**20**	
Article style						
Analytical/fact-reporting	38	61.3	33	78.6	5	25.0
Protagonist-oriented/reportage	14	22.6	5	11.9	9	45.0
Other	10	16.1	4	9.5	6	30.0
Total	**62**		**42**		**20**	

Note: Percentages are rounded off.

3.3.1 Inequality Focus

Codes for inequality focus were obtained inductively during coding. Thirty codes were created, of which 26 appeared in at least four articles (or more than 5 per cent of articles) and of which 22 were coded on article level (i.e., they constituted the main focus of the respective article). Figure 2 presents the frequencies of all inequality focus codes ordered by the number of documents for which the respective code constituted the main focus.

Figure 3.2: Inequality focus – frequency of thematic codes



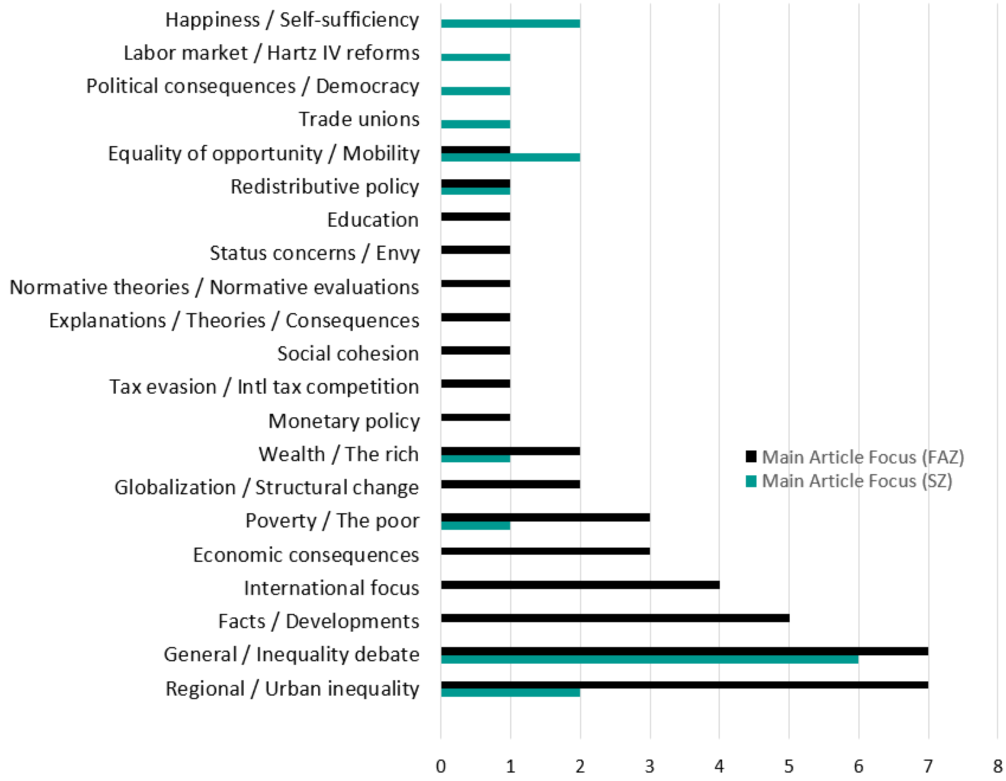
Number of articles for main article focus (black) and with at least one coded segment (grey), sorted by frequency of main article focus and then sorted by segment focuses.

It is not surprising that the most frequent main focus code is about general questions or the inequality debate as such (13 articles). These comprised general introductory articles as well as articles discussing the German inequality debate. Regional/urban inequality was subject to a special series within the inequality series of the *FAZ*. Five articles dealt explicitly with the discussion of facts and developments of inequality. Four articles reported on inequality in other countries (“international focus”). Poverty or being poor was the subject of four articles, and wealth and being rich was the subject of three articles. Three articles discussed questions of equality of opportunity and social mobility. Another three articles discussed economic consequences of inequality. Note that the small number of articles (one or two) for all other inequality themes does not render them irrelevant, as they reflect editorial choices of what further topics should be included in the series—for example, an article on the distributional consequences of monetary policy in the *FAZ* or an article on the role of trade unions for inequality in the *SZ*.

In terms of coded segments, “facts/developments” appeared in the largest number of articles (about half of all), which is hardly surprising given the important empirical dimension of inequality. Several themes emerged in many articles but did not in themselves constitute main focus issues. These are, among others, the topical issue of migration and asylum seekers, which was regularly mentioned as an additional complicating factor for understanding inequality or even an additional political challenge for dealing with inequality. The middle class was also a theme often referred to, just like inheritance and the inheritance tax.

When comparing the composition of the series in both newspapers, some striking differences emerged (see Figure 3.3). Note that the body of *FAZ* articles consisted of twice as many articles as the *SZ* series. It would not surprise then if *FAZ* had covered more specific issues than *SZ*, or had twice as many articles on any one specific issue.[66] It is, however, interesting to note that some issues were covered in SZ but not in *FAZ*, which indicates clear differences in focus. *SZ* had a couple of rather apolitical articles on "happiness/self-sufficiency" (put bluntly: "don't worry about inequality, just be happy") and on "charity" ("donate rather than solve inequality politically"). But it also focused on the important (and more political) role of the labour market and trade unions, which *FAZ* did only indirectly by covering globalization and structural change in relation to inequality. More generally, *FAZ* had more "analytical" articles explicitly discussing studies on the economic consequences of inequality or on facts and recent developments. This is mirrored in the article style code reported in Table 2. The fact that *FAZ* had four articles with an international focus can be attributed both to the larger size of the series and to the explicit focus of the *SZ* series on inequality in Germany.

Figure 3.3: Differences in main inequality focus between FAZ and SZ series

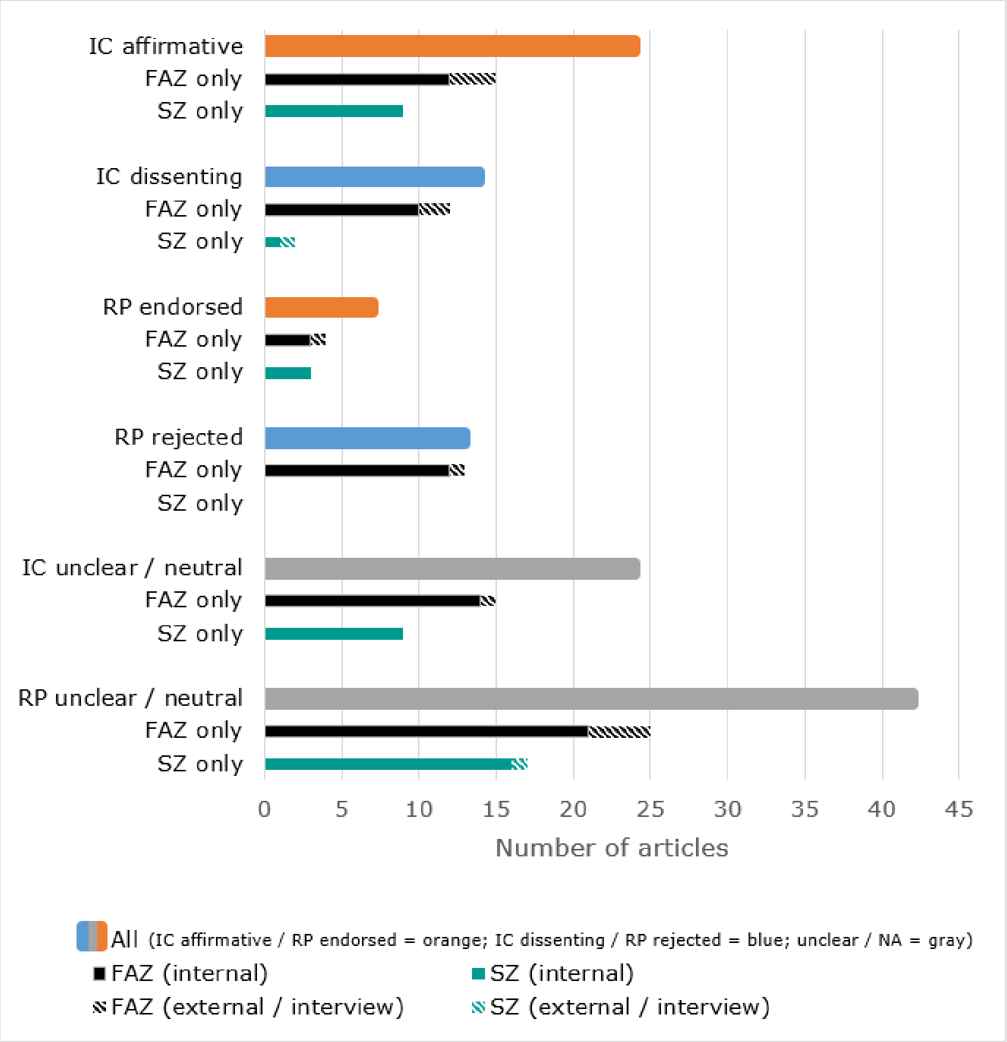


[66] Note that regional/urban inequality is so strongly represented in FAZ due to the special series within the series.

3.3.2 Inequality Concerns

Turning to the evaluations of inequality concerns (IC), it is interesting to note that overall, more articles were presenting economic inequality as a problem (21) than articles were dissenting from inequality concerns (14) (see Figure 3.4). Even in the *FAZ* newspaper, which, as we noted in the Data and Methods section, introduced its series as critical of discourses seen to be "dramatizing" inequality, more articles affirmed inequality concerns. At first glance, then, it may seem as if *FAZ* provided a fairly balanced evaluation of inequality concerns, whereas *SZ* overly problematized inequality. However, it is important to note that no objective middle point exists from which one could measure deviations. From a position that sees economic inequality (or one of its facets) as a problem, *SZ* may look fairly accurate whereas *FAZ* then appeared strongly distorted toward the "dissenting" side. Also note that when excluding the subseries on urban inequality, a majority of articles by internal authors were IC dissenting.

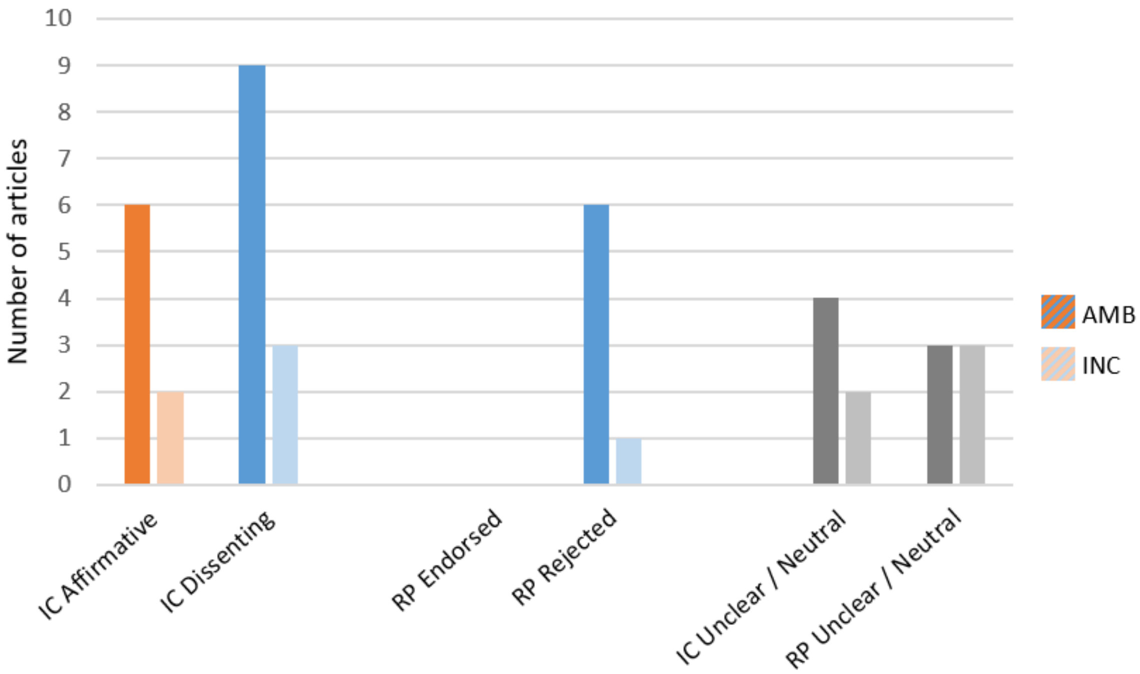
Figure 3.4: Inequality concerns and redistributive policy: Evaluations on article level.



Examples for IC and RP evaluation codings are provided in Table C.2 in Appendix C.

As concerns data and conceptual problems such as ambiguity in data or incomplete data, this was mentioned in only 21 of the 62 articles, with 20 articles mentioning ambiguity issues and eight articles mentioning incomplete data issues. Yet it is worth noting that among these 21 articles, such problems were mentioned more frequently in dissenting articles. This is contrary to the overall pattern discussed (see Figure 3.4), which suggests that dissenting IC evaluations are often framed with data problems (see Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: Alignment of articles addressing data problems



Inequality concerns and redistributive policy: Evaluation of articles mentioning 'ambiguity issues on data or concepts' (AMB; full colour) and 'incomplete data issues' (INC; pale colour).

At segment level, there were 74 affirmative text segments in 33 articles versus 49 dissenting text segments in 15 articles. There is an overlap of six articles, which contained both affirmative and dissenting text segments. Concerning the facets of economic inequality (codes IC1–IC4), most of the coded IC segments were best described in terms of broad economic inequality (IC4). Of the affirmative (dissenting) text segments, only seven (nine) explicitly dealt with income inequality (IC1) and only five (eight) referred explicitly to wealth inequality (IC2). Thus, we may say that dissenting text segments were slightly more precise in terms of the aspect of economic inequality they were referring to. Overall, however, economic inequality was typically discussed in more general terms. Note that—given how difficult it is to disentangle one dimension of economic inequality from another—this does not need to be a bad thing.

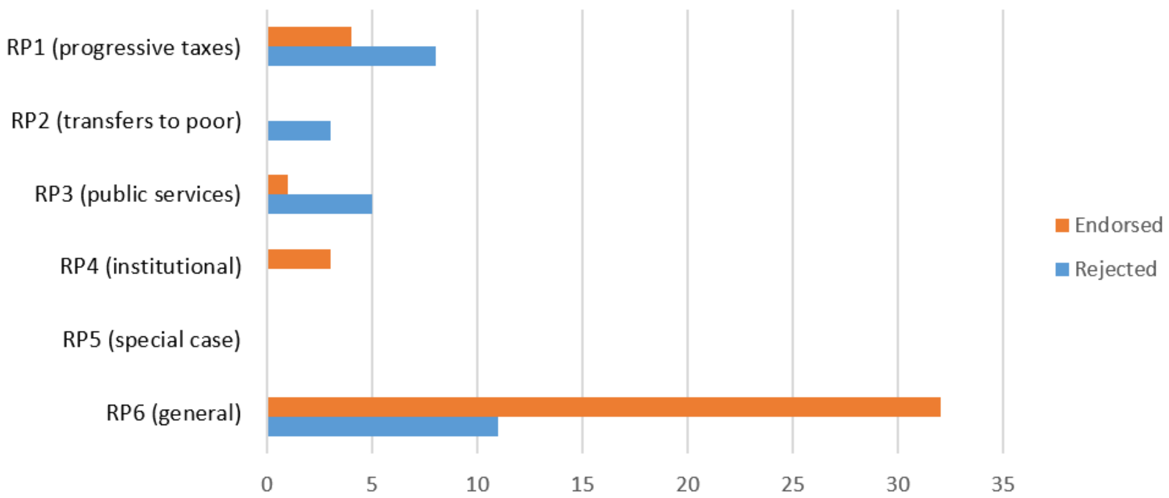
3.3.3 Redistributive Policy

Redistributive policy (RP) evaluations were less frequent than were IC evaluations, which should not surprise, as the series theme was economic inequality, of which policy approaches are only a subtopic. On article level, around half of the articles did not contain RP evaluations. But among the 30 articles that did, 13 rejected RP in interventionist terms whereas seven favoured it (see Figure 3.4). Thus, contrary to the IC evaluations where a majority of articles is affirmative of IC, in terms of policy approaches, economic liberalism prevails. We should note, though, that this only holds for the FAZ newspapers; the *SZ* newspaper—though it only had six of 20 RP relevant articles (against 24 of 42 in the *FAZ*) – was rather supportive of RP. If we accept to generalize based on the small number of relevant articles published in the *SZ*, my findings would seem to confirm those of Petring (2016).

Looking at conceptual or data problems codes, we find a similar picture as in the IC analysis (see Figure 3.5), though due to the smaller number of relevant articles, we have a larger share of the NA (not applicable) category. While none of the articles supportive of RP mentions data issues, at least the ambiguity issue featured prominently in almost half of the articles rejecting RP.

On segment level, there were 25 endorsing text segments in 11 articles against 39 rejecting text segments in 15 articles (with an overlap of three articles, which contained both kinds of evaluation). Concerning the RP1–RP6 codes capturing specific aspects of RP, the result was slightly different to the IC specifications (see Figure 3.6). Overall, most RP evaluations (like IC evaluations) were presented in general terms rather than in terms of RP1–RP5. However, among the RP endorsing text segments, more segments specified RP in terms of RP1–RP3 than appeared in general terms (RP6), contrary to rejecting segments. Thus, where RP is endorsed, it is more clearly specified than where it is rejected.[67]

Figure 3.6: Redistributive policy definitions and evaluations



Distribution of RP specification for endorsing (END) and rejecting (REJ) segments.

[67] Note that the code RP5 was not used once, which suggests that RP1—RP4, at least in the data at hand, are not used in explicitly exclusive ways, lending support to the coherence of the general notion of RP6.

3.3.4 Patterns of Framing

Having discussed the codings of inequality focus (problem definition), inequality concerns (normative evaluations), redistributive policy (treatment recommendation), and inequality data (problem definition/causal attribution), we are now in a position to look more closely at specific patterns of the described elements of framing. Some patterns have already emerged from the comparison of codings between the two newspapers, from the description of ID codes among IC evaluations as well as from the description of RP specifications.

One further question concerns the relationship between IC and RP evaluations. When looking at co-occurrences of IC and RP evaluations on article level (which are few, given the relatively small corpus), the most frequent co-occurrences are those of affirmative and endorsing, as well as dissenting and rejecting articles (see Figure 3.7). It comes as no surprise that RP is endorsed only where inequality is seen as a problem and that it is frequently rejected where it is not seen as a problem. Three articles were affirmative of IC, but did reject RP. The same pattern holds on segment level, with a larger number of cases obviously.

Figure 3.7: Co-occurrence of IC and RP evaluations (article level)

	IC AFF	IC DISS	IC U/N	IC NA	SUM
RP END	6	0	0	1	7
RP REJ	3	6	3	1	13
RP U/N	1	3	4	2	10
RP NA	14	5	7	6	32
SUM	24	14	14	10	62

A more nuanced view on patterns of framing can be obtained by looking at the different evaluations of IC and RP for different inequality focuses. Figure 3.8 presents these findings. It shows the cases of IC/RP evaluations (orange for affirmative/endorsing in columns 1–6 and blue for dissenting/rejecting in columns 7–12) on three levels of analysis for each inequality focus theme. The main focus (MF) level shows the number of articles with the respective IC/RP evaluations on article level for the respective main focus (columns 1, 4, 7, 10). The article level (AL) shows the number of articles with at least one segment evaluation of IC/RP for the respective thematic segment (2, 5, 8, 11). Segment level (SL) shows the number of segments with respective IC/RP evaluations for the respective thematic segment (3, 6, 9, 12). The "differences" columns (13–18) calculate the respective differences for each IC and RP level of evaluations. If values are positive, a net number of articles or segments are affirmative or endorsing (orange), while negative values are obtained for net dissenting/rejecting articles/segments (blue). The inequality focuses are ordered by IC differences first on MF level, second on AL level, and third on SL level. We can see that the differences across levels are mostly consistent.[68] Additionally, I have assessed in a disaggregated analysis where

[68] Only for "economic consequences" and "facts and developments" we have reversed signs between the MF level and one or both other levels.

thematic differences in evaluations again differ between FAZ and SZ. Red and black frames mark the cases with opposite signs across the two sources (see Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8: Patterns of framing – evaluations and differences per inequality focus

	EVALUATIONS												DIFFERENCES					
	IC			RP			IC			RP			IC			RP		
	MF	AL	SL	MF	AL	SL	MF	AL	SL	MF	AL	SL	MF	AL	SL	MF	AL	SL
	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨	⑩	⑪	⑫	⑬	⑭	⑮	⑯	⑰	⑱
	A AFF	AFF	AFF	A END	END	END	A DISS	DISS	DISS	A REJ	REJ	REJ	IC Difference	IC Difference	IC Difference	RP Difference	RP Difference	RP Difference
Main focus codes & segments																		
Regional / Urban inequality	3	6	9	2	2	4	1	1	2	0	0	0	2	5	7	2	2	4
Poverty / The poor	2	7	7	1	2	4	0	3	4	1	1	1	2	4	3	0	1	3
Globalization / Structural change	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	4	-1	-1	-2
Charity	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	0	0	0
International focus	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	-1	-1	-1
Equality of opportunity / Mobility	2	3	6	0	2	2	0	2	3	1	3	7	2	1	3	-1	-1	-5
Redistributive policy	1	5	6	1	7	14	0	3	4	1	10	15	1	2	2	0	-3	-1
Status concerns / Envy	1	2	3	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	1
Monetary policy	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0
Trade unions	1	1	2	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	2
Labor market / Hartz IV reforms	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Education	0	6	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	4	2	0	-1	0
Political consequences / Democracy	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	3	3	0	-1	-1
Explanations / Theories / Consequences	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	0	-2	-2
Social cohesion	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0
Tax evasion / Intl tax competition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Normative theories / Normative evaluations	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	4	1	2	2	0	-1	-3	-1	-2	-2
Economic Consequences	1	4	10	0	0	0	2	4	6	2	2	2	-1	0	4	-2	-2	-2
General / Inequality debate	4	7	10	1	1	2	5	7	13	3	4	8	-1	0	-3	-2	-3	-6
Happiness / Self-sufficiency	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	0	0	0	-1	-1	-4	0	0	0
Facts / Developments	1	7	9	0	0	0	3	5	7	1	1	2	-2	2	2	-1	-1	-2
Wealth / The rich	0	1	1	0	2	2	2	2	7	1	2	2	-2	-1	-6	-1	0	0
Segments only Middle class		1	1		2	2		0	0		1	1		1	1		1	1
International Comparison		2	2		0	0		2	2		0	0		0	0		0	0
Inheritance		0	0		4	1		1	1		0	0		-1	-1		4	1
Hist. perspective / increasing nat. income or wealth		0	0		0	0		1	1		0	0		-1	-1		0	0
Fed. Government's Report on Poverty and Wealth		0	0		0	0		1	1		0	0		-1	-1		0	0
Opinions / Perceptions / Justifications		0	0		0	0		1	1		0	0		-1	-1		0	0
Migration / Asylum seekers		0	0		0	0		1	1		2	2		-1	-1		-2	-2
Economic inequality not relevant category		0	0		0	0		1	2		0	0		-1	-2		0	0

Relative frequency:

Number of articles/segments

Difference positive, i.e. in favor of IC/RP

Difference negative, i.e against IC/RP

smallest absolute value — largest absolute value

Disaggregated differences:

Difference SZ positive, FAZ negative

Difference SZ negative, FAZ positive

IC = Inequality concerns, RP = Redistributive policy
MF = Main focus (# of articles with respective IC/RP evaluation for respective main focus)
AL = Article level (# of articles with at least one segment evaluation of IC/RP for respective thematic segment)
SL = Segment level (# of segments with respective IC/RP evaluation for respective thematic segment)

First of all, it becomes apparent that there are clear differences across thematic focuses. While, for example, the issues of urban inequality, poverty, globalization, or equality of opportunity are more affirmative of IC, themes such as wealth, the general inequality debate or happiness and self-sufficiency are rather dissenting. But by comparing the three IC differences columns with RP differences columns, we can also see where RP is rejected while IC are affirmed. Thus, while in the cases of urban inequality, poverty, or trade unions, redistributive policy stances are mostly supported, concerning the issues of globalization, equality of opportunity/mobility or education, RP is rejected.

FAZ and *SZ* diverge on various issues. In almost all cases, the *FAZ* adopts a dissenting/rejecting stance. The most striking case is redistributive policy, where in almost all columns, the signs of differences are opposed to each other, with *SZ* content being rather affirmative of *IC* and endorsing RP. Similarly, as far as general economic inequality or the inequality debate are concerned, the *SZ* has a penchant for the affirmative side of IC on all three levels of analysis. For wealth/the rich and middle class, *SZ* mostly endorses RP in segments on article and segment levels, while *FAZ* rejects it. Only concerning the theme of envy/status concerns, the *FAZ* diverges toward the affirmative side in segments on article and segment levels.

3.4 Conclusion

The analysis explored the framing of economic inequality in two series in the leading quality newspapers in Germany. It found that a wide range of issues are covered under the headline of economic inequality, with several differences in focus, style, and article type between the two newspapers. Overall, inequality was presented as an issue of social or political concern in a majority of articles and coded text segments, although in the *FAZ* newspaper a much larger share of articles relativised or dissented with these concerns. Interventionist redistributive policy was mostly endorsed in *SZ*, while *FAZ* authors in a majority of cases favoured economic liberalism. Where it was rejected, redistributive policy was defined less specifically, while endorsing cases were accompanied by more specific notions of progressive taxation and extension of public services or transfers to the poor. Inequality concerns were most often discussed as concerning general economic inequality, and they were slightly more often specific about inequality (as income or wealth inequality), where coded pieces of data were dissenting with these concerns. Conceptual ambiguity and data problems were more often mentioned in articles dissenting with inequality concerns and rejecting interventionist redistributive policy.

Concerns about inequality most often went along with support for redistributive policy, while dissent with these concerns co-occurred with a rejection of redistributive policy. In a few cases, inequality concerns were shared, while redistributive policy was rejected. As concerns thematic focuses, some clear patterns emerged, with several issues more closely related to the affirmative side of inequality concerns while others more often appeared on the dissenting side. For some issues, these patterns again diverged between the two newspapers, with the *FAZ* leaning clearly toward the side of questioning or relativising concerns about inequality and rejecting interventionist redistributive policy.

It seems striking and somewhat paradoxical that the issue of economic inequality was made the subject of a series in both papers, but that concerns about inequality were then, especially in the *FAZ* newspaper, so often dismissed or relativised (not to mention the overall hostility toward redistributive policy). Yet, recalling the editorial to the *FAZ* series described, which is plainly critical of inequality concerns, this should hardly be surprising. Against this backdrop, the *FAZ* series is rather surprisingly plural. Note, however, that the pattern of evaluations of inequality concerns is reversed when removing external authors and the subseries on urban inequality, with a clear rejection of inequality concerns.

It should also be noted that a less tangible, but arguably more effective form of framing took place on a more subtle level. This does not show up in the formal analysis but was captured in memos created during coding. I remarked strong rhetorical devices, such as unusually judgmental language or strong symbolic or metaphoric language, which were much more present in evaluations directed against inequality concerns and redistributive policy. Likewise, I encountered many cases where inequality concerns were implicitly relativised (e.g., through international comparisons, a historical perspective, or by reference to other problems). Yet these mechanisms were typically not explicit enough to justify coding as "dissenting" with inequality concerns. Language in headlines might also constitute a dimension of framing not formally covered in the analysis. It will be the aim of the next chapter to analyse and reveal those more subtle framing mechanisms.

Coding has shown that differences in evaluations exist across the thematic range. Yet it remains to be explored what specific argumentative patterns explain these differences. For example, does the issue of "regional/urban inequality" bring up more affirmative evaluations of economic inequality and endorsements of redistributive policy because it is a restricted policy area with a smaller "risk" of demands for general redistribution as, say, "general/inequality debate" articles, which turned out much more dissenting of inequality concerns and directed against redistributive policy? Is equality of opportunity (pattern: concerns shared, redistributive policy rejected) an issue where concerns about inequality can more easily be redirected at (*prima facie*) non-redistributive political demands, such as improving access to education? Are conceptual and data ambiguities mentioned more often in dissenting articles because this position is more nuanced, or is nuance a means to dismiss the problem? As concerns these questions, more narrow and thoroughgoing qualitative approaches, looking at specific argumentative patterns, might get us closer to an understanding of these complex ideological underpinnings. The next chapters will constitute attempts in that direction.

It is important to acknowledge that the analysis of this chapter extends only to the articles and editorial choices made for the specific time in 2016 and for the specific inequality series being explored. As pointed out, it seems plausible to assume that editorial decisions reflect choices reaching beyond daily reporting, both in terms of relevance beyond daily politics as well as thematic range. Another limitation concerning representativeness is the focus on the quality press and only the two main papers of this subgroup. It remains yet to be studied how far leading quality papers influence the wider media, how far the media more generally can account for the formation of economic policy discourses, and how their role might also be changing due to transformations resulting from technological changes and unsustainable old business models, as well as the emerging role of social media. It is also an open question in how far these leading papers are only mediators of a discourse primarily driven by academic actors and interest groups, or in how far journalists of these outlets are opinion leaders by themselves, following an agenda of journalistic activism. In the next chapter, I will take a closer look at the *FAZ* newspaper as well as interest groups and academic policy advisors, thus indirectly shedding some light on these questions, although my focus will remain on the text content and the framings and rhetorical mechanisms we encounter in it.

This chapter has in any case shown that the increasing salience of the issue of economic inequality in the two main quality outlets in Germany does by no means imply that concerns about inequality, let alone policies proposed by leading inequality scholars, are inevitably shared and supported by virtue of being put on the agenda. On the contrary, a significant part of the reporting has turned out to be directed at relativising inequality concerns and, even more so, questioning redistributive policy.

To better understand how this works, I will now move to a more close-reading and interpretive approach toward specific arguments and rhetorical mechanisms found in the mediated inequality debate in the next chapters, complementing the analysis thus far. In a final step, I will then turn to an analysis of the effects of these framings on ordinary people through a survey experiment.

4 Mechanisms of Inequality Denial 2013-2017

> Neither poverty nor income inequality are increasing in this country. Wealth inequality is also mercilessly overestimated. High time to shatter a few myths [Höchste Zeit ein paar Mythen zu zertrümmern].
>
> *Headline to a guest article by GCEE members Christoph M. Schmidt and Lars Feld, Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, 6 March 2016*

As we have seen in the analysis of the German Piketty reception, the problematizing of economic inequality coupled with demands for redistributive policy as put forward by Thomas Piketty in *C21* has been broadly met with fierce rejection in the German economic policy debate. The analysis of framing of inequality and redistributive policy in the two main quality newspapers confirmed that even if inequality was presented as a problem in these papers, it was more likely that redistributive policy measures addressing the inequality were rejected. Overall, there was a substantive share of articles and text segments in which a problematisation of inequality was rejected. It also became clear that the *FAZ* newspaper seemed especially prone to an inequality relativizing and anti-redistributive policy stance.

Although the preceding analysis has taken place on a close-reading interpretive level that captures framings in binary terms and in their thematic context, findings remain ‘flat’ when it comes to understanding the argumentative structure of inequality relativization or problematization and the evaluation of redistributive policy. In what follows in this and the next two chapters, I seek to gain a more nuanced and more political understanding of the discourse on inequality. By that, I mean an understanding, that goes beyond coding framings in binary terms, a level of understanding that reveals the specific arguments, their rhetorical context, and their premises and function.

In this chapter, I seek to better understand the specific rhetorical mechanisms of “inequality denial”[69] by way of an explorative qualitative analysis of material published by selected proponents of such positions. To that end, I first focus on key actors and forums of inequality-relativising views and their treatment of the issue of economic inequality and redistributive policy. Based on this discussion, I identify specific mechanisms of inequality denial encountered in this material.[70]

[69] An expression coined Paul Krugman, compare fn. 44, p. 26. Note that “denial” is understood in a broad sense. It does not need to involve claiming that inequality is denied as a fact. Rather, it denotes statements whose function (intentional or not) is to relativise or deny inequality as a problem. Note that the existence of this *function* does not depend on how we judge upon the existence of the *problem*, although, for those denying the existence of the problem, those statements may be seen as legitimate. The normative premise of this chapter rejects this position, but the analysis does not depend on the normative stance, although its *relevance* does.

[70] This chapter is based on Bank (2017b). With kind permission by *Metropolis Verlag*, where the analysis was originally published.

4.1 Data and Methods

The following analysis draws on material published by selected actors and forums of inequality denial between 2013 and 2017. As a key forum for inequality denial, I have identified the *FAZ* newspaper and its sister outlet the Sunday edition, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, *FAS*. Furthermore, I focus on the business financed research institute *IW Köln* and the closely linked business financed campaign *Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft* [Initiative New Social Market Economy] (*INSM*) as important actors of inequality relativising contributions to the German economic policy debate. Finally, I have included the *German Council of Economic Advisers* (*GCEE*) with its annual reports on the German economy in the analysis, which – in its majority of four out of five members – may be seen both as a forum or an actor of inequality denial for the time under discussion. A more detailed description of each of these forums or actors and justification for their inclusion in the analysis is provided in each section.

The material examined in the analysis comprises a selection of newspaper articles and blog posts from *FAZ* and *FAS*, publications by *IW Köln* and its representation in the media as well as a website published by *IW Köln*, *INSM* campaign material such as posters and a special issue on "justice" in Germany published in cooperation with a weekly business magazine, and the annual reports to the German federal government by the *GCEE* of the four years 2013-2016.

Note that the selection of material in this chapter did not aim at representativeness or a balanced depiction of inequality debates across ideological camps. With a deliberately one-sided perspective, it explores specifically the diverse mechanisms of inequality *denial*. By choosing key actors and forums, I expect to have identified the most relevant rhetorical mechanisms appearing in the debate. However, I did not attempt to quantify the relative salience of the mechanisms, neither internally (i.e., one mechanism relative to the other) nor externally (i.e., mechanisms of denial relative to problematizing stances in the inequality debate). Similar to the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6, the aim is more modest, namely to explore, understand and structure argumentative figures as encountered in elite debates.

Moreover, the approach in this chapter is a more close-reading and more interpretive approach towards the text material relative to the framing analysis in the previous chapter, which for the sake of coding reliability but at the cost of depth of analysis relied mostly on predefined codes in line with Entman's conception of framing (see 3.2). In that sense, the analysis in this chapter complements the more formalized analysis of framing with a more interpretive approach, closer to historical-critical methodology. It is complementary also in the sense that I include text material from *FAZ* coded as relativizing in the previous analysis.

I focus on material published between 2013 and mid-2017. The time frame spans from the federal election campaign in Germany in 2013 until early 2017. The election campaign in Germany in 2013 marked a moment in German politics, in which redistributive tax policies took centre stage once again after years of a relative consensus of economic liberalism (Holzhauser, 2018; Nachtwey, 2013). In 2013 then both *SPD* and the *Greens* campaigned in the spirit of a (tentative) progressive realignment,[71] and they accordingly encountered strong opposition by employer-financed campaigns of actors such as the *INSM* and *IW Köln* (IW Köln, 2014, pp. 19–21; Speth, 2013). After both parties had fallen short of expectations in the election results, there was a perception that both parties, especially the Greens had reached the boundaries of the political opportunity space as regards tax policy, boundaries which they might not dare to shift any further.[72] The analysis captures inequality relativizing contributions of the debates surrounding the election campaign and it further includes the subsequent period of the Piketty reception discussed in Chapter 2, as well as the peak of inequality reporting in 2016 (see Figure 3.1), including the period of the framing analysis in Chapter 3.

It may be noted that in its subtext the analysis reads like an analysis of interest groups and their positions, intentions and strategies, which in fact may carry anecdotic truth. However, we should be aware that – given the lack of representative sampling in line with an in-depth analysis of interest groups and their strategic formation in the field of economic policy debates[73] – we cannot conclude from the analysis anything beyond such anecdotal truth in this respect. For my purposes, it is sufficient though to understand and distinguish the rhetorical mechanisms that are employed. It serves to reveal and structure the presence of inequality denial and anti-redistribution rhetoric.

4.2 Actors and Forums of Inequality Denial

In the following, different forums and actors of inequality relativisation in the economic policy debate in Germany are discussed by way of example. First, I focus on *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (together with its sister outlet *FAS*) as an important forum for this debate (4.2.1). This is followed by a discussion of the think tank *IW Köln* and the PR campaign *INSM*, which represent interest groups in the inequality debate (4.2.2). Thirdly, I discuss the annual reports of the *German Council of Economic Experts* (*GCEE*), which can be seen as a relevant example for scientific actors of economic policy advice (4.2.3).[74]

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[71] The analysis of party programmes in 2009 and 2013 based on the *Duisburg-Election-Index* (*DWI*) indicates – despite some methodological concerns about direct compatibility across election years – that overall both SPD and Greens seem to have moved to the left on the axis of welfare state (-1) vs. market liberalism (1), with values of -0.53 (-0.3) and -0.58 (-0.39) respectively for 2013 (2009), cf. Treibel (2010); Bender et al. (2014).

[72] Peichl, Pestel, Siegloch, and Sommer (2014) point out that the *Greens*' proposals on tax policy ran against the narrow financial interests of their voters. Ulrich Schulte (2016) writes in the *taz* newspaper about a "concrete wall" against which the Greens probably did not want to run in another federal election after the experience of the 2013 election debacle. Note however that it remains an unanswered question, whether this boundary represents a real or only a perceived boundary (compare the discussion in Fastenrath et al. (2021)), whether the election results really fell short of expectations due to the proposed tax policies or (partly) for other reasons, and whether this applies equally to both parties, *SPD* and the *Greens*.

[73] For a more thorough analysis of economic policy debates and the fields of advocacy and interest groups and their intellectual reference points, see for example Cassel and Baumann (2019) and, more critically, Pühringer (2020) and Friedrichs, Stasiak, Thunert, and Rauscher (2019).

[74] The analysis thus includes both clear interest groups as well as actors and forums that in principle claim a certain degree of pluralism and independence. Note again that for our purposes it is not important to distinguish or even know whether the relativisations of inequality are made intentionally or strategically and thus both roles, forum and actor, are relevant sources of the analysis presented here.

4.2.1 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*

As has become clear in the foregoing chapters in both the discussion of the Piketty reception and the analysis of inequality series, the *FAZ* newspaper and its spin-off *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung (FAS)* qualify as a source for a closer look at denialist framings of inequality. They constitute an important medium of the economic policy debate and especially of the inequality debate. Arguably, they are both forum and actor in the debate. The *FAZ* in particular functions as a newspaper of record and national chronicle. This is reflected not only in its journalistic style and range of topics, as well as in its subtitle "Newspaper for Germany", but also in its circulation (with the highest circulation of a daily national quality newspaper after the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* during the period under investigation, cf. ALM, 2015, p. 201, 2018, p. 132) and in its prominent reception among decision-makers (Jandura & Brosius, 2011). Especially as concerns economic policy, the *FAZ* has a prominent position among national quality newspapers. It publishes weekly reviews of economic books as well as a topic page on economic policy issues ("Ordnung der Wirtschaft"), and its economics editors regularly report on academic economic policy debates. The *FAZ* also publishes its own blog on economic issues called FAZIT – das Wirtschaftsblog [the Economics and Business blog].[75] It can thus be seen as a key forum for economic policy debates in the quality press. At the same time, *FAZ* stands in a strong tradition of economic liberalism[76] (Kutzner, 2014) and thus can be seen as an actor in the debate as well.

The topic of inequality has been increasingly present in the *FAZ* at least since the debate about Thomas Piketty in 2014.[77] As discussed in Chapter 3, the *FAZ* even started a series on the topic of inequality in 2016, intending to present "controversial points of view" and "spark a serious debate about inequality and justice", as it says in the editorial (FAS, 2016). And it immediately states what its editorial line would be:

> The issue of inequality is complicated. (...) Those who howl with the zeitgeist, according to which the gap between rich and poor is widening, i.e. that the world is becoming ever more unjust because it is becoming ever more unequal, have understood little but are getting a lot of attention. (FAS, 2016)

In that vein, in one of the opening guest contributions, two members of the *GCEE*, Lars Feld and Christoph M. Schmidt, had their say under a headline termed in drastic language:

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[75] Its subtitle reads "For all those who want to know it exactly: In this blog we look deeper into stock markets and other markets – mostly with scientific help [my translation]", see FAZ (2022).

[76] From an economic liberal point of view, economic inequality is not typically seen as a goal, but it is at least accepted as a means or side effect. Above all, however, an "interventionist redistributive policy", or at least its expansion, is not desirable from an economic liberal perspective. This, it is usually argued, undermined competition as a "discovery procedure" and motor for an efficient allocation of scarce resources in an economy, cf. Hayek (1969b). In its most radical form, the very idea of social justice is completely delegitimised, cf. Hayek (1981). Compare fn. 24 on p. 13 above.

[77] The analysis of search results in the publisher's archive shows an increase of the term "inequality" in the title section of articles by more than seven times between 2011 and 2016, with a peak in 2016 and a general trend increase during the last decade (see Figure 3.1).

> Neither poverty nor income inequality are increasing in this country. Wealth inequality is also mercilessly overestimated. High time to shatter a few myths [Höchste Zeit ein paar Mythen zu zertrümmern] [*sic!*]. (Feld & Schmidt, 2016)

On the whole, the series was quite pluralistic. As we have seen in Chapter 3, the evaluation of the guest contributions between March and October 2016 shows that both contributions problematising inequality and those relativising it appeared – with a mixed orientation concerning economic policy positions. The reports of own editors however had an overall inequality-relativising orientation and were critical of redistributive policies (see 3.3.3).

In particular, Rainer Hank, head of the business and finance section of *FAS* at the time,[78] made his presence felt here with a series of articles in which he tried to underpin his inequality-relativising and redistribution-critical stance with the help of arguments from philosophy, social psychology and tax theory. In doing so, Hank did not shy away from rhetorical exaggeration, even to the point of defaming those who were concerned about inequality. He calls the latter "friends of the widening inequality gap" (Hank, 2016). Elsewhere in the article, he writes of the "aggression of Occupy, Blockupy and the Likes [und Co]" and in the same sentence, he mentions Thomas Piketty and his call for taxing the super-rich.[79] "Studies that are readily passed around" on the growth-inhibiting effect of inequality were "to be taken with a grain of salt". Hank, on the other hand, concludes the same article with a truly simplistic thesis:

> Whoever wanted to abolish inequality would have to renounce progress. That is how it was in the German Democratic Republic (and even there not all inequalities were levelled (Hank, 2016).

In an article in 2015, Hank deprecated egalitarian positions with a questionable suggestive argument. Hank referred to the philosopher Harry G. Frankfurt, who argued as a "humanitarian anti-egalitarian" that material equality was not an intrinsically important value. Because Frankfurt had in a different context also prominently written on the phenomenon of so-called philosophical "bullshit" in the past, Hank simply uses Frankfurt as a key witness for his own anti-egalitarian programme:

> Because fuzzy blathering [unscharfes Salbadern] used to make this thinker nervous, he dedicated one of his best-known books to the subject of 'bullshit'. Much of what the educated babble on [quasseln][80] about equality today, Frankfurt would certainly call bullshit or humbug. (Hank, 2015)[81]

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[78] Hank retired from his position as head of the business and finance section in 2018, cf. Hank (2022).

[79] Note that this is not only a defamation of Piketty, but also one of very different civil society actors, of which the overwhelming majority had committed to non-violent forms of protest. Although one might be inclined to understand the term 'aggression' as merely rhetorical, this seems unlikely to informed readers in the context it is used: The *Blockupy* protests which had erupted into violence had taken place less than a year earlier in Frankfurt (Main), cf. FAZ (2015).

[80] Note that the German term "Quasseln" as a political term could be associated with a negative connotation due to its inglorious history of defamation of German parliamentarianism, coining the Reichstag a "Quasselbude", cf. Steinbach (1997). In any case, it is a defamatory term when referring to citizens discussing politics.

[81] The only thing that does not fit into the picture is that another renowned analytical philosopher, G. A. Cohen, has written an equally notorious essay with reference to Frankfurt also criticising bullshit philosophy ("Deeper into Bullshit" and later "Complete Bullshit", Cohen (2013)). However, Cohen is a radical egalitarian, a position he advocates with a philosophical

As head of the economics department of the Sunday newspaper, Hank had an important role in shaping the economic policy agenda and may well be considered an ideological mastermind in the *FAZ* conglomerate at the time with his excellent sense for topics and rhetorical skills. This role shines through in an exchange of letters published on *FAZ.net* between Patrick Bernau, head of the online edition of the business and finance section of *FAZ*,[82] who also regularly wrote on inequality issues, and the inequality researcher at the NGO Oxfam Germany, Jörg Nowak. Bernau had polemicised against an inequality study by Oxfam in a column in the *FAZ* (Bernau, 2016a), where he sloppily mixed income and wealth inequality. The polemic prompted a letter by Nowak with responses by each of the two. The back and forth between Bernau and Nowak ended with the following reference by Bernau:

> My colleague Rainer Hank, however, fortunately, describes the inequality in a much more differentiated way than you are now saying. I am in complete agreement with him. Why don't you read it again! (Bernau & Nowak, 2016)

Patrick Bernau has also stood out several times in the *FAZ*'s coverage of *C21* with articles that help delegitimise Piketty and his work. “The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. What nonsense.” is the subtitle of an opinion piece on the *FAZ* front page. There, Bernau criticizes Piketty and, among other things, degrades a leading umbrella association of German independent welfare organisations, the *Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband*, as part of the “welfare industry” (Bernau, 2016b). In the article, Bernau repeats the thesis[83] that Piketty had “long since relativised” his position regarding the significance of the relationship between the return on capital and the overall economic growth rate (known as “ $r > g$ “, see section 2.3) (Bernau, 2016b), although Bernau himself cannot conclusively substantiate this claim and Piketty expressly objected to it (“There's nothing I can do for people who don't read!”, cf. Bank, 2015b).

In general, the *FAZ* has been a place of outright hostility towards Piketty in its coverage of *C21* (compare Chapter 2). No one, not even Piketty himself, claims that the work is free of errors and immune from any criticism. However, the thrust and gesture of the Piketty coverage in the *FAZ*, with which the author and his work were treated, revealed more about the newspaper and its agenda than about Piketty (see Chapter 2 and Schinke, 2015).[84] Soon after the publication of the English-language version of Piketty's book, the *FAZ*'s business and finance section printed a collection of slurs by six economists – without giving space to even one appreciative critique (FAZ, 2014). This is all the more astonishing since Piketty has published many times in numerous renowned journals, even beyond his

brilliance that would make it absurd to call blathering, cf. Cohen (1989). And Hank knows this too, because he himself translated an essay by Cohen into German (“Why not Socialism?”) and praised Cohen as a brilliant "non-bullshit Marxist", cf. Hank (2009).

[82] Bernau succeeded Rainer Hank as head of the business and finance section of *FAS* in 2018.

[83] Cf. Bernau (2015) for an earlier exposition.

[84] With the exception of a sympathetic portrait in the feuilleton by Nils Minkmar (2014) (meanwhile at *Der Spiegel*) and an early fair review by Gerald Braunberger (2014).

impressive research achievements in inequality economics, and is thus also well versed in the currency of mainstream economics, which is highly esteemed in the *FAZ*.

In a report on the criticism of Piketty's data basis in the British *Financial Times* (see 2.5), the *FAS* printed a photo of Piketty pulling his hair out under the title "Piketty and the damn numbers" (Von Petersdorff, 2014). The fact that this criticism later had to be relativised was not reported. In effect, a "fog of doubt" (Krugman, 2014c) remained as a stigma to Piketty's data.

Against this background, a small *FAZ* report of an annual media count under the title: "German media like Thomas Piketty" (Bernau, 2014) because Piketty had been quoted frequently, seems almost bizarre. Since what is withheld here is how and in what context his name was quoted. Yet this fits a pattern that seems to run through inequality reporting in the *FAZ*: the perception is spread that the paper operated as a small minority of fact-oriented truth-seekers against a hegemony of inequality dramatization and pro-redistribution campaigns. Bernau writes in his above-mentioned editorial on the *FAZ* front page:

> Many citizens trust the bent statistics, they hear so often about the rising gap [der aufgehenden Schere]. The effects are disastrous. Germans are as satisfied with their own economic situation as seldomly seen. But they are pessimistic about the future of the country. (Bernau, 2016b)

Rainer Hank writes that the "handmaiden of progress"[85] – by which he means inequality – was now "quite power-conscious. And very present" (Hank, 2016). And the *FAZ* editors claim, as seen in the editorial quoted above, that one got a lot of attention if one 'howled with the Zeitgeist', but that one had just understood little. They go on to write:

> The outrage after such reports [as by the NGO Oxfam on the pronounced global wealth inequality] functions so reflexively that hardly anyone dares to soberly ask the fundamental question of what is morally reprehensible about inequality. (FAS, 2016)

Thus, on the whole, an almost paradoxical picture emerges: On the one hand, apart from rudiments of plurality in the guest contributions in the inequality series, a vehement relativisation of inequality takes place in the *FAZ*. On the other hand, the public debate on the topic is presented as if the *FAZ* operated in an inequality-dramatising environment in which ritualized outrage undermined the very foundations of freedom of expression – because hardly anyone could dare to put forward certain arguments anymore. There is a certain disproportion when a leading medium like the *FAZ* regularly laments the alleged opinion-suppressing outrage reflexes and myth-making in the public, while it uses its outreach for one-sided rhetorical exaggeration and even defamation of those who problematise inequality.

[85] Hank uses this expression with reference to Angus Deaton, who uses the metaphor in the introduction to his book "The Great Escape", Deaton (2013, p. 6).

4.2.2 *IW Köln* and *INSM*

According to its self-description, the *German Economic Institute* (*IW Köln*) is a “private economic research institute in Germany, which is an advocate of a liberal economic and social order” (IW Köln, 2022b). Through several subsidiaries, it has a strong focus on public relations, advising business associations and German ministries, but also on activities in the – highly controversial[86] – field of free educational materials (IW Köln, 2022d). The *Initiative New Social Market Economy* (*INSM*) presents itself as a “cross-sector and cross-party platform“ funded by the “employers' associations of the metal and electrical industries” dedicated to “principles such as entrepreneurial freedom, the sovereignty of consumers, initiative and equal opportunities” (INSM, 2022a). While both actors appear mostly separately in public and take on different roles along the spectrum from think tank to campaign organisation, there are close interconnections between the two actors.[87] Both can be attributed to the ‘ordoliberal’ discourse coalition (Smith Ochoa, 2020, pp. 326–327). In the case of both, *IW Köln* and *INSM*, it is clear to see that and how they reject concerns about inequality and oppose redistributive policy, as I will show in the following analysis.

This position became obvious in the run-up to the 2013 federal elections. The *IW Köln*, for example, launched a website (www.arm-und-reich.de) with a sophisticated layout that provides information on inequality issues (IW Köln, 2022e).[88] Indeed, there were clear graphics, multimedia content and accessible explanations all brought together on a well-structured user interface. However, the content was by no means value-neutral, as uninitiated users might assume. In sometimes more, sometimes less subtle ways, it suggested that the topic of distribution was important, but that the “Social Market Economy” in Germany was ultimately in good order as concerns inequality. A headline such as “The strong protect the weak” accompanies an illustration that, in contrast to alternative presentations,[89] made the tax and contribution burden of those with the highest incomes appear to be particularly high. The accompanying text ends with the classic ‘incentives argument’ for inequality:

> However, one should not overdo it, because too much redistribution bears the risk that performance incentives are lost. (…) Ultimately, redistribution can thus even harm the

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[86] Cf. Zoske (2015).

[87] The links between *IW Köln* and *INSM* are not immediately obvious. In the *INSM's* online self-portrayal in German language, it is stated that the *INSM* is “scientifically accompanied” by the *IW Köln* (INSM (2022b)), while interestingly in the English version it is made transparent that it is a “subsidiary” of the *IW Köln Medien GmbH (IW Medien)* (INSM (2022a)). In the annual reports of the *IW Köln*, the *INSM* is regularly named as a client for studies (cf. e.g. IW Köln (2014, 2017a)). In the past, *INSM* cooperated closely with *IW Medien* in the area of free school materials; cf. Wirtschaft und Schule (2017). According to the most recent entry in the Bundesanzeiger (Federal Gazette), *IW Köln Medien GmbH* is actually stated as the sole shareholder of the *INSM – Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft GmbH*, cf. Bundesanzeiger (2021). The *INSM* also regularly has job advertisements on the *IW Köln*'s internal job platform (IW Köln (2022c, 2017b)) and its Berlin office shares the same address as *IW Köln*'s Berlin office, cf. IW Köln (2022a); INSM (2022c).

[88] Note that the *IW* has since then gradually evolved the website and relaunched it in 2020, as can be retraced via the *Internet Archive* website: https://web.archive.org/web/20220124000000*/https://www.arm-und-reich.de/ .

[89] Cf. Bach, Beznoska, and Steiner (2016).

recipients if society as a whole loses its drive and simply does not generate enough that could be redistributed. (IW Köln, 2013)

For the illustration of the development of income inequality, a representation was chosen which did not show inequality, but the relative change in income since 2000 according to different groups in the distribution. Under the heading: “The gap is somewhat closing again”, the stagnation of incomes within the top ten per cent of income earners – which had previously decoupled upwards – gives the impression that the gap between incomes is closing.[90] In contrast, for the other deciles of the distribution, only the last year, 2010, shows a slight decrease in the income spread,[91] while before that the lower household incomes only recovered from their real income loss in the wake of the good situation on the labour market and grew roughly in step with the other incomes, after the gap between incomes had widened sharply since 2000. The long-term and cyclically independent trend of rising inequality, on the other hand, is not well visible in the figure (cf. Bönke et al., 2015; Grabka & Goebel, 2013).[92]

In its multimedia content, the website presents the voices of four (male-only) representatives from seemingly diverse backgrounds at least concerning their views on inequality: there is Dietmar Bartsch, of the *Left Party*, and Michael Hüther, director of the *IW Köln*, as well as Klaus Schröder, a researcher of the *Free University Berlin*, and Georg Cremer, secretary-general of the German *Caritas Association* (representing the group of catholic welfare providers). While the former two appear as two poles on the spectrum of political views on inequality, the latter two might be expected to take somewhat moderate positions in between, as a university researcher and a representative of an association especially caring for those in need. However, in fact, both take stances quite similar to the *IW* positioning towards inequality. Georg Cremer for example wrote a long guest article in *FAZ* in 2015, criticizing a report on poverty by his sister organization *Der Paritätische* as overdramatizing the issue of poverty, with the worry that his could fuel “middle-class fears of decline, undermining the legitimacy of the welfare state and obscuring the view of politically achievable steps” (Cremer, 2015).[93] Klaus Schröder moreover has been quoted in the *FAZ* newspaper criticizing poverty research

[90] G. A. Horn, Gechert, Rehm, and Schmid (2014) point at the importance of capital income as a driver of income inequality. They show that the temporary collapse in capital income due to the financial crisis overcompensated an inequality increasing development of labour incomes around the end of the noughties.

[91] The fact that the described trend reversal is only apparent in the last year of the presentation is in remarkable contrast to the view of the IW distribution researcher Niehues, as presented in that annual report in which the website is also praised as a contribution to the objectification of the inequality debate: "She is fundamentally sceptical about statistical changes from one year to the next because other experts like to overinterpret them as trends. 'I don't make scandalising reports out of minor changes'", IW Köln (2014, p. 20).

[92] The same type of illustration but with base year 1991 and extending to later years by the *DIW* institute make a contrary visual impression, cf. Grabka et al. (2019).

[93] Note that Cremer does not join the chorus of inequality denial with simplistic messages, but he makes a substantial case with his warning, that an overdramatizing exaggeration of inequality might be harmful for the poor: He holds that “nothing suggests that this country will break up any time soon. Panic exaggerations promote fear in the middle class. And fear promotes their shielding downwards and makes political acceptance of a social policy for people on the margins of society more difficult.”, cf. Cremer (2015). One may not agree with him neither on the normative assertions on the overall unproblematic state of poverty and inequality in Germany, nor on the strategic argument that calming the debate would gain more support in the middle class for (more modest) poverty reducing policies. But in any case, he fits the *IW* position

as “mostly politically motivated”, while in society, the extent of inequality would be overestimated and its benefits would be underestimated (Hauser & Schwenn, 2012).[94] So while the four voices may appear diverse (in terms of positions on inequality only), it is rather a 1:3 setting. The rest of the content of the website does not correspond at all to the broad spectrum suggested by the video statements but can be attributed to the sole authorship and line of argumentation on inequality of the *IW Köln*. Of course, this is also entirely predictable and understandable in the logic of the *IW,* and it is not illegitimate at all. The point here is to show the mechanism at work: not least due to the fact of a seeming balancing of external voices, the website *appears* more balanced than it is, which can be regarded as a powerful tool for achieving interpretive sovereignty on an issue. In its annual report, the IW Köln quite fittingly states about its activities on the topic of inequality issues that it wanted to contribute to the “objectification” of the inequality debate in Germany (IW Köln, 2014, p. 19) – where it should be clear that “objectivity” will mean disseminating the *IW*’s view on the matter, not contributing to some imagined quest for truth, free from ideological and material interests.[95]

Even more openly than *IW Köln*, the *INSM* also got involved in the debate on the 2013 federal elections. The business weekly *WirtschaftsWoche* published a 100-page special issue on the topic “How just is Germany? [Wie gerecht ist Deutschland?]” in cooperation with the *INSM* (WirtschaftsWoche Global, 2013), which can still be obtained free of charge from *INSM* (INSM, 2022g). Of the 38 pieces in the table of contents, ten are marked as (commissioned) studies by the *INSM,* some produced by the *IW Köln*. They are discreetly marked with an asterisk in the table of contents and at the end of each study presentation, but otherwise do not differ from the rest of the editorial content, which on top contains stories summarizing other *IW* studies (e.g. WirtschaftsWoche Global, 2013, 22-23, 83-84).[96] The *IW Köln* notes in its annual report: “Among other things, [the IW’s publications on distribution issues] were prominently featured in the WirtschaftsWoche special edition ‘How just is Germany?’” (IW Köln, 2014, p. 19). The essence of the special issue can be found in the editorial: “[T]he conventional redistribution instruments are powerless when it comes

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neatly in his calls against dramatizing the debate on poverty and inequality, and he should thus be counted as a third voice aligned with *IW* positions.

94 In 2016 he was quoted in an *FAZ* article, which was part of the inequality series analysed in the previous chapter, with the following statement: “Inequality in Germany is productive because it provides incentives to take risks, start businesses, move up socially and work a lot”, while strongly criticizing a book on inequality by *DIW* research institute president Marcel Fratzscher: “Marcel Fratzscher could have written the book on three to four pages instead of 260, because he only ever repeats his core thesis (…) The book serves to justify redistribution strategies. (…) People are supposed to hear every day that Germany is unequal and the poor are getting poorer – until they believe it.” In the same article, he criticizes the discussion on poverty and life expectancy as too one sided, positing: “People with an unhealthy lifestyle who don’t take care of anything don’t rise socially and don’t earn much either, get sick more often and die earlier.”, cf. Hauser (2016).

95 It is an interesting question beyond the scope of my analysis to ask in how far *IW* positions are driven by conviction and ideology and in how far they are driven by interests and an instrumental relationship to the positions disseminated. To my mind, this could only be understood by way of an organizational analysis and in-depth interviews with the actors involved. As elaborated above with regard to the question of intentions, I remain agnostic about this question, while focusing on the rhetorical mechanisms at work, no matter what drives them.

96 Next to the imprint, the editors note: “This special issue was produced in cooperation with the Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft (INSM). The INSM, like the WirtschaftsWoche, is committed to free-market reforms in the sense of entrepreneurial freedom, initiative and equality of opportunity. (…) Responsibility for the overall content remains with the editors.”, cf. INSM (2022g, p. 5).

to the real problems" – policy should be about education and equal opportunities instead of classic redistributive policies, which only endangered economic growth (WirtschaftsWoche Global, 2013, p. 3). In the run-up to the federal elections in Germany, the *INSM* also placed large advertising posters for its campaign on the concept of justice. There were eight different motifs on various questions of justice and answers to distribution policy issues. Its messages: the minimum wage was unjust,[97] the tax burden was too high, the "compulsory pension" was unjust, while the deregulation of labour markets of the so-called *Agenda 2010* was just because it supposedly created many jobs and improved equality of opportunity. Beyond the *Agenda 2010*, fair policy on distributional issues consisted in education policy to improve equality of opportunity (INSM, 2013).[98]

In its 2013/2014 annual report, the *IW Köln* was satisfied with its role in the inequality debate surrounding the election campaign:

> Ultimately, the IW was successful with its work, says [IW inequality researcher] Niehues: 'We have shown that income distribution is not becoming more unfair. The fact that we have repeatedly brought this into the media through very different channels was our contribution to ensuring that tax increases are not up for debate.' When, for example, the Greens presented their tax plans, [IW tax expert] Thilo Schaefer 'made calculations and showed that this would also burden high-income earners – and thus the electorate of the Greens.' The FAZ, among others, made a big issue of these calculations. (IW Köln, 2014, p. 20)

The two actors were also active beyond the Bundestag elections. The *IW Köln* succeeded in attracting a great deal of attention – even international coverage[99] – with a study on the perception of inequality published for the first time in 2014 (Niehues, 2014). In essence, the study compared the pattern of income inequality in international country comparisons with a very general item from the *ISSP* survey on the perception of the "form of society" (and not income inequality) in the respective countries.[100] It concludes that the different levels of income inequality did not coincide with the perceived "form of society". The study approach earned strong criticism due to methodological problems and controversial assumptions and was even ridiculed in a satirical programme on public television (Bank, 2014c). Nevertheless, the *IW Köln* did not shy away from disseminating the results intensively and for months in the media and making them available in an elaborately programmed interactive graphic for integration on other websites. The *FAZ* reported exclusively on the study in a

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[97] The poster, like all others in very simple and plain language, states in large letters: "Is the minimum wage just? No" and in very small letters it adds: "Because it makes the labour of low qualified workers so expensive that they lose their job".

[98] For a critique of the economic liberal narrowing of equal opportunity policy to 'education policy without redistribution', see Bank (2016c).

[99] Cf. Krugman (2014a) and Wagstyl (2014).

[100] This perception was measured by different depictions of social stratification, explained by descriptions that spoke of a "small elite at the top" and a "great mass of the population below", but not of income distribution. Also, nowhere was it defined how the boundaries of different strata would be drawn – whereby in purely technical terms *any distribution* could have generated *any mapping* provided we chose the corresponding definition of boundaries between the strata, cf. Bank (2014c). Only in comparative perspective, the approach yields a certain informative value, which, however, should be treated with caution in view of the small number of countries and strong differences in socio-economic conditions and especially in view of the vague question – especially since other studies on the perception of inequality with regard to the distances between incomes and not their stratification regularly conclude that inequality is *underestimated* (cf. Osberg and Smeeding (2006); Engelhardt and Wagener (2018)).

detailed article and quoted study author Judith Niehues with the thesis that in Germany there was a "vicious circle" between misperception of inequality and justice debates (Creutzburg, 2014). In her study, she writes of "distorted redistribution preferences" (Niehues, 2014, p. 2) – a bold conclusion even if one was willing to accept the premise of a misperception of inequality despite the study's methodological problems. For even if it were true that inequality was overestimated, it could well be the case that people would still be as much in favour of more redistribution if they were better informed about the actual distribution.[101] Niehues makes clear in a quote in the *IW*'s Annual Report that she does not agree with perceptions and worries about inequality and low incomes, suggesting there was a distinction between emotions on one side and sober facts on the other:

> 'I see the figures every day,' says Niehues. 'Unemployment is at its lowest level in years, the incomes of the lower income groups, in particular, are rising – and then a picture is painted as if the country was on the brink. It is difficult to argue against these emotions.' (IW Köln, 2014, p. 20)

In addition to the study on the allegedly distorted perception of inequality, the *IW Köln* addressed another strategic breaking point in the inequality discourse, which goes to the core of economic liberal relativisation of inequality: the question of inequality as a supposedly necessary evil for economic dynamism – an argument with which the Rawlsian position on the justification of inequality, which is broadly accepted among 'social liberals', stands and falls.[102] In the meantime, however, the empirical foundation of this argumentation is crumbling away, because in the international macroeconomic discussion it is increasingly being questioned whether inequality makes a positive contribution to growth at all, if it does not rather represent an obstacle to growth and a danger to macroeconomic stability (Behringer & van Treeck, 2018; Dabla-Norris, Kochhar, Suphaphiphat, Ricka, & Trounta, 2013; OECD, 2014). The strategic importance and increasing questioning of the argument that inequality is necessary for economic dynamism to support liberal economic objections against redistributive policies seems to have been recognised at the *IW Köln* as well – after all, a study was published in 2016 that argued (rather defensively) that, at least in countries like Germany, inequality was not detrimental to growth and more redistribution was therefore not advisable for this reason (Kolev & Niehues, 2016).[103] In any case, the study served to

[101] Ultimately, this view reveals the anti-democratic and in a deeper sense hardly liberal attitude typical for 'economic liberal' positions: The only conclusive and legitimate political preferences are, in the sense of the so-called "median voter theorem", those supposedly rational political preferences that strictly maximise one's own (material) benefit in the political struggle about (re)distribution. This view is all the more astonishing when one considers that – on a more abstract philosophical level – economic liberal positions usually vehemently commit to 'methodological individualism' as the only legitimate approach to accommodate for the 'sovereignty of individuals' with regard to their own preferences, cf. for example Kirchgässner (1991); Vanberg (2000).

[102] According to the justice theorist John Rawls, despite a fundamental commitment to material equality, inequalities can be justified if they also benefit the worst off Rawls (1999 [1974], §11, §46). G. A. Cohen has convincingly pointed out relevant inconsistencies of this argumentation, cf. Cohen (2008).

[103] A contrary finding for Germany was modelled by Albig et al. (2017).

contribute to a veil of uncertainty in reporting on contrary studies – as taken up by journalists like Rainer Hank.[104]

IW and *INSM* use various channels to disseminate their positions. Besides its main campaign activities described above, the *INSM* publishes a Blog with the title "ÖkonomenBlog – Die Stimme der ökonomischen Vernunft [EconomistsBlog – The Voice of Reason]". The latter offered five links to external articles on economic topics every weekday (called "5 before 10") until recently,[105] which regularly includes references to inequality issues (INSM, 2022e) – usually framed with a rejection of both inequality concerns and support for redistributive policy.[106] Besides, the *INSM* also has a group of "ambassadors", who "support the *INSM* with their commitment to the Social Market Economy and with their expertise in science, politics and journalism as well as with their engagement in companies and associations", "representing the ordoliberal principles in the public". For example, former federal minster of family affairs, Kristina Schröder, contributed to the debate about the concept of poverty in 2014 on Twitter. She argued: "The purely relative concept of poverty that is once again haunting the media today does not measure #poverty, but inequality. That is a difference!", adding that the relative definition of poverty was ideologically charged. She would prefer an "absolute concept of poverty, which included a socio-cultural minimum subsistence level" (K. Schröder, 2014).

The *IW* consists of a conglomerate of subsidiaries (IW Köln, 2022d), of which several serve to disseminate its ideas in different formats. While the research branch of the institute itself has a communications department, there is the subsidiary *IW Medien GmbH* (to which the *INSM* also belongs). *IW Medien* operates the website iwd.de, which shall serve as a key channel for the dissemination of condensed facts and study results, and it also – like the sister subsidiary *IW Junior gGmbH* – reaches out to young people and the education sector with the online platform WirtschaftundSchule.de, offering free school materials and background information for teachers.

For example, in 2013 *IW Medien* published a 15-page-booklet for teachers on "Justice and Distribution in Germany" (IW Köln & Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft SchuleWirtschaft [SchuleWirtschaft], 2013), which presents an overview about principles of justice, facts on income and wealth inequality, the welfare state and the state of equality of opportunity. At first sight, it looks fairly balanced and not overly partisan – which it would have to be if it complied with the principle of the "Beutelsbach Consensus", a minimum standard for political and economic education.[107] But a

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[104] Recall Hank's quote mentioned in section 4.2.1 that "studies that are readily passed around" on that subject should be "taken with a grain of salt", cf. Hank (2016).

[105] The frequency was reduced to a weekly selection of recommendations in February 2021, cf. INSM (2022d, 2022f).

[106] For example, it refers to an article on inequality as an overrated topic: "Do economists spend too much time on the topic of inequality? Yes, says Bloomberg author Leonid Bershidsky, because the methods and data used by Thomas Piketty, for example, were questionable.", cf. INSM (2020). Another example: "Inequality can also be something good", cf. INSM (2017b). Or: "What Piketty likes to conceal", cf. INSM (2017a).

[107] The 'Beutelsbach Consensus' holds that pupils must not be overwhelmed, subjects must be treated as controversial and pupils must be able to personally connect to the issues discussed, cf. Lpb Baden-Württemberg (2022). On its platform Wirtschaftundschule.de the *IW* comits to these principles, cf. Wirtschaft und Schule (2022).

closer look reveals that the *IW* position is subtly embodied in the text. For example, as concerns the minimum wage, the text simply states:

> A common suggestion as a way out of this dilemma is: a statutory minimum wage should be introduced in Germany. One consequence of this, however, would be that some employers would then no longer be able to afford certain employees because they do not even earn their own wages. So the matter is not quite as simple as the gut feeling suggests. (IW Köln & SchuleWirtschaft, 2013, p. 14)

Or the comment on the low wage sector suggests empathy ("Many of these people work hard and many would certainly like a better-paid job") but then states: "However, a poorly paid job is still better than none at all", and also that low wages did not have to imply living in poverty (IW Köln & SchuleWirtschaft, 2013, pp. 13–14).[108]

IW experts also appeared in the media. An interview with *IW* inequality expert Judith Niehues with the public broadcaster *Phoenix* in 2017 on the occasion of a civil society alliance demanding more redistribution. The interview gives a good impression of the *IW* storyline.[109] A key point the expert makes is that the inequality debate resulted from the good situation in the labour market:

> Unemployment is at its lowest level since reunification and there are not such urgent problems there now, that one can discuss the issue of distribution. (Niehues, 2017)

She also mentions that poverty was relative, that Germany already had high levels of redistribution internationally, that the gap between Poor and Rich had not increased in the last ten years, and that the main policy proposals should be investments in education and increasing social mobility rather than redistribution (Niehues, 2017).

4.2.3 German Council of Economic Experts

One should expect a different kind of contribution to the inequality debate from the annual reports of the *German Council of Economic Experts*. After all, the *GCEE* is a body of experts from the scientific community appointed at the suggestion of the federal government, from which a certain effort towards balance in its reporting must be expected. The legal purpose of the *GCEE* is to "facilitate the formation of judgements by all bodies responsible for economic policy as well as the public" (§1 of the Law on the Formation of an Advisory Council on Macroeconomic Development – GCEE Act). The *GCEE*'s reports are to be based on "various assumptions and their different effects are to be presented and assessed" (§2 GCEE Act). However, the regular annual reports in the period

[108] Note that there is also an inconsistency in the more detailed argument: As concerns low wages and living in poverty the text makes the argument that more low wage earners were at poverty risk than those earning regular wages, but that poorly paid work was better than no work, "at least as concerns the poverty risk. Since among the unemployed, the rate of poverty risk is especially high". However, for the individual this sectoral quantity does not make any difference: if you are working and poor, you are poor, no matter you had higher chances not to be poor in your statistical group. It should be added that the text also mentions the higher chance to move into a regular job from a poorly paid job relative to the unemployed, which could, with a lot of good will, rescue the argument, cf. IW Köln and Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft SchuleWirtschaft (2013, p. 13).

[109] See transcript of the interview in Appendix D.2.

under investigation read more as one-sided economic-liberal policy recommendations, supplemented by "minority opinions" written by the *GCEE* member Peter Bofinger, rather than as a balanced piece of scientific policy advice.[110] When it comes to inequality, the *GCEE*'s stance marks no exception.

The *Annual Report 2013/2014* (SVR, 2013) focuses on the debate on redistribution raised by the federal election. Under the headline "Federal election campaign 2013: Redistribution instead of real reforms", the *GCEE* majority rejects a "backwards-looking economic policy" to tackle the "supposedly increased inequality" with "redistribution through tax policy". And further, they commit to unfettered market forces: "In the case of the currently discussed minimum wage or the rent cap, attempts are being made to impose a desired market outcome by law" (paras. 2-3). Further below, the *GCEE* majority plainly states: "In the German institutional setting, a nationwide statutory minimum wage must be rejected, as well as state-imposed sector- or region-specific wage floors" (para. 9). Meanwhile, the *GCEE* majority judges the increase in inequality from 1991 until 2013 as "only moderate" (paras. 18, 514).[111] They argue that this had to be seen in the light of a labour market integration of "less productive workers", which was a desired development of the German approach to reduce unemployment (para. 514). Since more tax revenue was not warranted the *GCEE* majority sees no reason to increase taxes on top incomes and reintroduce the wealth tax (para. 15, 551). This would be a "return to the wrong tax policies of earlier years" (para. 596). They thus plainly state:

> The *GCEE* rejects the reintroduction of the wealth tax and an increase in the top income tax rate. While. (…) The negative impact on investment activity and thus on economic growth would be considerable. (para. 665)

Note that Peter Bofinger voiced dissent with the four other members of the council in a minority vote about the minimum wage, the concerns about which he does not share. On the contrary, he notes that while the council stressed the need for evidence-based policy recommendations on the issue, the majority did not provide it, according to his view (para. 533). He also rejects the view of the majority that inequality-reducing policies were "backwards-looking", referring to research on inequality and its harmful effects on macroeconomic stability and growth (para. 536).[112]

In the *Annual Report 2014/2015* (SVR, 2014), the *GCEE* starts its considerations of inequality with an economic liberal definition of policy on distributional issues, according to which primacy

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[110] Following convention, the federal government appoints one of the five members of the *GCEE* on the proposal of the trade unions and another one on the proposal of the employers' associations. At the time, the former was Peter Bofinger, while the latter was Volker Wieland. The other members were Isabel Schnabel (replacing Claudia M. Buch in 2014), Christoph M. Schmidt and Lars P. Feld. On the debate about the role of the *GCEE*, see C. M. Schmidt et al. (2015), in particular the contribution by Gebhard Kirchgässner.

[111] Note that in 2013, the top decile had seen an increase in real disposable household income of more than 25 per cent, while the bottom decile had suffered real income losses of about 5 per cent, cf. Grabka et al. (2019).

[112] Peter Bofinger also wrote several minority votes in the subsequent annual reports. In the analysis hereafter, I will mostly refer to the *GCEE* majority's positions only, in order to focus on the mechanisms of inequality denial, and when using the term *GCEE*, I shall henceforth refer to its majority unless the context warrants differentiation. The example of the Annual Report 2013/14 should suffice to make it clear that there often was a minority voice countering the majority's positions. Note that not all instances of inequality denial were challenged in a minority vote, which may not necessarily imply that Peter Bofinger did agree to the majority position but it may also possibly result from priorities set by him during the certainly challenging process of production of the extensive report.

belonged to efficiency and economic performance before distributional questions could be considered (cf. paragraphs 510 and 513, see also para. 6). The report proceeds by quoting the above-mentioned *IW* study on inequality perceptions (paragraph 514), which also gives the subsection on inequality of the chapter on “labour markets and social issues” its title: “Distribution: distorted perceptions”. The council’s majority argues that redistribution in Germany “effectively contributes to preventing income poverty”. As alleged proof, the *GCEE* cites the poverty risk rate of (no less than) 15 per cent of the population. In a subtle way, however, this measure of poverty is then delegitimised in the following sentences: A “more appropriate measure of the risk of poverty” was the share of minimum income benefit recipients, which had been decreasing since 2006 (para. 514) – as if poverty was impossible for people who receive low labour incomes instead of minimum income benefits. In addition, the paragraph notes that the occurrence of absolute poverty in Germany was “as good as impossible” (para. 514). While the debate on absolute poverty is relevant for developing countries, it is rather irrelevant to the German discussion. This mentioning of irrelevant facts can be seen as an important framing tool: Placed in the context of the human misery associated with absolute poverty, the concern for poverty as it is usually understood in industrialised countries – as a lack of opportunity for social participation – may seem less oppressive than it would without this anchor of ‘absolute poverty’.[113]

In paragraph 516, the authors then implicitly suggest that the need for economic policy measures about distributional issues was primarily given when inequality increased – as if the need for economic policy action could not be legitimized just as well when inequality remained constant or decreased less than regarded as desirable.[114] Another remarkable statement is the thesis that the need for economic policy measures could hardly be justified in the case of inequality increases resulting from “assortative mating”, i.e. from the fact that partnerships increasingly emerged between people from similar socio-economic positions, implying less redistribution within households. This suggests that redistributive policy could only address individual inequality while the only way to restrict inequality driven by assortative mating would be to limit the freedom of choice of one’s partner. In reality, however, the welfare state for good reasons addresses inequality on the household level rather than inequality at the personal level in many instances.

In paragraph 518, the *GCEE* briefly discusses Thomas Piketty's book *C21* (see also Chapter 2 above). The authors write that *C21* focused on the functional distribution of income – although Piketty also centrally includes the analysis of *personal income* distribution when discussing top incomes, as well as the distribution of *wealth* in analysis. Next, the authors falsely imply that Piketty postulated a “quasi-natural development of income distribution”, which – expressed in an astonishingly dismissive way – was not tenable “from an economic point of view” (as if Piketty

[113] Thaler and Sunstein (2009, pp. 23–24) describe the effects of anchoring shown by experimental studies very illustratively.

[114] This is implicit especially in the formulation that the need for economic policy action “cannot be justified at all” if the observed changes in inequality were due to measurement errors (paragraph 516).

himself were not an economist). Overall, the authors conclude in their chapter that there was currently “no need for economic policy action” (para. 529) regarding income and wealth inequality in Germany. Only the question of equal opportunities and educational and income mobility should be addressed by economic policy (para. 530).

The two follow-up reports read quite similarly - with partly different emphases on distribution issues. In the *Annual Report 2015/16* (SVR, 2015) the section on distribution issues reads “Stable distribution results” - and it says that for the past ten years the observation of the inequality development gave “an unspectacular picture” (para. 490). Regarding the controversial question of whether the German middle class was shrinking, the *GCEE*, after referring to these controversies, states: “In the view of the *GCEE*, Germany is still a stable middle-class society” (para. 493), whereby the *GCEE* member Peter Bofinger contradicts this thesis in a minority vote (para. 582). It is interesting that the *GCEE* suddenly loses this willingness to take a clear position on controversial issues at another, inequality-relativising point: A separate subsection now discusses – similar to the *IW* study mentioned above – the growth effects of inequality (paragraphs 498-504). Here it is now stated, highlighted in bold type, that among empirical studies there was “no consensus on this connection” (para. 501) and such results must “therefore be interpreted with great caution” (para. 503, again in bold). Under the heading of the following section, “A Holistic Perspective”, the authors then refer to very fundamental principles:

> The controversial discussion about the growth effects of inequality and the interpretation of the relevant regression results clearly shows that the statistical processing of economic parameters is first and foremost an **instrument of discourse** and cannot be an instrument of economic policy without putting things in perspective. As quantitative condensations of reality, **indicators** can at best provide initial **signs** of a possible need for economic and social policy action. (Paragraph 505, emphasis in original)

And so it goes on for several lines of reflections about fundamental questions regarding causality, macroeconomic changes and corresponding policy recommendations, even about the historical roots of statistics and the measurement of social progress, which is all interesting from a philosophy of science perspective. However, it remains completely unclear why such fundamental questions occur to the *GCEE* at this point of all places, in a subsection on the growth-harming effects of inequality. This stands in complete disproportion to the multitude of very courageously formulated, clear and one-sided economic policy recommendations in the respective reports of the time, which were based on similar difficulties from a philosophy of science perspective and which were also hugely controversial.[115]

In the *Annual Report 2016/17* (SVR, 2016), it seems as if an economic liberal narrative on the inequality issue had slowly consolidated after the initial excitement about the inequality debate that

[115] One example is the debate on the introduction of the nationwide minimum wage in Germany referred to above. Gebhard Kirchgässner writes in his critique of the *GCEE*: “The available empirical evidence on the effects of a minimum wage is, however, by far not as clear as a majority of the Council of Experts would have us believe”, cf. C. M. Schmidt et al. (2015, p. 169).

broke out.[116] In the introductory chapter on economic policy, the relevant section is immediately entitled "Focus on Equal Opportunities" (para. 59). This section moves from the necessary "balance between growth and redistribution" (para. 59) to the need to focus on employment, to the statement that inequality in Germany "has remained largely unchanged over the past decade" (para. 60), to the clear recommendation to refrain from using a wealth tax as an instrument for redistribution (para. 62), to the recommendation to focus on education policy and equal opportunities when dealing with distributional issues. This argumentative choreography is based on a detailed chapter (Chapter 10 of the Annual Report), to which *GCEE* member Peter Bofinger has again added a minority opinion in which he contradicts central points. Apart from the clear rejection of the wealth tax by the *GCEE* majority, the numerous reform proposals by economists such as Piketty (2014) or Atkinson (2015) are not mentioned in a single sentence.

4.3 Mechanisms of Inequality Denial

The previous section has made it clear that some actors in the German economic policy debate use a variety of arguments, rhetorical figures and methods of framing to help relativise the problem of inequality and delegitimise redistribution policies. The line between solid arguments and skilful framing is blurred. And the question of when it is intentional manipulation and when it is ideological conviction cannot be answered from the outside in many cases. Even without an answer to this question of intentions, however, various mechanisms can be identified that contribute to relativising inequality or questioning redistribution policies. I have put question marks as to how well justified I regard many of these, but a conclusive stance on this is not of interest here. My focus is to unveil rhetorical and argumentative mechanisms in the first place. In the following, I try to systematize the various mechanisms although naturally there may always be overlaps between the various aspects. Table 4.1 summarizes the findings.

4.3.1 Inequality Relativization

First, there are several mechanisms of relativisation: inequality in Germany is presented as less of a problem by placing it in a context where the problem appears to be smaller. These include mechanisms such as:

- *International comparisons*: Germany was only in the international midfield in terms of income inequality, and there was already a relatively high level of redistribution compared to other countries.
- *Anchoring / portrayal of inequality as a luxury problem:* In the poverty debate, the concept of poverty is placed in a more drastic context through the reference to absolute poverty,

[116] The text carries the corresponding title: "Conclusions from the inequality debate" (para. 60), as if to draw a line under it.

which is irrelevant to the expert debate on the issue. Likewise, a popular pattern of relativisation is the thesis that concerns about inequality were increasingly being voiced because unemployment was so low and people were satisfied enough with their economic situation to worry about the 'less important issues', as put forward by *IW* experts for example. Another example is the reference to the *global* decline in poverty and inequality (e.g. Bernau, 2016a).

- *Data tailoring:* By selecting the appropriate base year, for example, the inequality increase of the past years can be presented as less drastic; or by ignoring the overall economic situation (unemployment, capital returns etc) and long-term trends. On the topic of redistribution, the tax burden on high-income groups can be presented as particularly drastic, depending on which taxes and levies are included in the presentation.

4.3.2 Delegitimisation of Actors and Data Bases

Another central mechanism is the questioning of the seriousness or competence of actors in the inequality debate, up to their defamation, as well as the questioning of the quality of data bases. Examples of *defamation of actors/proponents of inequality concerns* found above are:

- The statement "the educated" who held egalitarian positions preferred to use argumentations that could be described as "bullshit" – because critics of bullshit are sometimes also anti-egalitarian.
- Constructing a "turn" in Thomas Piketty's argumentation when he has only objected to his critics' readings of his work and pointed out his actual line of argumentation.
- The *GCEE*'s formulation that Piketty's theses were "not tenable from an economic point of view" – as if Piketty himself were not an economist.
- The naming of Piketty in the same breath as the "aggression of Occupy, Blockupy and the Likes".
- The reference to the dictatorial regime of the GDR as a (failed) attempt to establish equality – when positing that "progress" was only possible with inequality, implicitly suggesting that demands for redistribution policies could not also be legitimate policy goals in a liberal democratic order.
- Referring to critics of inequality as "friends of the inequality gap" and calling charitiy and welfare organizations the "welfare industry".
- A particularly far-reaching form of defamation is the way the *IW Köln* study on the perception of inequality was presented in the media: Ultimately, the rationality and competence of large parts of the population were questioned by suggesting people had "distorted redistribution preferences".

Table 4.1: Mechanisms of inequality denial

Mechanism	Variants	Examples
Inequality relativization	*International comparisons*	‘Germany is only in the international midfield’
		‘Redistribution in Germany is already high’
	Anchoring / portrayal of inequality as a luxury problem	‘Relative poverty is not absolute poverty’
		‘Unemployment is so low that people start worrying about things like inequality’
		‘Global inequality is declining’
	Data tailoring	Using base year 2000 instead of 1991
		Showing tax progressivity excluding direct taxes
Delegitimisation of actors and data bases	*Questioning of seriousness / ad hominem attacks / defamation of actors*	The babbling of the educated on equality as ‘bullshit’
		‘Piketty has relativized his position’; ‘Piketty’s stance is not tenable from an economic point of view’; Piketty and ‘the aggression of Occupy, Blockupy and the Likes’
		‘The friends of the inequality gap’
	Questioning Data Quality	‘Wealth inequality data cannot be compared due to institutional differences’
		‘Piketty and the damn numbers’
Selective differentiation	*Selective Differentiation*	‘Studies about the income-growth nexus should be read with a grain of salt’ vs. ‘The minimum wage must be rejected’
	Reference to complexity	‘Those who howl with the Zeitgeist have understood little’
Struggle for terms	*Equality of opportunity*	‘Policy improving equality of opportunity instead of backwards-looking redistributive policy’ (as opposed to: ‘improving equality of opportunity through redistributive policy’)
	Poverty	‘A more appropriate measure of poverty risk is of minimum income benefit recipients only’
		‘Relative poverty is not absolute poverty’
	Freedom	‘Compulsory pension’; ‘Look at the GDR as a failed attempt to level inequality’
	Progress	‘Who wants to abolish inequality has to give up progress’
Struggle for discourse sovereignty	*Lack of plurality*	Presenting six voices criticizing *C21* but none appreciating merits
	Pseudo-plurality	External voices on www.arm-und-reich.de suggesting plurality, while content is one-sided
	Self-depiction as a small sober minority	‘Hardly anyone dares to soberly ask what is morally reprehensible about inequality’
Monopolisation of expert status	*Disciplinary gatekeeping*	‘From an economic point of view, Piketty’s theses are untenable’
	Moralizing/emotionalizing of counter-arguments	‘Compassion with the disadvantaged is morally/emotionally comprehensible, but from an expert view, redistribution will harm those most’

In addition to the defamation or delegitimisation of actors, the *quality of data and data bases is* repeatedly *questioned.* Examples are:

- The reference to data problems in international comparisons of wealth inequality (a case for which the above-mentioned mechanism of relativisation through international comparison is not suitable, because Germany ranks among the top countries in terms of wealth inequality). Here, reference is made in particular to above-average pension entitlements, which allegedly distort the statistics in a relevant way.
- The reporting of criticism of Piketty's data by the Financial Times. That the FT criticism later largely collapsed was not reported.
- The criticism of the concept of poverty as an unsuitable measure, whereby it is not so much the measurement but the technical construction and thus ultimately the concept itself that is attacked (see below).

4.3.3 Selective Differentiation

Another mechanism is the *selective differentiation of* studies. Massive flaws in inequality-relating studies are ignored or mentioned in marginal notes, while controversies in inequality-problematising studies are inflated in comparison. One example is the discussion on the relationship between inequality and economic growth. The *reference to the complexity of an issue* can also be used to take the wind out of the sails of demands for redistribution. An example of such a formulation can be found in the aforementioned *FAZ* editorial on the inequality series.

Overall, both mechanisms, delegitimisation of actors and data bases as well as selective differentiation can contribute to maintaining a "fog of doubt", a veil of uncertainty and doubt. Even if criticism can be successfully refuted in the end, the stigma often remains and weakens the positions accordingly in the discourse.

4.3.4 Struggle for Terms

A central element of the relativisation of inequality lies in the terms themselves. Therefore, an essential mechanism is the occupation and reinterpretation of terms. Examples are the terms:

- *Equality of opportunity*: The *INSM* campaign on the concept of equity makes it clear how interest-driven actors try to use the term equality of opportunity to define distribution policy as a redistribution-free project (as opposed to a policy that also seeks to improve equality of opportunity by way of redistribution).
- *Poverty*: Very often, the relative concept of poverty, which is relevant for rich countries, is subtly questioned by referring to the absolute concept of poverty. At other times, the level of the poverty threshold is questioned or the concept is only called poverty risk.
- *Freedom*: A central ideological reference point of economic liberalism in its rhetoric against redistribution is the concept of freedom. This is shown for example by formulations such as

"compulsory pension" from the *INSM* campaign on 'justice' and similar accusations of the supposed paternalism and hostility to freedom of redistributive policy measures – although redistribution policy can be seen as freedom policy in the best sense.[117]

- *Progress*: Suggesting that society had to choose between 'progress' or 'economic dynamism' and inequality reduction, as put forward for example by Rainer Hank in the *FAS* newspaper.

4.3.5 The Struggle for Discourse Sovereignty

A very direct mechanism to contain inequality debates in an economic-liberal way is by way of avoiding *plurality*. This can be seen, for example, in the *FAZ*'s reception of Thomas Piketty's *C21*, most conspicuously in the article in which six economists can present their critique of Piketty, while not a single economist representing a counter-position is invited. A similar, possibly even more effective mechanism can be said to be at work on the *IW* website on inequality, where a Left politician signals plurality, while the rest of the content is aligned with *IW* positions, which could lead uninitiated readers to expect a balanced presentation of the issue.

Paradoxically, at the same time, there is the lament of acting as a *small sober minority* in a society full of inequality concerns and calls for redistribution. Certainly, the perception of the public debate depends strongly on the media and discourse spaces observed – and surveys show large majorities agree with this position (see Chapter 7). However, given the journalistic outreach of a leading medium like the *FAZ* as well as financially powered PR campaigns/think tanks like *INSM* and *IW Köln*, this lamentation seems somewhat exaggerated and rather rhetorical.

4.3.6 Monopolisation of Expert Status

Another mechanism is the *monopolisation of one's own expert status*. This happens, for example, in the case of the *GCEE*, which implicitly denies Thomas Piketty his status as an economist, which would entitle Piketty qua status to make a qualified contribution to the expert controversy. From an "economic point of view", his theses are untenable. In this way, the claim to speak for economics is monopolised – possibly even unconsciously, but effectively.

A highly questionable "division of labour" in economic policy discourses functions in a very similar way, which presents economic liberal positions under the label of "factual arguments", while objections to them are presented as coming from an ethical-normative point of view, or are 'simply' emotional, as shown in the quote by *IW* inequality expert Judith Niehues above that it was hard to argue against the emotions. The objections may appear to be sympathetic and humane, but, according to this division of labour, they cannot do anything argumentatively in the field of hard evidence orientation. Thus, the compassionate redistributionists seem to remain without arguments: they have a heart, but do not sufficiently understand the complex world of the economy.[118]

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[117] Cf. Bank (2014b).

[118] Note that the problem with this mechanism has a 'technocratic' and a 'democratic' dimension. As concerns the former, the mechanism conceals that often there are *technical* counter-arguments readily available, an observation van Treeck

4.4 Conclusion

The above analysis of material from the years 2013-2017 has shown that we can find a variety of mechanisms of inequality relativisation and along with it a delegitimisation of redistributive policy. We find these mechanisms both in statements by interest groups such as *IW Köln* or *INSM*, as well as in economic liberal outlets such as *FAZ* and the policy advice of the *GCEE*.

The point of the analysis is to make visible mechanisms of inequality denial, independently from an analysis of the politics, the strategic formations and the relative strength of camps within that debate. Nonetheless, the analysis presented here has included a rich amount of context information about actors in order to better explain the mechanisms, for rhetorical mechanisms can often not be interpreted without considering their context. And by that it has also provided clues that indicate strategic communication of participants of the debate – and I suspect, based on the material I have analysed – that an analysis of communication strategies or a network analysis of actors in this field might be a promising route of further deepening the analysis.

While less surprising and troubling in the case of interest groups, it is remarkable, that such mechanisms are also brought forward so vehemently in the German 'paper of record' *FAZ* and most importantly, in the annual reports of a body of policy advice to the federal government, which by law is obliged to present alternative positions and policy options. Note however that the point here is not to lament a lack of plurality in certain parts of the public debate. It is also likely that we would encounter a contrary picture when focusing on more progressive outlets, the campaigns of progressive civil society organizations and bodies of policy advice with academics from different backgrounds. One might well be able to present an analogous analysis on 'mechanisms of inequality problematization'. Note however that my analysis does not make any claims about the relative strength of one 'storyline' or the other. As has been pointed out before, other research on inequality debates has shown that different narratives on inequality and related issues (co-)exist (Petring, 2016; Smith Ochoa, 2020; Volkmann, 2006), which may *per se* be regarded as a signal of quality and diversity of public debates in a pluralist democracy. Howsoever, as a minimal finding on this matter, given what I have shown for *FAZ* and *GCEE*, it would be inappropriate to call the overall debate one-sidedly inequality-dramatizing. It is also worth noting the immense resources interest groups such as *IW Köln* and *INSM* have at their disposal to influence the debate, which has become apparent in the depiction of these actors' activities. Moreover, as the analysis of the Piketty reception in Chapter 2 has shown, there still seemed to be a dominance of economic liberalism especially in economic policy debates and among economists in Germany at the time.

(2014a, pp. 17–18) has made concerning the issue of public debt in a critical evaluation of school material on the German economic order. From a *democratic* point of view, this position furthermore bears the risk of degrading counter-arguments that have not yet been elaborated more technically. For sure, ultimately, any policy proposal needs to pass the test of real world complexity, but it seems a fundamental misconception of democracy to prematurely assume only those already differentiated positions by nature of their superior *format* also held normative high ground. This way, interest groups with the means to finance technical expertise could always maintain competitive advantage in the political process, concealing the normative nature of their positions by the higher degree of technicality.

In any case, the main interest of my research is understanding the discursive opportunity space restricting policy to reduce inequality. When asking why we do not see more redistributive policy outcomes, despite the widespread view that inequality is too large and that the government should do more to reduce inequality, the analysis presented here helps to give us a notion of the rhetorical mechanisms serving to 'siphon off the water' from the inequality debate in Germany or, if this is not possible, to redirect it in more economic liberal directions. The mechanisms identified here represent the 'economic liberal frontier' to redistributive ambitions within that discursive opportunity space. They show that problematizing accounts of inequality meet fierce resistance – and they are most likely not only explained by convictions about inequality but also by convictions about redistributive policy. Recall that while in some instances the mechanisms address inequality concerns (e.g. 'inequality has stabilized', 'inequality is not that large compared to other countries'), in others they signal agreement about inequality concerns but address the policy proposals as ineffective or even counterproductive (e.g. 'the minimum wage may have adverse effects').

Note that acknowledging the diversity of inequality debates as something valuable in a pluralist democracy does not imply all mechanisms bear the same quality and potential for acceptance, if imagined as propositions in an ideal-type deliberation about the issue. Take the example of relativizations by international comparison as opposed to ad-hominem attacks. While the former may be a justifiable normative judgment, the latter is a case of unfair style and, once revealed, an unconvincing piece of rhetoric, without substantive arguments. The analysis may thus also help distinguish acceptable arguments from unacceptable methods that serve to manipulate uninitiated participants or the audience of the debate. It may even help those convinced of economic liberal positions to refine some of their own arguments while questioning others.

This chapter and the analysis thus far have shown the limits to redistributive policy when proposed in public debates on economic inequality in Germany. My findings thus help to understand why – among others – it is so difficult to tackle inequality: because there is a massive rhetorical wall of inequality denial. As pointed out at the outset, I do not show how much, in quantitative terms, these discursive obstacles account for in explaining the policy gap on inequality. Comparative analysis suggests that the role of the media should not be underestimated (Neimanns, 2021) and in Chapter 7 I will examine the causal effect of framed media content on inequality attitudes, which is one further piece of evidence showing the relevance of public inequality debates. However, for now, we can already count on good documentation of the existence of mechanisms of inequality denial in recent years.

In the next two chapters, I will focus on justification patterns of income inequality. While that analysis looks at both sides, legitimizing and criticizing parts of the debate on income inequality, it also yields an outlook on the progressive potential of the inequality discourse in Germany: it shows that the normative discourse, which at first sight seems quite friendly to large income inequality, has much potential for far more egalitarian reinterpretations of the same normative principles it involves.

5 Justifying Income Inequality – The Winterkorn Cause 2012/13

> One should be wary, however, of the conventional wisdom that modern economic growth is a marvellous instrument for revealing individual talents and aptitudes. There is some truth in this view, but since the early nineteenth century, it has all too often been used to justify inequalities of all sorts, no matter how great their magnitude and no matter what their real causes may be, while at the same time gracing the winners in the new industrial economy with every imaginable virtue.
>
> *Thomas Piketty, Capital in the 21st Century, p. 85*

The previous chapters have dealt with the way economic inequality is discussed in the German media more generally. The analysis included the treatment of both income and wealth inequality, as well as the framing of redistributive policy. We found that relevant parts of the German economic policy debate in the 2010s were dismissive of a problematizing perspective on inequality, rejecting demands for redistributive policy. This broad perspective has allowed us to understand rhetorical mechanisms of inequality denial in its various facets, partly by restricting the analysis towards the ‘denial side’ of the debate without assessing the salience and relative strength of alternative views, although the broader analysis of the reception of Piketty’s *C21* as well as the inclusion of main quality newspapers and important actors of economic policy advice such as the *GCEE* all indicate the strong position of inequality relativizing views in the German debate.

A key element of debates on economic inequality – often only implicitly – consists in the discourse on the legitimacy of income inequalities: what makes a specific instance of income inequality just or unjust? Which arguments can, conversely, be found to justify policies which prevent large discrepancies in remuneration? In what follows, I thus shift the focus toward *income* inequality, and more specifically towards its *justifications*. Furthermore, the interest now is directed towards both sides, justificatory and critical.

In the analysis in this and the following chapter,[119] I focus on this discourse about the legitimacy of income inequality, seeking to unveil the argumentative structure of the respective justifications. To this end, I employ a qualitative content analysis to reconstruct the discourse on justifications of income inequality by developing a typology of justification patterns. I try to identify important premises and dimensions according to which common justifications can be classified. By developing a typology of justification patterns, I aim to contribute to our understanding of inequality debates more generally. The typology will enable us to shed light on often somewhat confused or even incoherent justificatory statements. I also aim to enrich empirical research on justifications of

[119] Based on Bank (2016b) and my master thesis (Bank (2013)). With kind permission by *Springer Science Business Media New York*.

(income) inequality by providing a more detailed ‘map’ of arguments. Similarly, this analysis may serve as a building block in future research on the ‘cultural processes’ that presumably contribute to the rise in income inequality (Lamont et al., 2014).[120]

I furthermore suggest that mapping the discourse on justification patterns of inequality in this way is an additional key component to a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions and constraints of redistributive policy because the generalized, abstract typology of justification patterns serves as a contrast layer against which actual public (and private) inequality debates can be compared.[121] The analysis shows that the discourse about justifications of income inequality is much more timeless than it may appear when considering specific discursive events without relating them to the underlying discourse. As Piketty has pointed out in the quote above from *C21* and further elaborated in his *Capital and Ideology* (Piketty, 2020), discourses of inequality have always served the function to legitimize actual inequalities, “no matter how great their magnitude”, – just that the magic trick is to formulate it the other way around, where inequality, in the justificatory view, is overall just as large as justifications require and permit.

The Winterkorn Cause marked a welcome opportunity for an analysis of justification patterns of income inequality, as it brought up a broad spectrum of opinions on managerial pay in the public debate for a then well-respected German CEO, Martin Winterkorn, earning a record salary of more than 17 million Euros in 2012. In applying a qualitative content analysis to the empirical material of the public debate surrounding Mr Winterkorn’s record salary, I first identify various justification patterns of income inequality that can be found in the data. In the next chapter, I will then proceed to develop a typology of these justification patterns.

5.1 Previous Research on Inequality Justifications

Attitudes towards income inequality and views about their justification have been subject to both quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research has identified various ‘stylized facts’ about views on inequality in general and on income inequality specifically (Evans et al. 2010; Sachweh 2010, pp. 62–63). Income inequality is widely perceived as existent and regarded as a social cleavage. Its extent however is typically underestimated and there is a bias of self-allocation toward the centre of the distribution, i.e. earners of high incomes tend to underestimate their relative income position whereas earners of low incomes tend to overestimate their position (Aalberg, 2003; Engelhardt & Wagener, 2018; Evans & Kelley, 2004; Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018; Osberg

[120] Compare section 1.3, final paragraph.

[121] It may seem tautological to use a theoretical framework gained by empirical analysis in order to assess empirical reality, but I take that is precisely the point of inductive theory-building. We construct a layer of analysis that abstracts from a specific empirical reality in order to generalize and reflect the issue in the abstract, but ultimately, we want to use this theory to understand empirical reality again.

& Smeeding, 2006).[122] Most people reject absolute income equality and they typically associate higher qualifications with legitimate income advantages (Gijsberts 2002, p. 276).[123] Empirical justice research has suggested that three main principles are typically used to normatively evaluate income differentials, namely desert, need and equality. Desert tends to be the most dominant principle, especially – but not exclusively – amongst the better off (Aalberg, 2003, p. 139; Miller, 1992, p. 559).

But how can such contrary principles coexist and how do they relate to one another? Aiming at a more nuanced understanding of people's beliefs, qualitative research has sought to further explore and contextualize these principles. Sachweh (2010, 2012) for example has shown based on in-depth interviews with 20 people from Germany that the meritocratic principle is widely shared across income levels, but that the specific definition of 'merit' tends to be more friendly to inequalities in the view of earners of higher incomes. The principle of need, on the other hand, is seen as an important limit to the would-be extremes of a society governed purely based on merit, as institutionalized for instance in progressive taxation. 'Need' may thus well be understood as complementary to the desert principle. Equality is typically either rejected as too extreme (equality of outcome) or regarded as a precondition (equality of opportunity). Dubet (2009) similarly distinguishes three principles to govern considerations of justice specifically at workplaces in France, namely equality, merit and autonomy. Burak (2013) identifies several principles that are referred to among Americans when asked about their attitude towards a cap on high incomes. Besides equality, need and desert, respondents referred to the values of 'individual freedom' and 'market processes', as well as to the 'scarcity of resources' when explaining why they were for or against a cap. Hochschild (1981) finds in 28 open-ended interviews with working Americans that different norms of distributive justice are typically applied in different contexts, with more equality-oriented views in political and 'socializing' domains of life while more 'differentiating' principles are applied in the economic domain. More recently, Hecht (2021) showed with in-depth interviews with 30 UK based top earners that meritocratic views are widely shared amongst this group, most notably reflected in the importance and legitimacy ascribed to performance pay common, especially in the finance sector. Similarly, Kuusela (2020) finds a "hyperopia of wealth", a 'blindness' towards the "structural conditions of economic disparities", in interviews with Finnish top 0.1 per cent earners: inequality is mostly seen as natural, deserved, necessary to create incentives – or again not as bad at all, given the relatively equalizing welfare state in Finland.

Despite this increasingly rich understanding of attitudes towards distributional issues and of related normative principles, we still lack a more specific and systematic examination of the different *argumentative patterns* employed in the discourse surrounding these attitudes and a more systematic overview of the argumentative space: Which kinds of normative statements are possibly made to justify or to question an income inequality? What, specifically, is meant by a concept such as 'desert'

[122] Some studies suggest inequality would be overestimated, which usually refers not to the *extent* of inequality, but the *form* of the distributional structure. For a critical discussion, see fn. 100 on p. 65 above.

[123] Compare the more extensive review of research on inequality attitudes in Chapter 7, section 7.1.

or ‘equality’? Which different notions can be subsumed under these overarching principles? Are there important implicit or explicit premises? How broad is the range of different justifications? Does the typical threefold distinction mentioned above capture all possible justifications?

Analytic political theory often discusses specific strands of arguments for and against equality in much detail, unfolding an abundance of ‘immanent arguments’.[124] But there has been relatively little interest in a global overview or typology of different strands of justification patterns. For example, the ‘equality of what’ debate (Cohen, 1989; Dworkin, 1981; Sen, 1980) vividly illustrates the complexity of one strand of egalitarian thought, which itself is only a subgroup of normative theory on income inequalities. Moreover, normative theory almost by definition rarely seeks an empirical grounding for its subject matter, although, for example, Miller (1992) has made some efforts to go in that direction.

The analysis of this and the next chapter thus also tries to narrow the gap between empirical justice research and normative theory. It empirically reconstructs the discourse on justifications of income inequality and it attempts on that basis to develop a typology that structures such justifications with reference to examples in normative theory. It aims to provide an overview, but still to account for the argumentative complexity that often gets lost when one focuses on few generic concepts like ‘desert’.

I proceed in two steps. First, a body of data is analysed qualitatively to reconstruct the justification patterns empirically. The empirical case I have chosen for this purpose is the German public debate surrounding the record salary of Volkswagen CEO Martin Winterkorn in 2012. An inductive codification of German newspaper articles and a national public TV talk show yields a set of justification patterns that are pre-structured roughly according to different ‘families of justifications’, which emerge from the analysis. In a second step, I reconstruct a typology from this empirical raw material by identifying core justification patterns and various dimensions, according to which these patterns can be structured. Moreover, the typology seeks to link the empirical case to normative theory concerning income inequality by way of references to examples of pertinent theorists.

The next section briefly discusses the methodological framework. Particular attention is paid to the concept of discourse underlying the analysis and to the data sources used. Section 3 presents the empirical findings of the discourse analysis. The proceeding chapter then goes on to develop the typology of justification patterns.

[124] Vrousalis (2015, p. 4) employs the concept of ‘immanent arguments’ to denote strands of normative theory that have emerged *en route* of theoretic debates: these arguments are then typically not presented as a coherent set of propositions but rather as responses and criticisms of other propositions, hampering a systematic overview of these positions.

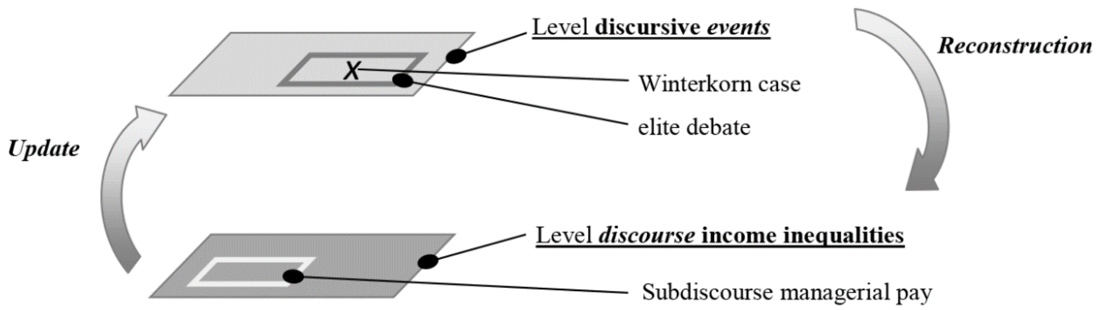
5.2 Data and Methods

The empirical analysis is based on a discourse analysis of 132 German newspaper articles and the transcription of a German public TV talk show. They all discuss Volkswagen (VW) CEO Martin Winterkorn's record salary in 2011 and his earnings in the subsequent year.

Following Keller (2008), a *discourse* is here understood as the abstract context of meaning of a certain topic, disconnected from specific events and circumstances. In contrast, a *discursive event* is one specific update of the underlying discourse (see Figure 5.1 below). Discourses understood in that sense materialize in specific discursive events, in real acts of communication, as taking place in a public debate. The underlying discourse to such events may thus be seen as the set of 'structuring principles' (Keller, 2008, p. 205, my translation) of those debates. The two concepts are hence intrinsically linked: a discourse cannot exist without discursive events and vice versa (Keller, 2008, p. 205).

In the discourse analysis at hand, the discursive event consists in the public debate surrounding Martin Winterkorn's record salary, whereas the discourse consists in the abstract realm of justification patterns of income inequalities. The debate about Mr Winterkorn's salary is a specific update of the underlying general discourse on income inequalities. Figure 5.1 illustrates these distinct but interdependent levels of analysis:

Figure 5.1: Levels of analysis



Two caveats should be noted. First, due to the data used – newspaper articles and a TV talk show – the analysis is restricted to the realm of an 'elite discussion', from which the discourse has to be reconstructed. This raises the question of representativeness. Also, in a strict sense, the object of analysis is, first of all, a discourse on *executive pay*, from which I generalize to justifications about income differences of any kind. Note however that many justifications in the data already appeared in a generalized fashion, i.e. statements discussed the legitimacy of income inequality in general rather than specifically executive pay or Mr Winterkorn's salary. I will come back to these questions of generalizability at the end of the chapter.

The Winterkorn case provides rich material for this undertaking. Firstly, by virtue of being reported as a record salary, Martin Winterkorn's remuneration already resonated with an implicit call for justification. On the other hand, Mr Winterkorn, at that time, enjoyed an image of a down-to-earth CEO.[125] He was often contrasted with the much-maligned figure of the 'greedy banker'. One could say that Mr Winterkorn was taken to represent 'real value' being created in the automobile industry in contrast to the supposedly 'virtual' and 'speculative' activities of the finance sector. In addition, VW was more profitable at that time than had been expected, experiencing sustained growth in turnover. In fact, this was the technical reason for Mr Winterkorn's high salary in 2011. This discrepancy between public resentment about the amount of his remuneration and a relatively positive public image served to provide a broad range of argumentative patterns.[126]

Martin Winterkorn's record 2011 salary of 17.4 million Euros was published in March 2012.[127] It arose in a context of increasing inequality and a decoupling of managerial pay from average wages in Germany since the 1980s (Göx, 2016; R. Schmidt & Schwalbach, 2007, p. 119). The subsequent public debate led to the announcement by trade union representatives on the board of the co-determined car manufacturer that the reward system of the VW executive board would be amended so as to reduce the future salary of their CEO and the other directors.[128] The public debate then resurfaced in early 2013 when Mr Winterkorn's 2012 salary was publicized. While Volkswagen's turnovers and profits had increased, Mr Winterkorn's salary had actually declined to around 14 million Euros due to the changes in the board's remuneration system.

The sample period of the discourse analysis accordingly extends over twelve weeks after the publication of the salary in 2012 and 2013 respectively. 538 newspaper articles from three major national quality newspapers (*FAZ*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Handelsblatt*), the largest tabloid newspaper (*Bild*) and the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* mentioning Mr Winterkorn were included in the data set. The body of data was subsequently reduced to 132 relevant articles, dropping texts that repeated quotes or did not contain any justification patterns. A transcript of the Sunday night German public TV talk show, *Günter Jauch*, of March 10, 2013, which dealt with the issue of executive pay and made specific reference to Mr Winterkorn's case, was included as an additional data source (Jauch, 2013).

[125] He even won an 'image award' in 2011 for his alleged character traits like being down-to-earth and upright (FAZ, October, 8, 2011, p. 18).

[126] There is a good amount of historical irony in the fact that Winterkorn has been accused of bearing responsibility in the *Volkswagen* emission scandal (coined as 'Dieselgate') involving large scale cheating on car emissions. While the cheating was still taking place at the time of the debate about Winterkorn's record salary, its revelation and the reporting on Winterkorn's alleged involvement came only several years later, cf. FAZ, July 10, 2017, p. 20 and FAZ, March 1, 2018, p. 26.

[127] FAZ, March 13, 2012, p. 9.

[128] FAZ, May 8, 2012, p. 16.

The remaining body of data was then coded with a software package for qualitative data analysis (MaxQDA). Codes were developed inductively, i.e. coding started without any pre-defined codes. A code was given to any sentence or paragraph containing a justification pattern while allowing for double coding if more than one pattern was identified. A justification pattern was identified when the body of text gave an answer to the questions ‘Why is Martin Winterkorn’s salary / a high executive pay / an income differential (il)legitimate?’. Accordingly, any coded piece of text could yield a sentence ‘Martin Winterkorn’s salary / a high executive pay / an income differential is or are (il)legitimate because X’, where X denoted the justification pattern. Note that the term ‘justification pattern’ is used both for positive and negative judgements about a certain income inequality, i.e. both legitimizing as well as *de*legitimizing statements. Additional codes were used to assess the role of those expressing justification patterns.

During the coding process, the continuously growing body of codes was regularly restructured so that a host of ‘families of justification patterns’ became apparent. In the end, 105 codes were identified coding about 500 text segments. They were sorted broadly into seven families of justification patterns. Note, however, that this was only a first tentative structure. The attribution of individual codes to larger groups was in many cases ambiguous. The second step of developing a typology (Chapter 6) was therefore necessary to disambiguate or to make it clear that overlaps were conceivable.

5.3 Justification Patterns of Income Inequality in the Winterkorn Debate

The Winterkorn debate provided rich material for an empirical analysis of justification patterns of income inequalities. 105 codes for justification patterns were attributed to seven ‘families’ of justification patterns. Figure 5.2 presents a list of the families to which individual codes for justification patterns were tentatively attributed:

Figure 5.2: Families of justification patterns

Families of justification patterns

1. Equality of opportunity
2. Desert
3. Procedure of salary determination
4. Harmful consequences
5. Need
6. System / frame of reference
7. Pragmatic / strategic

While some justification patterns were articulated by journalists, a large part was expressed in opinion quotes of less than 50 mostly male representatives of interest groups, most notably representatives of capital owners (especially the private investors’ lobby *Deutsche Schutzvereinigung für Wertpapierbesitz* (*DSW*)), other corporate lobby representatives, trade union representatives and

CEOs themselves (see Table 5.1). The composition and small overall size of the group of participants underlines the character of the material as an elite debate.

Table 5.1: Distribution of quoted groups in the debate

Group	Per cent
Capital representatives	28
CEOs	23
Trade union representatives	20
Consultants and 'remuneration experts'	13
Other 'experts'	6
Politicians	6
Opinion polls	4

Percentages rounded off; excluding justifications articulated by journalists and excluding talk show data. The share of articles with external quotes containing justification patterns was about 70 per cent.

The next subsections introduce the individual families of justification patterns in more detail. Before I turn to these expositions, let me draw attention to one important overarching finding. It turned out that in many cases one can distinguish the justificatory *motif* from factual, definitional or behavioural *premises* employed by the respective justificatory statements. A justification pattern is typically composed of both, motif and premise(s). For example, if we consider a justification pattern (JP) of 'desert', the typical statement can be decomposed into the motif (M) of 'desert', its normative core, and into one or more premises (P) which further explicate the motif. Consider:

(P) Performance consists, amongst other things, in inventing something useful. Inventions are made by researchers in the R&D department and not by the CEO.

(M) The desert principle holds that pay should reward performance.

∴ (JP) Pay should reward the researchers and not the CEOs for inventions made in a company.

It is important to see that without changing the motif of 'desert', one could reach the opposite justificatory statement by simply modifying the 'factual' premise concerning performance attribution.[129]

[129] Note that by the rules of formal logic, both elements (P) and (M) are *premises* of an argument with the conclusion (JP). Furthermore, both tend to be *normative*. It is obvious that the motif (M) is a normative premise. But the 'factual' premise can equally be normative. In fact, (P) may well rather than (M) turn out to be the *implicit* normative core of a justificatory pattern, whereas (M) then 'only' denotes the *explicit* normative label that by itself does not yet mean very much. However, I take it that the above made preliminary conceptual distinction is the most straightforward framework to empirically capture justification patterns for a start, as well as to further structure them in a typology that marks out the relevant normative space of arguments for and against income inequalities. A further analysis of the structure and normative content of the premises themselves and their relationship to the motif may then allow further insights, but it should not anticipate the initial step of reconstruction attempted in this article.

5.3.1 Equality of Opportunity

The first important family of justification patterns employs the motif of *equality of opportunity*. This motif appeared in the analysis in two guises, as formal and as substantive equality of opportunity.

An example for the justification pattern of *formal* equality of opportunity can be found in an FAZ newspaper comment on the legitimacy of Martin Winterkorn's record salary:

> [1] Nowhere do market forces operate with as little bias as in sports and the show business. Anyone can stand on a stage and start lilting. If he finds people to pay for that, he will become rich. If not, he won't. Anyone can try to earn millions by playing football – he just needs to find a club that remits them.[130]

In contrast, the notion of *substantive* equality of opportunity focuses on social or even genetic preconditions, as well as structural considerations (for example that not everyone could do the same job in a society based on the division of labour). The *Left Party* politician Sahra Wagenknecht used such 'structural' considerations to argue that equality of opportunity could not justify large wage differentials in a society based on a division of labour:

> [2] Not everyone could set up a business. The country also needed nurses. "And it is a scandal how these people are paid".

'Bild'-tabloid commentator Michael Backhaus invoked the same motif of substantive equality of opportunity. But he denied Ms Wagenknecht's premise that such equality of opportunity did not exist. He thus defended Mr Winterkorn's pay using effectively the opposite justificatory pattern, but based on the same motif:

> [3] Germany needs more Mr Winterkorns. People who out of their own effort rise towards being an industrial captain. Martin Winterkorn comes from a displaced family from Hungary, his father was a working man, his mother was a housewife.

5.3.2 Desert

Another family of justification patterns can be subsumed under the concept of *desert*.[131] This is by far the largest group of justification patterns found in the given empirical case. The list of subgroups in figure 3 illustrates various notions that were identified in this category. They can be broadly sorted into input- and output-based variants. The former focuses on how much *effort* (in its various forms) people put into the production process, whereas the latter focuses on the proportion

[130] References to each quote are provided in Appendix E.1.

[131] In political theory, both concepts 'desert' and 'merit' are often used synonymously, e.g. Miller (1996). However, some point to the important nuance that merit tends to refer to *possessed* qualities, to what people are, while desert rather referred to *performed* qualities, to what people have done, cf. Wigley (1998, 9; 27) and Lucas (1993, pp. 124–126). For that reason, I chose to use the concept of desert, as that seems more closely related to the dimension of performance and effort, playing a key role in the justificatory arguments encountered here. Note that in Chapter 7, I use the term 'merit' because there I relate to literature using the concept 'meritocracy'.

of the income difference relative to the *outcome*. In some cases however, the distinction was not as clear-cut. In some instances, both variants were even explicitly connected with each other.

Figure 5.3: Different notions of 'desert'

A classic version found in the data was the – output-oriented – reference to the *corporate success* of Volkswagen, from which employees benefited massively and for which Mr Winterkorn was held implicitly or at times explicitly responsible:

> [4] Most of his salary is merit-based and the performance of VW is simply outstanding: The corporation is in a superb position, employees are getting record bonuses.

Likewise, justifications referred to the *productivity* of the respective sector, as put forward by trade unionist Berthold Huber:

> [5] Let us be clear: The metal and electrical industry is a high-performance industry. That must be reflected in the wages paid.

But there were other variants, for example, justification patterns referring to *incentives*:

> [6] A certain measure of inequality is vital to a market economy. The opportunity to earn more, to accumulate wealth, drives people to greater performance.

In a similar vein, it was argued higher than average incomes could serve to prevent corruption and other malpractice in businesses.

Another popular form of desert-related justification patterns was the reference to *responsibility*:

> [7] What is often overlooked in this debate is that business leaders bear a much larger responsibility. If VW is successful, ten million people directly or indirectly feel the results as much as if does not go well. One of them is the minister of finance, Wolfgang Schäuble.

Note that responsibility could either refer to the output dimension of an individual's contribution, or to the input dimension, insofar as bearing more responsibility may imply a larger psychological strain for that person.

Furthermore, desert-related justification patterns addressed the issue of *recognition*. Mr Winterkorn himself seemed to employ such a motif when discussing his record salary and the question asking what he would use it for.

> [8] Mr Winterkorn: "Well, I neither own a yacht nor a Picasso. If I indulge in something, it will be a nice watch; but my bonus also stands for the success of the company."

His answer seems to rely on the implicit premise that the success is, to a significant extent, to be attributed to his own efforts. Otherwise, it would not make much sense to consider *his bonus* as symbolic for the success of the company.

Another example for the importance of premises can be found in the following dispute about rewarding innovation, which inspired the earlier exposition of the difference between motif and premise. Businessman Carsten Maschmeyer and left-wing politician Sahra Wagenknecht invoked the same desert-related motif of rewarding innovation, but employed diametrically opposed premises about what is to be understood by 'innovation':

> [9] Mr Maschmeyer: "I own many companies, I like setting up businesses. Yesterday, we won the German Innovation award with a product that allows that people in future will need only one surgery instead of two, and if these CEOs, in that company of which I own a share, develop this product from which millions of people benefit, then they shall also have a good share in the profits."

Ms Wagenknecht interrupts: "But it is not the CEO who develops that product. That is done by the people who work there, in the R&D department. The CEOs organize that, which is certainly an important job. But they are not the ones who invent, who do the research."

Ms Wagenknecht here also touched on the theme of *exploitation.* This becomes even clearer in her reply to Mr Maschmeyer's claim that many people employed double standards when accepting high incomes for someone working in the entertainment business while rejecting them for CEOs:

> [10] Ms Wagenknecht: "But that is a fundamental difference. A CEO profits from the output produced by his employees. Musicians and sportsmen at least only earn from their own labour."

In the same talk show, VW worker Gehard Wulff made a similar point, stressing the importance of *collaboration*:

> [11] If employees do not deliver quality, do their work well and bring forward the product, Mr Winterkorn can manage as much as he wants – it won't help.

5.3.3 Procedure of Income Determination

Another important family of justification patterns focuses on the *process of income determination*. One variant referred specifically to the procedure according to which salaries of CEOs are determined in large German corporations, such as VW. In these cases, the supervisory board decides on the reward system. Following the German tradition of co-determination, the supervisory board itself is controlled both by owners' and workers' representatives.

Defenders of the system did not want to question this procedure as the only legitimate way to determine the salary of a CEO. The chair of the Federation of German Industries (BDI) at the time, Ulrich Grillo, said:

> [12] It is the job of the supervisory board to determine the salaries of CEOs. It is up to them to make sure they are appropriate.

Critics mentioned the susceptibility to manipulation and to a behaviour based on the principle of ‘mutual back-scratching’. Former Daimler CEO Edzard Reuter complained:

> [13] Among DAX companies there is a network of supervisors and managers. People know each other and they meet at a great many functions. One hand washes the other.

Another important, more general procedural justification pattern portrayed income differentials as legitimate outcomes of a free *market process*. A classic variant of this pattern, the *libertarian* version, was illustrated exemplarily in a newspaper column. First, the author dismissed alternative desert-related motifs:

> [14] The salary is neither determined by the amount of sweat (otherwise road construction would be a high wage sector), nor by the degree of responsibility (otherwise the Chancellor would be a rich woman), but only by its market value.

He then identified the pattern’s deeper normative core, by reference to ‘voluntariness’, in the value of *freedom*:

> [15] It is a fact that Messi’s football magic is decisive for championships and revenue. (…) Demand is huge, the supply consists in one person. Its price hence goes towards infinity. Is that problematic, or even immoral? Certainly not. All who pay for Messi do so voluntarily (…).

Note that freedom is here understood as a (property-) rights-based concept, according to which voluntariness consists in an actor’s participation in market transactions based on her property rights. The market process is here presented as capable of legitimizing any outcome, including large income inequalities. In that vein, similar patterns referred to the ‘procedure’ of *binding contracts* and the primacy of *property rights.*

Alternative market-oriented justification patterns referred to valuable outcomes rather than intrinsic values (such as freedom). The market process, it was argued, raised *social welfare* and the resulting income disparities were legitimized by this utility gain. Note that all these patterns implied the premise that market processes would function successfully. In a parallel fashion, unjust income inequalities were associated with market failures.

5.3.4 Harmful consequences

One family of justification patterns criticized the record salary because of its *harmful consequences* to society. The theme here is that social cohesion is being endangered and acceptance of the ‘Social Market Economy’ is being undermined by salaries like Mr Winterkorn’s. In some cases the argument was strategic rather than intrinsically normative:

> [16] The critique of executive pay should be taken seriously precisely because - ultimately - it is an expression of the erosion of trust in the existing economic and social order.

5.3.5 Need

Other justification patterns questioned Mr Winterkorn’s pay by claiming he would not *need* such high pay. As VW employee Mr Wulff put it bluntly:

> [17] What does Mr Winterkorn want to do with all that money? He will not be able to spend it all! That guy has a 60 to 70 hours week, he simply won’t have the time to spend his money.

A more subtle reference to ‘need’ by former Nestlé manager Helmut Maucher introduced an effective distinction into structural principles of justice, according to which even large income differences might be legitimate, and an individual ethics that might nonetheless demand a voluntary renunciation of parts of the salary:

> [18] No doubt the double-digit million salary of VW manager Mr Winterkorn was legitimate (…). But he still did not have to insist on receiving it. “We top managers all have enough money”. He, Maucher, would have reimbursed part of the salary.

5.3.6 Frame of Reference

Some justification patterns tied the question of legitimacy to the *frame of reference* within which a given income inequality occurs. One and the same salary could be legitimate in one context (firm, sector, etc.), yet illegitimate in another one:

> [19] (…) supervisory boards should not so much leer at their competitors but they should also look at the internal pay structure of their company. The pay discrepancy between average employees and the management should not be too large.

Similarly, some patterns distinguished between the sector in which income was earned, between industry in contrast to finance, or between politics, public services and civil society on one hand and the business sector on the other hand.

5.3.7 Strategic and Pragmatic

Two other forms, strategic and pragmatic patterns, were in a strict sense not *normative* justifications, but rather ‘brackets’ for other justification patterns, which effectively reversed the ‘signs’ of the initial pattern. Consider the *strategic* variant. In its normative core, the justification could, for example, consist in a procedural motif. However, a *strategic* bracket restricted the extent to which the procedural view was to be applied, to protect companies from regulation. As a supervisor in several German DAX-companies, Manfred Schneider, openly admitted:

> [20] “My aim is to prevent further political regulation. We should solve the issue by ourselves. This could simply be done by defining limits.”

Conversely, a *pragmatic* pattern would accept the large income difference *despite*, at its normative core, condemning it. A cost-benefit analysis could reveal that regulation was too much of an effort:

> [21] Everywhere, you have got top employees who earn exorbitant sums of money. (…) But as it is such a small number of people, it is not worthwhile to consider regulations.

Similarly, talk-show host Günter Jauch suggested that reducing Mr Winterkorn’s salary and redistributing the amount to the hundreds of thousands of employees would make virtually no difference to individual salaries. Note that this cost-benefit analysis rests on the premise that the income difference is purely monetary, rather than impacting, for example, status, recognition, freedom, or access to power. Also note that the argument implies a factual premise that the volume of top incomes was irrelevant – a premise recent empirical studies showing the macroeconomic relevance of top incomes put in question (Alvaredo et al., 2013).

5.4 Conclusion

The empirical analysis of the public debate surrounding Mr Winterkorn’s record salary has revealed seven ‘families’ of justification patterns, as answers to the question of why a certain income inequality could be regarded as just or unjust. These were ‘equality of opportunity’, ‘desert’, ‘procedure of income determination’, ‘harmful consequences’, ‘need’ and the two less normative and more technical groups of patterns labelled as ‘frame of reference’ and ‘strategic and pragmatic’. The analysis has shown that within each group of these patterns, quite distinct notions of justificatory arguments can be subsumed. They may share the same core normative motif, but may also widely vary with respect to their acceptance of specific instances of inequality, depending on the exact variant and the premises specifying further details about the argument. This observation became especially clear in the case of the ‘desert’ motif, which entailed different notions focusing rather on the input or the output of individual efforts, as well as different definitions and attributions of effort or different ways to assess outcomes.

While the empirical analysis already yielded a provisional structure, it still refers to the specific debate on managerial pay and it falls short of the reconstructive step to represent the general discourse on justifications of income inequality. In the next chapter, I develop a typology that fulfils exactly this step of structuring the argumentative patterns and reconstructing the general discourse from the specific event, which I have analysed. I do so with cursory reference to normative theory, thus showing the timelessness of the abstract discourse on justifications of income inequality, from which the specific debate we have considered in this chapter has emerged.

6 A Typology of Justification Patterns of Income Inequality

> Often, when a substantial premiss in an argument is unexposed, the argument convinces more than it would if that premiss were laid bare for inspection.
>
> *G.A. Cohen, Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality, p. 66*

Building on the foregoing analysis of the Winterkorn Case and the specific instance of the public debate about managerial pay, I now develop a generalized typology of justification patterns of income inequality as the second step of my discourse analysis. The typology is illustrated by cursory reference to normative theory on the legitimization of inequality. I identify five key justification patterns, namely desert, procedural, equality of opportunity, need and harmful consequences. I also show definitory and normative premises play a key role. I also identify several so-called 'cross patterns', allowing for a nuanced overview of justificatory statements on income inequality.

6.1 Justification Patterns of Income Inequality – A Typology

Having looked at the empirical case of the public debate surrounding Mr Winterkorn's pay, we can now turn to an attempt of generalizing and structuring the various justification patterns in a typology. The concept of *typology* is rooted in the Greek term 'typos' (impression, figure, pattern). At the end of the 19th century, Carl Menger established it as a term of the social sciences. According to him, it denotes a 'repeated manifestation' (Kluge, 1999, p. 26, my translation). Max Weber also gave centre stage to the concept by developing key ideal types in his 'Basic Sociological Terms' (Weber, 1976, p. 3). Barton and Lazarsfeld proposed a more narrow definition of 'typology'. They define a 'type' as a specific 'compound of attributes' (Lazarsfeld & Barton, 1951, p. 169). A typology, thus understood, denotes a classificatory system, the so-called 'attribute space', in which types can be unambiguously allocated across the various dimensions of attributes. The purpose of a typology is to identify *similarities* and *differences* within an object of investigation. Ideally, a type is characterized by 'internal homogeneity' (within one type) and 'external heterogeneity' (across types). The typology serves as the 'bracket, that unites different types to one common typology' (Kluge, 1999, p. 26, my translation). A typology gives a structured overview and is thus a 'conceptual tool' in the quest for knowledge (Kluge, 1999, p. 63).

The typology developed here is understood in this sense: it is designed to provide a structured overview of the various types of justification patterns for and against income inequality. It maps the argumentative space, in which such justificatory statements can be located. It is however not a typology in the strict sense that Lazarsfeld and Barton had in mind. This is because it does not identify all logically possible attributes (a procedure called 'substruction'), from which one could then pragmatically reduce the attribute space. The typology developed here rather provides, so to speak, a structured kit of building blocks of justification patterns. As will become clear in subsection 6.1.2, there is not one unambiguous, transitive order among elements of the proposed typology. Overlaps occur in various directions. [132]

In developing this typology, I also seek to show links to the treatment of income inequalities in normative political theory, but without attempting to develop a systematic account of this treatment. Rather, by way of cursory references, various strands of political thought will be located in the argumentative space that has been reconstructed on an empirical basis in the preceding section. Recalling the definition of discourse underlying the analysis (see section 2), the step to develop a typology from the empirical raw material completes the attempt to reconstruct the discourse as the deeper context of meaning that underlies any specific discursive event such as the Winterkorn debate. This step helps reveal that the discourse on the justification of inequality is more timeless than it might appear at first sight.

I have identified seven families of justification patterns in the empirical analysis. To my mind, the most important themes are the following five motifs, which I accordingly place at the centre of my typology: desert, procedure of income determination, equality of opportunity, harmful consequences and need. The other motifs are defined as ‘cross patterns’. They typically encapsulate other motifs or merge various of the five key motifs into one mixed pattern. In the following subsections, I briefly discuss each key motif and the various dimensions, according to which they are structured in the typology. I then briefly introduce several cross patterns before finally discussing the more general question of overlaps between single elements of the typology. Table 6.1 below displays the typology.

[132] Note that a typology can be distinguished from a *taxonomy* as an alternative classificatory concept. As Bailey (1994) points out, a taxonomy and typology are often used synonymously but typically a taxonomy rather classifies empirical entities, while a typology is more conceptual. Taxonomies are also typically hierarchical and rather used in natural sciences, cf. Bailey (1994, pp. 4–6). For all of these differences, I have opted for the term typology.

Table 6.1: Justification patterns of income inequality – a typology

Motif	DESERT	PROCEDURAL	EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY	HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES	NEED
	(Typically) sufficient condition		(Typically) necessary condition		
Description	Inequality legitimate if compensation proportional in terms of (1), (2), or (3)	Inequality legitimate if result of good/just/ established process, as according to (1), (2), or (3)	Inequality legitimate if everyone had equal opportunities to advantage, with equality in senses (1) or (2)	Inequality illegitimate if harmful consequences in terms of (1) – (4) or other values	Inequality legitimate if in accordance with need satisfaction in terms of (1), (2), or (3)
Key variants	(1) *Input*—Effort, Working time, education, risk, loyalty, responsibility (as strain) (2) *Output*—corporate success, social returns, responsibility (as outreach) (3) Input-output-relation	(1) *Market* (process realizes freedom or leads to welfare gains) (2) *Social Partners* (process realizes equality of bargaining power) (3) *Democracy* (process realizes political equality)	(1) *Formal* (equal rights or access) (2) *Substantive* (equality of opportunity compensating for social and/or genetic disadvantages)	(1) Social cohesion (2) Social peace (3) Acceptance of market economy (4) Democracy (5) …	(1) *Sufficiency* (strong): if no one gets more than required for need satisfaction (2) *Subsistence* (weak) form: if no one gets less than required for need satisfaction (3) As *metric*: need determines precise legitimate income (strength here: *sufficient* condition)
Intrinsic (a) vs functional (b)	(a) Recognition or (b) incentives	Variant (1): (a) libertarianism or (b) welfare Variants (2), (3): (a) intrinsic justice: equality	(a) Intrinsic justice: equality	(b) Functional relation to values social cohesion, stability, democracy, market economy, etc.	(a) Intrinsic justice of need (b) functional relation to values such as dignity or welfare
Examples for key premises	Whose effort; how is input/output defined; which output is attributed to whom; which value does certain output have?; behaviour due to incentives	Variant (1): assessment of market efficiency and rationality of actors; Libertarianism: freedom defined qua property rights	Assessment of degree of equality, both formal and substantive; definition of specific determinants of substantive variant	Definition of threshold; assessment of whether inequality or its counterfactual more harmful; specific dimension of harm	Definition of needs – in what terms, defined by whom
Cross Patterns	*PRAGMATIC* (tolerans): tolerate inequality, despite illegitimacy – as result of cost-benefit analysis *STRATEGIC* (opportune): reduce inequality, despite legitimacy – for strategic reasons *ADDITIVE FUNCTION* to determine legitimate income, e.g. various dimensions of *desert* plus *need* *FRAME OF REFERENCE* as scale to define limits or even proportions for legitimate income differences, e.g. in combination with *desert* or *equality of opportunity* *FACTICITY*: one cannot change it				

6.1.1 Key Motifs and Structuring Dimensions

The five key motifs that constitute the core of the typology of justification patterns can be broadly distinguished into two groups of different scopes. The motifs of desert and process typically constitute *sufficient conditions* for a justification pattern. They can (but do not need to) by themselves provide a comprehensive 'measure' according to which income differences may be judged (compare for example quotations [4], [12] or [15]). In contrast, the other three motifs – equality of opportunity, harmful consequences and need – typically form *necessary conditions* as 'restrictions' concerning the legitimacy of income inequalities, in that they either define a starting condition or a boundary. But they do not typically, by themselves, explicate what determines a just income difference within these boundaries (e.g. [16] or [17]).

Each core motif can furthermore be differentiated into several key *variants*. These variants can differ widely both in quality (why) and in terms of the quantity (how much) of legitimate income differences. Moreover, justification patterns may either refer to *intrinsic* values of justice (e.g. [8]) or they may place inequalities into a *functional* relation to other values, such as welfare, social cohesion or democracy (e.g. [6]). In the case of equality of opportunity and harmful consequences, only one such dimension fits the motif, whereas in the other cases, both dimensions constitute different nuances of one single motif or its variants.[133]

Finally, as elaborated in the empirical section above, each motif is typically accompanied by certain *premises* that may contain important information specifying the application of the motif. These may be factual, behavioural or definitional assumptions. In the typology, examples for premises are given, but these by no means give an exhaustive account.

6.1.1.1 Motif: Desert

As pointed out in the empirical section, the motif of desert can be distinguished into *input*- and *output*-related justifications of income differences.[134] A third variant combines both by considering just remuneration differences in terms of input-output-*relations*. It is important to see that the different variants allow for a wide range of distributional outcomes: a high degree of equality may (but need not) be favoured by the purely input-oriented, luck egalitarian approaches of *G. A. Cohen* and *Ronald Dworkin*. According to Cohen, inequalities may be legitimate only inasmuch as the disadvantaged person may be held responsible for the disadvantage (Cohen, 1989, p. 916). Family background or genetic 'luck' are not considered to be sources of just income differences. In a similar vein, *Karl Marx* employs an input-related motif of desert in his 'Critique of the Gotha Programme'

[133] Note that the distinction between intrinsic values of justice and functional relation to other values collapses in the case in which realizing another value is set as the principle of justice, as with utilitarian approaches. However, even in this case, the dimension may help distinguish principles that are either valuable in themselves (deontological) and principles that only indirectly serve another value (teleological).

[134] This distinction can for example be found in Offe (1977, p. 107), who identifies an 'unresolved dualism' ('unausgetragener Dualismus') of criteria contained in the desert principle.

when he demands that workers should have a right to the full value of their produce (Marx, 1970 [1891]).[135]

In contrast, especially the other two forms, output variants or input-output-relations, tend to allow for larger inequalities. They can be closely related to the market variant of procedural motifs (see below). For example, output-oriented variants may consider the outcome of ‘corporate success’ as the key magnitude to determine just income differences.

Desert-related justification patterns may refer to intrinsic principles of justice or regard inequalities as functional to other values. An intrinsic form can be found in *Axel Honneth’s* social theory of recognition, in which legitimate material inequalities represent differences in recognition (Honneth, 2003).[136] In contrast, functional accounts, for example *John Rawls’* ‘Theory of Justice’, hold that inequalities are necessary to incentivize higher performance which may, in turn, be beneficial to social welfare or the welfare of the worst off (Rawls, 1999 [1974]). Note that in Rawls’ case, a legitimatory pressure against the inequality, based on the value of equality, is withstood on the grounds of another value, namely social welfare.

6.1.1.2 Motif: Procedure of Income Determination

Amongst procedural motifs, the *market process* presumably marks the most prevalent variant, with two main sources of legitimacy, freedom and welfare maximization. According to the intrinsic, libertarian notion, the market process is a just procedure with just distributional results if these outcomes are the results of voluntary transactions based on legitimate property rights – a position most prominently spelt out by *Robert Nozick*. It is a theory of justice whose locus of justice consists in a rights-based conception of freedom. Quote [15] represents a perfect analogy to Nozick’s ‘Wilt Chamberlain example’, where a basketball player legitimately receives a quarter million simply because all his spectators voluntarily pay for their tickets (Nozick, 1974, pp. 160–164). Alternatively (or complementarily), *Welfare Economics* sees the market process as the means to maximize welfare, and the income differences resulting from the market process as an inevitable outcome (e.g. A. Marshall, 1907, p. 265).

A key premise of the market variant of procedural justification patterns consists in the assumption of functioning ‘free markets’. Markets are said to realize more freedom of market participants or more welfare than their implicit or explicit counterfactuals against which this justificatory motif is directed, namely less ‘free’ markets with greater degrees of redistribution. If markets fail to do so, the reason is assumed to consist in an impediment to their functioning (typically

[135] Although Marx only seems to see this as an intermediate goal which shall be progressively superseded by the principle of need White (1996, p. 95).

[136] Note that Honneth does not endorse but rather *describe* the justification pattern as ‘ideological’ in his theory of recognition. He critically points out that its “normative reference point is the economic activity of the independent, middle-class, male bourgeois. What is distinguished as ‘work,’ with a specific, quantifiable use for society, hence amounts to the result of a group-specific determination of value – to which whole sectors of other activities, themselves equally necessary for reproduction (e.g. household work), fall victim’ Honneth (2003, p. 141).

state regulations), rather than a potential malfunctioning. A further definitional premise of the libertarian subvariant consists in the definition of freedom in terms of private property rights.[137]

An alternative procedural variant can be modelled on the *democratic process*. For example, following *Jürgen Habermas'* discourse ethics perspective on democracy – the so-called deliberative democracy – an income difference might be legitimate if it was the result of a fair deliberation. A deliberation is fair if each one affected had equal opportunities for speech (Habermas, 1971, pp. 136–141, 1998). Alternative, potentially less demanding democratic procedures are of course conceivable in this variant.

A third variant of procedural patterns may consist in the equality of bargaining power of the *Social Partnership* of 'corporatist' settings of corporate governance. An income (difference) here would be just if it was the result of a fair bargaining process between capital and labour (Höpner, 2003, p. 193).

6.1.1.3 Motif: Equality of Opportunity

According to the motif of equality of opportunity, income inequalities may be legitimate if everyone had equal opportunities to the advantages in question. Equality may here be defined more or less narrowly, resulting in different variants of the motif. A weak variant, *formal* equality of opportunity holds that everyone has to have equal rights and formal access to the opportunities for advantage, but it disregards social preconditions or natural talents in evaluating that equality. Accordingly, *substantive* equality of opportunity is more restrictive towards inequalities in that it includes the latter preconditions.[138]

6.1.1.4 Motif: Harmful Consequences

The motif of harmful consequences typically delegitimizes income differences by stating that they had detrimental effects in certain respects. The different variants of this motif represent different values whose realization is impaired by the inequalities, such as democracy, social cohesion, or the acceptance of the market economy. A special variant is the inverted motif of the social cohesion variant, which is put forward by *John Maynard Keynes*, when he famously proclaims that it was 'better that man should tyrannise over his bank balance than over his fellow-citizens' (Keynes, 1973 [1936], p. 374). Although he is generally denouncing too large income inequalities in this chapter of

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[137] A position that has been challenged as conceptually fragile by Cohen (1995). Directed at the above mentioned 'Wilt Chamberlain example', Cohen also points out that it need not be so that people who voluntarily pay for a ticket agree with the distributive results, which could likewise be legitimately 'upset' by redistributive policies, cf. Cohen (1995, p. 26).

[138] A discussion of the historical evolution of different concepts of equality of opportunity from formal status and equal rights at the market, replacing feudal status differences, to social and political rights, emerging with the rise of democracy and the social welfare state, can be found in T.H. Marshall's essay 'Citizenship and Social Class', cf. T. H. Marshall (1965 [1949a]). Interestingly, Marshall also illustrates in how far the two motifs of *equality of opportunity* and the procedural motif of *Social Partnership* may overlap, as well as how *Social Partnership* and *Democracy* may overlap: Marshall calls the instrument of collective bargaining a 'secondary system of industrial citizenship', which helps transcend asymmetries of contract between employees and employers characteristic of the 'individualistic phase of capitalism', cf T. H. Marshall (1965 [1949b], pp. 103–104); see also Streeck (1988, pp. 17–23).

his General Theory, Keynes here warns that too *little* income inequality could also have harmful consequences.

6.1.1.5 Motif: Need

A final key motif in the typology is the need principle. It may serve both to legitimize and question income differences. Consider a classic *biblical* example, the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20: 1-16), in which workers at the end of a workday receive the same wage despite having worked different lengths of time. One way of interpreting the parable is that the needs principle here trumps alternative intuitions of justice, for example, a desert motif that might demand equal *hourly* wages, or wages according to *productivity*. So in terms of remuneration per working time or per output, this is a justification for income *inequality*. It here substitutes alternative metrics (such as working time or productivity, as subvariants of the desert motif, or a procedural motif).

The motif may also only limit other metrics, in that income inequalities may not surpass a certain degree. Two variants are conceivable. According to the stronger variant of *sufficiency*, inequalities are only legitimate if no one gets more than he or she needs. Alternatively, the weaker variant would hold that inequalities were legitimate if no one received less than required for need satisfaction – call it *subsistence*. Note the key role of premises in further defining ‘needs’.

As mentioned above, another proponent of the need principle is *Karl Marx* in his famous dictum in the ‘Critique of the Gotha Programme’, that in communist society, society could ‘inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs’ (Marx, 1970 [1891], p. 17).

Whereas Marx and Matthew seem to employ intrinsic accounts of justice based on the principle of need, functional accounts may pursue other ideals in which inequalities only play an indirect role. Consider for example *Martha Nussbaum’s* ‘Aristotelian essentialism’ according to which distributional results are not directly relevant. Rather it counts that everyone could live in dignity, to which inequality may turn out to be detrimental (Krebs, 2000, pp. 30–31; Nussbaum, 1992).

6.1.2 Cross Patterns and Overlaps

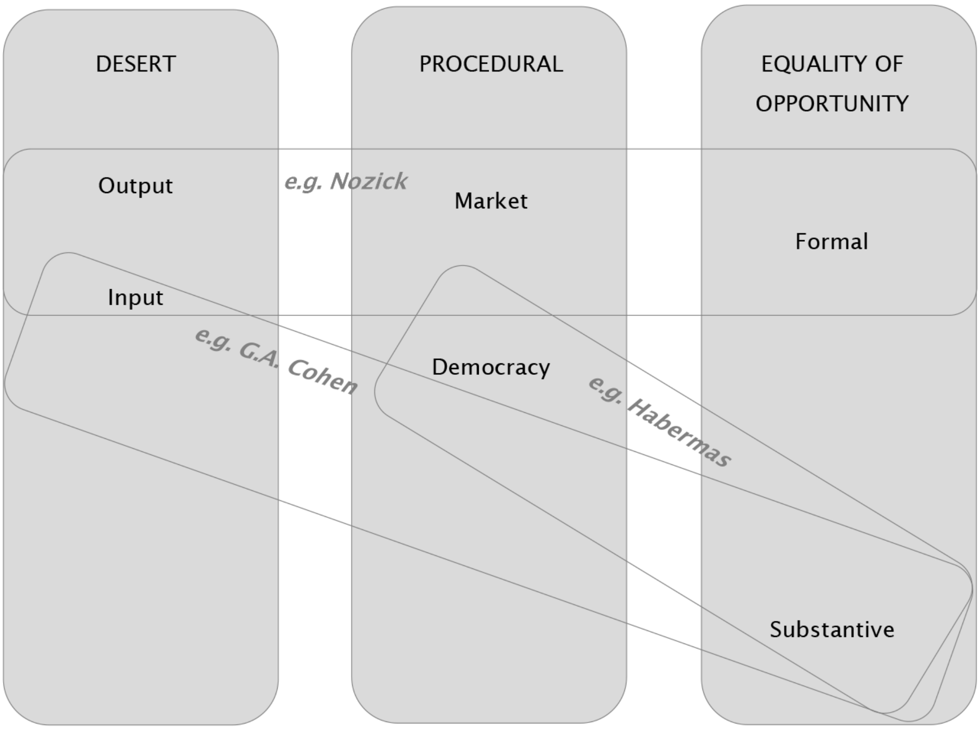
Another group of five justification patterns did not qualify as motifs in their own right. They can rather be described as ‘cross patterns’ that transform or mix some of the previous core motifs. Take the two patterns, ‘pragmatic’ and ‘strategic’. The *pragmatic* pattern ‘justifies’ income inequalities against its own implicit normative rejection of these income differences, typically as a result of a cost-benefit analysis. An income inequality may be illegitimate – but this core justification pattern is encapsulated by a ‘pragmatic’ consideration stating it was not worth the effort of doing anything about it. Inversely, the *strategic* pattern effectively opposes an income inequality although, at its normative core, it considers the income difference as just. So both patterns in essence reverse the ‘sign’ of the justification.

The *additive* pattern combines several other motifs, possibly even in a quite technical manner as a mathematical additive function. A just overall distributional result is derived from a somehow qualified mix of various separate justice considerations. Proponents of this pattern can be found among political theorists such *Michael Walzer* with his ‘Spheres of Justice’ (Walzer, 1983) and *David Miller* with his ‘Principles of Justice’ (Miller, 1999). A related pattern, possibly a variant of the previous one, can be seen in the *frame of reference*, according to which income differences are judged depending on their social context, for example, the company, geographic space or sector.

Finally, the pattern of *facticity* ‘turns off’ any other justification patterns by simply referring to the allegedly inescapable social reality of certain or all income inequalities. In a sense, it appears not to be a normative statement at all. However, by virtue of rejecting its counterfactuals of alternative justification patterns, it can be regarded as normative itself.

As pointed out above, there are some overlaps between different key patterns. For example, output-related desert patterns often overlap with procedural justifications of inequality referring to the market mechanism. They also typically rely on the precondition of formal equality of opportunity. Other overlaps are conceivable for example between input variants of desert and substantive equality of opportunity. As Figure 4 shows, the overlaps are not transitive, i.e. there is not one natural hierarchy amongst them that would allow further disambiguation. This is why I chose not to further divide the five key patterns. The advantage of this approach is to keep a good overview of justification patterns and see the schools of thought they can be traced back to. This way, one also remains close to certain ‘signal terms’ such as ‘desert’ or ‘equality of opportunity’, which helps clarify why they can end up meaning very different things depending on how encompassing premises are spelt out.

Figure 6.1: Schematic illustration of overlaps



It is important to keep in mind that the above-presented typology of justification patterns of income inequality does have its limits. First, it is not a typology in the strict sense that it shows all logical possibilities to justify income inequalities. As pointed out above, it is rather designed to give an overview and to provide a kit of building blocks of justification patterns including their premises. Secondly, the typology does not consider other forms of economic inequality than income inequality (such as wealth inequality), let alone immaterial forms of social inequality (such as status or power). It remains a task at hand to examine where the typology may be further generalized to other forms of inequality and where not.

A final caveat of the typology concerns the question of a positive definition of just income differences. As inherent in the approach, the typology provides arguments as to how to evaluate the (il)legitimacy of one *given* income inequality – but it often does not tell us from scratch which precise income difference would be legitimate. Some justification patterns could solve this issue by their virtue of retreating to a procedure or a starting condition (namely the procedural pattern and equality of opportunity). Only the desert principle typically seeks to establish a precise metric of just income differences. But the latter unsurprisingly turns out to be the vaguest justification pattern, most dependent on the associated premises spelling out how effort, attribution or outcomes are to be defined.

6.2 Conclusion

This chapter has developed a typology of justification patterns of income inequality based on an empirical analysis of the German public debate about *VW* CEO Martin Winterkorn's record salary. The debate has proven a rich source of justification patterns. As many justificatory statements came in a generalized fashion, the material turned out to reach beyond the discourse surrounding executive pay.

Five core justification patterns were identified: equality of opportunity, desert, procedure of salary determination, harmful consequences, and need. Their scope ranges from starting conditions, metrics and procedures to limits concerning income inequality. Some patterns, most notably the desert pattern, may be compatible with a broad range of different legitimatory outcomes, from a more egalitarian stance to legitimizing large inequalities. It was noted that this crucially depends on the specific variant employed and its associated premises. Besides the key patterns, several cross patterns were identified that can be composed of a mix or variation of the key patterns.

My typology complements quantitative and qualitative research on views of income inequality in that it draws a map of the argumentative space of justification patterns of income inequality. It thus serves to give a more nuanced overview of justification patterns than typical empirical research provides us with. At the same time, it complements normative theory by way of drawing upon empirical analysis. In my view, both branches of research dealing with the question of justifications of income inequality may benefit from this overview and may contribute to further elaborating it.

The analysis accordingly leaves some open questions and routes for further research. To begin with, it remains a question on its own, whether and in how far the justification patterns may be generalized to other forms of inequality than that of incomes. A related question concerns the completeness of the typology. Does it miss important justification patterns despite the amount of material analysed and the breadth and the generality of the debate? One might argue, that the short period from which data was included in the analysis may bias the result towards the current Zeitgeist of German public debates, often described as 'neoliberal'. Against this, I hold that the typology is termed in such an abstract way that it reaches beyond current debates. Take the desert pattern or the procedural pattern. Both can be interpreted in economic liberal terms, i.e. justifying income inequalities as market outcomes (procedural) or as representing differences in productivity (desert). However, as pointed out above, the same patterns may be interpreted very differently, in a more radical egalitarian fashion, when alternative variants or premises are employed. A similar case could be made for equality of opportunity. I would thus hold that the presented typology is generalized enough to draw out most of the logical space in which arguments for and against income differences may be brought forward.

I see three especially promising paths for further research based on the results presented here. First, one might use the typology as a map for a final step of what is often understood as discourse analysis: an analysis of discourse coalitions, i.e. of the strength of certain argumentative patterns and their attribution to specific material interests and their ideological underpinnings. My research factored out this interest and power-oriented approach. What I have provided is the ‘cartography’ for such an analysis. A logical step could now be to examine the strategic use of certain justification patterns building upon this map to evaluate the relationship between discourse, interests and inequality.

A second route for further research is related to such an interest-oriented analysis, but it reaches into the realm of economic sociology (or an economics approach that is open to sociological observations) and links to the literature on ‘cultural processes’ mentioned in the Introduction (section 1.3). It concerns the process of income determination and the question of how prices in labour markets are determined: If the typical neoclassical assumption that wages mainly reflect marginal productivity (or, in a relaxed variant, additionally reflect institutional rigidities) can be shown to be inaccurate or at least incomplete and that justification patterns turn out to be an important factor, we might be able to unveil an all too vicious circularity in here: A dominant justification pattern consists in the procedural pattern in its market variant. But if justification patterns themselves play a key role in determining income inequalities, this begs the question. Being able to show this would put pressure on both the alleged legitimacy of supposedly market-induced income inequalities and the corresponding policy choices concerning income inequality.

A final route ahead stretches into the realm of political theory. This research has only sought cursory links to the history of normative theory. It would be an excellent expansion of this primarily empirical reconstruction of justification patterns (but also an arduous project), to develop a systematic account of the history of normative thought on justifications of (income) inequality.

What I hope to have shown so far is that the question of justifying income inequalities is not only a highly interesting one that deserves more attention but that justifications of income inequality are also much more timeless than they may seem. Likewise, they could be reinterpreted in far more egalitarian terms than is often the case in recent debates recurring especially to meritocratic principles as justifications of inequality. In the next chapter, we shall consider the potential effects of different justificatory framings on the general acceptance of inequality.

7 Framed Justifications of Income Inequality and Inequality Acceptance

The preceding analysis has focused on various aspects of public debates on economic inequality in Germany in the decade of the 2010s. It has shown an extraordinary hostility towards a major academic contribution on economic inequality, Thomas Piketty's *C21*. It has revealed that even when put on the public agenda, inequality and concerns about it are dismissed by a relevant part of the quality press; and where concerns are shared, redistributive policy is regularly rejected as an appropriate policy measure. A closer analysis of contributions of 'inequality denial' has shown a wide range of rhetorical mechanisms that serve to downplay economic inequality as a societal challenge and an issue requiring public policy reactions. At the same time, my analysis of justification patterns of income inequality reveals that arguments typically employed to legitimize income inequality could in principle well be inverted to egalitarian positions. Their philosophical-historical roots are much more open and diverse than current applications in public debates might suggest. Philosophical principles can be adjusted to the political interests of the time, without substituting core concepts, be it 'equality of opportunity', 'meritocracy', 'poverty' or 'freedom'. It can suffice, to wrangle over the relevant premises of an argument, factual claims or attribution of merits. At the same time, as Piketty has pointed out incisively in *C21*, justifications of inequality have been there at all times, irrespective of the actual level of inequality (Piketty, 2014, p. 85), which in fact is just another example of the potential flexibility of normative principles. It is this question about the flexibility of normative principles – and their resonance with people – that shall now move to the centre of the analysis.

Thus far, I have exclusively focused on public debates in the German media. But this focus on elite debates has yet to be linked to the general public as recipients of these debates. By showing that the framing of inequality affects general inequality attitudes, we gain one important piece of evidence about the importance of inequality debates in determining redistributive political outcomes. Hence, I shall move on to ask how the framing of inequality and different argumentative patterns resonate with citizens in the general public. What is the effect of the way inequality is presented to the public on the general acceptance of inequality? Do people have unstable convictions on inequality that are sensitive to expositions of certain argumentative patterns? Does support for redistributive policy depend on how people are informed about inequality?

These questions are approached through a survey experiment conducted with a representative sample from Germany in December 2021.[139] The results give a mixed picture: on the one hand, the

[139] The research in this chapter was part of a larger survey of the project "The influence of socio-economic problems on political integration", funded by the North Rhine-Westphalian Ministry of Culture and Science. The analysis of this survey experiment, including the implementation of the design, subsequent analysis of the data, as well as the writing of this

experiment shows that inequality attitudes seem more stable than we might think when considering sensitivity to exposure of individual framings and arguments; however, I can also show that in conjuncture, a consistently relativizing or problematizing framing of inequality seems to make a difference affecting short term inequality attitudes quite substantially. I will go on to discuss how the survey experiment links to previous research on inequality attitudes and framing effects (7.1), then carefully describe the research design and data (7.2), followed by a presentation and discussion of the main findings (7.3 and 7.4).

7.1 Research on Inequality Attitudes and Media and Framing Effects

The field of research on inequality attitudes is vast and somewhat disparate, lacking a unified systematic framework of analysis (Janmaat, 2013). This may in part be due to the interdisciplinary nature of the field of investigation, with crossroads between political sociology, social psychology, political economy and other branches of political science, as well as socio-economics and economics. But it is also partly due to the different focus of investigation. Janmaat (2013) suggests to distinguish comparative studies with a focus on three types of conceptions (*perceptions* of existing inequality, *beliefs* about fair inequality, and *judgements* about existing inequality) and two dimensions (magnitude of inequality vs. principles governing the distribution of resources). Furthermore, he differentiates between the large bulk of studies, where inequality attitudes are examined descriptively or as dependent variables, and a smaller body of work, where views on inequality constitute an explanatory variable. Note that in most studies, ‘inequality’ refers to income distribution (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: Classification of comparative studies on inequality attitudes[140]

		Dimensions Magnitude	Principles
Conceptions	Perceptions	DD$_1$ / EV$_1$	DD$_2$ / EV$_2$
	Beliefs	DD$_3$ / EV$_3$	DD$_4$ / EV$_4$
	Judgements	DD$_5$ / EV$_5$	

DD = descriptive or dependent variable, EV = explanatory variable.
Based on Janmaat (2013).

Most of this research relies on large international surveys such as the *European Values Survey*, the *International Social Survey Program (ISSP)* and the *World Values Survey*, typically with a cross-country comparative perspective. These surveys contain items on the evaluation of inequality, views

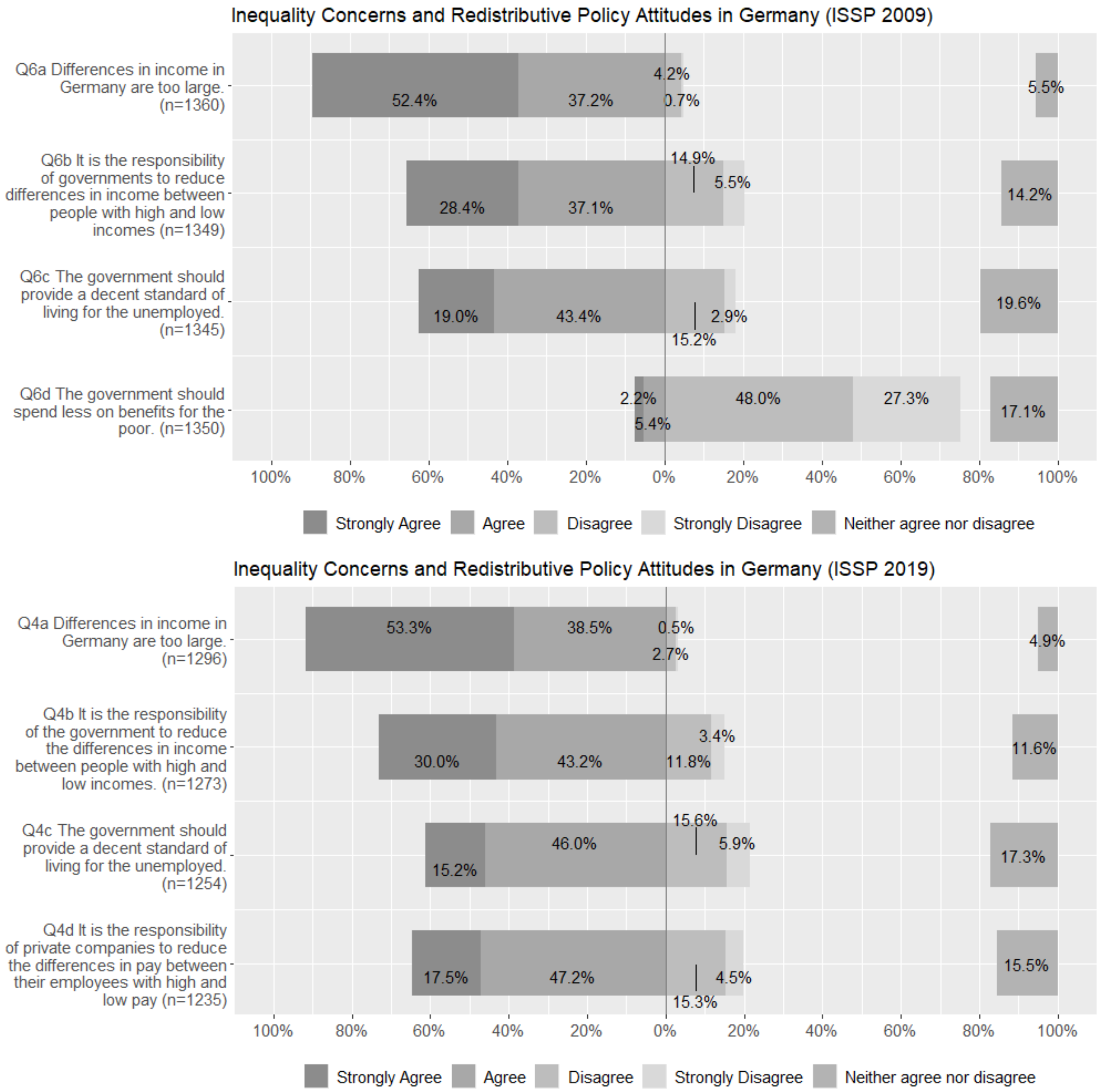
chapter was my own work. I thank Paul Marx for his invaluable feedback and helpful suggestions, and for the opportunity to participate in his research project.

140 Note that no study is located in the last field of the matrix in Janmaat’s review. He suspects that comparative surveys hardly captured “judgements about the fairness of existing inequalities with respect to the distributive principles they reflect”, cf. Janmaat (2013, p. 369). Arguably this is also a problem of separating the two conceptions of beliefs and judgments, where the former represents evaluations of normative principles while the latter represents evaluations of their *application*.

on redistributive policy, attitudes towards the welfare state as well as questions on principles of distributive justice. The body of research based on these data yields several stylized facts on inequality attitudes. These include the finding that people tend to underestimate the extent of income inequality, positioning themselves more towards the centre of the distribution, i.e. the poor overestimate their income, while the rich tend to underestimate it (Engelhardt & Wagener, 2018; Evans & Kelley, 2004; Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018). A large majority (between around 60 and 90 per cent of respondents) believes that income inequality is too large (Mijs, 2021; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006), with more tolerance toward inequality amongst higher-income groups (Aalberg, 2003, p. 167).[141] Figure 7.1 shows the strong and stable support for redistributive policy and concerns about inequality in Germany, according to the *ISSP* survey, where in 2019 (2009) 91.8 per cent (89.6 per cent) agree that differences in income are too large and 73.2 per cent (65.5 per cent) agree that it is the responsibility of the government to reduce inequality. A dominant explanatory motif of 'success' is hard work, which is typically interpreted as an indication of meritocratic beliefs (Mijs, 2021; Roex, Huijts, & Sieben, 2019). Notably, more unequal societies seem to be more tolerant of inequality and have stronger support for meritocracy, with support of meritocracy increasing with socio-economic position on a within-country level. Mijs (2021) posits this as a partial explanation of what he calls the "paradox of inequality", consisting in the fact that inequality concerns are smaller in more unequal countries and that they do not seem to increase with inequality within countries.

[141] Quoted studies refer to *ISSP* data up until 2009 of the decennial inequality waves. For the latest inequality wave of 2019, I have extracted data on inequality acceptance in Figure 7.1 below.

Figure 7.1: Inequality concerns and redistributive policy attitudes in Germany 2009 and 2019



Source: ISSP 2009, ISSP 2019.

Although they constitute an indispensable and rich source for a broad range of research fields, one source of dissatisfaction with these large comparative surveys is imprecise measurement and the ‘deductivist’ nature of research based on these data (Sachweh, 2010, p. 66). Take the example of “meritocracy”. As indicated above, meritocratic normative beliefs are often proxied by accordance with the *ISSP* item “hard work” when asking how important respondents considered certain factors as important for “getting ahead in life”. Strictly speaking, the item thus only measures accordance with an *explanation* of ‘success’, not its *justification* or approval of this explanation. Based on theoretic reasoning, the available empirical data may then be taken for pragmatic reasons to fit the research question even though it may not really suit it.[142] To overcome these limitations, qualitative

[142] Another example is Kenworthy and McCall (2007), who commit to a theoretically convincing empirical deconstruction of the median voter hypothesis. However, for pragmatic reasons, the authors among others use the *ISSP* item on agreement with the statement that income differences in a country were too large as a proxy for ‘awareness of income inequality’. They write: “If we assume that people’s views about how much inequality is too much are roughly constant over time, then

research has helped to get a more nuanced understanding of normative views on inequality, helping to explain the seemingly contradictory coexistence of different principles, stressing the role of contextualization both of principles and their proponents (Burak, 2013; Dubet, 2009; Hecht, 2021; Hochschild, 1981; Kuusela, 2020; Sachweh, 2010, 2012). Their findings underline both the complexity of views and the importance of perceptions and framings as well as the individual socio-economic position for views about inequality (see Chapter 5, section 5.1, for a more detailed review of this qualitative strand of research).

In addition to large comparative surveys and qualitative approaches to inequality attitudes, there is a body of experimental research, both lab and survey-based, aimed at exploring normative views and understanding causal patterns. A seminal experimental study on inequality attitudes is Alves and Rossi's multifactorial vignette experiment on just rewards, where respondents have been asked to evaluate the fairness of pay after reading short descriptions of individuals with varying characteristics, showing that people sought to balance different principles of justice, such as merit and need, when evaluating the fairness of earnings (Alves & Rossi, 1978; Liebig, Sauer, & Friedhoff, 2015). Their study also shows that merit enjoyed stronger support among the privileged (Alves & Rossi, 1978, p. 559). More recent lab experiments with convenience samples of US undergraduates has confirmed those findings of balancing distinct principles of justice with a clear dominance of meritocratic attitudes (Scott, Matland, Michelbach, & Bornstein, 2001).

A whole body of experimental work has been done especially in social psychology on beliefs in a just world, motivated by system justification theory (Ellard, Harvey, & Callan, 2016). System justification theory holds that humans are inclined to subconsciously regard their social environment as just. To avoid discomfort people tend to make sense of the world as it is rather than questioning its state as illegitimate, especially if there are collectively shared rationales available – in the case of inequality, if "a culturally acceptable reason for rationalizing an inequality is readily available to us" (Trump, 2018). Building on this research, Trump (2018) suggests based on experimental evidence (both laboratory and survey-based) that people seem to adjust their normative standards on inequality acceptance according to their perception of actual inequality. If they learn that inequality is larger than assumed, they do not react by turning more inequality averse but by adapting their inequality tolerance. Trump points at the role of legitimatory discourses:

> With respect to income inequality in particular, such legitimacy-maintaining interpretations are readily available because the concept of 'justly earned' income is culturally accessible, and judgements of fairness in income differences are inherently ambiguous. (Trump, 2018, p. 934)

Trump stresses that according to this perspective, people do not automatically accept all inequalities (which obviously is not the case). The system justification motif rather suggests that

changes in responses to this question will primarily gauge changes in people's views about how much inequality there is", which in my view constitutes an example of deductivist overloading of empirical data that only imperfectly suits the research question.

people are *biased* towards more comfortable interpretations of reality so that “exposure to information about large income differences is, in the aggregate, likely to produce a re-evaluation of what fairness in income differences looks like” (Trump, 2018, p. 934). At the same time, Trump admits that in her experiments, information on inequality was presented in a neutral way and that “more politically charged ways of presenting” (Trump, 2018, p. 948) inequality information might well run counter to this pattern.

Other experiments with information treatments have mixed results concerning inequality acceptance and attitudes towards redistributive policy. In a survey-based experiment, Kuziemko et al. (2015) find that giving Americans intuitively comprehensible and intentionally “shocking” information on the actual distribution of income reduces inequality acceptance, while it leaves redistributive policy preferences largely unaffected (except for support for raising the estate tax, which increases strongly). In a survey experiment with German respondents, Engelhardt and Wagener (2018) find that people underestimate the extent of inequality, but that learning about the actual distribution does hardly affect the already strong support for redistributive policy, except for a fraction of those who learn they would be negatively affected by this policy. Sachweh and Eicher (2018) find that support for a wealth tax depends on contextual information about the origin of wealth, i.e. based on earnings as opposed to inheritance, marriage or ‘speculation’, while mere information on the actual wealth distribution seems to have no effect.

A large body of research has analysed the causal effects of media framings. Hopmann et al. (2017) for example show that the framing of deservingness in media reports has effects on support for welfare policies. Kneafsey and Regan (2020) find that Irish citizens are less critical of tax avoidance when presented with nationalistic media framings relative to framings referring to morality and fairness considerations. Barnes and Hicks (2018) show that media frames on austerity affect acceptance of public deficits, with more Keynesian arguments going along with less agreement that the public deficit should be eliminated. A complementary strand of research has exploited the natural experiment of an incremental rollout of *Fox News* as the first partisan news network in the United States to show the effects of the news media on voting behaviour (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007; Hopkins & Ladd, 2014) and political outcomes (Arceneaux, Johnson, Lindstädt, & Wielen, 2016). A different approach to explaining the role of the media in forming inequality attitudes treats the content of the media as a ‘black box’ and focuses on the political economy of media ownership by comparatively analysing the relationship between media ownership concentration and redistributive policy preferences (Neimanns, 2021). Neimanns finds that more concentrated media ownership structures are associated with lower support for redistribution, even when taking into account the type of welfare state regimes and levels of inequality.

Let me summarize key findings from the above-discussed research on inequality attitudes and the role of information and framing: Previous research shows that a large majority is concerned about inequality and supports redistributive policy in Germany as elsewhere. At the same time, meritocratic views constitute a dominant legitimatory motif about inequality. Qualitative research shows that views on inequality are however complex and nuanced, more so than general surveys are able to capture. They underline the complexity and relevance of framings and justificatory discourses concerning inequality. My research on justification patterns reveals the large argumentative space in inequality discourses, allowing for both justification and delegitimisation of income inequalities by the same normative principles. Furthermore, experimental research shows that to some extent, mere information on inequality can remain ineffective as concerns inequality attitudes, by rather increasing inequality tolerance; however, the framing of information and normative contextualization seems to matter, as other research on media and framing effects suggests.

In light of these ambiguous findings about inequality attitudes and the effects of information about and framing of inequality and redistributive policy, a natural link arises to my findings from previous chapters. We have considered the way inequality has been framed in the media and how income inequality has been justified or delegitimised publicly. But how do these framings and argumentative patterns then affect the wider public as recipients of this media content? What is the effect on inequality acceptance if information and justifications are embedded in a media context and a normative way of presentation? This survey experiment seeks to address these questions directly by using a treatment that simulates media frames and justification patterns on inequality. I try to find out whether such framings have an effect on inequality acceptance and which specific merit-oriented justificatory arguments might resonate with people.

More generally, the survey experiment also addresses the puzzle about the "paradox of inequality" mentioned above, that across countries, higher inequality does not correlate with greater inequality concerns and that within countries, they do not seem to increase with rises in inequality. Mijs (2021) suggests that complementary explanations may consist in inaccurate perceptions of inequality (which we have seen are existent), in the adjustment hypothesis of system justification theory (which is supported by findings in certain experimental settings) and in an increasing approval of meritocratic beliefs (which Mijs points at based on the *ISSP* data). However, as has been shown in the preceding two chapters, meritocratic arguments themselves can be coined in more than one justificatory way, think of the image of hard-working but poorly paid health workers as contrasted with undeserving rich rentiers. Meritocratic arguments can thus also imply preferences for more equal distributional outcomes depending on how we attribute performance, or judge upon normative preconditions or boundaries to the principle. At the same time, the predictions of system justification theory may be weakened by more normative contextualization of information on inequality. Thus, although my analysis is not comparative and does not capture changes over time, it still speaks to the puzzle Mijs posits by addressing the question in how far specific *public debates* involving differently coined merit-oriented arguments may play a role in forming inequality attitudes.

I build on the analysis of framings of inequality reporting identified in the analysis of inequality denial in Chapters 3 and 4 and on the typology of justification patterns developed in Chapters 5 and

6 to design a survey experiment examining the effects on inequality acceptance of merit-related justificatory arguments criticising and legitimising income inequality, of a general framing about inequality developments and of an additional anchor clarifying what specific instance of inequality the arguments are referring to. In the next section I will carefully describe the specific research design and sample characteristics, and then present my findings in the subsequent section.

7.2 Data and Methods

In our survey experiment, I address the link between merit-related justificatory arguments and attitudes towards inequality and redistributive policy, as mediated through media discourses. I try to answer several research questions: What is the effect of different specific merit-related arguments legitimising/criticising income inequality on the general acceptance of inequality (as measured in terms of inequality concerns and redistributive policy preferences)? Are neutral merit-based arguments (without implicit criticism or justification) more likely to lead to inequality-critical or inequality-justifying associations? Are there specific arguments or classes of arguments that have a particularly strong effect on the acceptance of inequality?

7.2.1 A Multifactorial Survey Experiment

Examining the effects of justificatory arguments and framings on inequality constitutes a methodological challenge. While simply measuring the effect of one framing relative to another may be achieved by traditional experimental designs with single treatment and control groups, the dimensions of variation will then naturally be restricted.[143] However, justification patterns of income inequality are, as has been shown in the previous chapter, more nuanced and multi-dimensional than such a simple experimental design could accommodate.[144] We have therefore opted for a *multifactorial vignette experiment* embedded in a large sample survey of the German population, which allows examining the effects in multiple factor dimensions simultaneously. However, operationalizing such simultaneous treatments with different dimensions of justificatory arguments is not trivial. Consider arguments about *individual attribution* of performance when considering the justificatory motif of merit as opposed to *structural arguments* about equality of opportunity or the consequences of inequality for society at large. Although it is possible to relate them in the abstract (as done in my typology in Chapter 6), it is more difficult to construct an application for both of the same time: One could either describe a situation of inequality and consider the legitimacy of income advantages of one individual for certain merit-based reasons, or one could think of the distributive results at large and consider structural preconditions or implications. As a solution to this tension

[143] A "prototypical example" (Sniderman 2018) of a framing experiment is Nelson and Clawson (1997), where study participants were shown two differently framed video clips on civil liberty protests and then asked about their support for freedom of speech.

[144] Likewise, non-experimental survey designs asking respondents to simply rate individual legitimatory arguments may yield high correlation of ratings but little information about how people would weigh them against one another.

between structural and individual-related arguments, we designed a fictitious expert interview as presented in a media setting, where our expert reflects on the different legitimatory aspects. In this way, we could replicate justification patterns on the same 'meta-level' as presented in the typology in Chapter 6, as *a priori* equally relevant to the debate about justifying income inequality.

What is more, by designing the survey experiment this way, we were able to simulate the presentation of these arguments in a *media setting*, by conveying the expert interview in the style of journalistic content of an online magazine. This has the key advantage that it exactly matches the focus of interest in the previous chapters, which is not simply about the normative-philosophical dimension of inequality debates, but also about their framing dimension in the media. The design accordingly consisted in a fictitious expert interview in a fictitious online magazine presented to respondents with fully randomized multifactorial treatment dimensions representing various aspects of merit-related argumentative patterns and the contextual framing of inequality. Presenting the treatments in a format very close to real-world media content (which includes the presentation of expert opinions) promises a high degree of external validity – although it should be clear that respondents will have been more or less aware of its artificiality in the survey setting. Having been asked to read the interview, respondents were then asked about their "inequality acceptance", our dependent variable, as measured by three distinct items (see 7.2.2).

Multifactorial vignette designs, like conjoint designs, are experimental survey designs, which unite the advantages of both of their methodological components. Being *experimental* with full randomization of treatments allows for a 'causal' interpretation of estimates for treatment effects,[145] as statistically significant variation in the dependent variable may only be explained by the variation in treatments. Being a *survey* design, it in contrast to laboratory experiments allows for large sample sizes with sufficient statistical power for estimating multifactorial treatment effects. Methodologically, the design follows conjoint designs as theorized by Bansak, Hainmueller et al. (2021) and Hainmueller, Hopkins et al. (2014a).[146] Conjoint designs and multifactorial vignette designs follow the same design logic (Sniderman, 2018, p. 265), but are usually distinct in the way treatments are presented to survey respondents. In conjoint designs, respondents are typically asked to rate or choose profiles presented in *tabular* form, where treatments are randomly varied in multiple attribute/factor[147] dimensions presented in a table of one, two or more profiles. Data is accordingly

[145] Leeper (2020, p. 208) points out that most published conjoint analysis not only interpreted results *causally* but for *descriptive* purposes, i.e. to "map levels of favourability toward a multidimensional object across its various features", in order to "measure a sample's preferences over something difficult to measure with direct questioning". He points out: "The quantity is causal, but it is often read descriptively".

[146] One major contribution of these authors is reinterpreting and transferring the conjoint method from its original domains first for agricultural and industrial applications and later in psychology / marketing research to political science research. A key difference is its more straightforward statistical approach based on the potential outcomes framework of causal inference, cf. Hainmueller et al. (2014a) and Bansak et al. (2021).

[147] A large share of literature on conjoint experiments, including the methodological literature I am referring to by Bansak et al. (2021) and Hainmueller et al. (2014a), uses the term 'attribute' or 'attribute dimension' instead of 'factor' or 'factor dimension' (as contained in the term 'multifactorial'). Note however that these are typically tabular designs where each factor represents one *attribute* of a profile (most typically a person or a policy package). While in our case, specific legitimatory arguments or subframings could also with good will be regarded as 'attributes' of an overall framing, the term

structured as a vector with i respondents, j profiles, l factors and d factor levels (Hainmueller et al., 2014a).[148] The same logic applies to multifactorial vignette designs, although treatments are normally not structured in tabular form (thus normally lacking the dimension of j profiles) but as components of a body of text.

7.2.2 Dependent Variable and Attention Check

The dependent variable (inequality acceptance) was measured with a three-item battery, measured as five-level Likert items ('strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree, nor disagree', 'disagree', 'strongly disagree'). The first item asked respondents about their agreement with the statement about the overall justice of the income distribution ('All in all, the distribution of income in Germany is fair', *dv1*). The second one included the redistributive policy dimension, worded as 'The government should do more to reduce the differences between rich and poor' (*dv2*) and the third one was more specifically about the legitimacy of top incomes ('People with high incomes in Germany have earned their good income', *dv3*). Note that in contrast to *dv1* and *dv3*, *dv2* was reversely coded with inequality acceptance being largest when *agreement* to the statement was highest. This serves as an implicit attention check as on average, we would be able to notice inattentive respondents clicking one-sidedly or randomly.

Dependent variable items could be merged into an additive index variable by simply adding its values:

$$dv_{index} = dv_1 - dv_2 + dv_3 + 4 \qquad (1)$$

Adding the value 4 serves to avoid values below 1, given the lowest number can be –3 when adding two values of 1 and subtracting a value of 5. The second dependent variable is subtracted due to its reverse coding.

Additionally, a genuine attention check was included on the page following the measurement of the dependent variable items. Respondents were asked to select three out of eight topics in randomized order to indicate what the interview had been about. The three correct items were 'equality of opportunity', 'income inequality' and 'just incomes'. The five incorrect items were 'pension system', 'corona pandemic', 'child poverty', 'world trade' and 'globalisation'. Passing the attention check was defined as selecting all three correct items and none of the incorrect ones (compare Appendix F.1 and codebook in Appendix F.2). We did not include a *manipulation* check because by design we do not speculate about psychological mechanisms in our experiment. The objective of a manipulation check would be to test whether the treatment stimulus had indeed been effective in producing what we consider as the explanatory variable (Mutz & Kim, 2020). As in our

factor seemed more fitting for the design developed here, which is why I opted for the term 'factor', as done for example in Egami and Imai (2019).

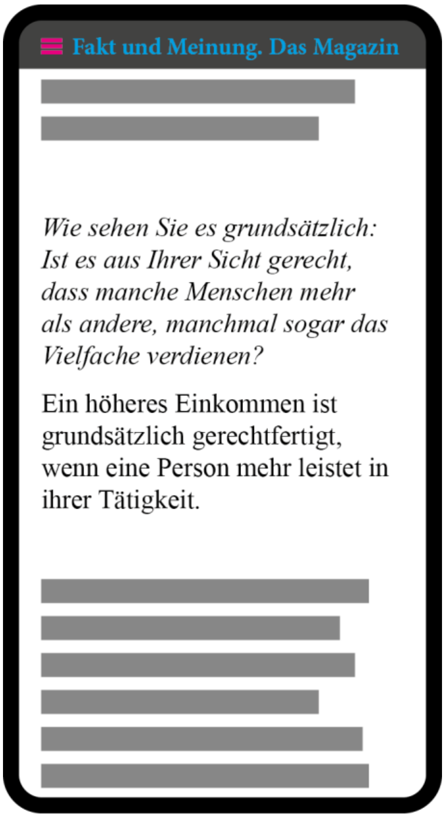
[148] If respondents are asked to repeat tasks, an additional dimension of k tasks is added. For vignette designs repeated tasks are harder to implement without reaching respondent fatigue.

case, the exposure to framing in itself is the explanatory variable, it seems sufficient to check whether the information has been processed at all, which is (at least superficially) achieved by the attention check. In other words, the manipulation check in the analysis of framing collapses to an attention check.

7.2.3 Factors and Treatment Levels

Our vignette design takes the form of snippets from a fictitious interview with an "expert on social and economic affairs". Each snippet contains a part of the interview text and represents one factor dimension, presented in the form of smartphone screenshots of our fictitious online magazine. The design is chosen to represent quality news content, without alluding to any known online magazines (to avoid ideological association with more left- or right-leaning outlets). Its fictitious name is "Fakt und Meinung. Das Magazin [Fact and Opinion. The magazine]" and it looked like the example snippet in Figure 7.2.

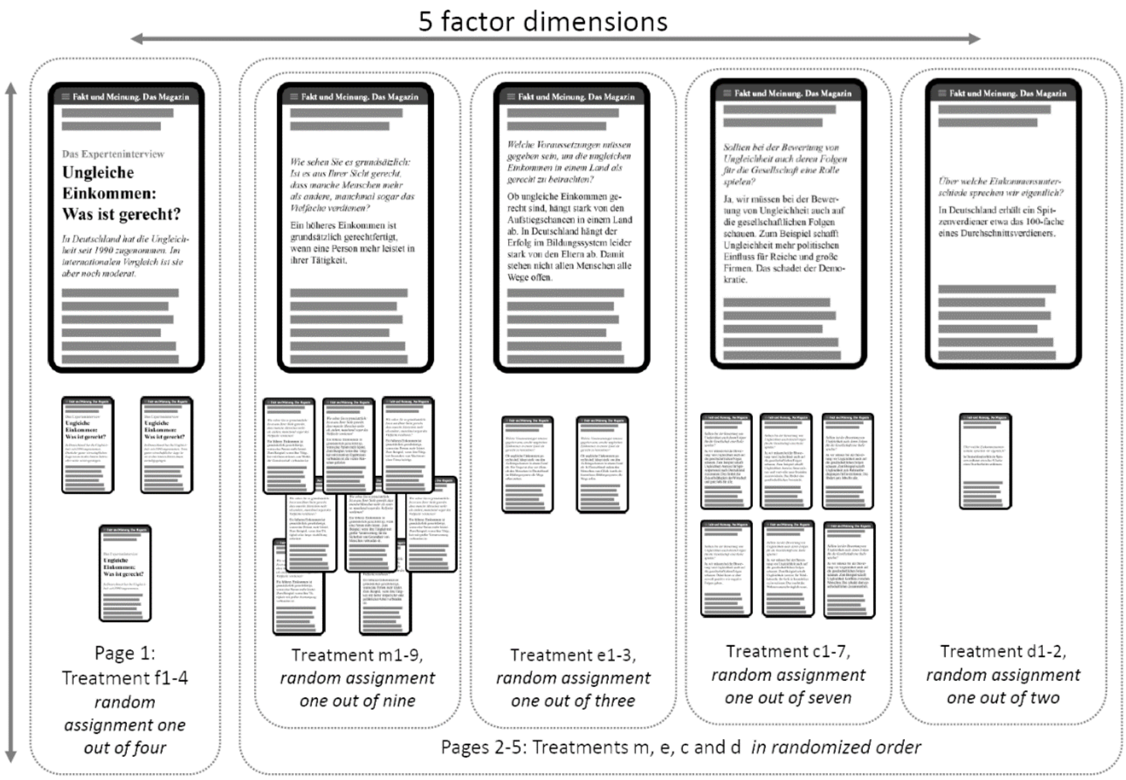
Figure 7.2: Example of treatment snippet



Translation: "Q: How do you see it in principle: Is it fair in your view that some people earn more than others, sometimes even many times more? A: In principle, a higher income is justified if a person performs more in his or her job."

The interview experiment consisted of five screenshots for five treatment dimensions with two to nine fully randomized levels (see Figure 7.3 for illustration). Factors consisted of either neutral, critical, or legitimizing statements. In addition to three treatments with merit-related arguments (different notions of merit; equality of opportunity as a precondition; consequences of inequality as boundaries or additional justifications), we used an anchor to vary the level of inequality, to which the arguments of the interview should relate, and the framing through the interviewer (see overview in Table 7.2 and specific wording in Appendix F.1). Respondents were asked to read the 'following interview'. Additionally, they were informed that in it, 'an expert on economic and social affairs explains arguments for and against income inequality' and that afterwards they would be asked 'a few questions on the topic' (compare Appendix F.1).

Figure 7.3: Illustration of multifactorial interview design



7.2.3.1 Framing Treatment (f1-4)

The fictitious interview always started with the headline ('Unequal incomes: What is fair [gerecht]?') and a *framing through the interviewer* (*f1-4*). This was included to examine the effect of the journalistic presentation of empirical facts on inequality. As shown in the analysis of mechanisms of inequality denial in Chapter 4, factual frames such as the choice of the base year, international comparison or presentation of counterfactual is a common rhetorical mechanism that serves to present inequality information in a relativizing or dramatizing way. All treatments included the wording that inequality had increased since 1990. However, they differed in how they put that general trend into perspective. The baseline treatment (*f1*) was presented without further information, while the second treatment (*f2*) was more critical of the inequality situation by presenting the counterfactual of decreasing inequality given the good economic situation. Conversely, the third treatment (*f3*) conveyed a contrarian counterfactual of increasing inequality, which had been avoided by the good economic situation (which could – implicitly – have been thanks to 'prosperity-enhancing' inequality). The fourth treatment (*f4*) was also directed against critical perspectives on inequality by framing the situation in Germany as relatively mild by international standards. Note that all treatments, as generally attempted in our wordings, differed as little as possible. This follows the logic that the fewer treatments differ, the clearer the causal attribution. If in contrast, we had changed the wording substantially, we could not have known if an effect was due to the substantive change we sought to measure or some other variation, such as more vivid language or certain signal words.[149]

7.2.3.2 Merit Treatment (m1-9)

Three treatment dimensions directly tackled *justification patterns* of income inequality as analysed in Chapters 5 and 6. As pointed out above, our focus was on merit-related justifications as the dominant strain of justificatory motifs. However, we wanted to find out whether different variants of merit-related arguments resonated differently and whether more neutral versions were associated more closely with critical or legitimizing variants. So the first factor of these three was '*merit*' itself.[150] All treatments contained a merit-based answer to the question 'How do you see it in principle: Is it fair in your view that some people earn more than others, sometimes even many times more?'. The 'neutral' baseline variant simply had the answer 'In principle, a higher income is justified if a person performs more in his or her job', while the other eight variants contained different exemplary explications of what it meant to 'perform more'. Recalling the typology developed in Chapter 6, we may distinguish five variants leaning to the 'input' side of the meritocratic motif (*m2-m6*) and three leaning to the 'output' side (*m7-m9*). The basic 'input' variant was 'more effort' (*m2*). Alternatively, we used 'hard physical or dangerous work' (*m3*) and two notions of responsibility, one general ('great responsibility', *m4*) and one more specific, possibly more critical towards actual income inequality ('responsibility for health and security of people', *m5*).[151] Another typical justificatory input variant was 'long training and education' (*m6*). Output variants were performance as 'contribution to company growth' (*m7*), 'creative results' (*m8*) and 'contribution to beneficial innovation' (*m9*).

Note that we hypothesized only two of nine treatments as potentially critical towards inequality in general (*m3* and *m5*). By its nature, merit *a priori* serves as a justificatory motif of income inequality. However, as pointed out before it can be inverted to supporting more equal distributional outcomes if, for example, we suppose that those who 'work hard' do not get their just rewards, while

149 On a related note, Sniderman (2018) advocates 'sequential factorials' directed at progressing from more coarse grained wordings to more precise ones, while holding the design template constant – a "step-by-step examination of synonymy", as he calls it.

150 In this chapter, I chose to use the term 'merit' rather than 'desert', because it links to the literature on 'meritocracy'. As pointed out in fn. 131 in section 5.3.2, the two concepts are often used synonymously, although 'desert' tends to be more precise when it comes to attribution of performance-based merits.

151 Note that especially variant m5 allows interpretation both in terms of input or output, depending on the focus of the *strain* side of responsibility or the *contribution* side of it, as pointed out in section 5.3.2.

others get more than they deserve. Depending on how we attribute performance or define effort, we may come to different conclusions as regards actual income distributions. The two variants *m3* and *m5* alluded to such more egalitarian interpretations, given the typically low remuneration for hard physical labour, as well as the often-criticized underpayment of jobs in the health and security sectors (Bosch & Kalina, 2007; Kalina & Weinkopf, 2020). We should note, however, that this egalitarian interpretation was only implicitly projected into the treatments and may not have been understood by participants this way. Likewise, the hypothesized inequality-friendly interpretations might also have resonated more ambiguously with respondents than hypothesized here.

7.2.3.3 Equality of Opportunity Treatment (e1-3)

A second factor dimension of justificatory arguments was the *precondition of equality of opportunity*. As elaborated in Chapter 6 (sections 6.1.1.3 and 6.1.2), this dimension may serve as a restrictive precondition to the justificatory motif of merit, potentially deactivating merit-based justifications; and it might simply reduce the extent of accepted inequality. Note that the former would hypothesise an interaction effect with the merit-dimension on inequality acceptance, while the latter hypothesizes a direct effect. We operationalized it not as equality of opportunity in the abstract, but regarding ‘upward mobility’, which, according to our fictitious expert, depended on the education system. In the neutral baseline version it left open, if equality of opportunity existed (*e1*), in one treatment version it stated Germany’s ‘free education system’ meant that ‘all paths are open to people’ (*e2*). The third variant contrarily stated that ‘success in the education system, unfortunately, depends heavily on the parents. This means that not all paths are open to everyone’ (*e3*).

7.2.3.4 Consequences Treatment (c1-7)

The third factor of justificatory arguments was about the *consequences of inequality*. This dimension thus symmetrically to the previous precondition of equality of opportunity added another structural condition to inequality justifications, namely their consequences as limits to or additional justifications for inequality. The fictitious journalist asked ‘When evaluating inequality, should its consequences for society also play a role?’. The fictitious expert always affirmed the question but raised different variants, one neutral, three inequality-affirmative and three inequality-criticizing variants. The neutral baseline version left it open (‘there can be both positive and negative consequences’, *c1*), while *c2-c4* stated beneficial consequences of inequality (‘incentives to innovate and develop valuable new products’ which promoted social progress, *c2*, ‘incentives for top performers to come to Germany’, as beneficial to the economy and jobs, *c3*, and inequality creating ‘good conditions for investment’, which promoted good jobs for all, *c4*). In contrast, *c5-c7* stated harmful consequences of inequality (‘inequality creates incentives for the wealthy to invest their money in real estate’, which made housing ‘prohibitively expensive’, *c5*, ‘inequality creates conflicts’, which harmed social cohesion, *c6*, and ‘inequality creates more political influence for the rich and big companies’, which was detrimental to democracy, *c7*).

7.2.3.5 *Income Distance treatment (d1-2)*

A final factor, in addition to the initial framing and the three justificatory arguments, consisted in an anchor about the specific *income distance* to be considered in the interview. Independently of the treatment, the rationale to include this information was to make sure, respondents thought of the same aspect of inequality, namely, one specific distance between top incomes and average incomes. It consisted in the simple question 'What income differences are we actually talking about?' and a reply by the fictitious expert stating an income difference between average earners and 'top earners'. Baseline income distance was a '5-fold' inequality between top earners and the average (*d1*). The alternative variant consisted in a '100-fold' income distance. Note that both statements can be considered as factually accurate, given you may define 'top earner' differently: the lower distance rather referred to top earners as the top few percentages of the income distribution, while the larger distance referred to orders of magnitude in CEO-level pay.

Table 7.2: Treatments of the survey experiment

Factor	Alignment	Treatment levels (code)
Framing	(0)	inequality has increased (f1)
	(-)	inequality has increased. Despite good economic situation not decreased (f2)
	(+)	inequality increased. Thanks to good economic situation not increased further (f3)
	(+)	inequality has increased. In international comparison still moderate (f4)
Merit	(0)	if person performs more (m1)
	(+)	performance as a lot of effort (m2)
	(-)	performance as hard physical or dangerous work (m3)
	(+)	performance as great responsibility (m4)
	(-)	performance as responsibility for health and security of people (m5)
	(+)	performance as long training and education (m6)
	(+)	performance as contribution to company growth (m7)
	(+)	performance as creative results (m8)
	(+)	contribution to beneficial innovation (m9)
Equality of opportunity	(0)	unclear whether all paths open (e1)
	(+)	all paths open thanks to free education system (e2)
	(-)	success in education system depends on parents (e3)
Consequences	(0)	neutral (c1)
	(+)	incentivizes innovation (c2)
	(+)	incentives for top performers to come to Germany (c3)
	(+)	good conditions for investment (c4)
	(-)	increasing housing costs via inequality induced real estate boom (c5)
	(-)	creates conflicts – harmful to social cohesion (c6)
	(-)	more influence for rich and big companies – harmful to democracy (c7)
Income Distance	(+)	top-earner gets 5 times the average (d1)
	(-)	top-earner gets 100 times the average (d2)

Alignment as hypothesized. Consistently with the dependent variable as 'inequality acceptance', negative means critical of inequality, positive means legitimizing/rejecting concerns. For original German wording and its translations, see Appendix F.1. Note that I am using different (lower case) codes to the (capital case) codes used in the survey programming and codebook (see Appendix F.2), which was handled in German. Codes were then chosen to guarantee clear programming instructions, with S for the initial framing, and then groups A-D to indicate those four treatment groups whose order had to be randomized. For the sake of consistency with the programming code, I have left the original codes unchanged in the codebook, but for explanations in this chapter, I have decided to opt for more intuitive first letters reflecting the factor dimensions. To avoid confusion with codes in the codebook I am using lower cases here.

7.2.3.6 Estimating Average Marginal Component Effects

It is important to note that a set of five factors with 2-9 levels yields a large number of possible combinations, in this case, $4 \times 9 \times 3 \times 7 \times 2 = 1{,}512$ combinations. With 6,100 respondents and independent uniformly distributed randomization of each factor, this gives us only around 4 respondents seeing an identical interview combination. However, as Hainmueller et al. (2014a) point out, in conjoint/vignette experiments, the number of unique profiles typically even outnumber the observed profiles. This is why usually these studies do not estimate the average treatment effect (ATE) as the typical magnitude of interest in the potential outcomes framework, but the average *marginal* component effect (AMCE), which "represents the effect of a particular attribute value of interest against another value of the same attribute while holding equal the joint distribution of the other attributes in the design" (Bansak et al., 2021, p. 29). The AMCE estimate thus tells us the average effect of changing one factor level relative to its baseline level while averaging over the effects of the other factors (Bansak et al., 2021).[152]

7.2.3.7 Aggregating Treatments and Defining Interview Types

As shown in Table 7.2, I designated a hypothesized alignment direction to each treatment level, either negative/critical, neutral/baseline, or positive/legitimizing. The direction sign was chosen in line with the dependent variable of 'inequality acceptance', where less means more equality-oriented while more means more inequality-accepting. Note that in some cases, there is more interpretive room for designation to either side, for example with the 'merit' treatments, whose supposedly more equality-oriented variants might not be understood that way by respondents (compare section 7.2.3.2). Whether neutral baseline variants would be more closely associated with critical or legitimizing variants was one desired outcome to be shown in the case of clear individual treatment effects.

Coding all treatments in this ternary way allows two additional levels of analysis. First, it allows to analyse the *aggregated effects of each treatment group* instead of individual treatment effects, i.e. applying for each factor three (or two for the income distance dimension) instead of 2 to 9 levels. Second, it allows a further *aggregation of types of interviews* presented to respondents. Three types are conceivable: Consistently critical interviews, mixed interviews and consistently legitimizing interviews. As with five factors and full randomization, only a few interviews would contain equal signs in *all* treatments, I relaxed the condition for assignment to a 'consistent type' of interview to it being either criticizing (legitimizing) or neutral. So a consistently criticizing interview contains both

[152] Note that the analysis is more complicated when treatments are nonuniformly randomized. Weighted or restricted randomization may be an option to exclude unrealistic factor combinations or match population distributions. For suggestions to estimate *population* AMCEs rather than *uniform* AMCEs, see La Cuesta, Egami, and Imai (2021). This however is not relevant for our analysis. Although interviews may contain *mixed* signals as concerns the overall distributive evaluation (compare section 7.2.3.7), it does not follow that they are inconsistent given the distinct argumentative motifs we chose as factors. We furthermore did not aim to achieve a realistic representation of media framings but rather a variation of all possible (and consistent) combinations.

criticizing and neutral treatments, but no legitimizing ones; a consistently legitimizing interview conversely could only contain legitimizing or neutral ones, but no criticizing ones. All interviews with mixed treatments were assigned to the mixed group. Additionally, a *count variable* indicating the overall *tendency* could be constructed by simply adding the recoded values of all treatment variables to a count variable with values between –5 and 5 (for treatment values –1, 0 and 1) or 1 and 11 (if shifted to positive values by adding the value of 6 to the count variable).

7.2.4 Sample and Background Variables

Our survey experiment was part of a larger survey of about 15 minutes duration and a sample size of 6,100 respondents in Germany in the age groups 18-65, representative for age, gender and education. It was carried out by *Respondi AG* through its online access panel *Mingle* during the period 10-18 December 2021. Survey participants receive a small monetary incentive for participating in the surveys at *Mingle*.[153] The entire survey consisted of four blocks, of which the interview experiment was the third one. The first block contained a survey experiment on political alienation, while the second one encompassed a survey experiment on fiscal policy rationales. The fourth block contained an experiment on political violence.

We also measured several background variables mostly at the end of the survey.[154] Among these were age, gender, education, monthly net income, top-down self-allocation today, top-down self-allocation in ten years, political left-right self-allocation, party preference, sources for information on politics, Covid-19 vaccination status, big-five personality traits, occupation and residential area type (see codebook in Appendix F.2).

7.3 Results

I analysed the data using the *cjoint* package for the statistical software R (Hainmueller, Hopkins, & Yamamoto, 2014b). The code is documented in Appendix F.5. Before presenting and discussing the analyses with estimates for treatment effects, I will first give an overview of the descriptive sample statistics including our dependent variable questions, the results of the attention check and socio-demographic information.

7.3.1 Descriptive Statistics and Dependent Variable Measures

The sample comprised 6,100 respondents, representative for age, education and gender of the German population aged 18-65 years. It is also well stratified across income groups and political

[153] Participants receive points which they can exchange for money, shopping vouchers or donations. For our 15 minutes experiment, they received 75 points, which corresponds to 0,75 Euro, cf. Mingle (2022). The panel has a total of around 100,000 members, with mixed recruitment mostly via own campaigns (85 per cent), but also recruitment marketers and self-recruitment. It is certified according to the norm for market, opinion and social research, ISO 20252:2019, cf. Respondi AG (2021).

[154] A few variables were measured at the outset as a warm up and to fill up quotas, namely gender, age and education, as well as strength of political interest and political left-right self-allocation (see codebook in Appendix F.2).

ideology. Figure 7.4 shows responses for party preference in the top panel and left-right self-allocation in the bottom panel. Figure 7.5 shows the distribution of monthly net income in the left panel.

Figure 7.4: Sample distribution ideology

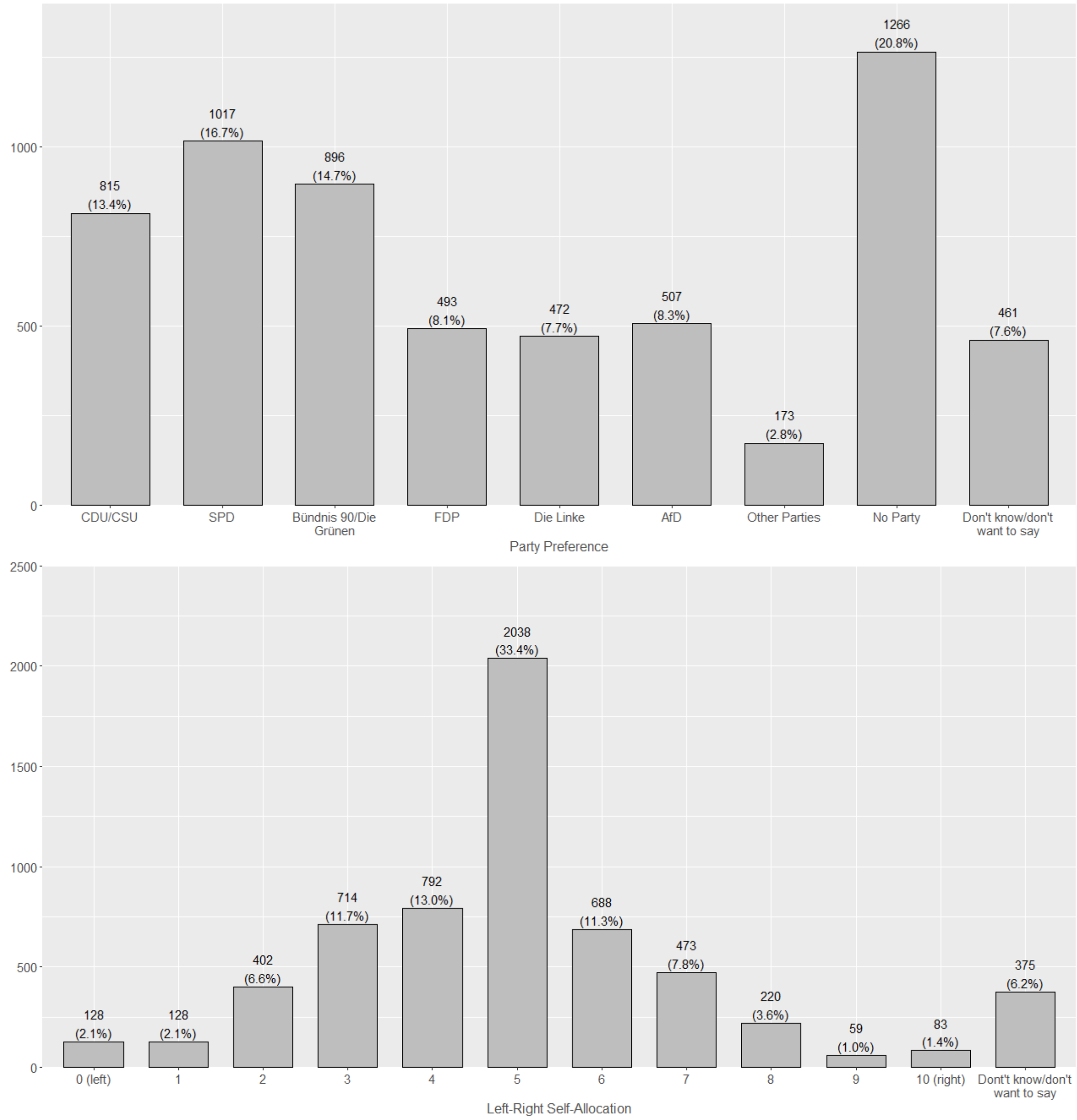
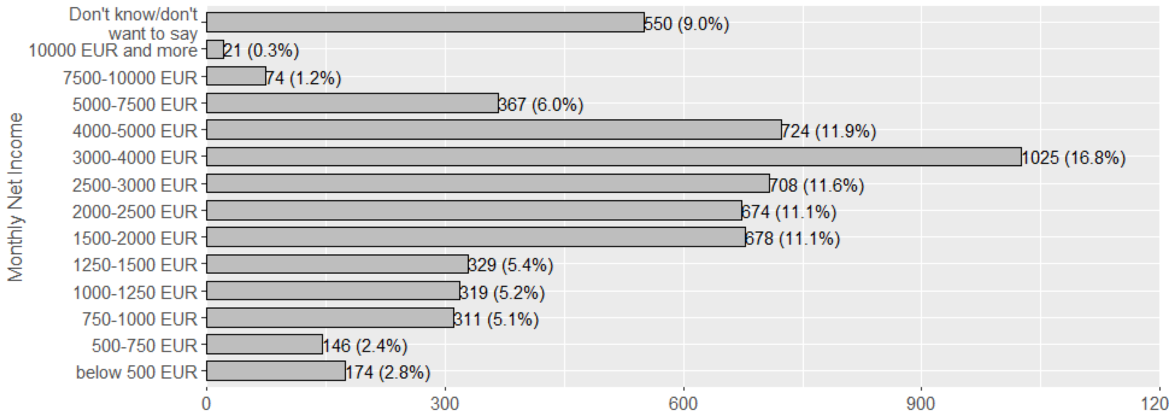


Figure 7.5: Sample distribution income



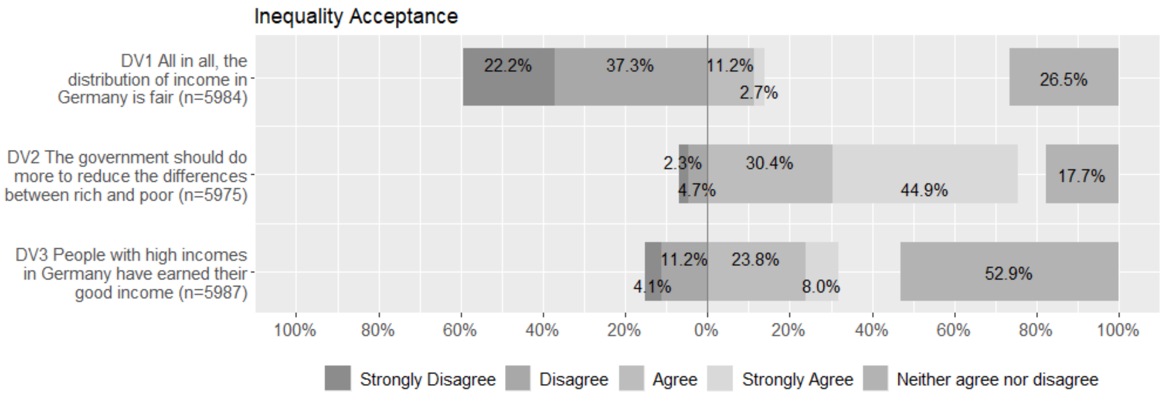
Monthly net income stated by respondents, not adjusted for household size.

Responses for the dependent variable items are consistent with findings of other surveys (compare section 7.1 and Figure 7.1), with a large majority having inequality-critical attitudes. As can be seen in Figure 7.6, 59.5 per cent of respondents in our survey disagree with the statement, that 'all in all income distribution in Germany is fair'. Only 13.9 per cent agree with the statement. An even larger majority of 75.3 per cent agrees with the statement that 'the government should do more to reduce the differences between the rich and poor'. Only seven per cent disagree. This implies that even some respondents who do not generally consider income inequality in Germany as unfair think that the government should to some extent increase redistributive efforts. Interestingly, responses to the third item were not as clear, with more respondents (31.8 per cent) agreeing that 'people with high incomes in Germany have earned their good income', while only 15.3 per cent disagreed. The largest bulk of 52.9 per cent responded with 'neither agree nor disagree', suggesting that respondents had more nuanced views of the legitimacy of top incomes, possibly seeing some as legitimate while seeing others as illegitimate (Figure 7.6). A speculative interpretation might be that the interview experiment raised awareness for a more nuanced view of income advantages, while not affecting general inequality aversion.[155] In any case, both consistency of the reversely coded items *dv1* and *dv2* and the mixed answer to *dv3* speak in favour of data quality.[156]

[155] Note that this does not imply an inconsistent view: It may well be that a respondent thinks that the overall distribution is too unequal and that at the same time some top incomes are seen as legitimate.

[156] For detailed responses by different background variables, see Figure F.1–Figure F.3 in Appendix F.3.

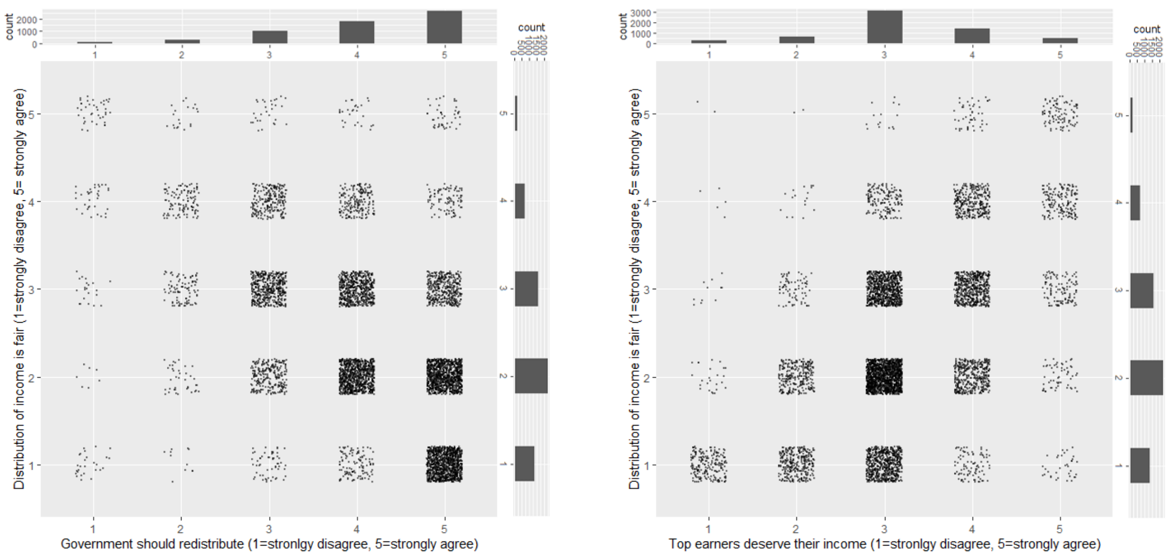
Figure 7.6: Inequality acceptance – single items



In the same vein, respondents performed quite well in the attention check. 64.9 per cent (3,959 of 6,100) passed the test of choosing all three correct items and choosing none of the five incorrect items. When relaxing the condition to erring at most once (i.e. missing at most one correct item *or* choosing at most one incorrect item), we find that 77 per cent (4,689 of 6,100) passed this less restrictive test.

Analysis of correlations between dependent variables shows a consistent pattern of inequality acceptance, especially between agreement in *dv1* ('distribution of income is fair') and disagreement in *dv2* ('government should redistribute'), which can be seen in jittered scatterplots for the two variables (Figure 7.7, left panel). A correlation between *dv1* and *dv3* is also apparent, albeit less clearly pronounced, given the large share of 'neither agree nor disagree' answers (Figure 7.7, right panel).

Figure 7.7: Dependent variable item correlations



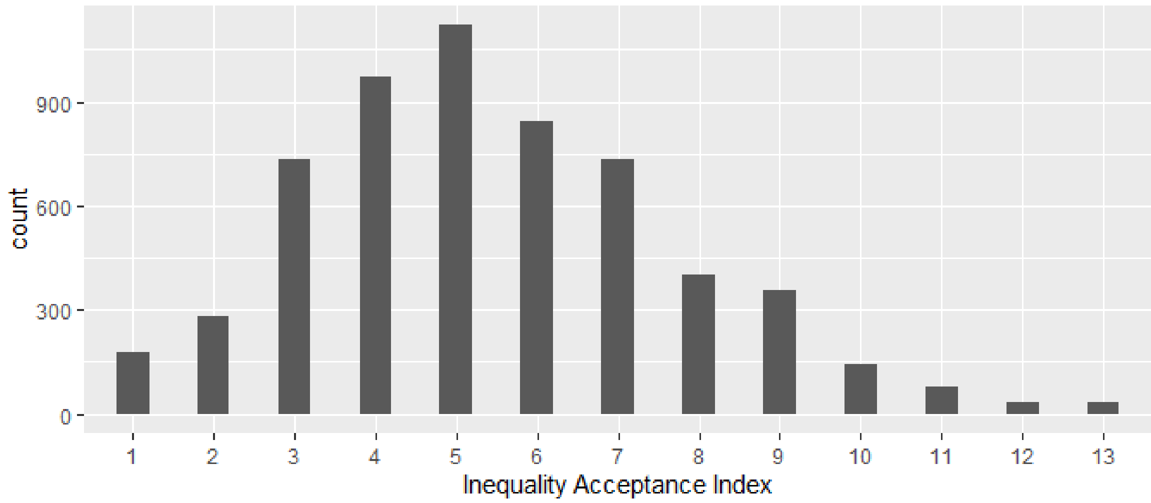
Panels show jittered scatterplots of dv1 against dv2 (left panel) and against dv3 (right panel). The side-lined histograms show the corresponding distribution of each single variable.

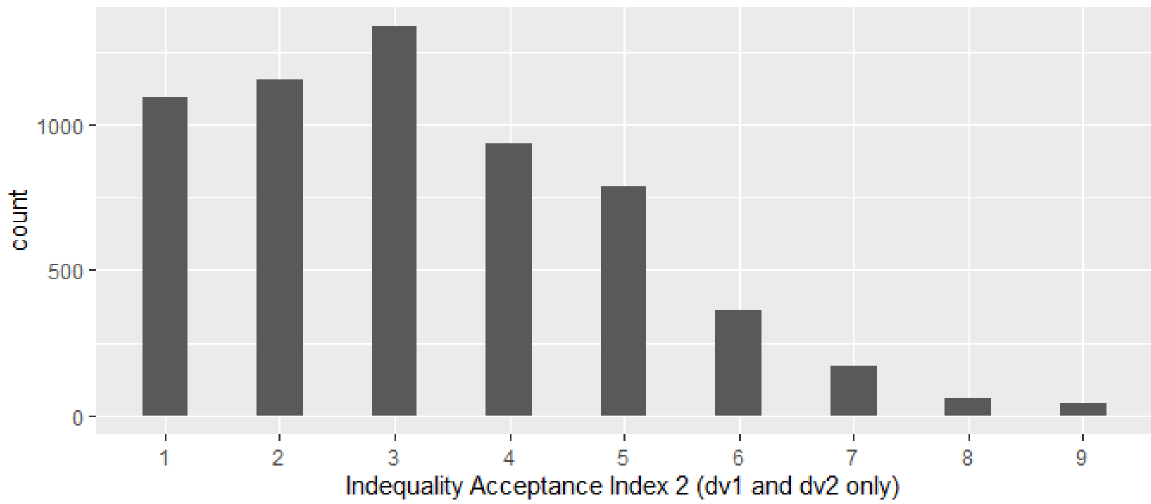
As explained in section 7.2.2 and shown in equation (1), I constructed an additive index variable dv_{index}, which includes the values of all dependent variables. Its distribution is shown in Figure 7.8. As the third item *dv3* had unexpectedly high responses as ‘neither agree, nor disagree’, I additionally constructed an alternative index variable consisting of only the first two dependent variable items. It is calculated in the same way as the index for all three items (adding the value 5 here to shift the minimum value of -4 to a value of 1):

$$dv_{index2} = dv_1 - dv_2 + 5 \qquad (2)$$

The distribution of index variable dv_{index2} is also shown in Figure 7.8. As can be expected from the correlations shown above, it is more skewed to the inequality-averse side than dv_{index}. I will report estimates for both.

Figure 7.8: Inequality acceptance – additive index variables





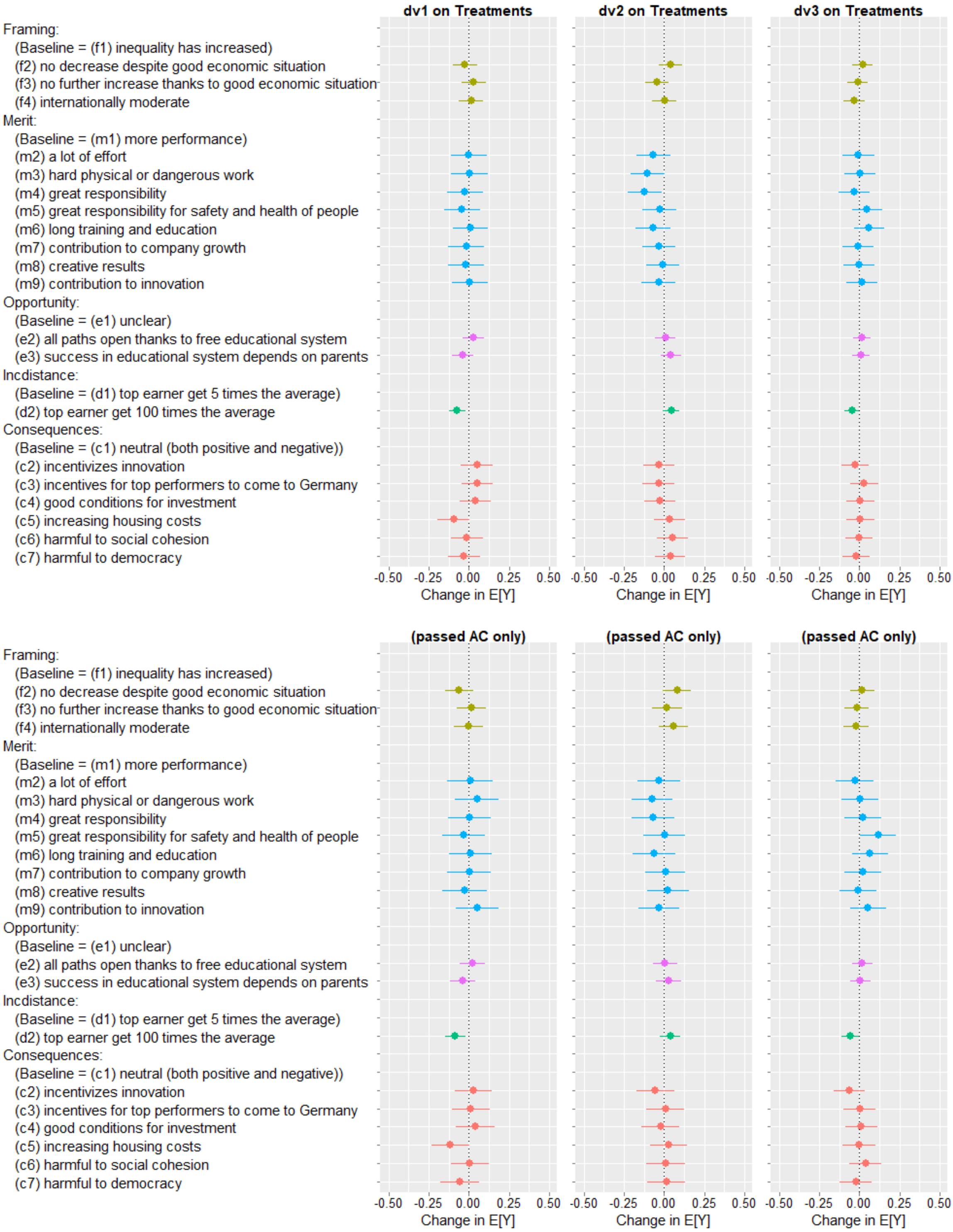
Inequality Acceptance increases with index value, i.e. 1 means lowest inequality acceptance, 13 (9) means highest inequality acceptance.

7.3.2 Average Marginal Component Effects

Estimates for average marginal component effects (AMCE) are based on linear regression following Hainmueller et al. (2014b). As pointed out in section 7.2.3.6 and indicated by the term *marginal*, AMCE represent the average effect of varying the treatment level in one factor relative to the defined baseline level, given the average effects of treatments across all other factors. Note also that it constitutes an *average* effect, potentially hiding heterogeneity across respondents (Bansak et al., 2021, p. 32).

Figure 7.9 shows the results for the AMCE estimates for all three dependent variable items, the three plots in the first row show results for all respondents, the second row shows results for those who passed the attention check. Horizontal lines around point estimates indicate .95 confidence intervals. Note that only the treatment dimension of income distance (*d2*) yields a small but significant effect in the expected direction: it shows that respondents who had seen interviews stating top incomes were 100 times the average had responded with slightly smaller inequality acceptance according to *dv1* and *dv2*. For *dv3* there is no significant effect. As concerns effect size, the effect is very small. Recall dependent variable items are measured on a 1-5 scale, so that a change in the expected value of the dependent variable, E[Y], of the magnitude of +1 would mean the average respondent chose one item more toward the inequality accepting end of the scale for *dv1* and *dv3*. Put more intuitively: more inequality-rejecting effects are directed to the left, while more inequality-accepting effects are directed to the right. In contrast, for *dv2* the reverse scale means that positive effects represent an increase in inequality *rejection*. The AMCE point estimate for *d2* (i.e. seeing income difference presented as 100-fold instead of 5-fold) on the expected value for the Likert item *dv1* is -0.07 (see Appendix F.4 for regression output tables). The results for respondents who passed the attention check only (second row of plots) are consistent with the results for the entire sample, with slightly more pronounced point estimates but larger confidence intervals due to the smaller sample size.

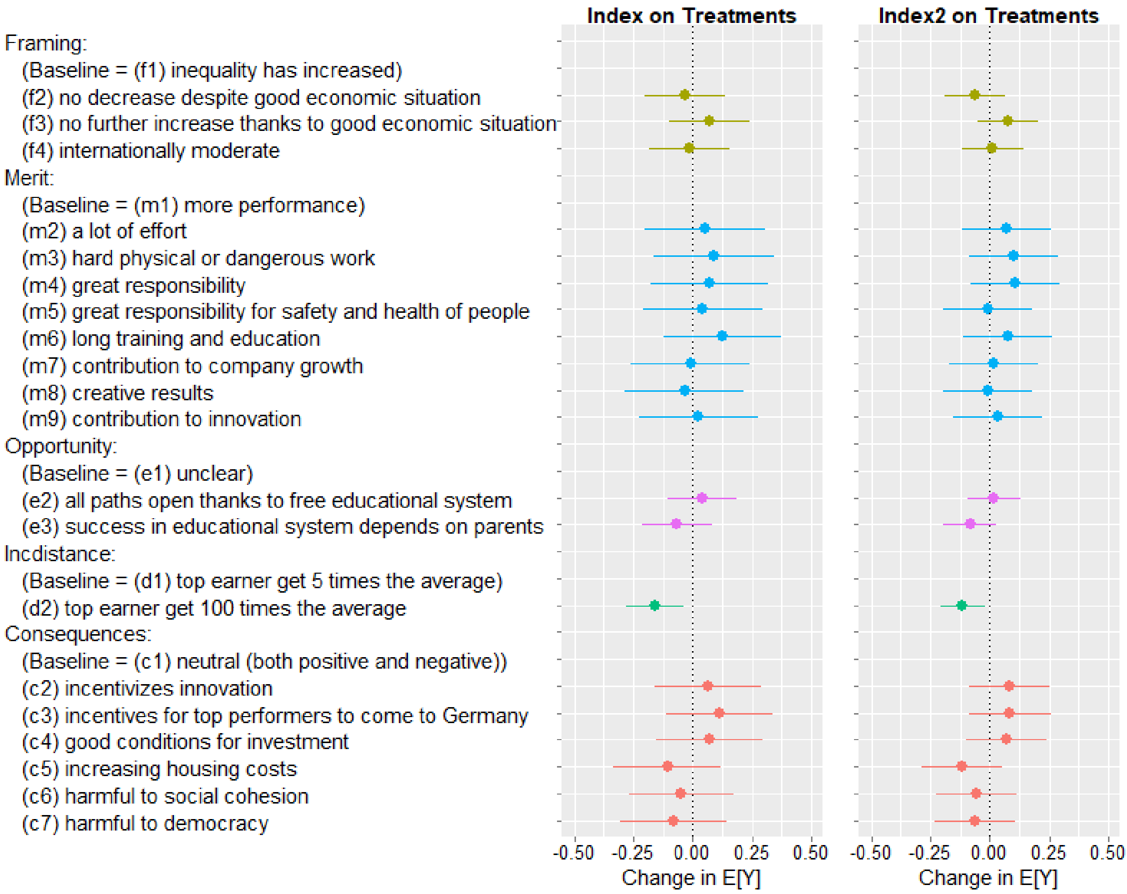
Figure 7.9: AMCE estimates for dv1-3



Horizontal lines around point estimates indicate .95 confidence intervals. Baseline levels by definition are point estimates on the vertical line for E[Y]=0. Treatment labels in short forms. For more precise descriptions, see Table 7.2 and Appendix F.1.

Figure 7.10 shows estimates for the two index variables dv_{index} (left plot) and dv_{index2} (right plot). Estimates are consistent with findings for individual dependent variable items above, with only the treatment of income distance showing a small significant effect. Note the different order of magnitude of effects (and larger confidence intervals on that scale) due to differently scaled values for dependent variables, with values of 1-13 for the overall index dv_{index} and values of 1-9 for the index dv_{index2} for *dv1* and *dv2* only.

Figure 7.10: AMCE estimates for index variables as dependent variables

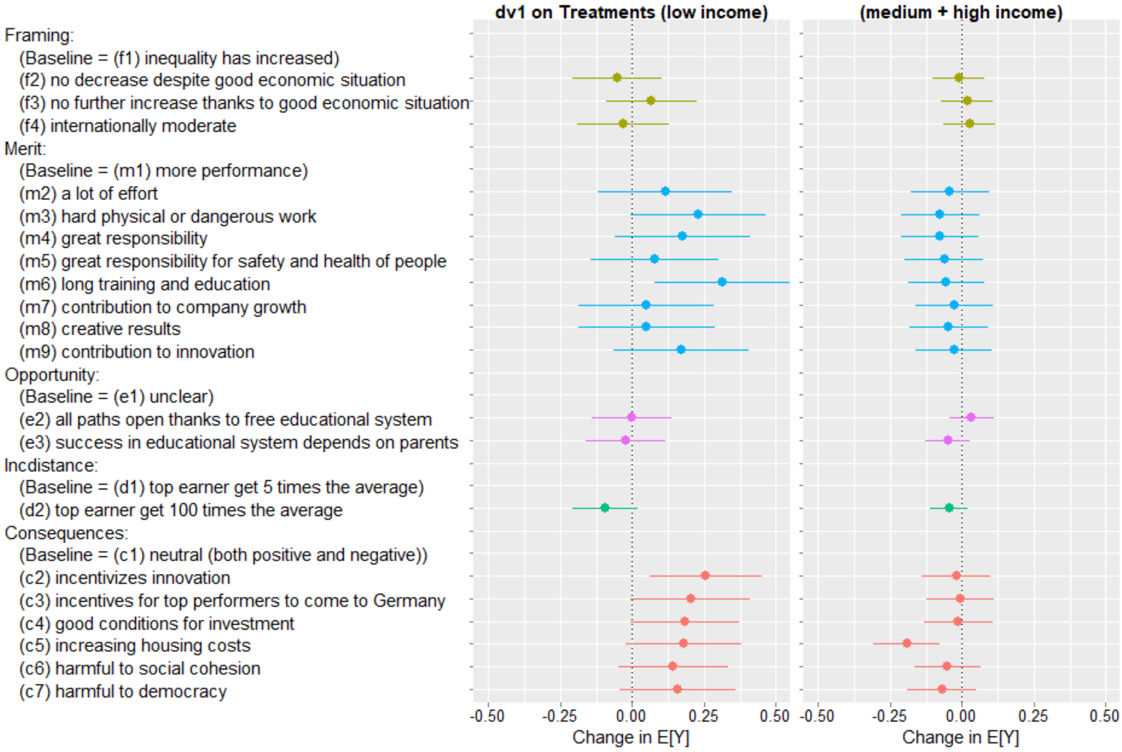


Analysis of income subgroups (monthly net incomes below 1,500 EUR, N=1,252 vs. monthly net incomes above 1,500 EUR, N= 4,218) shows some slight patterns, but should be read with a grain of salt, given small effect sizes and large confidence intervals (due to the smaller sample size for low incomes).[157] As Figure 7.11 shows, there is a significant effect of *m6* (long education) towards inequality acceptance for low-income groups, while this effect is absent for medium to high incomes. Conversely, there is a significant effect for treatment *c5* housing costs in medium-to-high-income groups, while this effect is absent for low-income groups. For alternative analyses with the smaller sample of high incomes only, that effect was not significant anymore (although a similar pattern of point estimates emerged). Similar patterns although slightly less pronounced can be found for the index variables as dependent variables.[158]

[157] As an additional caveat, recall that income data is not adjusted for household size.

[158] I chose to show selected results for dv1 only instead of using one of the two indices because it seems more intuitive for interpretation to keep a specific question in mind rather than an index.

Figure 7.11: Subgroup analysis for income groups

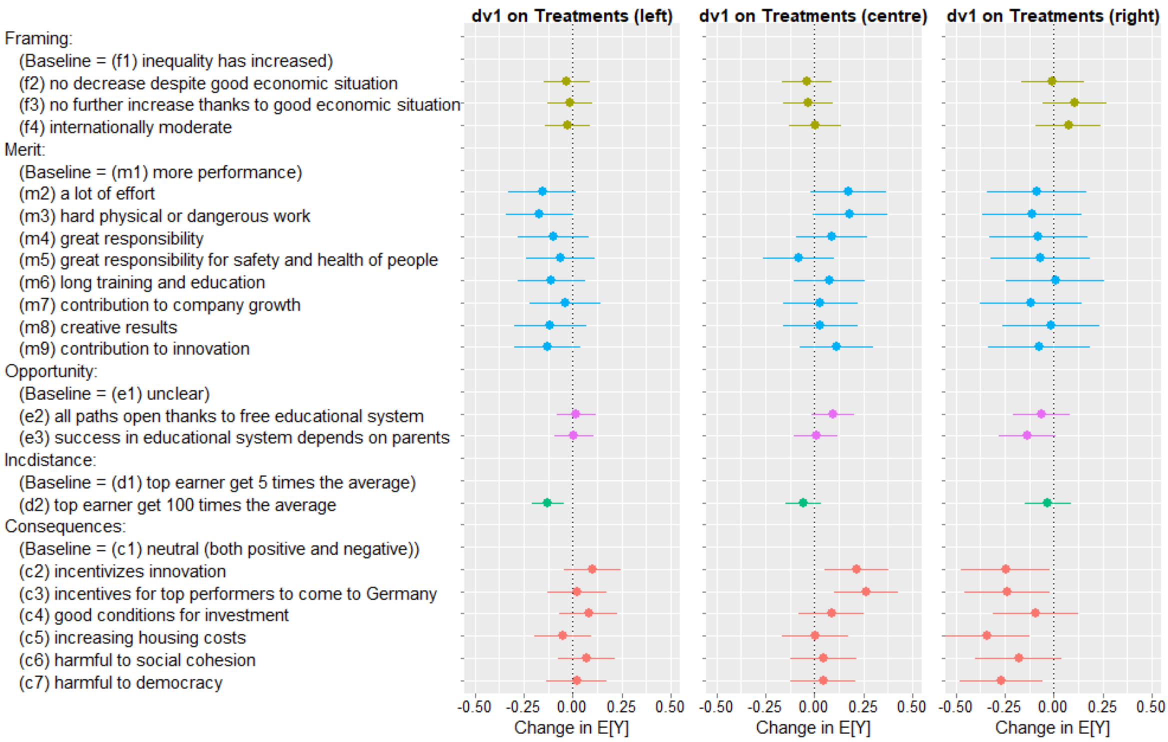


A putative interpretation of the inequality-criticizing effect of *c5* is that housing has become an *emerging* issue of concern especially for the (upper) middle income groups, while socio-economic distress including the issue of housing has been an old and well-known issue for lower classes, thus rendering it a potentially less immediate trigger for concern amongst those groups. The inequality-legitimizing effect of the long training and education treatment *m6* on *lower*-income groups might represent a form of system-justification motivation, as different to the other treatments, which are directed at *current* attribution of merit (working hard, showing responsibility etc.), it is directed to the *past* or the *future*. Recall that statistically, a non-effect of this treatment for the middle to top income groups does not mean this motif does not matter to those groups – but its *relative* importance may be smaller. However, as pointed out above, both explanations are putative and given the overall small effects, they should be read as no more than one interpretative possibility.

Subgroup analysis of left-right self-allocation also showed slight patterns, again to be interpreted with caution. While the effect of the income distance treatment (*d2*) was only significant for the 'leftist' subgroup, the 'centrist' subgroup showed a significant positive effect on inequality acceptance of the two beneficial consequences treatments holding that inequality incentivized either innovation (*c2*) or the attraction of top performers to Germany (*c3*). The 'rightist' subgroup showed a significant negative effect of inequality induced increasing housing costs (*c5*). A putative interpretation would be that progressives care about the magnitude of inequality for reasons of conviction, while centrists seem sensitive to arguments about beneficial incentives. The sensitivity to increasing housing costs on the right might reflect anxieties about the individual socio-economic position, a theme attributed to adherents of right-wing positions in other research (e.g. Hyll & Schneider, 2018). Interestingly, the rightist subgroup also showed a significant *negative* effect of the two incentive-related arguments about consequences of income inequality, *c2* and *c3*. This might reflect not an aversion to the *incentives* part of the argument, but rather an aversion towards the concepts of 'innovation' and 'top performers', both presumably despised themes on the right (Figure 7.12).

Subgroup analyses investigating interaction effects of the income distance and the equality of opportunity treatments showed no clear pattern of interaction overall.[159] Due to the lack of clear individual treatment effects, the question of whether neutral treatments were more closely associated with criticizing or legitimizing treatments could also not be answered satisfactorily. In the subgroup analysis for political self-allocation (Figure 7.12) we can see such patterns indicated by point estimates of the equality of opportunity treatment: while for centrists, an inequality-accepting deviation seems to occur if the expert mentions the 'free educational system' (*e2*), for rightists the neutral treatment (*e1*) seems more aligned with *e2*, showing a deviation towards less inequality-acceptance after the treatment denying equality of opportunity ('success in the educational system depends on parents', *e3*). However, the overall analysis did not allow observation of such patterns.

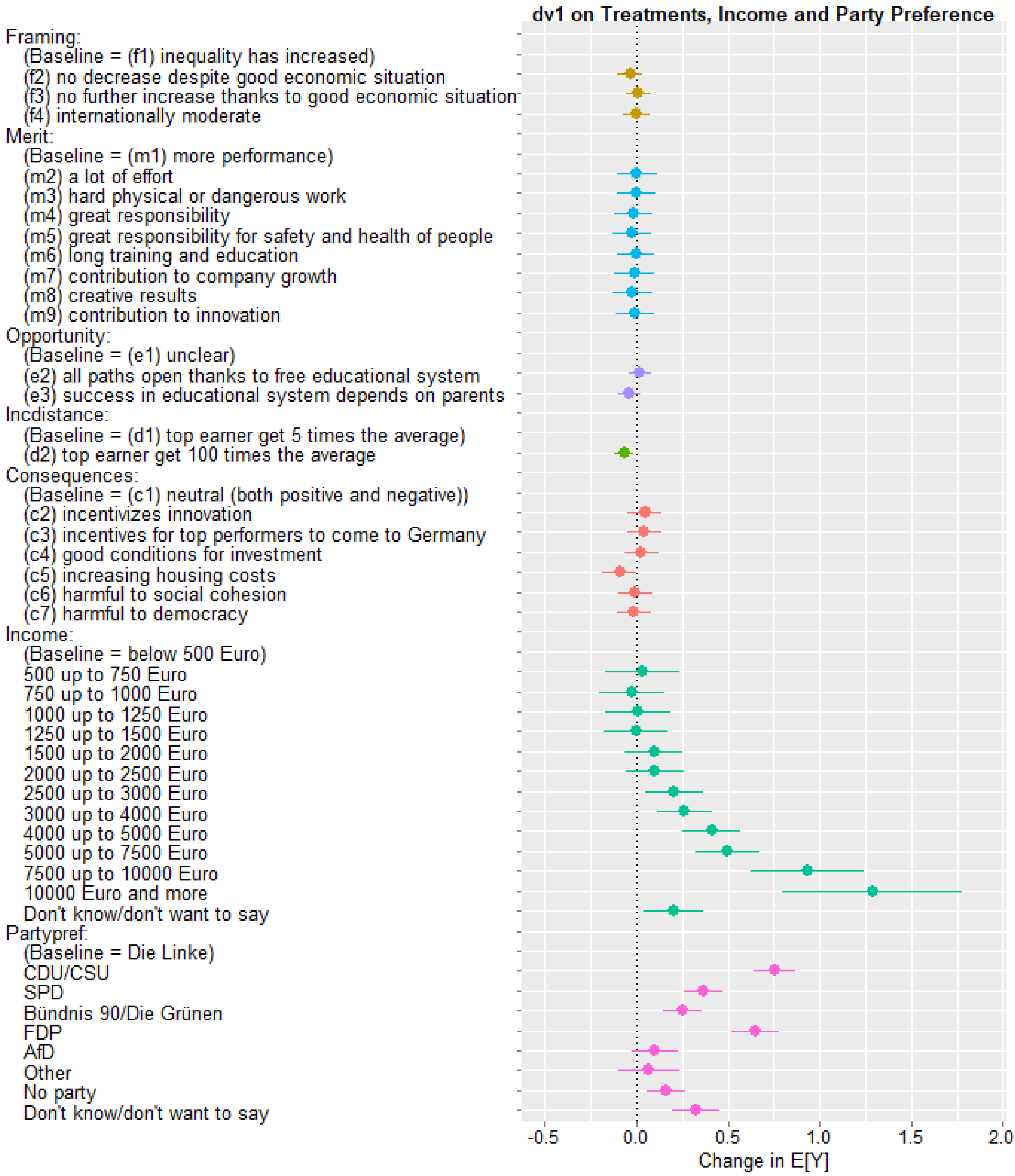
Figure 7.12: Subgroup analysis for political self-allocation



[159] For *dv1* but not the other two dependent variable items, a small interaction was found between the income distance and the equality of opportunity treatments. While the subgroup of those treated with the large income distance (*d2*) showed no effect of the legitimizing treatment, this was the case with the small income distance treatment (*d1*) subgroup. Conversely, the income distance treatment had an effect on inequality acceptance for the subgroup with *e2*, while this effect was absent with *e3*, suggesting that large income distances 'switched off' the inequality acceptance potential of equality of opportunity. See Figure F.9 in Appendix F.4 showing this pattern for aggregated treatments.

To sum up: We do not find almost any significant effect of individual treatments on inequality acceptance as measured by *dv1-3* and our index variables. As pointed out above, the only significant effect of the income difference anchor is very small. Subgroup analyses for income and political self-allocation show slight patterns, which however should be interpreted with caution given the small effect sizes. To put the effect sizes into perspective, consider the next plot showing the effects of the socio-demographic background variables income and party preference (Figure 7.13). It becomes clear that far more relevant determinants of variance of inequality acceptance are socio-economic determinants such as income and ideological determinants such as party preference. In contrast, the single treatments of our survey experiment seem to have had hardly any influence on responses right after seeing the interview. Inequality attitudes seem to be more stable than anticipated when designing the experiment. This virtual absence of effects of single signals on justifications of inequality is a first important finding. Simply switching the levels of our chosen factors is not sufficient to relevantly change how respondents judge upon general statements concerning the fairness of the distribution and redistributive policy responses.

Figure 7.13: Illustrating effect sizes – individual treatments vs. income and party preference

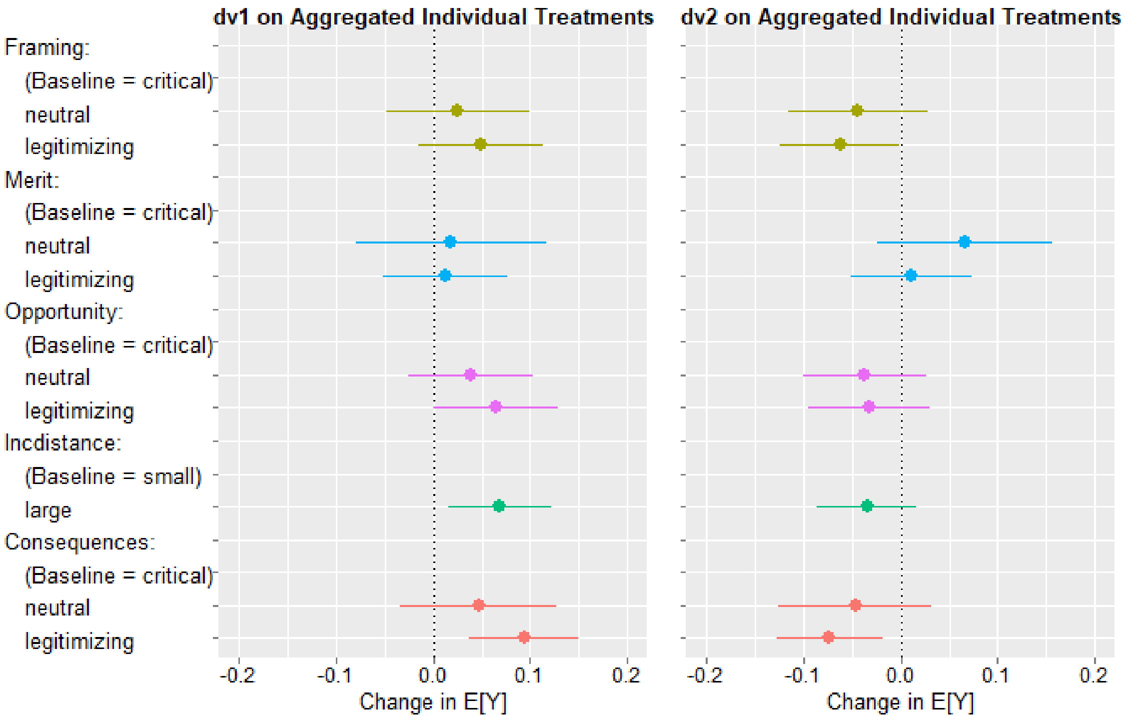


7.3.3 Aggregate Treatment Effects

Having shown that single treatment effects were mostly negligible, we can now move on to consider the question of whether the treatments had an impact on a more aggregate level. As pointed out in section 7.2.3.7, aggregation of treatments can be achieved in two steps, firstly by recoding treatments on factor level, and secondly by defining three types of interviews on the interview level. Treatments were recoded into three categories in line with hypothesized effect directions (compare Table 7.2).

This way I could already estimate the effects of aggregated treatments for each factor (Figure 7.14). On this level of aggregation, besides the income distance treatment, we see another significant effect on *dv1* and *dv2* for aggregated treatments in the *consequences* dimension: Legitimizing treatments had significantly higher levels of inequality acceptance than criticizing treatments. Additionally, there is a significant effect for *equality of opportunity* on *dv1* and a significant effect for *framing* on *dv2*.[160] For all other factors, the estimates are not significant (although point estimates are in the expected direction for all dimensions except for the merit dimension).

Figure 7.14: AMCE estimates for treatments aggregated per factor dimension (dv1 and dv2)



At this point, let me elaborate on one important aspect of the interpretation of AMCE estimates. In our experimental setting, they are interpreted as estimates of 'effects' of a treatment relative to the baseline level, which here was incidentally set as criticizing treatments. But note that we could simply redefine baseline levels and then see the exact reverse 'effect' of *criticizing* treatments. For this reason, it is important to appreciate the following epistemological dimension of interpretation: As *all* factor levels involve some form of framing of the issue, we should be careful not to understand the incidental choice of the baseline level as an 'objective' reference point. Rather, a significant effect tells us that there is a significant difference in outcomes with causal explanation. However, strictly speaking, and given we had not measured the outcome before treatment,[161] we cannot know which

[160] AMCE estimates are documented for all three dependent variable items in Appendix F.4.

[161] Not additionally measuring the outcome variable before the treatment was a deliberate choice, as it would not have come without cost: Asking respondents about the dependent variable before and after treatment may harm external validity by incentivizing a consistency-preserving response behaviour in respondents. Also, it might have primed respondents and thus caused additional distortion. Note that randomly assigning a fraction of respondents to the *dv1-3* questions without treating them at all neither serves to identify reference values for *dv1-3* as this only gives us the average effect of overall treatments with the interview. For example, it is well possible that *all variants* of the interview had a net criticizing or legitimizing effect.

part *changed* opinions, and it may also depend on our normative, analytical and even epistemological stance, which of the treatments we might regard as ‘manipulative’ (if not *all* or *any at all*). *All treatments*, by nature of containing textual information on the issue, represented forms of framings of inequality. This implies that strictly speaking there is no such thing as a baseline level for treatments; there is no control group as it were. But we can still be confident that due to randomization of treatments, differences in outcomes have a causal explanation in the fact that people saw different treatments. Thus, in our case, a positive ‘effect’ of legitimizing treatments does not necessarily imply that legitimizing treatments *increased* inequality acceptance; it may also be the case that criticizing treatments *reduced* inequality acceptance; or that both had a share in the total effect. In any case, the difference in treatments explains the difference in outcomes for all randomized items.

Our next step of aggregation is on interview level. A first more gradual approximation consists in a set of count variables (denoted as *Tcount* here) constructed by simply adding the new codings (of values -1, 0 or 1) for all factor dimensions, which implies eleven levels (compare section 7.2.3.7). A reduced more coarse-grained form of this variable merges always two levels into one to achieve larger sample sizes.[162] Additionally, I constructed a second count variable leaving out the merit treatment. This is based on the finding that this treatment did not show any clear pattern at all.[163] I also constructed a reduced form of this variable in the same way as with the complete *Tcount* variable above. We can then use the *Tcount* variables as explanatory variables to estimate the effects of the ‘degree’ to which an interview seen by a respondent was more criticizing (smaller values) or more legitimizing (greater values).[164] Figure 7.15 shows the results of AMCE estimates for the four variants of *Tcount* variables, which all indicate a clear pattern of increasing inequality aversion the more criticizing treatments an interview contained and vice versa. Estimates are most precise for the reduced form of the *Tcount* variable excluding the ‘merit’ dimension (bottom right panel).

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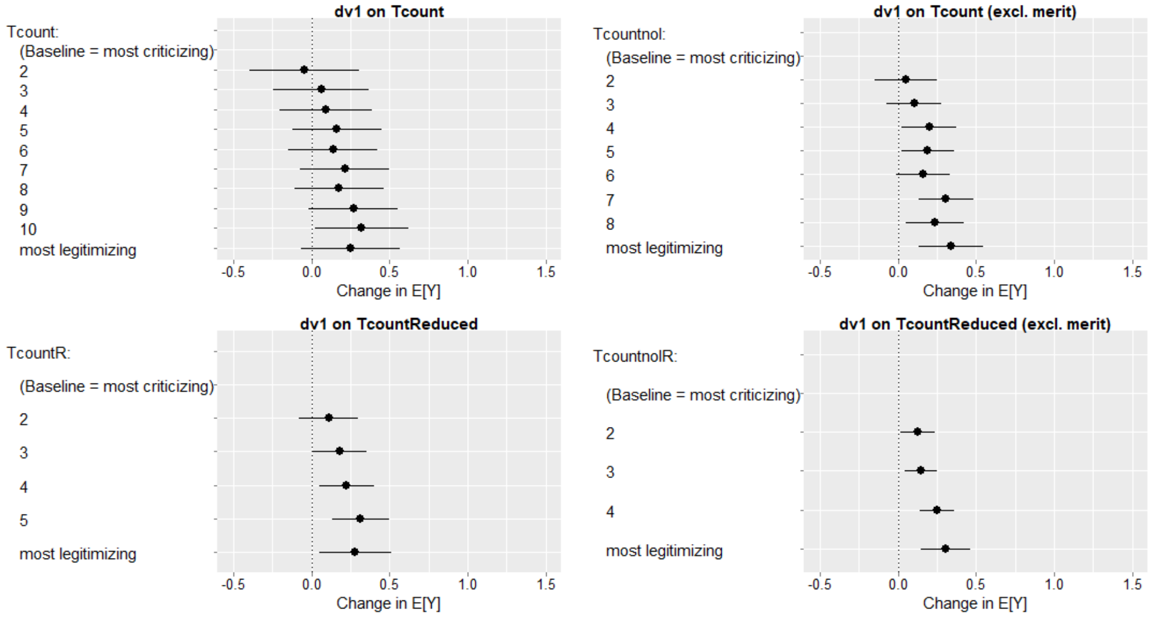
[162] Technically this was simply achieved by halving values and rounding up to the next higher natural number.

[163] Note that this was an *ex post* step of analysis, however, as pointed out in the Data and Methods section (see subsection 7.2.3.2), given it marked the most problematic dimension for hypothesizing the direction of effects, this might also have been expected *ex ante*.

[164] Note that due to full randomization and a more or less balanced distribution of codings, the distribution of the count variable values resembles a normal distribution, but slightly right-skewed due to relative prevalence of legitimizing treatments in treatment dimensions *f* and *m*. See Figure F.4 in Appendix F.3 for the distribution of the count variables. The smaller number of the extreme treatments explains slightly more imprecise estimates for those levels. However, thanks to the overall large sample size, this seems negligible. The main reason for the seemingly imprecise estimates is *scale*, which actually reflects the small size of effects.

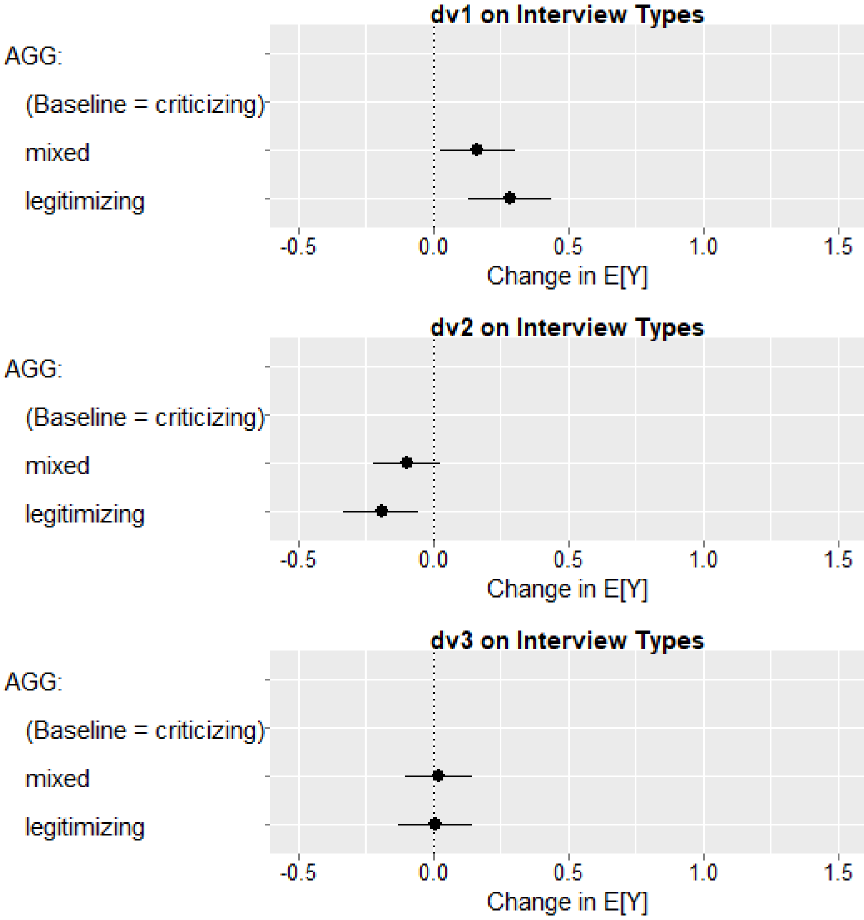
Figure 7.15: Aggregated effects (Tcount variables)



Although the *Tcount* variable indicates a *tendency* of how criticizing or legitimizing an interview was overall, it conceals whether interviews contained treatments of opposite signs. As pointed out in the discussion of factors in section 7.2.2 this does not mean an interview was inconsistent, but it potentially contained mixed signals as to whether inequality was rather problematic or not. Based on the ternary coding of treatments, we could thus reach a further level of aggregation by identifying three distinct types of interviews, namely consistently 'legitimizing' ones, 'mixed' ones, and consistently 'criticizing' ones (compare section 7.2.3.7).[165] Figure 7.16 shows the estimates for the effects of each of the three types of interviews on all three of our dependent variable items. Effects on *dv1* and *dv2* for legitimizing interviews relative to criticizing interviews are significant and of a larger order of magnitude than the single treatment effects we have seen above. No effect is shown on *dv3*, where – as we have seen – more than half of the respondents chose the 'neither agree nor disagree' category.

[165] Again, the distribution of interview types was unequal due to full randomization of treatments. Figure F.5 in Appendix F.3 shows the distribution of types, with only 233 in the criticizing type and 757 in the legitimizing type. Relaxing the coding by excluding the treatment dimension 'merit' analogously to the construction of the second index variable above, yields somewhat larger groups (662 vs. 988), as shown in the distributions in the Appendix. I performed an analogous analysis as a form of robustness check with this modified interview type variable, which yielded the same pattern. I report findings in Figure F.6 in Appendix F.4.

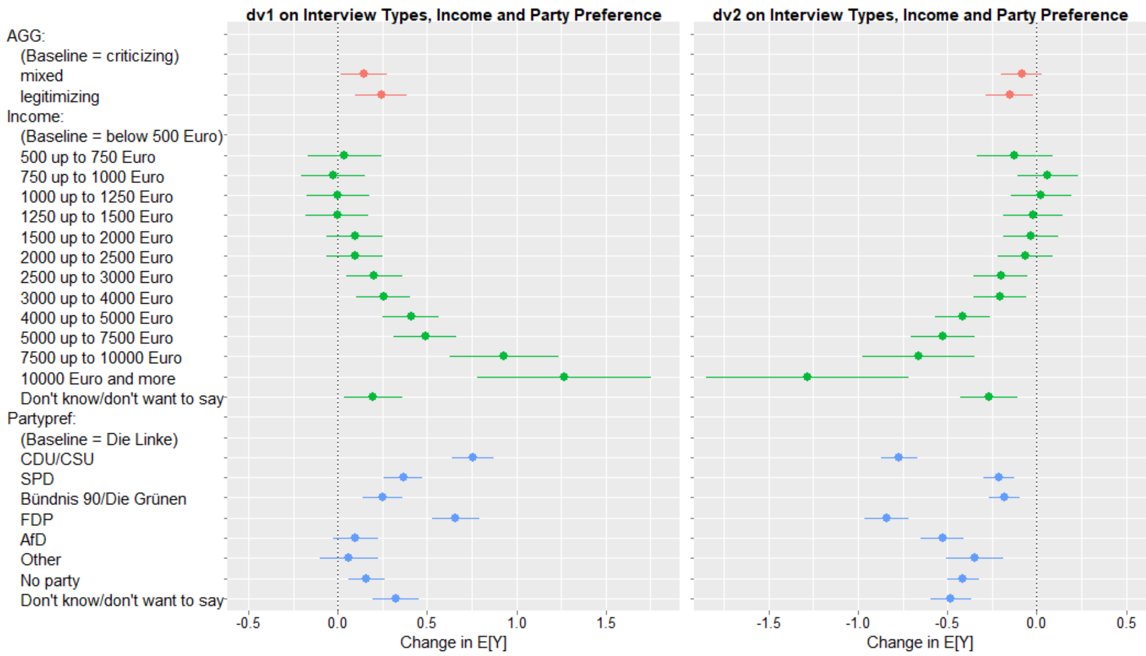
Figure 7.16: Aggregated effects (interview types)



The finding of much clearer effects of interview types is the second important result of our analysis. To appreciate the dimension of effect size, let us once again compare it to the effects we have seen for socio-demographic variables (Figure 7.17).[166] While effects of single treatments seen in section 7.3.2 were almost negligible, the aggregated effects are quite substantial. Consider the distance for example for the *dv1* dependent variable between the baseline level of the Left Party (*Die Linke*) and the Greens (*Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen*) of 0.25. The difference in inequality evaluations between legitimizing and criticizing interview types is almost the same with an estimate of 0.24, or one-fourth of switching from one of the five Likert items to the next more inequality critical one. It is two-thirds of the difference between *Die Linke* and *SPD* or around 80 per cent of the difference between *SPD* and *FDP*. Just reading a few screenshots of a fictitious expert interview in some fictitious online magazine changes inequality acceptance almost on an order of magnitude similar to differences between adherents of different political parties. This seems a substantial effect, although we do not know at all how long-lasting this effect may be and whether it is cumulative.

[166] Estimates for *dv3*, which showed no effect of interview type, are documented in Figure F.7 in Appendix F.4.

Figure 7.17: Illustrating effect sizes – dv1-2 on interview type, income and party preference



7.4 Conclusion

Two main findings emerge from this survey experiment. First, it shows that exposing respondents to variation in single treatments does not have almost any effect. Only the variation of the anchor on income distance has a small but significant effect, as did some of the other treatments for specific subgroups by income or political self-allocation. In comparison, socio-economic position and ideology turn out to be much more important factors in explaining variation in inequality acceptance. Subtle and single manipulations do not seem sufficient to change inequality acceptance, suggesting a degree of stability of individual orientations. At the same time, and this is the second important finding, the analysis of aggregated treatments shows that in the aggregate, differently framed interviews overall had a substantive effect. A gradual pattern already emerged in the analysis of the count variable of treatments (*Tcount*). But this finding was especially clear in the analysis of interview *types*, which possibly substantiated the treatments by separating consistently criticizing interviews from consistently legitimizing ones. This suggests that the effect on inequality attitudes is strongest the more consistently the signals of the framing are directed. Comparing effect size to the reference dimensions of socio-economic position and ideology, we found that treatment effects between interview types were substantial, in the order of magnitude of differences in inequality attitudes between adherents of different political parties. It remains unclear, however, how stable these effects are and whether they are cumulative over time. Also note that our study design allows causal interpretation, although it does not allow pinning down reference categories. We do not know if it is a *legitimizing* or a *criticizing* presentation of arguments, facts and framings, or both, which *changes* attitudes.

My findings speak to the strand of comparative survey research on inequality acceptance by shedding light on the question of the determinants and stability of attitudes, where framing seems to occupy a middle ground, being neither irrelevant nor the main short-term explanatory factor. Note, however, that my analysis examined very subtle treatments. A much stronger stimulus might well have caused much larger effects.[167] We should also be cautious about strictly separating the 'framing and discourse dimension' from other explanatory categories. Especially the ideological stance, as measured for example by party preferences, will by no means be exogenous to discourses. Parties react to public discourses[168] and respondents' individual party preferences may well also be dependent on both discourse-driven change in attitudes as well as discourse-driven change in party stance. These complex interactions remain to be better understood. Confirming that discourses directly matter in determining attitudes in the general public is one important building block in advancing this understanding.

The results also speak to the strand of experimental research motivated among others by system justification theory. It is worth noting that the only single dimension with a small but significant effect on individual treatment level was the anchor defining income distance between top and average earnings. The experiment shows in contrast to findings by Trump (2018) that variation in this anchor, *ceteris paribus*, has a small effect on inequality evaluations. As suggested by Trump, more politically charged information on inequality might well affect fairness evaluations of general inequality. This is the case in our experiment, where information on inequality is presented in the normative context of discussing the legitimacy of income inequality.

As concerns the role of different specific meritocratic justification patterns of income inequality, the experiment does not provide as much insight as expected. The subgroup analysis per income hints at a special role of the *long education* motif for low-income groups, possibly because it is distinct in not referring to *present* attributions of merit. The subgroup analysis per political self-allocation also points to the differential impact of some of the justificatory arguments referring to beneficial or harmful consequences of income inequality. Also, when considering the aggregation of individual treatments, the consequences 'restriction' as well as the equality of opportunity 'precondition' of merit-related justification patterns seem relevant, as shown in small significant effects of all of the dimensions on either *dv1* or *dv2*. However, in our design, effects remain too small to allow for bold conclusions from these findings. It remains open to re-examine this issue with stronger stimuli or a modified experimental design, for example measuring outcomes directly after each snippet.

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[167] Kuziemko et al. (2015) for example show much clearer effects on inequality attitudes with stronger stimuli, deliberately designed to "provide a large 'shock' to individuals' knowledge about inequality and redistributive policies", cf. Kuziemko et al. (2015), p. 1484.

[168] Recall Fastenrath et al. (2021) citing policy-makers who describe media discourses as barriers to pushing for more progressive redistributive policy.

A further open question is why so many respondents opted for the 'neither agree nor disagree' category for *dv3*, asking about the deservingness of top income earners. Does this simply represent general views on top incomes, or is this the result of an interview-induced priming of the complexity of normative justifications, making respondents wish to reply in a more nuanced way than the question permitted? A differently posed question, a control group without seeing the interview or an additional open question might have helped to better understand this outcome.

Most importantly for my overall research on inequality debates in Germany, the survey experiment underlines that inequality debates matter. Although in the short-run, such nuanced stimuli cannot override more profound inequality attitudes, we see an immediate substantial effect of consistently aligned interviews even in this brief setting. We should note that this has ambiguous implications for my previous analyses of public inequality debates. On the one hand, it underlines the importance of mechanisms of inequality denial for public attitudes. It also underlines the relevance of (near-)hegemonic public discourses. On the other hand, it shows the limits of strategies aiming for discourse hegemony. Even minority voices might distort the effect of signals of relativization or dramatization. And this points to a third potential implication: if public inequality debates are at the outset of a turning point towards more of a consensus that concerns about economic inequality are justified, the role of inequality relativizers may change from *stabilizers* of a hegemonic economic liberal position to *denialists* spreading doubts about such consensus about inequality concerns. For both positions, it is of relevance to understand that achieving a *change* in attitudes may critically rely on consistent signals. Hooghe and Marks (2009) have coined the two concepts of a 'permissive consensus' as opposed to a 'constraining dissensus'. Applied to redistributive policy, we may think of the inequality discourse as torn between these two states. Economic liberals have been used to a permissive consensus about their policy preferences; now they seem to fear a contrary consensus favouring redistribution. So instead of working towards manufacturing and consolidating a permissive consensus of economic liberalism, they may move to the more defensive position of fuelling a 'constraining dissensus' about the adequacy of redistributive policy. Recall the language of the *FAZ* editorial on economic inequality discussed in Chapter 4 ("Those who howl with the zeitgeist…", see p. 58) possibly anticipating[169] this role, indicating that such an ideological-strategic realignment may already have started.

The analysis in this chapter has made it clear that consistent media framings of inequality and its justifications have an impact on its acceptance. When considering the policy gap on inequality this plays an important role: we know that a majority, despite all mechanisms of relativization, shares *general* concerns about inequality and favours more redistributive policy *in general*. Against this background, framings in debates on specific policies may play a key role in reducing public and elite support when a concrete opportunity for a redistributive policy measure arises.

[169] I say 'anticipating' because my analysis in Chapters 2-4 has shown, that this is by no means yet the reality of German inequality debates.

8 Conclusion

In my research, I have closely examined inequality debates in Germany in the past decade, thereby mapping the discursive opportunity space for redistributive policy. In four explorative analyses, I have analysed various aspects of public debates on the general theme of economic inequality and policy responses through redistributive policy. Additionally, I have examined the causal effects of media framings to assess the relevance of media debates for inequality attitudes of citizens. My research shows that German inequality debates of the past decade were in key parts dismissive of concerns about inequality, rejecting redistributive policy. A variety of 'mechanisms of inequality denial' were employed, effectively questioning worries about inequality and playing down the need for policy measures to reduce inequality. At the same time, my analysis reveals that normative arguments available in the public discourse have a much more egalitarian potential than it may seem, given the partly harsh rejection of concerns about inequality. Finally, my research shows that public framings of inequality in the media, including its normative justification, do matter, as they have the potential to change general inequality acceptance. Taken together, we can conclude that public debates relativizing inequality do exist. What is more, they are actively pursued by key actors in the debate, they get a forum in principal outlets of the German public debate, and they can have an effect on the acceptance of inequality amongst citizens. My analysis does not make (and is not designed to make) any causal claims about policy outcomes. But in the light of my findings, it seems quite plausible that the German inequality discourse does indeed play an important role in explaining the policy gap on inequality. In any case, my analyses serve as an important documentation of this relevant discourse in the past decade.

In the first analysis in Chapter 2, I have shown that the reception of Piketty's *C21* was overly hostile, lacking an openness to consider the analysis on economic inequality in *C21* more seriously and honestly. Piketty was widely attacked by journalists and economists for his theory, his data, his methodological approach and his policy recommendations. While some were more unhappy with his theory as either too neoclassical or not neoclassical enough, others questioned his integrity on the grounds of his data quality or consistency of his arguments, while many again harshly rejected his redistributive policy recommendations. I suggest that the reception reveals more about German economic policy debates than about Piketty's work, which was often (but surely not always) presented in a distorted and misleading, and in any case unappreciative way – in sharp contrast to the much more friendly and open reception in the English-speaking world. The analysis of the reception of *C21* thus turns out as a useful start to set the scene for my further analyses. It shows that especially the forums for economic policy debates in Germany seemed mostly unprepared to accept inequality as a relevant policy concern. These parts of the media landscape and public seem to have internalised the one-sidedness of German economic policy debates, which might be explained by disciplinary homogeneity in the past and corresponding lack of plurality in the education of many economic journalists.

In my next analysis, I consequently took a closer look at the framing of inequality in German newspapers. I exploited the opportunity to analyse two almost simultaneous series on inequality in the two large German quality outlets, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *FAZ*. The timing of the series was only two years after the Piketty reception and arguably still part of the echoes of the reception of *C21*, and at any rate reflecting the fact that inequality had arrived as a key issue in international elite debates, as shown on the agenda of the *World Economic Forum* (compare Appendix A). My analysis shows that while inequality was identified by editors as a relevant issue for reporting, at the same time it was surprisingly often dismissed as an issue of concern: especially journalists of the *FAZ* newspaper often rejected concerns about inequality and redistributive policy proposals. I show diverging patterns depending on the thematic context, outlet and article style. For example, inequality was problematized especially when it referred to urban or regional inequality, while more general articles tended to be more inequality relativizing. The issue of equality of opportunity is a case where concerns about inequality tended to be shared but redistributive policy was rejected. Articles that dismissed inequality concerns typically went along with more technical details. The analysis also yielded some observations beyond formal coding, captured in memos, which revealed rhetorical devices, such as unusually judgmental, strong symbolic or metaphoric language. These were particularly present in evaluations directed against inequality concerns and redistributive policy.

Building on the more formalised analysis of framing, I identified the *FAZ* newspaper as a good source to look more closely at mechanisms of inequality denial in the next chapter. Additionally, I included two important actors of inequality relativization in the analysis, the think tank *IW Köln* and the employer-financed campaign platform *INSM*. Thirdly, I included the annual reports of the advisory council on economic issues to the German federal government, *GCEE*. The period I investigated was from 2013, the year of the federal election in Germany which crucially evolved around redistributive tax policy and justice concerns, to 2017, thus further including the time of the Piketty reception as well as the inequality series of 2016 analysed in previous chapters. I reveal a variety of mechanisms of inequality denial. These include relativization by international comparison, anchoring and data tailoring and selective differentiation, but also attempts to delegitimise actors and data bases, or monopolise expert status. The latter can be achieved both by disciplinary gatekeeping and a moralising or emotionalising of counter-arguments. They further include the struggle for terms (such as ‘equality of opportunity’, ‘poverty’ or ‘freedom’) and the struggle for discourse sovereignty (by controlling platforms and pretending plurality, or by claiming minority status). The analysis makes it clear that it may not come as a surprise if policy-makers perceive discursive boundaries concerning inequality-reducing policy proposals.

In the next two chapters, I have expanded my focus to include both inequality-legitimizing and inequality-criticising parts of the discourse alike. In a discourse analysis of the public debate surrounding the record salary of then *VW* CEO Martin Winterkorn, I sought to explore the normative space on justification patterns of income inequality. Based on the public debate on managerial pay, I developed a generalised typology of justification patterns that structures the manifold arguments justifying or delegitimising income inequality. The five key argumentative motifs are 'desert', 'equality of opportunity' and 'procedural' motifs, as well as 'harmful consequences' and 'need'. Additionally, I found several 'cross patterns' that combine various motifs or that refrain from referring to any substantive normative principle. My analysis shows that justification patterns were more timeless and more flexible than it may seem. The analysis not only reveals the crucial roles of merit-related and procedural arguments to justify inequality; it also shows the egalitarian potential of the actual inequality discourse. More inequality-averse positions would not need to build on substituting established normative patterns, but could rather build on redefining premises of attribution, stricter reliance on preconditions and giving more weight to harmful implications. Take the example of hard-working but poorly paid care workers. Remunerating their hard work more on par with currently well-paid jobs could be legitimized by the same meritocratic justification patterns only with changed attribution of who is working hard and contributing in which way. Likewise, equality of opportunity could be reinterpreted in much more egalitarian ways by stressing the notoriously unequal opportunities produced by unequal starting conditions due to existing inequality.

In my final analysis, I expand the focus from elite debates to the general public. I seek to examine the causal effects of media framings on inequality acceptance among citizens as media recipients. The study uses framings and justification patterns found in the previous analyses and varies them in a multifactorial survey experiment, based on a fictitious expert interview in an online magazine. The survey experiment shows that single nuanced treatments cannot compete with the strong socio-demographic determinants of inequality acceptance, namely socioeconomic position and ideology. However, the analysis of aggregate treatments shows that there is a significant and substantial effect of framings when comparing consistently criticizing with consistently legitimizing interviews. This effect is in the order of magnitude of ideological differences between different parties. Given that respondents have only processed five short snippets of media framings on inequality justifications, the findings reinforce the importance of public inequality debates in the media in explaining attitudes and ultimately policy outcomes, which directly and indirectly depend on attitudes.

In my research, I have approached a huge topic: a very general debate ('inequality and redistribution'), with broad participation, involving complex cross-sectional policy issues, with a research focus on the wide field of the media and public debates. The aims of the analysis must accordingly remain modest, which is reflected in the restrictions of both my focus and analytical goals. Consequently, one limitation of my research is that I do not focus on actors, their intentions and strategies as well as their influence on both discourse and political outcomes. Thus, my analysis does not directly assess the ‘politics of inequality’. What it provides instead is a (partial) mapping of framings and argumentative patterns, depicting the discursive landscape in which such politics takes place. Likewise, I do not approach the ‘production process’ of media content as an object of analysis, since the focus is on its output. Thus, my analysis also does not explicitly reveal any causal mechanisms behind media framings as for example the question of journalistic activism or the role of media ownership. Again, my focus is on ideas, not the actors employing or amplifying them. Throughout Chapters 2-6, my analysis remains explorative without assessing causal mechanisms or explanations, neither about the emergence nor about the effects of the framings and argumentative patterns I reveal. In the final chapter, in contrast, I commit to causal analysis, showing an effect of media framings on inequality attitudes with a survey experiment, thus underlining the relevance of my focus on such framings in the previous explorative analyses.

Another caveat concerns the dichotomous distinction between ‘economic liberalism’ and ‘interventionist redistributive policy’, which was employed throughout the analysis. This distinction was useful to operationalize the alignments of framings and provide clarity in the analysis of an already complex issue. But by definition, it conceals more nuanced positionings that are likely to be held amongst individual contributors to the debates. Note, however, that I used this distinction to discuss *alignments*, not the views about an ideal type social order. Almost no one would choose either extreme: one of a minimal state that does not redistribute at all or one that seeks complete economic equality. Alignments rather tell us the *direction* of preferred policy from the status quo: reduce inequality through interventionist redistributive policy or not. In some instances, for example with higher education spending aimed at improving equality of opportunity, it was even possible to conceive of both alignments: one as complementary policy, one as substitute, i.e. one that approves of progressive (and thus redistributive) financing of such expenses, and one that suggests that education spending shall *replace* demands for redistribution, thus effectively aligning it against more redistributive policy. Here, interpreting alignments required contextualizing the statements and debates to reveal what was often only implicit. All in all, the dichotomous distinction proved useful to capture these alignments in my analysis; but it is important to keep in mind the possibility that participants of inequality debates may also have held mixed alignments in different specific policy areas and concerning different aspects of economic inequality.

While my analysis of debates of the past decade may bear merit for historians as a documentation, the approach itself is not historical as an analysis. I do not trace the development of debates nor do I compare debates across historical moments. Nonetheless, it is undoubtfully a special moment of inequality debates which I capture: The past decade of 2011-2021 marks a time, in which the issue of inequality gained salience in public debates. As has been pointed out along the way, it is the time of post-Great-Recession economic policy discourse; a time of disciplinary transformation in economics in Germany; a decade where progressive parties were in tentative realignment after years of neoliberal economic policy in labour markets, taxation, welfare state and approaches to globalization all contributing to the widening gap on inequality; essentially a time of at least cautious questioning of old certainties. But my analysis shows that it also was a time, when apparently not everyone was prepared for more progressive and egalitarian reconsiderations of such certainties. My research documents this ‘constraining dissensus’, with contributions that served to relativize the concerns about inequality, spread doubts both about the adequacy of redistributive policy and about the competence of those supporting it. This way, I contribute to a better understanding of the discursive obstacles to redistributive policy.

My analysis has taken a general perspective, which has both advantages and disadvantages. While other studies on inequality debates have more closely examined more specific debates about certain redistributive policy measures, my contribution consists in considering economic inequality, its justifications and the evaluations of redistributive policy *in general*. I have analysed specific discursive events as well as specific actors and forums of the debate, but always with an interest in how ‘economic inequality’ is treated generally. At the same time, I have applied qualitative, interpretive approaches that serve to capture diverse rhetorical mechanisms of denial of economic inequality and a wide range of normative arguments about income inequality. The generality of my analysis in conjuncture with an interpretive, close-reading approach bears one key benefit. I have identified patterns of framing, mechanisms of inequality denial and a typology of justification patterns, which are more timeless than the specific discursive events from which they emerged. This way, they also serve as mappings to make sense of future inequality debates.

The case for inequality reduction is so easily made; there is egalitarian philosophy, epidemiological research; analysis of carbon emissions and the role of inequality for the functioning of democracy, as well as research showing the harms to economic stability. But the immediate commitment to inequality reduction will depend on both awareness of such concerns about inequality and an insusceptibility to denialism. My findings show that there is much denialism around and that such framings apparently can affect inequality acceptance. My analysis may furthermore serve as a source helping to identify such argumentative and rhetorical patterns. At the same time, it shows that more radical egalitarian ideals for our society are already part of our collective normative repertoire. This leads me to conclude that it is a worthwhile undertaking for anyone committed to the reduction of inequality to discern and understand the denialism of inequality, make it visible and counter it with appropriate replies. This means unveiling illegitimate defamations and countering legitimate arguments. It also means, pointing out that justifications of inequality have always been around and are both more timeless and potentially more egalitarian than some may want to make them appear. Policy change ultimately requires more than discourses; but without consideration of discourses, policy action will have a hard time overcoming obstacles. Windows of opportunity often do not follow our wishes concerning their timing – but when they open, it makes a huge difference how discourses are understood and conducted. My research is meant to contribute to this understanding.

9 References

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10 Appendices

Appendix A – Introduction

Table A.1: Annual Reports of World Economic Forum quoting 'inequality'

Annual Report	Mentions of 'inequality'
1998/1999	-
1999/2000	-
2000/2001	-
2001/2002	-
2002/2003	-
2003/2004	2
2004/2005	-
2005/2006	-
2006/2007	-
2007/2008	-
2008/2009	-
2009/2010	-
2010/2011	1
2011/2012	-
2012/2013	-
2013/2014	-
2014/2015	4
2015/2016	1
2016/2017	2
2017/2018	3
2018/2019	5
2019/2020	13
2020/2021	6

Sources: World Economic Forum, Annual Reports 1998/99–2020/21. Analysis by the author.

Appendix B – Piketty reception 2014

B.1 Sales of *C21* and Reporting on “Piketty”

Table B.1: Sales of C21

Language	Number printed
English	650,000
Chinese simplified	282,500
French	274,910
Japanese	163,000
Portuguese	155,367
German	108,270
Castilian	101,500
Korean	88,000
Italian	71,353
Dutch	50,981
Chinese complex	44,000
Turkish	33,000
Polish	16,460
Norwegian	12,000
Catalan	10,000
Swedish	8,000
Greek	7,357
Danish	7,000
Russian	7,000
Czech	5,500
Slovenian	4,380
Croat	3,000
Slovakian	1,905
Hungarian	1,850
Serbian	1,750
Bosnian	1,000
Total	2,110,083

As of December 2015. Other languages (sales figures unavailable): Romanian, Thai, Tamil, Hindi, Mongol, Bengali, Latvian, Arabic, Finnish, Macedonian, Vietnamese, Ukrainian; Source: Goldhammer, 2017

Table B.2: Articles on “Piketty” in German and English language news

	German Language News	All English Language News
all 2013	5	68
January 2014	1	20
February 2014	3	6
March 2014	5	38
April 2014	19	254
Mai 2014	97	747
June 2014	80	509
July 2014	43	329
August 2014	34	307
September 2014	48	355
October 2014	102	253

Search at Nexis News Database in German and English language, respectively; duplicate filter for “similar” articles activated, as of December 2014.

B.2 Primary Sources of the Analysis of the German Piketty reception

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Appendix C – Framing Analysis

C.1 Quantitative Analysis of Inequality Headlines *FAZ* and *SZ*

Table C.1: Number of articles in SZ and FAZ with "Ungleichheit [inequality]" in the headline.

Year	SZ	SZ (print only)	FAZ	FAZ (print only)
2011	5	4	6	3
2012	6	5	8	4
2013	11	7	10	6
2014	27	19	22	11
2015	21	13	10	9
2016	53	33	44	21
2017	34	26	12	6
2018	23	15	15	9
2019	24	19	24	11
2020	25	16	15	8
2021	68	22	15	9

Search results from https://archiv.szarchiv.de/ (SZ) and from https://www.faz-biblionet.de/ (FAZ).

C.2 Primary Sources of the Framing Analysis

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) and Frankfurter Sonntagszeitung (FAS)

FAS (21 February 2016). ARM UND REICH, p. 21.

FAS (21 February 2016). Leben hinterm Zaun, pp. 25-27.

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FAZ (27 February 2016). Die große Kluft zwischen Arm und Reich, p. 18.

FAZ (3 March 2016). Das Lohngefälle wird flacher, p. 17.

FAZ (5 March 2016). Die globale Ungleichheit sinkt, p. 20.

FAZ (12 March 2016). Die überschätzte Gerechtigkeitslücke, p. 18.

FAS (13 March 2016). Wohlstand für wenige, p. 26.

FAZ (15 March 2016). Durch mehr Wettbewerb zu mehr Gerechtigkeit, p. 17.

FAZ (16 March 2016). Besserverdiener verdienen immer besser, p. 16.

FAZ (17 March 2016). Schadet Ungleichheit dem Wachstum?, p. 21.

FAS (20 March 2016). Nehmt von den Reichen das Geld !, p. 25.

FAZ (22 March 2016). Einkommensunterschiede schaden nicht, p. 17.

FAZ (26 March 2016). Harter Aufstieg, p. 23.

FAZ (29 March 2016). "Amerikas Arbeiter haben 35 lausige Jahre hinter sich", p. 19.

FAZ (30 March 2016). Erhöht das billige Geld die Ungleichheit?, p. 17.

FAZ (31 March 2016). Für arme Kinder wird viel getan, p. 17.

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FAS (3 April 2016). Die Mär von der bröckelnden Mittelschicht, p. 28.

FAZ (9 April 2016). Der Spaltungs-Forscher, p. 26.

FAS (10 April 2016). Die neue soziale Spaltung, p. 28.

FAS (17 April 2016). Deutschlands große Tafelrunde, p. 24.

FAS (01 May 2016). Ganz oben, ganz unten, p. 27.

FAS (15 May 2016). Die Armut richtig bekämpfen!, p. 26.

FAS (22 May 2016). Pirmasens, abgehängt, p. 24.

FAS (12 June 2016). Abstiegsgesellschaft, p. 32.

FAS (10 July 2016). Der Leistungsmythos, p. 25.

FAS (17 July 2016). Die Ungleichheit bremst das Wachstum, p. 24.

FAS (24 July 2016). Oh, wie schön ist Panama!, p. 26.

FAZ (5 August 2016). Spalten steigende Mieten die Gesellschaft?, p. 23.

FAS (7 August 2016). Gleich und gleich gesellt sich, p. 23.

FAZ (10 August 2016). Alle auf einen Haufen, p. 21.

FAZ (16 August 2016). Die Völkerwanderung vom Land in die Stadt, p. 23.

FAZ (22 August 2016). Im Gespräch: Jürgen Leibfried, Vorstand des Berliner Projektentwicklers Bauwert AG, p. 22.

FAZ (26 August 2016). Investitionen in die Mauern, nicht in die Menschen, p.20.

FAS (4 September 2016). Lasst doch die Milliardäre in Ruhe, p. 30.

FAZ (6 September 2016). "Mümmelmannsberg? Da leben doch nur Asoziale", p. 18.

FAZ (15 September 2016). Vom Sozialamt aus der Stadt geworfen, p. 21.

FAS (18 September 2016). Bildung macht reich, aber nicht gleich, p. 24.

FAZ (20 September 2016). Höher, enger, lauter - aber urban und mit kurzen Wegen, p. 20.

FAS (25 September 2016). Ungleichheit ist längst kein Monopol der Linken mehr, p. 31.

Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) / Sueddeutsche.de (SZ online edition)

Sueddeutsche.de (30 June 2016), Immer reicher, immer ärmer - wie wächst Deutschland wieder zusammen.

Sueddeutsche.de (30 June 2016), Arm und Reich

Sueddeutsche.de (2 September 2016), Arm im reichen Land

Sueddeutsche.de (26 September 2016), Gleich ist nicht gleich gerecht

Sueddeutsche.de (26 September 2016), So ungleich ist Deutschland

SZ (26 September 2016), Gegen die Machtwirtschaft, p. 19.

Sueddeutsche.de (27 September 2016), Armut gibt's in Deutschland doch gar nicht

SZ (27 September 2016), Weniger gibt ihnen mehr, p. 18.

Sueddeutsche.de (28 September 2016), "Die AfD ist die neue Partei der Mittelschicht"

Sueddeutsche.de (28 September 2016), Die Lust am Jammern

Sueddeutsche.de (28 September 2016), Möglichkeiten im Kampf gegen die Ungleichheit

Sueddeutsche.de (28 September 2016), "Wir waren die typische RTL-II-Unterschichtenfamilie"

Sueddeutsche.de (28 September 2016), München: "Was wäre, wenn niemand Nein sagt?"

SZ (28 September 2016), „Reichen wird oft unrecht getan“, p. 20.

Sueddeutsche.de (29 September 2016), Berlin: Wut als Proseminar

Sueddeutsche.de (29 September 2016), Besser helfen - mit schwerem Herzen

SZ (29 September 2016), „Ich würde zuschlagen, wenn ich könnte“, p. 21.

Sueddeutsche.de (30 September 2016), Straße der Gegensätze

SZ (30 September 2016), Helfen, womit man kann, p. 18.

SZ (1 October 2016), Reiche und andere, p. 28.

Table C.2: Examples for IC and RP codings

Framing Dimension	Evaluation	Example	Source
Inequality Concerns	Affirmative	"Poor people have little money and die earlier. Pirmasens holds the sad record."	FAS (22 May 2016). Pirmasens, abgehängt, p. 24.
		"We live in a class society. A class society in which it is increasingly the responsibility of each individual to provide for his or her own life, his or her own survival - even though the resources are barely sufficient to do so."	Sueddeutsche.de (26 September 2016), Gleich ist nicht gleich gerecht
	Dissenting	"A stock market crash that makes a few super billionaires significantly poorer suddenly makes the global distribution of wealth appear more equal. But does that improve the reality of life for a single person?"	FAS (4 September 2016). Lasst doch die Milliardäre in Ruhe, p. 30.
		"more equal pay can also mean that training from unskilled to skilled is less worthwhile"	FAZ (12 March 2016). Die überschätzte Gerechtigkeitslücke, p. 18.
Redistributive Policy	Affirmative	"Rich people's tax, cheap housing or marital splitting: there are many ways to ensure more social justice."	Sueddeutsche.de (28 September 2016), Möglichkeiten im Kampf gegen die Ungleichheit
		"Urban upgrading is closely linked to the programme 'Soziale Stadt', which the federal government launched in 1999 to improve the lives of residents in problem neighbourhoods. (…) By last year, the federal government had invested 1.3 billion euros, and the Länder and municipalities had each invested a similar amount. Now the project is being significantly expanded, the Ministry of Construction has doubled the funding to 300 million euros per year (…). A great success (…)"	FAZ (6 September 2016). "Mümmelmannsberg? Da leben doch nur Asoziale", p. 18.
	Rejecting	"Inequality in Germany is high. This endangers the prosperity of future generations. More state or more taxes are not the answer. Instead: more opportunities." *	FAS (13 March 2016). Wohlstand für wenige, p. 26.
		"Is there a need for more redistribution when there is more inequality? One might think so. But in reality, world history works quite differently."	FAS (20 March 2016). Nehmt von den Reichen das Geld !, p. 25.

** Note that this is an example for a text segment with IC affirmative but RP rejecting coding.*

Appendix D – Mechanisms of Inequality Denial

D.1 Primary Sources of the Analysis of Mechanisms of Inequality Denial

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Creutzburg, D. (2014, July 21). Die Deutschen fühlen sich gerne schlecht. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, p. 17.

Feld, L. P., & Schmidt, C. M. (2016, March 6). Wie ungleich ist Deutschland wirklich? *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, p. 24.

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D.2 Transcription of TV interview with *IW* inequality expert Judith Niehues

Transcription from Niehues, Judith (2017): Phoenix: Interview am 28.3.2017, https://youtu.be/pnvM-9qwWwE?t=1m8s .

German original	English translation
Moderator: Muss in Deutschland wirklich umverteilt werden und wenn ja wie soll das gehen? Darüber möchte ich mit Judith Niehues sprechen. Schön, dass Sie da sind, vom Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft in Köln. Sie sind Finanzwissenschaftlerin und Verteilungsexpertin, wenn man das so sagen darf. Ist Deutschland ungerecht in Ihrer Sicht?	Moderator: Is there really a need for redistribution in Germany, and if so, how should it be done? I would like to talk about this with Judith Niehues. It's nice to have you here from the German Economic Institute. You are a public finance researcher and distribution expert, if I may say so. Is Germany an unfair place in your view?
Niehues: Wenn man sich zunächst einmal anschaut was die Bürger hierzulande denken, dann ist es in der Tat so, dass die Mehrheit der Meinung sind, dass die wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse ungerecht verteilt sind. Aber das ist kein neues Phänomen. Also in wirtschaftlichen Zeiten zum Beispiel vor zehn Jahren oder in Zeiten der Finanzkrise haben noch mehr Leute gesagt es gehe ungerecht zu. Und wenn wir mal bei den Gefühlen bleiben und tatsächlich anschauen wie viele Leute hierzulande sich abgehängt fühlen, oder ihre Situation als wirtschaftlich schlecht einordnen dann sind es weniger als zehn Prozent, also weniger als ein Zehntel der Bevölkerung, und vor zehn Jahren beispielsweise war der Wert doppelt so hoch. Das heißt also, der Befund es würde immer schlechter und ungerechter hierzulande zugehen der lässt sich damit nur schwer vereinbaren.	Niehues: If you first look at what the citizens in this country think, it is indeed the case that the majority believe that economic means are unfairly distributed. But this is not a new phenomenon. In economic times, for example, ten years ago or in times of financial crisis, even more people said that things were unfair. And if we stay with the feelings and actually look at how many people in this country feel left behind, or classify their situation as economically bad, then it is less than ten per cent, so less than one-tenth of the population, and ten years ago, for example, the figure was twice as high. This means that it is difficult to reconcile the finding that things are getting worse and more unjust in this country.
Moderator: Aber dann taugt dieses Thema ja eigentlich auch nicht für den Wahlkampf.	Moderator: But then this topic is not really suitable for the election campaign.
Niehues: Ja es ist mit Sicherheit auch so dass, wenn wir uns jetzt die Situation vor zehn Jahren anschauen – hohe Arbeitslosigkeit – dann war natürlich das dringlichste Problem irgendwie zu versuchen, diese Leute in den Arbeitsmarkt zu integrieren. Jetzt hat sich das etwas geändert, die Arbeitslosigkeit ist auf den niedrigsten Stand seit der Wiedervereinigung und wenn jetzt keine, also sind nicht so dringliche Probleme da, dass man halt jetzt vor allem über die Verteilungsthema diskutieren kann. Das heißt also, ich glaube es hängt auch schon damit zusammen mit der guten wirtschaftlichen Situation, dass wir jetzt darüber diskutieren wie man sozusagen den Wohlstand dann verteilen kann.	Niehues: Yes, it is certainly also the case that if we look at the situation ten years ago - high unemployment - then the most urgent problem was of course to somehow try to integrate these people into the labour market. Now things have changed a bit, unemployment is at its lowest level since reunification and if there are no problems now, well, there are not so urgent problems, that we can now mainly discuss the issue of distribution. That means, I think that it is also connected to the good economic situation that we are now discussing how to distribute the wealth, so to speak.

Moderator: Ja, Sie sprachen die Befindlichkeit an, wie die Leute das so selber sehen. Aber wie sieht es denn faktisch aus? Ich meine wir haben ja auch so etwas wie eine Armut, insbesondere der alten Menschen, alleinerziehende Mütter, und dieses wird ja in Zukunft auch noch schlimmer werden. Also gibt es da doch vielleicht wirklich gute Gründe dafür, an der Stellschraube Verteilung zu drehen.

Moderator: Yes, you mentioned the feelings, how people see it themselves. But what does it look like in fact? I mean, we have something like poverty, especially among the elderly, single mothers, and this will get worse in the future. So maybe there are really good reasons for turning the 'distribution screw'.

Niehues: Es ist richtig, also es gibt Armut. Also hierzulande ist Armut oder ist meistens relativ gemessen, also relativ zu dem Mittel der Gesellschaft. Aber Sie haben jetzt gerade schon von Altersarmut gesprochen und da sehen wir eigentlich, wenn wir uns die Armutsgefährdungsbereiche nach dem Alter anschauen, dass Altersarmut im Moment gar nicht das dringlichste Problem ist, sondern die Armutsgefährdung im Alter ist unterdurchschnittlich. Also bei jungen Erwachsenen ist sie sehr hoch, wie Sie schon angedeutet haben bei alleinerziehenden Familien mit vielen Kindern und auch Personen mit Migrationshintergrund. Aber im Vordergrund der Diskussion steht vor allem die Altersarmut. Und wenn wir jetzt hier zum Beispiel etwas an der Rente ändern, um dieses Problem zu ändern, was in der Wahrnehmung das Größte ist, dann würden wir dafür sorgen, dass später, in nachfolgenden Generationen, da Altersarmut definitiv ein Problem würde.

Niehues: It is true that there is poverty. In this country, poverty is usually measured relatively, which is relative to the middle of society. But you have just mentioned poverty in old age, and when we look at the poverty risk according to age, we see that poverty in old age is not the most urgent problem at the moment, rather, the risk of poverty in old age is below average. It is very high among young adults, as already mentioned, among single-parent families with many children and also among people with a migration background. But the main focus of the discussion is poverty in old age. And if we were to change something about pensions, for example, to change this problem, which is perceived to be the biggest, then we would ensure that poverty in old age would definitely become a problem later, in future generations.

Moderator: Also, was müssten wir tun, bleiben wir mal kurz bei der Rente, was müssten wir tun, um dann das Land gerechter zu machen, in Zukunft?

Moderator: So, what would we have to do, let's stay with pensions for a moment, what would we have to do to make the country fairer in the future?

Niehues: Da würde ich wie ich schon gesagt habe: Also, die Armutsrisiken sind vor allem im jungen Erwachsenenalter, das heißt wir sollten vor allem dafür sorgen, also durch Bildungsinvestitionen und so weiter, dass die Personen einen guten Job haben, einen gut bezahlten Job, lange im Arbeitsmarkt bleiben, also möglichst lange Erwerbszeiten, so dass sie dann auch in der Lage sind, zum einen halt gut für die Rente anzusparen, aber auch privat vorzusorgen.

Niehues: As I have already said: Well, the risks of poverty are mainly in young adulthood, which means that we should primarily ensure, through investments in education and so on, that people have a good job, a well-paid job, stay in the labour market for a long time, that is, as long a working life as possible, so that they are able to save well for their pension, but also to make private savings.

Moderator: Das ist aber nicht Umverteilung. Niehues: (lacht) Naja also zu dem Punkt Umverteilung, da muss man natürlich auch zunächst einmal festhalten, wenn wir uns das im internationalen Vergleich anschauen, dass in Deutschland schon sehr viel umverteilt wird. Also es gibt kaum ein europäisches Land, wo so stark von Reich zu Arm umverteilt wird. Das heißt, wir sollten nicht so sehr auf die Höhe der Umverteilung achten, sondern wenn wir uns das anschauen, dann ist die Problematik tatsächlich eher die Verteilung vor der Umverteilung. Das heißt, hier sind wirklich dann Bildungsinvestition gefragt, um unsere Probleme anzupacken, die zum Beispiel darin liegen, dass der Bildungserfolg immer noch recht stark vom Hintergrund der Eltern abhängt. Das sind Maßnahmen, die Mobilität zu erhöhen, und so weiter, damit wir dann mehr Gerechtigkeit in unserem Land schaffen. Gerechtigkeit ist ja auch nicht gleich Ungleichheit [sic] und Leute haben sehr unterschiedliche Vorstellungen darüber, was gerecht ist. Und da zeigen auch Umfragen, dass die Leute Gerechtigkeit vor allem als Leistungs- und Chancengerechtigkeit wahrnehmen. Das heißt, wenn Ungleichheit auf Leistung besteht, dann sind die Leute auch eher bereit diese Ungleichheit zu akzeptieren.	Moderator: But that is not redistribution. Niehues: (laughs) Well, on the point of redistribution, first of all we have to say that if we look at it in an international comparison, there is already a lot of redistribution in Germany. There is hardly any other European country where there is so much redistribution from rich to poor. This means that we should not pay so much attention to the amount of redistribution, but if we look at it, then the problem is actually more the distribution before the redistribution. This means that we really need to invest in education to tackle our problems, which are, for example, that educational success is still very much dependent on the background of the parents. These are measures to increase mobility and so on so that we can create more justice in our country. Justice does not equal inequality [sic; probably supposed to mean equality], and people have very different ideas about what is fair. Surveys also show that people perceive justice primarily in terms of merit and equality of opportunity. This means that if inequality is based on performance, people are more willing to accept this inequality.
Moderator: Nun fordert das *Bündnis Umverteilung* eben nun mal die Umverteilung von Reichtum. Was ist denn da dann Ihrer Meinung nach dran. Wo müsste denn die Stellschraube angelegt werden, zum Beispiel bei der Vermögenssteuer? Niehues: Hier ist es wiederum ganz interessant. Also die Vermögen sind tatsächlich ungleich verteilt, in Deutschland ungleicher verteilt als in anderen Ländern. Aber hier ist es ganz interessant, dass dieser Befund sozusagen herangezogen wird um für mehr Umverteilung zu plädieren. Weil im internationalen Vergleich sind gerade die Länder, oder in den Ländern Vermögen ungleich verteilt, die hohe Umverteilung haben. Weil das ist ja auch ganz plausibel: Wenn es eine hohe staatliche Absicherung gibt, das heißt der Staat für die staatliche Absicherung sorgt, dann haben die Personen nicht den Anreiz, selbst fürs Alter vorzusorgen, weil es ja die staatliche Absicherung gibt. Genau so muss diese Absicherung durch Steuern finanziert werden und diese Steuern fehlen gleichzeitig in der Mittelschicht, um privates Vermögen aufzubauen. Das heißt: also in Ländern wo die Vermögen ungleicher verteilt sind, beobachten wir insbesondere eine hohe staatliche Umverteilung.	Moderator: Well, the 'Alliance for Redistribution' calls for the redistribution of wealth. In your opinion, what is the point of this? Where should policy address the issue, for example, in the wealth tax? Niehues: Here again it is quite interesting. Wealth is indeed unequally distributed, more unequally distributed in Germany than in other countries. But here it is quite interesting that this finding is used, so to speak, to argue for more redistribution. Because in an international comparison, it is precisely those countries or in those countries where wealth is unequally distributed that have a high level of redistribution. Because that is also quite plausible: if there is a high level of state protection, that means the state provides state protection, then people do not have the incentive to make their own provisions for old age because there is state protection. Likewise, this protection has to be financed by taxes and at the same time, these taxes are lacking in the middle class to build up private assets. This means that in countries where wealth is distributed more unequally, we observe a high degree of redistribution by the state.
Moderator: Also ich sehe, dass Probleme sehr vielschichtig sind und vielschichtiger als man vielleicht denkt. Ganz kurz: Geht die Schere zwischen Arm und Reich auseinander in Deutschland, oder nicht? Niehues: Also zumindest in den letzten zehn Jahren ist sie nicht weiter auseinander gegangen.	Moderator: Well, I see that problems are very complex and more complex than one might think. Very briefly: Is the gap between rich and poor widening in Germany or not? Niehues: Well, at least in the last ten years it has not widened.

Moderator: Judith Niehues, ganz herzlichen Dank für ihre Einschätzung	Moderator: Judith Niehues, thank you very much for your assessment.
Niehues: Ich danke Ihnen.	Niehues: Thank you.

Appendix E – Justification Patterns of Income Inequality

E.1 References to Quotes in Section 5.3.

[1] FAS (2012, March 25). Dürfen Top-Manager ihre Gehälter an Star-Gagen messen?, p. 37.

[2] FAZ.NET (2012, March 27). Herr Winterkorn ist nicht gekommen.

[3] Bild am Sonntag (2012, March 25). Wir brauchen mehr Winterkorns.

[4] FAS (2012, June 3). ‘Die Deutschen sollen gewinnen‘, p. 33.

[5] FAS (2012, May 6). ‘Wir in Deutschland sind verdammt gut‘, p. 37.

[6] Der Spiegel (2013, March 11). Deckel drauf!, p. 70.

[7] *See* [1].

[8] Der Spiegel (2013, February 9). ‘Ich werde weniger bekommen‘, p. 60.

[9]-[11] Günter Jauch (Author) (2013, March 10). Den Managern ans Gehalt - Brauchen wir ein Gesetz gegen die Gier? [Television broadcast]. ARD.

[12] Der Spiegel (2012, April 30). Die Menschliche Gier, p. 75.

[13] FAZ (2013, January 28). Ohne schwarze Zahlen keine grünen Gedanken, p. 19.

[14]-[15] *See* [1].

[16] FAS (2013, March 17). Manager, haftet mit Eurem Geld, p. 37.

[17] *See* [9]-[11].

[18] FAZ (2012, May 5). Wir haben doch alle genug Geld, p. 44.

[19] FAZ (2012, March 14). Einsame Spitze, p. 16.

[20] FAZ.NET (2012, April 23). Top-Manager empfehlen Obergrenzen für Vorstandsbezüge.

[21] FAZ (2012, March 23). ‘500000 Euro für die Bundeskanzlerin‘, p. 14.

Appendix F – Survey Experiment

F.1 Treatments: The Expert Interview – Text Version

Text used in the multifactorial vignette experiment block, followed by English translations in grey. Codes in brackets reflect lower case versions in line with chapter 7 (compare explanations to Table 7.2 on p. 118).

<< Page 1: Introduction to interview experiment block >>

Wir bitten Sie nun, das folgende Interview zu lesen. We now ask you to read the following interview.

Darin erklärt ein Experte für Wirtschaft und Soziales, was für und gegen Ungleichheit bei den Einkommen spricht. In it, an expert on economic and social affairs explains arguments for and against income inequality.

Im Anschluss werden wir Sie dann bitten, ein paar Fragen zu dem Thema zu beantworten. Afterwards, we will ask you to answer a few questions on the topic.

<< Page 2: Start S of interview experiment; randomized treatment of factor "framing" (f1-4) >>

Ungleiche Einkommen: Was ist gerecht? Unequal incomes: What is fair?

In Deutschland hat die Ungleichheit seit 1990 In Germany, inequality has […] since 1990. […].

[zugenommen. increased (f1) /

zugenommen. Trotz guter wirtschaftlicher Lage ist sie in den letzten Jahren kaum zurückgegangen. increased […]. Despite the good economic situation, it has hardly decreased in recent years. (f2) /

zugenommen. Dank der guten wirtschaftlichen Lage ist sie in den letzten Jahren aber nicht weiter gestiegen. increased […]. However, thanks to the good economic situation, it has not increased further in recent years. (f3) /

zugenommen. Im internationalen Vergleich ist sie aber noch moderat. increased […]. In international comparison, however, it is still moderate. (S4)]

<< Pages 3-6: In randomized order, one of the factor "merit", "equality of opportunity", "income distance" and "consequences" (questions A-D) was presented, with one randomized treatment of each factor>>

<<Question A: Merit (m1-9)>>

Wie sehen Sie es grundsätzlich: Ist es aus Ihrer Sicht gerecht, dass manche Menschen mehr als andere, manchmal sogar das Vielfache verdienen? How do you see it in principle: Is it fair in your view that some people earn more than others, sometimes even many times more?

Ein höheres Einkommen ist grundsätzlich gerechtfertigt, wenn eine Person mehr In principle, a higher income is justified if a person

[leistet in ihrer Tätigkeit. performs more in his or her job. (m1) /

leistet. Zum Beispiel, wenn ihre Tätigkeit mit großer Anstrengung verbunden ist. performs more. For example, if their activity involves a lot of effort. (m2) /

leistet. Zum Beispiel, wenn ihre Tätigkeit mit harter körperlicher oder gefährlicher Arbeit verbunden ist. performs more. For example, if their job involves hard physical or dangerous work. (m3) /

leistet. Zum Beispiel, wenn ihre Tätigkeit mit großer Verantwortung verbunden ist. performs more. For example, if their job involves great responsibility. (m4) /

leistet. Zum Beispiel, wenn ihre Tätigkeit mit großer Verantwortung für die Sicherheit und Gesundheit von Menschen verbunden ist. performs more. For example, if their work involves great responsibility for the safety and health of people. (m5) /

leistet. Zum Beispiel, wenn ihre Tätigkeit eine lange Ausbildung erfordert. performs more. For example, if their job requires a long training and education. (m6) /

leistet. Zum Beispiel, wenn ihre Tätigkeit besonders zum Wachstum einer Firma beiträgt. performs more. For example, if their activity particularly contributes to the growth of a company. (m7) /

leistet. Zum Beispiel, wenn ihre Tätigkeit mit kreativen Ergebnissen verbunden ist, die vielen Menschen gefallen. performs more. For example, if their activity is associated with creative results that many people like. (m8) /

leistet. Zum Beispiel, wenn ihre Tätigkeit mit Innovationen zum Wohle der Gemeinschaft verbunden ist. performs more. For example, if their activity is linked to innovations for the benefit of the community. (m9)]

<<Question B: Equality of opportunity (e1-3)>>

Welche Voraussetzungen müssen gegeben sein, um die ungleichen Einkommen in einem Land als gerecht zu betrachten? What conditions must be met in order for unequal incomes in a country to be considered fair?

Ob ungleiche Einkommen gerecht sind, hängt stark von den Aufstiegschancen in einem Land ab. Whether unequal incomes are fair depends strongly on the opportunities for upward mobility in a country.

[Die Frage ist also vor allem, ob den Menschen in Deutschland im Bildungssystem alle Wege offen stehen. The question, then, is above all whether all paths are open to people in Germany in the education system. (e1) /

In Deutschland stehen den Menschen zum Glück durch ein kostenloses Bildungssystem alle Wege offen. Fortunately, in Germany, a free education system means that all paths are open to people. (e2) /

In Deutschland hängt der Erfolg im Bildungssystem leider stark von den Eltern ab. Damit stehen nicht allen Menschen alle Wege offen. In Germany, success in the education system, unfortunately, depends heavily on the parents. This means that not all paths are open to everyone. (e3)]

<<Question C: Income distance (d1-2) >>

Über welche Einkommensunterschiede sprechen wir eigentlich? What income differences are we actually talking about?

In Deutschland erhält ein Spitzenverdiener etwa das [5 (d1) / 100 (d2)]-fache eines Durchschnittsverdieners. In Germany, a top earner receives about [5 / 100]-fold of an average earner.

<<Question D: Consequences (c1-7)>>

Sollten bei der Bewertung von Ungleichheit auch deren Folgen für die Gesellschaft eine Rolle spielen? When evaluating inequality, should its consequences for society also play a role?

Ja, wir müssen schon auf die gesellschaftlichen Folgen von ungleichen Einkommen schauen. Yes, we do have to look at the social consequences of unequal incomes.

[Dabei kann es aber sowohl positive wie negative Folgen geben. However, there can be both positive and negative consequences. (c1) /

Zum Beispiel schafft Ungleichheit Anreize, Innovationen und wertvolle neue Produkte zu entwickeln. Das fördert den gesellschaftlichen Fortschritt. For example, inequality creates incentives to innovate and develop valuable new products. This promotes social progress. (c2) /

Zum Beispiel schafft Ungleichheit Anreize für Spitzenpersonal, nach Deutschland zu kommen. Das fördert die Zukunftsfähigkeit der Wirtschaft und gute Jobs für alle. For example, inequality creates incentives for top performers to come to Germany. This promotes the future viability of the economy and good jobs for all. (c3) /

Zum Beispiel schafft Ungleichheit gute Rahmenbedingungen für Investitionen. Das fördert gute Jobs für alle. For example, inequality creates good conditions for investment. This promotes good jobs for all. (c4) /

Zum Beispiel schafft Ungleichheit Anreize für Wohlhabende, ihr Geld in Immobilien zu investieren. Das macht das Wohnen unerschwinglich teuer. For example, inequality creates incentives for the wealthy to invest their money in real estate. This makes housing prohibitively expensive. (c5) /

Zum Beispiel schafft Ungleichheit Konflikte zwischen Menschen. Das schadet dem gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt. For example, inequality creates conflicts between people. This harms social cohesion. (c6) /

Zum Beispiel schafft Ungleichheit mehr politischen Einfluss für Reiche und große Firmen. Das schadet der Demokratie. For example, inequality creates more political influence for the rich and big companies. This is detrimental to democracy. (c7)]

<<Page 7: Measurement of dependent variable items. For response options see codebook in Appendix section F.2>>

Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu oder lehnen Sie ab? How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Alles in allem ist die Einkommensverteilung in Deutschland gerecht All in all, the distribution of income in Germany is fair
- Die Regierung sollte mehr tun, um die Unterschiede zwischen Arm und Reich zu verringern The government should do more to reduce the differences between rich and poor
- Menschen mit hohen Einkommen in Deutschland haben sich ihr gutes Einkommen verdient People with high incomes in Germany have earned their good income

<<Page 8: Attention Check. For response options see codebook in Appendix section F.2. No forced options.>>

Bitte geben Sie an, um welche der folgenden Themen es bei dem Interview ging, das Sie soeben gelesen haben. Bitte wählen Sie 3 Themen aus. Please indicate which of the following topics the interview you have just read was about. Please select 3 topics.

<< for list of items, see codebook in Appendix F.2 below >>

F.2 Codebook Survey Experiment

Table F.1: Codebook survey experiment (selection)

ID	Name	Label	Values	Value Labels
1	lfdn	number		
2	duration	time to complete survey		
3	c_0119	timestamp		
4	v_27	v61 Geschlecht Gender	1 2 3	Männlich Male Weiblich Female Divers Diverse
5	v_29	v62 Alter Age	*range: 18-65*	
6	v_30	v63 Bildung Education	*six options*	
7	v_32	v01 politisches Interesse political interest	1 2 3 4 5 77	sehr stark very strong stark strong mittelmäßig average weniger stark less strong überhaupt nicht no interest at all Weiß nicht / Möchte ich nicht sagen Don't know / Don't want to say
8	v_34	v02 Einordnung Politik political left-right self-allocation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 77	0 (links left) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (rechts right) Weiß nicht / Möchte ich nicht sagen Don't know / Don't wanto to say
9-28	c_0031	Block 1: Experiment gendergerechte Sprache Experiment gender-sensitive language		
29-35	c_0032	Block 2. Steuerpolitik Fiscal Policy		
35	Framing	Block 3. Interview-Experiment_S	1 2 3 4	S1.png S2.png S3.png S4.png
36	Merit	Block 3. Interview-Experiment_A	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	A1.png A2.png A3.png A4.png A5.png A6.png A7.png A8.png A9.png
37	Opportunity	Block 3. Interview-Experiment_B	1 2 3	B1.png B2.png B3.png

38	Incdistance	Block 3. Interview-Experiment_C	1 2	C1.png C2.png
39	Consequences	Block 3. Interview-Experiment_D	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	D1.png D2.png D3.png D4.png D5.png D6.png D7.png
40	v_62	v31a_Alles in allem ist die Einkommensverteilung in Deutschland gerecht All in all, the distribution of income in Germany is fair	1 2 3 4 5 77	Stimme gar nicht zu Strongly disagree Stimme eher nicht zu Disagree Teils, teils Neither agree, nor disagree Stimme eher zu Agree Stimme voll und ganz zu Strongly agree Weiß nicht / Möchte ich nicht sagen Don't know / Don't want to say
41	v_63	v31b_Die Regierung sollte mehr tun, um die Unterschiede zwischen Arm und Reich zu verringern The government should do more to reduce the differences between rich and poor	1 2 3 4 5 77	Stimme gar nicht zu Strongly disagree Stimme eher nicht zu Disagree Teils, teils Neither agree, nor disagree Stimme eher zu Agree Stimme voll und ganz zu Strongly agree Weiß nicht / Möchte ich nicht sagen Don't know / Don't want to say
42	v_64	v31c_Menschen mit hohen Einkommen in Deutschland haben sich ihr gutes Einkommen verdient People with high incomes in Germany have earned their good income	1 2 3 4 5 77	Stimme gar nicht zu Strongly disagree Stimme eher nicht zu Disagree Teils, teils Neither agree, nor disagree Stimme eher zu Agree Stimme voll und ganz zu Strongly agree Weiß nicht / Möchte ich nicht sagen Don't know / Don't want to say
43	v_65	v32_Aufstiegschancen Equality of opportunity	0 1	not quoted quoted
44	v_66	v32_Einkommensungleichheit Income inequality	0 1	not quoted quoted
45	v_67	v32_Gerechte Einkommen Just incomes	0 1	not quoted quoted
46	v_68	v32_Rentensystem Pension system	0 1	not quoted quoted
47	v_69	v32_Corona-Pandemie Corona pandemic	0 1	not quoted quoted
48	v_70	v32_Kinderarmut Child poverty	0 1	not quoted quoted
49	v_71	v32_Welthandel World trade	0 1	not quoted quoted
50	v_72	v32_Globalisierung Globalisation	0 1	not quoted quoted
51	v_73	v32_Weiß nicht / habe nicht richtig gelesen Don't know / did not pay attention	0 1	not quoted quoted
52-58	c_0040	Block 4. Polarisierung_1		
59	v_81	v51 Standpunkt Oben oder Unten Top-down self-positioning In unserer Gesellschaft gibt es Bevölkerungsgruppen, die eher oben stehen, und solche, die eher unten stehen. Wir haben hier eine Skala, die von oben nach unten verläuft. Wenn Sie an sich selbst denken: Wo würden Sie sich auf dieser Skala von 1 bis 10 einordnen? 1 bedeutet „unten" und 10 bedeutet „oben" In our society, there are groups that tend to be at the top and those that tend to be at the bottom. We have a scale here that runs from top to bottom. If you think about yourself: Where would you place yourself on this scale from 1 to 10? 1 means "bottom" and 10 means "top".	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 77	1 unten bottom 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 oben top Weiß nicht / Möchte ich nicht sagen Don't know / Don't want to say
60	v_82	v52 Zukunft Oben oder Unten future top down	1 2 3 4	1 unten bottom 2 3 4

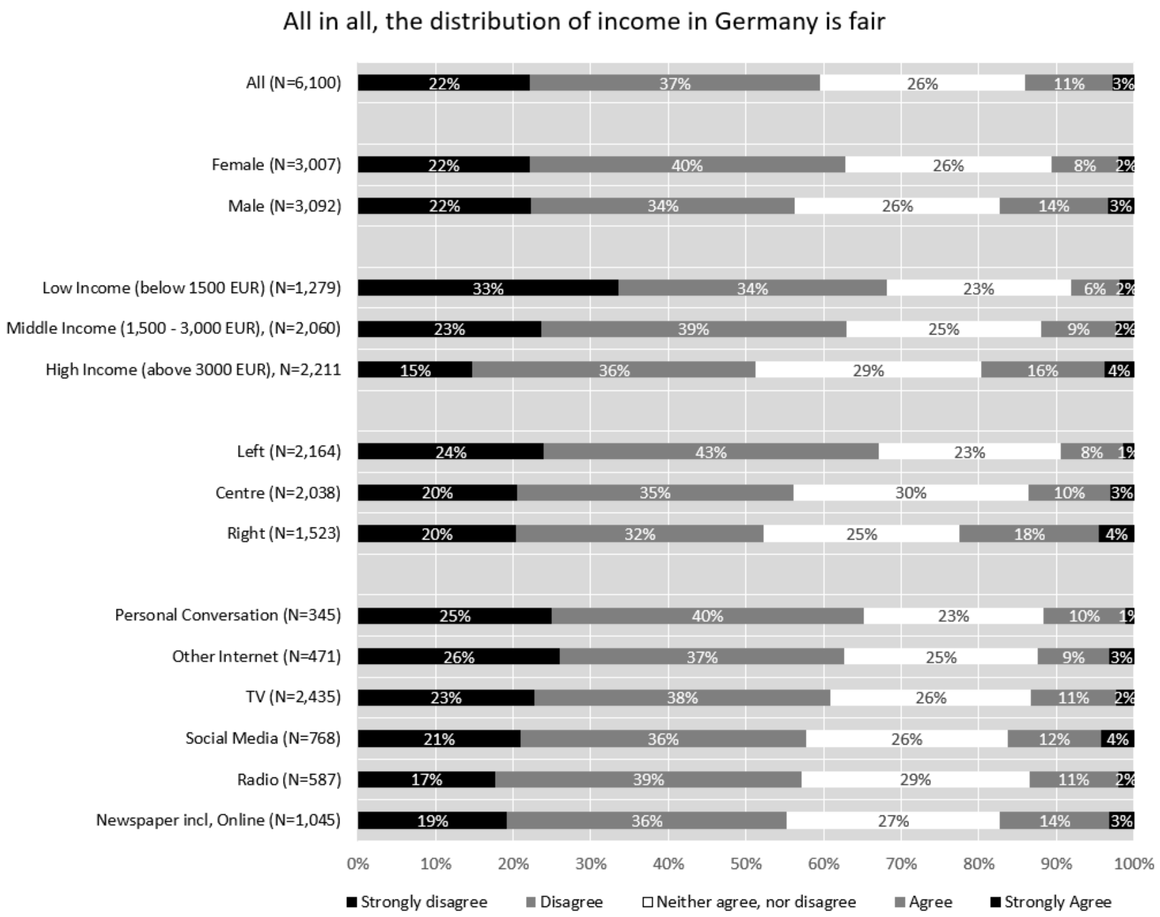
		Und wenn Sie an die Zukunft denken, wo würden Sie sich in 10 Jahren auf dieser Skala von 1 bis 10 einordnen? And when you think about the future, where would you place yourself on this scale of 1 to 10 in 10 years' time?	5 6 7 8 9 10 77	5 6 7 8 9 10 oben top Weiß nicht / Möchte ich nicht sagen Don't know / Don't want to say
61	Partypref	v53 Parteineigung In Deutschland neigen viele Leute längere Zeit einer bestimmten politischen Partei zu, obwohl sie auch ab und zu eine andere Partei wählen. Wie ist das bei Ihnen: Neigen Sie - ganz allgemein - einer bestimmten Partei zu? Und wenn ja, welcher? In Germany, many people tend to vote for a certain political party for a long time, although they also vote for another party from time to time. How is it with you: Do you - in general - lean towards a certain party? And if so, which one?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 77	CDU/CSU SPD Bündnis 90/Die Grünen FDP Die Linke AfD Andere Parteien, und zwar: Other parties, namely: Keine Partei No party Weiß nicht / Möchte ich nicht sagen Don't know / Don't want to say
62	v_84	v53 Parteineigung_Andere		[Text field if 61=7]
63	v_85	v54 Bundestagswahl Federal election Welche Partei haben Sie bei der Bundestagswahl in diesem Jahr gewählt? Which party did you vote for in the federal election this year?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 77	CDU/CSU SPD Bündnis 90/Die Grünen FDP Die Linke AfD Andere Partei, und zwar: Other parties, namely: Bin nicht zur Wahl gegangen Didn't vote War nicht wahlberechtigt Wasnt eligible to vote Weiß nicht / Möchte ich nicht sagen Don't know / Don't want to say
64	v_86	v54 Bundestagswahl_Andere		[Freitext wenn 63=7]
65	v_87	v58 Informationen über Politik Es gibt unterschiedliche Möglichkeiten, wie man sich über das aktuelle politische Geschehen in Deutschland informieren kann. Woher bekommen Sie die meisten Informationen über Politik? There are different ways to get information about current political events in Germany. Where do you get most of your information about politics?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Fernsehen (inkl. Mediathek) TV (incl. online) Zeitung (inkl. Onlineangebot) Newspaper (incl. online) Radio (inkl. Webradio) Radio (incl. web radio) soziale Medien social media (z.B. e.g. Facebook, Twitter) andere Internetquellen (z.B. E-Mail-Anbieter, Blog) other internet sources (e.g. email, blog) persönliches Gespräch personal conversation andere Quelle, und zwar other source, namely Weiß nicht / Möchte ich nicht sagen Don't know / Don't want to say
66	v_88	v58 Informationen über Politik_Andere Information about Politics_Other		[Text field if 65=7]
67-97		Andere Hintergrundvariablen (inkl. Impfstatus, Persönlichkeitsmerkmale, Beruf) Other background variables (incl. vaccination status, personality traits, occupation)		
98	Income	v69 Netto-Einkommen Net income	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 77	unter below 500 Euro 500 bis unter until under 750 Euro 750 bis unter until under 1000 Euro 1000 bis unter until under 1250 Euro 1250 bis unter until under 1500 Euro 1500 bis unter until under 2000 Euro 2000 bis unter until under 2500 Euro 2500 bis unter until under 3000 Euro 3000 bis unter until under 4000 Euro 4000 bis unter until under 5000 Euro 5000 bis unter until under 7500 Euro 7500 bis unter until under 10000 Euro 10000 Euro und mehr and more Weiß nicht / Möchte ich nicht sagen Don't know / Don't want to say
99	v_121	v610 Wohnort Type of residential area	*five options*	

100	v_122	v611 Nationalität Nationality	1 2	Deutsch German Andere, und zwar: Other, namely:
101	v_123	v611 Nationalität_Andere Nationality_Other		[Text field if 100=2]

Original codes and variable names. Note the differences for ID=35-39 (Treatment variables) to lower case treatment codes used in Chapter 7 (compare explanations to Table 7.2 on p. 118).

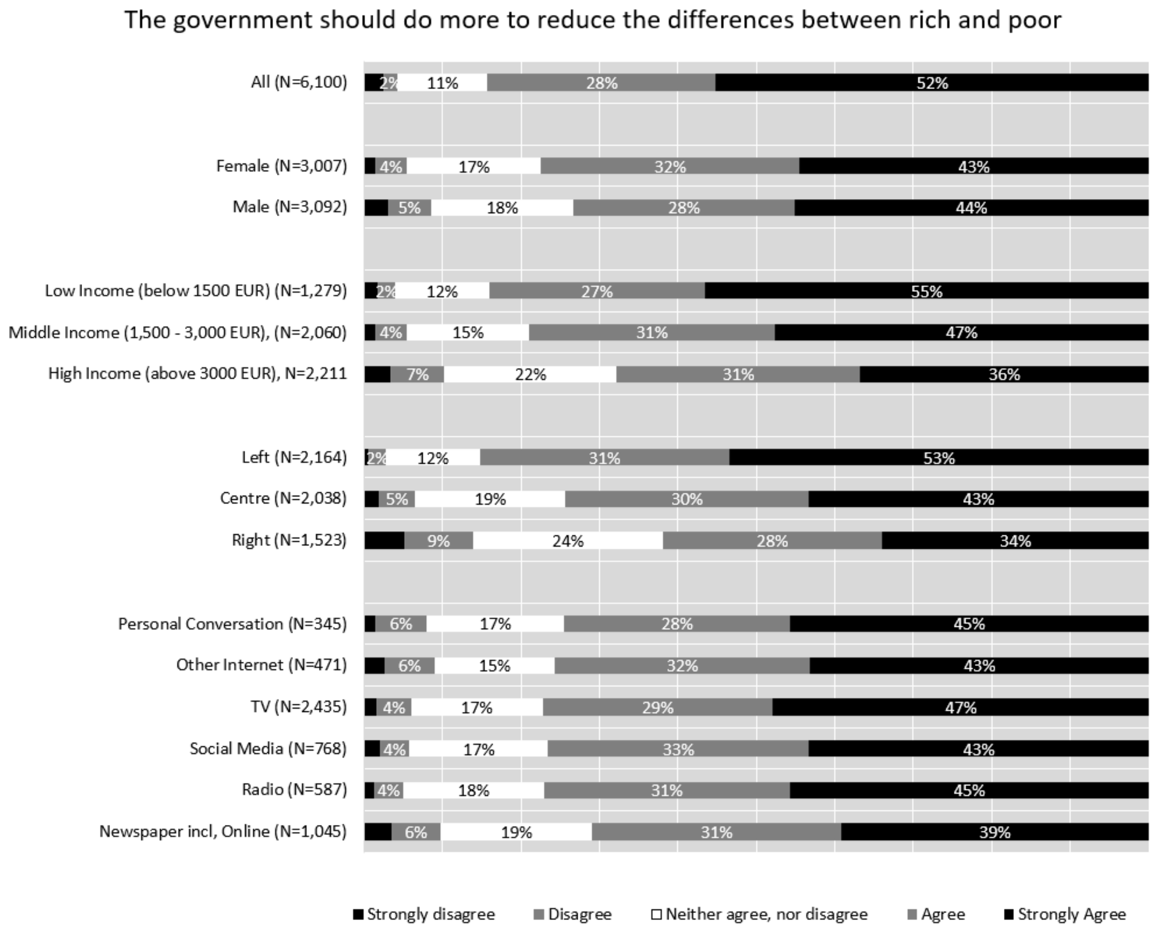
F.3 Descriptive Statistics

Figure F.1: Responses to dv1 by background characteristics



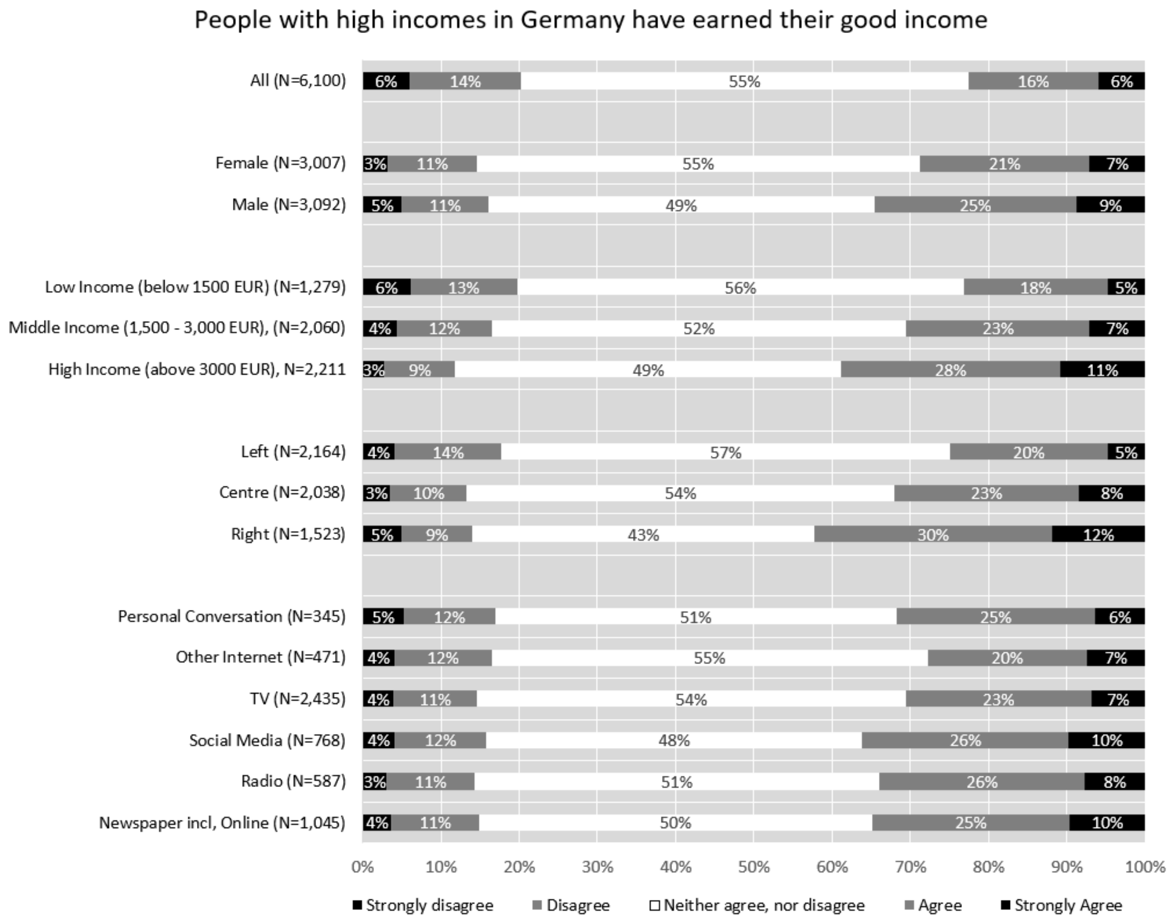
Gender category 'diverse' only had one response and was thus omitted; left (right) according to self-allocation values 1-5 (7-11); media types indicate respondents' main source of political information; compare codebook in Appendix F.2 above.

Figure F.2: Responses to dv2 by background characteristics



Gender category 'diverse' only had one response and was thus omitted; left (right) according to self-allocation values 1-5 (7-11); media types indicate respondents' main source of political information; compare codebook in Appendix F.2 above. Percentages for 'strongly disagree' category not shown due to space restrictions.

Figure F.3: Responses to dv3 by background characteristics



Gender category 'diverse' only had one response and was thus omitted; left (right) according to self-allocation values 1-5 (7-11); media types indicate respondents' main source of political information; compare codebook in Appendix F.2 above.

Figure F.4: Distribution of count variables

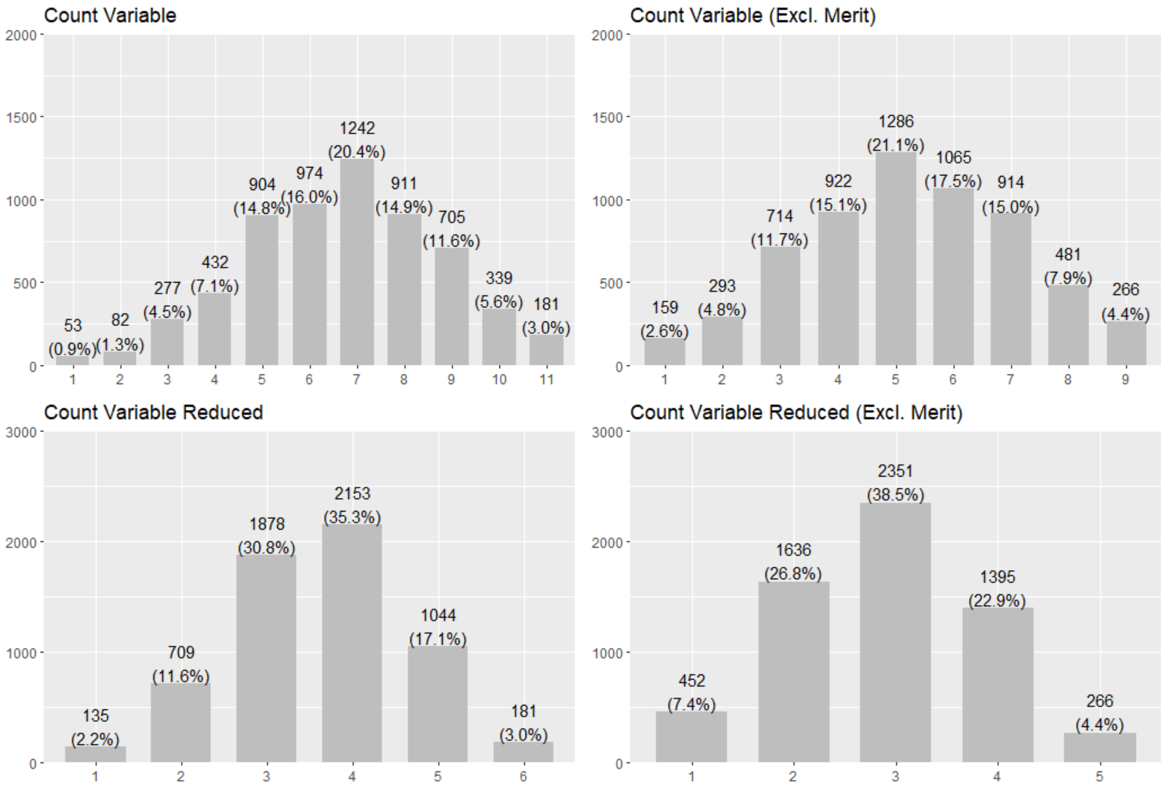
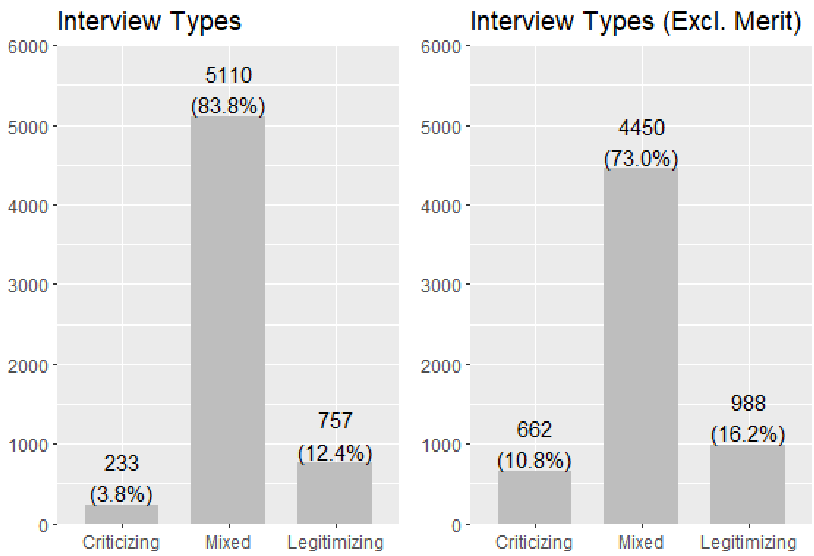


Figure F.5: Distribution of interview types



F.4 Results

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Treatments

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level   Estimate    Std. Err  z value  Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences2      0.05004986 0.050530  0.990507 0.3219263
 Consequences3      0.05223297 0.050342  1.037566 0.2994720
 Consequences4      0.04208373 0.050082  0.840302 0.4007391
 Consequences5     -0.09556690 0.049883 -1.915816 0.0553886
 Consequences6     -0.01187220 0.049847 -0.238174 0.8117458
 Consequences7     -0.02999874 0.050737 -0.591265 0.5543428
      Framing2     -0.02446204 0.037919 -0.645114 0.5188533
      Framing3      0.03104877 0.038139  0.814090 0.4155935
      Framing4      0.01559826 0.038533  0.404801 0.6856239
  Incdistance2     -0.07161235 0.027231 -2.629828 0.0085428 **
        Merit2      0.00087909 0.057569  0.015270 0.9878167
        Merit3      0.00339851 0.057565  0.059038 0.9529216
        Merit4     -0.02351407 0.057066 -0.412050 0.6803027
        Merit5     -0.04162746 0.056704 -0.734112 0.4628804
        Merit6      0.00841536 0.056180  0.149792 0.8809290
        Merit7     -0.01533360 0.057723 -0.265640 0.7905162
        Merit8     -0.01786339 0.057963 -0.308186 0.7579406
        Merit9      0.00554356 0.056937  0.097363 0.9224380
  Opportunity2      0.02745468 0.033132  0.828647 0.4073043
  Opportunity3     -0.03968494 0.033240 -1.193881 0.2325245
---
Number of Obs. = 5984
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences1
 Framing1
 Incdistance1
 Merit1
 Opportunity1
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv2 on Treatments

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate   Std. Err z value   Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences2      -0.0344061 0.048985 -0.702381 0.482441
 Consequences3      -0.0339964 0.050182 -0.677466 0.498110
 Consequences4      -0.0271263 0.049391 -0.549216 0.582857
 Consequences5       0.0333656 0.049111  0.679397 0.496886
 Consequences6       0.0539049 0.048756  1.105596 0.268902
 Consequences7       0.0382875 0.048388  0.791253 0.428796
      Framing2       0.0410061 0.036742  1.116047 0.264402
      Framing3      -0.0436995 0.037806 -1.155896 0.247724
      Framing4       0.0020991 0.037614  0.055806 0.955496
  Incdistance2       0.0436443 0.026615  1.639831 0.101040
        Merit2      -0.0672129 0.054436 -1.234718 0.216935
        Merit3      -0.1028940 0.053130 -1.936650 0.052788
        Merit4      -0.1205335 0.054227 -2.222753 0.026232 *
        Merit5      -0.0277928 0.053549 -0.519013 0.603752
        Merit6      -0.0685898 0.054357 -1.261847 0.207004
        Merit7      -0.0332103 0.052798 -0.629001 0.529348
        Merit8      -0.0087622 0.053114 -0.164970 0.868968
        Merit9      -0.0348581 0.053178 -0.655496 0.512149
  Opportunity2       0.0077145 0.032403  0.238078 0.811821
  Opportunity3       0.0411607 0.032127  1.281189 0.200127
---
Number of Obs. = 5975
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05
--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences1
 Framing1
 Incdistance1
 Merit1
 Opportunity1
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv3 on Treatments

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate    Std. Err z value   Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences2      -0.02517844 0.042823 -0.587960 0.556559
 Consequences3       0.03115754 0.043582  0.714920 0.474659
 Consequences4       0.00708532 0.043749  0.161955 0.871341
 Consequences5       0.00662068 0.044436  0.148994 0.881559
 Consequences6      -0.00096856 0.042518 -0.022780 0.981826
 Consequences7      -0.01949786 0.042850 -0.455030 0.649088
      Framing2       0.02098670 0.032654  0.642709 0.520413
      Framing3      -0.00891658 0.032627 -0.273285 0.784634
      Framing4      -0.03276802 0.033489 -0.978476 0.327839
  Incdistance2      -0.04591307 0.023641 -1.942085 0.052127
        Merit2      -0.00550824 0.050193 -0.109741 0.912615
        Merit3       0.00403711 0.050322  0.080225 0.936058
        Merit4      -0.03094714 0.048810 -0.634035 0.526058
        Merit5       0.04936251 0.049100  1.005356 0.314726
        Merit6       0.06124236 0.048168  1.271425 0.203577
        Merit7      -0.00771005 0.049745 -0.154992 0.876827
        Merit8      -0.00066537 0.049497 -0.013442 0.989275
        Merit9       0.01475507 0.050027  0.294944 0.768036
  Opportunity2       0.01746184 0.028600  0.610551 0.541497
  Opportunity3       0.00922260 0.028668  0.321704 0.747677
---
Number of Obs. = 5987
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences1
 Framing1
 Incdistance1
 Merit1
 Opportunity1
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of Index on Treatments

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate  Std. Err z value   Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences2       0.065132 0.114352  0.569580 0.5689627
 Consequences3       0.114310 0.114709  0.996520 0.3189976
 Consequences4       0.068374 0.114510  0.597102 0.5504390
 Consequences5      -0.106745 0.116262 -0.918144 0.3585437
 Consequences6      -0.048040 0.113362 -0.423777 0.6717287
 Consequences7      -0.079365 0.114437 -0.693524 0.4879809
      Framing2      -0.033049 0.085648 -0.385871 0.6995920
      Framing3       0.071681 0.086169  0.831870 0.4054823
      Framing4      -0.012777 0.086293 -0.148068 0.8822889
  Incdistance2      -0.159937 0.061771 -2.589207 0.0096197 **
        Merit2       0.050473 0.129608  0.389429 0.6969585
        Merit3       0.089928 0.129094  0.696604 0.4860504
        Merit4       0.069562 0.125808  0.552917 0.5803200
        Merit5       0.042350 0.128211  0.330311 0.7411650
        Merit6       0.123682 0.126366  0.978763 0.3276971
        Merit7      -0.010695 0.128973 -0.082925 0.9339115
        Merit8      -0.034373 0.127917 -0.268710 0.7881527
        Merit9       0.025196 0.127954  0.196913 0.8438958
  Opportunity2       0.042405 0.074620  0.568273 0.5698498
  Opportunity3      -0.066180 0.074700 -0.885946 0.3756464
---
Number of Obs. = 5911
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences1
 Framing1
 Incdistance1
 Merit1
 Opportunity1
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of Index2 on Treatments

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate   Std. Err z value   Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences2       0.0830625 0.086380  0.961590  0.33626
 Consequences3       0.0856485 0.086570  0.989353  0.32249
 Consequences4       0.0689749 0.086306  0.799191  0.42418
 Consequences5      -0.1192345 0.086448 -1.379258  0.16782
 Consequences6      -0.0572037 0.086229 -0.663396  0.50708
 Consequences7      -0.0645962 0.086269 -0.748775  0.45399
      Framing2      -0.0615090 0.064994 -0.946375  0.34396
      Framing3       0.0762488 0.065467  1.164695  0.24414
      Framing4       0.0130406 0.065317  0.199650  0.84175
  Incdistance2      -0.1141596 0.046521 -2.453945  0.01413 *
        Merit2       0.0701591 0.096950  0.723662  0.46927
        Merit3       0.1001934 0.096213  1.041375  0.29770
        Merit4       0.1068542 0.095213  1.122262  0.26175
        Merit5      -0.0080050 0.096066 -0.083328  0.93359
        Merit6       0.0787283 0.095609  0.823441  0.41026
        Merit7       0.0142590 0.095800  0.148841  0.88168
        Merit8      -0.0085946 0.095801 -0.089713  0.92852
        Merit9       0.0350597 0.094822  0.369743  0.71157
  Opportunity2       0.0184904 0.056306  0.328389  0.74262
  Opportunity3      -0.0828459 0.056525 -1.465659  0.14274
---
Number of Obs. = 5936
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences1
 Framing1
 Incdistance1
 Merit1
 Opportunity1
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv2 on Treatments (passed AC only)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate   Std. Err z value   Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences       -0.0550048 0.059555 -0.923597 0.355696
 Consequences        0.0075405 0.060911  0.123794 0.901478
 Consequences       -0.0222830 0.060505 -0.368285 0.712661
 Consequences        0.0281335 0.060031  0.468652 0.639318
 Consequences        0.0105322 0.060844  0.173100 0.862573
 Consequences        0.0149191 0.060529  0.246478 0.805312
      Framing        0.0808054 0.044675  1.808720 0.070495
      Framing        0.0188077 0.046796  0.401908 0.687752
      Framing        0.0582457 0.046010  1.265924 0.205540
  Incdistance        0.0378285 0.032633  1.159207 0.246372
        Merit       -0.0342371 0.067575 -0.506652 0.612399
        Merit       -0.0735935 0.065519 -1.123234 0.261338
        Merit       -0.0668739 0.067508 -0.990611 0.321876
        Merit        0.0028634 0.066161  0.043279 0.965479
        Merit       -0.0621487 0.067099 -0.926226 0.354329
        Merit        0.0083505 0.063859  0.130765 0.895961
        Merit        0.0243301 0.065545  0.371199 0.710489
        Merit       -0.0337235 0.064983 -0.518958 0.603790
  Opportunity        0.0067995 0.039055  0.174102 0.861785
  Opportunity        0.0288103 0.039155  0.735807 0.461848
---
Number of Obs. = 3922
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences
      Framing
  Incdistance
        Merit
  Opportunity
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Treatments (passed AC only)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate   Std. Err z value   Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences        0.0277734 0.059688  0.465309 0.6417102
 Consequences        0.0108320 0.060150  0.180083 0.8570877
 Consequences        0.0400137 0.060803  0.658088 0.5104816
 Consequences       -0.1143488 0.058943 -1.939998 0.0523799
 Consequences        0.0053907 0.060193  0.089556 0.9286399
 Consequences       -0.0554393 0.061382 -0.903182 0.3664295
      Framing       -0.0608040 0.045152 -1.346652 0.1780922
      Framing        0.0157170 0.046004  0.341643 0.7326199
      Framing       -0.0021104 0.046066 -0.045812 0.9634601
  Incdistance       -0.0857078 0.032557 -2.632545 0.0084748 **
        Merit        0.0071741 0.071180  0.100787 0.9197192
        Merit        0.0496734 0.069328  0.716502 0.4736814
        Merit        0.0042334 0.068648  0.061668 0.9508273
        Merit       -0.0334555 0.068152 -0.490894 0.6235014
        Merit        0.0111125 0.067680  0.164193 0.8695792
        Merit        0.0020224 0.068842  0.029377 0.9765640
        Merit       -0.0255577 0.070068 -0.364754 0.7152953
        Merit        0.0515310 0.068058  0.757163 0.4489521
  Opportunity        0.0230003 0.039316  0.585004 0.5585449
  Opportunity       -0.0393960 0.039623 -0.994259 0.3200969
---
Number of Obs. = 3921
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences
      Framing
  Incdistance
        Merit
  Opportunity
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv3 on Treatments (passed AC only)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate    Std. Err z value    Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences       -0.06130305 0.049815 -1.2306075 0.218470
 Consequences        0.00274276 0.051512  0.0532451 0.957537
 Consequences        0.01216263 0.051372  0.2367557 0.812846
 Consequences       -0.00020298 0.051892 -0.0039117 0.996879
 Consequences        0.03802373 0.051562  0.7374328 0.460859
 Consequences       -0.02314418 0.050184 -0.4611888 0.644663
      Framing        0.01822766 0.038337  0.4754608 0.634459
      Framing       -0.01552704 0.039003 -0.3980983 0.690558
      Framing       -0.01980968 0.038828 -0.5101942 0.609915
  Incdistance       -0.05734358 0.027538 -2.0823616 0.037309 *
        Merit       -0.02654982 0.060314 -0.4401945 0.659796
        Merit        0.00369528 0.059954  0.0616349 0.950854
        Merit        0.02104227 0.058210  0.3614882 0.717735
        Merit        0.11691466 0.057177  2.0447882 0.040876 *
        Merit        0.06616807 0.057300  1.1547751 0.248183
        Merit        0.02272789 0.058308  0.3897919 0.696690
        Merit       -0.01072468 0.058838 -0.1822762 0.855366
        Merit        0.05351288 0.057642  0.9283728 0.353214
  Opportunity        0.01904516 0.033246  0.5728508 0.566746
  Opportunity        0.00684628 0.033631  0.2035701 0.838689
---
Number of Obs. = 3932
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences
      Framing
  Incdistance
        Merit
  Opportunity
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Treatments, Income and Partypref

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate    Std. Err  z value    Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences2       0.04750520 0.048044  0.9887798 3.2277e-01
 Consequences3       0.04335830 0.047445  0.9138632 3.6079e-01
 Consequences4       0.02904204 0.047490  0.6115434 5.4084e-01
 Consequences5      -0.08974285 0.047462 -1.8908550 5.8644e-02
 Consequences6      -0.00685770 0.047503 -0.1443626 8.8521e-01
 Consequences7      -0.01200845 0.047843 -0.2509956 8.0182e-01
      Framing2      -0.03512642 0.036015 -0.9753389 3.2939e-01
      Framing3       0.01255040 0.036534  0.3435258 7.3120e-01
      Framing4      -0.00237398 0.036940 -0.0642658 9.4876e-01
  Incdistance2      -0.06636046 0.025954 -2.5568337 1.0563e-02   *
       Income2       0.03346290 0.104902  0.3189911 7.4973e-01
       Income3      -0.02281851 0.090046 -0.2534096 7.9995e-01
       Income4       0.00576803 0.090733  0.0635716 9.4931e-01
       Income5      -0.00127792 0.089757 -0.0142376 9.8864e-01
       Income6       0.09773498 0.080620  1.2122985 2.2540e-01
       Income7       0.10111862 0.080584  1.2548151 2.0955e-01
       Income8       0.20770003 0.080800  2.5705405 1.0154e-02   *
       Income9       0.26204609 0.077173  3.3955638 6.8487e-04 ***
      Income10       0.41209388 0.080484  5.1202007 3.0521e-07 ***
      Income11       0.49700359 0.088907  5.5901756 2.2684e-08 ***
      Income12       0.93674763 0.157107  5.9624810 2.4844e-09 ***
      Income13       1.28753883 0.248892  5.1730883 2.3026e-07 ***
      IncomeNA       0.20072530 0.082621  2.4294823 1.5120e-02   *
        Merit2       0.00449843 0.054919  0.0819110 9.3472e-01
        Merit3      -0.00033329 0.054452 -0.0061208 9.9512e-01
        Merit4      -0.01682171 0.054218 -0.3102596 7.5636e-01
        Merit5      -0.02611011 0.054032 -0.4832351 6.2893e-01
        Merit6      -0.00245483 0.053382 -0.0459864 9.6332e-01
        Merit7      -0.00892517 0.055318 -0.1613422 8.7182e-01
        Merit8      -0.02266919 0.055634 -0.4074696 6.8366e-01
        Merit9      -0.00557755 0.054189 -0.1029271 9.1802e-01
  Opportunity2       0.01917322 0.031747  0.6039405 5.4588e-01
  Opportunity3      -0.03629014 0.031756 -1.1427925 2.5312e-01
      CDU/CSU        0.75768551 0.058732 12.9006349 4.4640e-38 ***
          SPD        0.36474242 0.055098  6.6198280 3.5962e-11 ***
 Bündnis90/Die       0.25164618 0.055385  4.5435747 5.5308e-06 ***
          FDP        0.65342885 0.066263  9.8611356 6.1352e-23 ***
          AfD        0.10226134 0.065417  1.5632315 1.1800e-01
        Other        0.06955983 0.084442  0.8237572 4.1008e-01
     No Party        0.16461432 0.052496  3.1357365 1.7142e-03  **
   PartyprefNA       0.32383215 0.065940  4.9110288 9.0600e-07 ***
---
Number of Obs. = 5984
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
    Attribute Level
 Consequences1
      Framing1
  Incdistance1
       Income1
        Merit1
  Opportunity1
     Die Linke
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1, dv2 and dv3 on aggregated individual treatments

```
> dv1
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
 ConsequencesN      0.047133 0.041037 1.14855 0.2507399
 ConsequencesL      0.093446 0.028849 3.23913 0.0011989 **
      FramingN      0.025223 0.037649 0.66997 0.5028799
      FramingL      0.049587 0.032601 1.52102 0.1282537
  IncdistanceL      0.068452 0.026737 2.56022 0.0104606  *
        MeritN      0.018507 0.049624 0.37294 0.7091924
        MeritL      0.012383 0.032491 0.38113 0.7031038
  OpportunityN      0.038527 0.032991 1.16780 0.2428891
  OpportunityL      0.064310 0.032519 1.97760 0.0479741  *
---
Number of Obs. = 5984
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
    Attribute Level
 ConsequencesC
      FramingC
  IncdistanceC
        MeritC
  OpportunityC


> dv2
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate  Std. Err z value  Pr(>|z|)
 ConsequencesN      -0.046400 0.040073 -1.15789 0.2469087
 ConsequencesL      -0.072923 0.028082 -2.59673 0.0094116 **
      FramingN      -0.043836 0.036458 -1.20235 0.2292261
      FramingL      -0.062457 0.031301 -1.99539 0.0460003  *
  IncdistanceL      -0.034639 0.026117 -1.32631 0.1847379
        MeritN       0.066518 0.045572  1.45962 0.1443945
        MeritL       0.010704 0.031846  0.33612 0.7367803
  OpportunityN      -0.036613 0.031920 -1.14702 0.2513730
  OpportunityL      -0.032892 0.031795 -1.03452 0.3008952
---
Number of Obs. = 5975
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
    Attribute Level
 ConsequencesC
      FramingC
  IncdistanceC
        MeritC
  OpportunityC


> dv3
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate   Std. Err  z value Pr(>|z|)
 ConsequencesN       0.0042148 0.035248  0.11957 0.904820
 ConsequencesL       0.0092722 0.024979  0.37120 0.710486
      FramingN      -0.0184452 0.032543 -0.56679 0.570854
      FramingL      -0.0419627 0.028173 -1.48946 0.136367
  IncdistanceL       0.0460217 0.023200  1.98365 0.047295 *
        MeritN      -0.0280875 0.043113 -0.65149 0.514729
        MeritL      -0.0224035 0.028341 -0.79050 0.429236
  OpportunityN      -0.0096429 0.028505 -0.33829 0.735148
  OpportunityL       0.0095006 0.028352  0.33509 0.737555
---
Number of Obs. = 5987
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
    Attribute Level
 ConsequencesC
      FramingC
  IncdistanceC
        MeritC
  OpportunityC
```

AMCE Estimates for regressions of dv1 on Tcount variables

```
> Tcount (all)
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level  Estimate  Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
    Tcount2      -0.047860  0.17969 -0.26634 0.789975
    Tcount3       0.062073  0.15514  0.40010 0.689081
    Tcount4       0.091981  0.15049  0.61121 0.541062
    Tcount5       0.163142  0.14591  1.11810 0.263524
    Tcount6       0.137881  0.14578  0.94580 0.344252
    Tcount7       0.212662  0.14486  1.46810 0.142078
    Tcount8       0.175400  0.14619  1.19984 0.230200
    Tcount9       0.268229  0.14682  1.82694 0.067709
    Tcount10      0.321153  0.15349  2.09239 0.036404 *
    Tcount11      0.251537  0.16168  1.55581 0.119753
---
Number of Obs. = 5984
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
    Tcount1
```

```
> Tcount (all) - Reduced
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level Estimate Std. Err  z value Pr(>|z|)
   TcountR2       0.10926 0.095244  1.1472 0.25131708
   TcountR3       0.17908 0.090043  1.9889 0.04671476   *
   TcountR4       0.22594 0.089683  2.5193 0.01175808   *
   TcountR5       0.31442 0.092456  3.4008 0.00067189 ***
   TcountR6       0.28061 0.116394  2.4108 0.01591549   *
---
Number of Obs. = 5984
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
   TcountR1
```

```
   > Tcount (excl. merit) (all)
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level Estimate Std. Err z value   Pr(>|z|)
 Tcountnol2      0.049385 0.102047 0.48394 0.62842789
 Tcountnol3      0.102144 0.091193 1.12008 0.26267795
 Tcountnol4      0.200431 0.089453 2.24064 0.02504947   *
 Tcountnol5      0.191256 0.087418 2.18783 0.02868190   *
 Tcountnol6      0.159565 0.088494 1.80311 0.07137138
 Tcountnol7      0.308365 0.089156 3.45872 0.00054274 ***
 Tcountnol8      0.235007 0.095737 2.45471 0.01409976   *
 Tcountnol9      0.337955 0.105249 3.21100 0.00132275  **
---
Number of Obs. = 5984
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Tcountnol1
```

```
> Tcount (excl. merit) (Reduced)
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level  Estimate Std. Err  z value Pr(>|z|)
 TcountnolR2       0.12540 0.054916  2.2835 2.2400e-02   *
 TcountnolR3       0.14491 0.052988  2.7347 6.2434e-03  **
 TcountnolR4       0.25113 0.055842  4.4971 6.8894e-06 ***
 TcountnolR5       0.30603 0.081329  3.7628 1.6801e-04 ***
---
Number of Obs. = 5984
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 TcountnolR1
```

AMCE Estimates for regressions of dv1, dv2 and dv3 on Interview Types

```
> dv1
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level  Estimate Std. Err  z value Pr(>|z|)
        mixed      0.16487 0.070323  2.3444 0.01905644   *
  legitimizing     0.28708 0.078686  3.6485 0.00026382 ***
---
Number of Obs. = 5984
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
  criticizing
```

```
> dv2
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level  Estimate   Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
        mixed     -0.099332 0.063115 -1.5738 0.1155300
  legitimizing    -0.192621 0.072241 -2.6664 0.0076677 **
---
Number of Obs. = 5975
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
  criticizing
```

```
> dv3
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level  Estimate   Std. Err z value  Pr(>|z|)
        mixed     0.0181512 0.063335 0.28659  0.77443
  legitimizing    0.0063321 0.069898 0.09059  0.92782
---
Number of Obs. = 5987
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
  criticizing
```

AMCE Estimates for regressions of dv1, dv2 and dv3 on Interview Types (excl. merit)

```
> dv1
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level     Estimate Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
       mixed          0.10812 0.043594  2.4802 0.0131313   *
 legitimizing         0.19920 0.052749  3.7764 0.0001591 ***
---
Number of Obs. = 5984
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
  criticizing
```

```
> dv2
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level      Estimate  Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
       mixed         -0.064826 0.039886 -1.6253 0.1041034
 legitimizing        -0.128464 0.049673 -2.5862 0.0097038 **
---
Number of Obs. = 5975
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
  criticizing
```

```
> dv3
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level      Estimate Std. Err z value  Pr(>|z|)
       mixed         0.023159 0.037324 0.62049  0.53494
 legitimizing         0.022563 0.045097 0.50032  0.61685
---
Number of Obs. = 5987
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
  criticizing
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Interview Types, Income and Party Preference

```
dv1
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level Estimate   Std. Err  z value   Pr(>|z|)
         Mixed   0.14673719 0.065601  2.2368053 2.5299e-02   *
  Legitimizing   0.24229885 0.073824  3.2821281 1.0303e-03  **
       Income2   0.03675067 0.104936  0.3502200 7.2617e-01
       Income3  -0.02687060 0.089766 -0.2993411 7.6468e-01
       Income4   0.00012065 0.090474  0.0013335 9.9894e-01
       Income5  -0.00487170 0.089576 -0.0543863 9.5663e-01
       Income6   0.09435532 0.080383  1.1738165 2.4047e-01
       Income7   0.09561423 0.080437  1.1886829 2.3456e-01
       Income8   0.20441672 0.080520  2.5387174 1.1126e-02   *
       Income9   0.25573113 0.077074  3.3179765 9.0672e-04 ***
      Income10   0.40914416 0.080343  5.0924931 3.5339e-07 ***
      Income11   0.48803468 0.088663  5.5044062 3.7041e-08 ***
      Income12   0.93062382 0.156332  5.9528679 2.6348e-09 ***
      Income13   1.26661644 0.247305  5.1216871 3.0281e-07 ***
      IncomeNA   0.19804095 0.082357  2.4046595 1.6188e-02   *
       CDU/CSU   0.75600883 0.058683 12.8830056 5.6107e-38 ***
           SPD   0.36499464 0.055049  6.6303398 3.3491e-11 ***
 Bündnis90/Die   0.25083727 0.055339  4.5327531 5.8220e-06 ***
           FDP   0.66010205 0.066105  9.9856092 1.7622e-23 ***
           AfD   0.09873649 0.065341  1.5110882 1.3077e-01
         Other   0.06243929 0.084251  0.7411138 4.5862e-01
      No Party   0.16114349 0.052430  3.0735266 2.1154e-03  **
   PartyprefNA   0.32259407 0.065834  4.9001229 9.5777e-07 ***
---
Number of Obs. = 5984
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
   Criticizing
       Income1
     Die Linke
```

```
dv2
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level   Estimate  Std. Err  z value  Pr(>|z|)
         Mixed     -0.083508 0.058322  -1.43184 1.5219e-01
  Legitimizing     -0.150488 0.067634  -2.22505 2.6078e-02   *
       Income2     -0.123164 0.108973  -1.13023 2.5838e-01
       Income3      0.061810 0.085443   0.72341 4.6943e-01
       Income4      0.024892 0.085685   0.29050 7.7143e-01
       Income5     -0.020647 0.084544  -0.24421 8.0707e-01
       Income6     -0.034591 0.077843  -0.44437 6.5677e-01
       Income7     -0.062279 0.077847  -0.80002 4.2370e-01
       Income8     -0.201417 0.077828  -2.58796 9.6545e-03  **
       Income9     -0.206734 0.075674  -2.73190 6.2970e-03  **
      Income10     -0.412672 0.078863  -5.23275 1.6701e-07 ***
      Income11     -0.525462 0.090563  -5.80219 6.5455e-09 ***
      Income12     -0.659999 0.160092  -4.12264 3.7456e-05 ***
      Income13     -1.281358 0.289199  -4.43071 9.3925e-06 ***
      Income14     -0.266780 0.081162  -3.28699 1.0127e-03  **
       CDU/CSU     -0.770191 0.052350 -14.71232 5.3734e-49 ***
           SPD     -0.211449 0.044931  -4.70606 2.5255e-06 ***
 Bündnis90/Die     -0.181233 0.044644  -4.05955 4.9168e-05 ***
           FDP     -0.840177 0.062676 -13.40507 5.6471e-41 ***
           AfD     -0.528696 0.062325  -8.48294 2.1957e-17 ***
         Other     -0.348919 0.081543  -4.27898 1.8775e-05 ***
      No Party     -0.413207 0.045479  -9.08574 1.0300e-19 ***
   PartyprefNA     -0.480419 0.059002  -8.14238 3.8759e-16 ***
---
Number of Obs. = 5975
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Criticizing
     Income1
   Die Linke
```

```
dv3
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate  Std. Err  z value Pr(>|z|)
         Mixed       0.010922 0.061731  0.17693 8.5956e-01
  Legitimizing      -0.018188 0.068134 -0.26695 7.8951e-01
       Income2       0.015138 0.097463  0.15533 8.7657e-01
       Income3      -0.016399 0.083974 -0.19529 8.4517e-01
       Income4       0.067772 0.083225  0.81432 4.1546e-01
       Income5      -0.028592 0.084163 -0.33973 7.3406e-01
       Income6       0.084383 0.076962  1.09643 2.7289e-01
       Income7       0.094420 0.077112  1.22446 2.2078e-01
       Income8       0.145328 0.075828  1.91656 5.5294e-02
       Income9       0.174857 0.073565  2.37690 1.7459e-02   *
      Income10       0.254886 0.076938  3.31288 9.2341e-04 ***
      Income11       0.370555 0.082552  4.48877 7.1637e-06 ***
      Income12       0.752573 0.119243  6.31123 2.7683e-10 ***
      Income13       0.887907 0.211046  4.20718 2.5858e-05 ***
      IncomeNA       0.103816 0.077934  1.33209 1.8283e-01
       CDU/CSU       0.578614 0.052776 10.96362 5.7169e-28 ***
           SPD       0.323591 0.048422  6.68277 2.3447e-11 ***
 Bündnis90/Die       0.243476 0.048825  4.98666 6.1431e-07 ***
           FDP       0.630080 0.056728 11.10697 1.1603e-28 ***
           AfD       0.171107 0.061702  2.77313 5.5520e-03  **
         Other       0.109513 0.076451  1.43246 1.5201e-01
      No Party       0.261950 0.046508  5.63237 1.7775e-08 ***
   PartyprefNA       0.257973 0.058996  4.37270 1.2272e-05 ***
---
Number of Obs. = 5987
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
   Criticizing
       Income1
     Die Linke
```

AMCE Estimates for regressions of index and index2 on Interview Types

```
> index
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level Estimate   Std. Err z value  Pr(>|z|)
       Mixed     0.2222645  0.15123  1.469748 1.4163e-01
 legitimizing    0.3427024  0.16884  2.029763 4.2381e-02   *
     Income2     0.1817810  0.22732  0.799686 4.2389e-01
     Income3    -0.0974220  0.18756 -0.519422 6.0347e-01
     Income4     0.0498340  0.18771  0.265482 7.9064e-01
     Income5     0.0095173  0.18732  0.050807 9.5948e-01
     Income6     0.2279820  0.17147  1.329579 1.8366e-01
     Income7     0.2557944  0.16994  1.505177 1.3228e-01
     Income8     0.5719143  0.17121  3.340334 8.3678e-04 ***
     Income9     0.6544045  0.16368  3.997982 6.3885e-05 ***
    Income10     1.0929952  0.17209  6.351370 2.1341e-10 ***
    Income11     1.4048077  0.19494  7.206324 5.7483e-13 ***
    Income12     2.3153923  0.35759  6.475022 9.4798e-11 ***
    Income13     3.4551365  0.60828  5.680141 1.3458e-08 ***
    IncomeNA     0.5912374  0.17899  3.303260 9.5568e-04 ***
  Partypref2     2.1136291  0.12653 16.704019 1.2253e-62 ***
  Partypref3     0.8960742  0.11274  7.948173 1.8928e-15 ***
  Partypref4     0.6824515  0.11334  6.021073 1.7326e-09 ***
  Partypref5     2.1297248  0.14479 14.709393 5.6109e-49 ***
  Partypref6     0.7923957  0.14605  5.425438 5.7813e-08 ***
  Partypref7     0.5317793  0.19570  2.717277 6.5822e-03  **
  Partypref8     0.8363277  0.11070  7.554702 4.1982e-14 ***
 PartyprefNA     1.0619743  0.13965  7.604334 2.8637e-14 ***
---
Number of Obs. = 5911
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Criticizing
    Income1
  Partypref1
```

```
> index2
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level  Estimate Std. Err  z value Pr(>|z|)
       Mixed      0.212425 0.109189  1.94547 5.1718e-02
 legitimizing     0.374079 0.122708  3.04852 2.2997e-03  **
     Income2      0.165238 0.176681  0.93523 3.4967e-01
     Income3     -0.097353 0.140364 -0.69357 4.8795e-01
     Income4     -0.024932 0.142962 -0.17440 8.6155e-01
     Income5      0.014455 0.141353  0.10226 9.1855e-01
     Income6      0.126771 0.128645  0.98544 3.2441e-01
     Income7      0.157541 0.128051  1.23029 2.1859e-01
     Income8      0.407478 0.129686  3.14204 1.6777e-03  **
     Income9      0.468529 0.123856  3.78284 1.5505e-04 ***
    Income10      0.823601 0.129412  6.36417 1.9635e-10 ***
    Income11      1.021979 0.148136  6.89891 5.2404e-12 ***
    Income12      1.563967 0.279776  5.59007 2.2698e-08 ***
    Income13      2.550013 0.466552  5.46566 4.6119e-08 ***
    IncomeNA      0.475210 0.135091  3.51770 4.3530e-04 ***
  Partypref2      1.528781 0.092889 16.45810 7.3366e-61 ***
  Partypref3      0.573204 0.082911  6.91345 4.7300e-12 ***
  Partypref4      0.431121 0.083213  5.18091 2.2081e-07 ***
  Partypref5      1.502256 0.109777 13.68465 1.2540e-42 ***
  Partypref6      0.620574 0.108294  5.73043 1.0018e-08 ***
  Partypref7      0.417943 0.144409  2.89415 3.8018e-03  **
  Partypref8      0.578425 0.081943  7.05888 1.6785e-12 ***
 PartyprefNA      0.802004 0.104033  7.70916 1.2665e-14 ***
---
Number of Obs. = 5936
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Criticizing
     Income
   Partypref
```

Subgroup Analysis: Low incomes vs. medium-high incomes – DV1 on Treatments

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Treatments (low incomes)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate   Std. Err  z value  Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences2      0.25689258 0.100437  2.557753 0.0105351  *
 Consequences3      0.20288243 0.105367  1.925479 0.0541695
 Consequences4      0.18429271 0.096794  1.903964 0.0569149
 Consequences5      0.18003367 0.103393  1.741261 0.0816379
 Consequences6      0.14340184 0.097763  1.466832 0.1424217
 Consequences7      0.15813182 0.102120  1.548484 0.1215058
      Framing2     -0.05029997 0.079365 -0.633778 0.5262260
      Framing3      0.06785342 0.080956  0.838151 0.4019462
      Framing4     -0.02922315 0.081294 -0.359476 0.7192391
  Incdistance2     -0.09538265 0.057652 -1.654447 0.0980368
        Merit2      0.11450490 0.118532  0.966028 0.3340303
        Merit3      0.22776554 0.120098  1.896504 0.0578935
        Merit4      0.17491474 0.120514  1.451412 0.1466653
        Merit5      0.07972012 0.113759  0.700783 0.4834381
        Merit6      0.31268519 0.119721  2.611779 0.0090072 **
        Merit7      0.04902954 0.120046  0.408423 0.6829633
        Merit8      0.05078583 0.120979  0.419789 0.6746397
        Merit9      0.17122441 0.119473  1.433163 0.1518113
  Opportunity2     -0.00089322 0.070052 -0.012751 0.9898266
  Opportunity3     -0.02154279 0.070472 -0.305691 0.7598398
---
Number of Obs. = 1252
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences1
      Framing1
  Incdistance1
        Merit1
  Opportunity1
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Treatments (medium-high incomes)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate   Std. Err z value   Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences2     -0.0202688 0.060213 -0.336620 0.7364031
 Consequences3     -0.0056646 0.059754 -0.094798 0.9244750
 Consequences4     -0.0125912 0.060744 -0.207282 0.8357898
 Consequences5     -0.1925083 0.059316 -3.245468 0.0011726 **
 Consequences6     -0.0500433 0.059811 -0.836696 0.4027633
 Consequences7     -0.0700387 0.060791 -1.152118 0.2492724
      Framing2     -0.0114077 0.045748 -0.249357 0.8030849
      Framing3      0.0181633 0.045858  0.396073 0.6920511
      Framing4      0.0272069 0.046123  0.589875 0.5552744
  Incdistance2     -0.0449420 0.032573 -1.379728 0.1676703
        Merit2     -0.0414440 0.068853 -0.601919 0.5472280
        Merit3     -0.0763630 0.069595 -1.097255 0.2725299
        Merit4     -0.0763939 0.068634 -1.113057 0.2656840
        Merit5     -0.0620760 0.068844 -0.901685 0.3672244
        Merit6     -0.0549693 0.067878 -0.809822 0.4180427
        Merit7     -0.0258502 0.069245 -0.373316 0.7089133
        Merit8     -0.0455869 0.069862 -0.652527 0.5140612
        Merit9     -0.0283058 0.067913 -0.416792 0.6768307
  Opportunity2      0.0325896 0.039745  0.819968 0.4122345
  Opportunity3     -0.0488287 0.039570 -1.233972 0.2172132
---
Number of Obs. = 4218
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences1
      Framing1
  Incdistance1
        Merit1
  Opportunity1
```

Subgroup Analysis: Low incomes vs. medium-high incomes – DV1 on Interview Types

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Interview Types (low incomes)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level Estimate Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
        mixed    0.086323  0.10003 0.86294 0.388170
 legitimizing    0.203927  0.11384 1.79139 0.073231
---
Number of Obs. = 2546
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
  criticizing
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Interview Types (medium-high incomes)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level Estimate Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
        mixed    0.11378  0.10942  1.0399  0.29839
 legitimizing    0.21040  0.12071  1.7431  0.08132
---
Number of Obs. = 2864
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
  criticizing
```

Subgroup Analysis: Left vs. centre vs. right – DV1 on Treatments

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Treatments (left)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level     Estimate   Std. Err z value  Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences2        0.1021811 0.074586  1.36997 0.1706948
 Consequences3        0.0231613 0.076529  0.30265 0.7621582
 Consequences4        0.0816155 0.076092  1.07259 0.2834556
 Consequences5       -0.0518427 0.074165 -0.69902 0.4845366
 Consequences6        0.0712459 0.074881  0.95145 0.3413735
 Consequences7        0.0199185 0.078458  0.25387 0.7995933
      Framing2       -0.0313306 0.059827 -0.52368 0.6004995
      Framing3       -0.0145223 0.058943 -0.24638 0.8053877
      Framing4       -0.0270445 0.058506 -0.46225 0.6439027
  Incdistance2       -0.1276988 0.041564 -3.07235 0.0021238 **
        Merit2       -0.1553898 0.088408 -1.75764 0.0788095
        Merit3       -0.1689752 0.089017 -1.89823 0.0576661
        Merit4       -0.0999913 0.092395 -1.08222 0.2791549
        Merit5       -0.0634808 0.090291 -0.70307 0.4820127
        Merit6       -0.1083140 0.088123 -1.22913 0.2190236
        Merit7       -0.0381374 0.091805 -0.41542 0.6778373
        Merit8       -0.1149054 0.094713 -1.21319 0.2250568
        Merit9       -0.1303705 0.087249 -1.49423 0.1351147
  Opportunity2        0.0181272 0.050089  0.36190 0.7174266
  Opportunity3        0.0065059 0.050809  0.12805 0.8981110
---
Number of Obs. = 2137
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences1
      Framing1
  Incdistance1
        Merit1
  Opportunity1
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Treatments (right)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level    Estimate   Std. Err z value   Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences2      -0.2444740 0.115705 -2.112916 0.0346080  *
 Consequences3      -0.2379694 0.110510 -2.153372 0.0312894  *
 Consequences4      -0.0940662 0.110397 -0.852069 0.3941758
 Consequences5      -0.3406106 0.109886 -3.099684 0.0019373 **
 Consequences6      -0.1796639 0.112610 -1.595446 0.1106125
 Consequences7      -0.2663508 0.108487 -2.455136 0.0140831  *
      Framing2      -0.0057162 0.082137 -0.069594 0.9445172
      Framing3       0.1063558 0.082914  1.282725 0.1995884
      Framing4       0.0745324 0.084184  0.885356 0.3759648
  Incdistance2      -0.0308318 0.060034 -0.513570 0.6075525
        Merit2      -0.0876270 0.130268 -0.672669 0.5011582
        Merit3      -0.1085533 0.129534 -0.838027 0.4020157
        Merit4      -0.0779378 0.129035 -0.604005 0.5458405
        Merit5      -0.0682452 0.129278 -0.527894 0.5975732
        Merit6       0.0076648 0.127726  0.060010 0.9521478
        Merit7      -0.1164495 0.132266 -0.880418 0.3786327
        Merit8      -0.0167021 0.126699 -0.131826 0.8951222
        Merit9      -0.0722127 0.132546 -0.544811 0.5858833
  Opportunity2      -0.0623103 0.072989 -0.853694 0.3932747
  Opportunity3      -0.1359875 0.073648 -1.846455 0.0648262
---
Number of Obs. = 1518
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences1
      Framing1
  Incdistance1
        Merit1
  Opportunity1
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Treatments (centre)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level   Estimate Std. Err   z value  Pr(>|z|)
 Consequences2       0.2134103 0.083499  2.555851 0.0105929  *
 Consequences3       0.2643806 0.082862  3.190630 0.0014196 **
 Consequences4        0.0861909 0.083675  1.030071 0.3029766
 Consequences5        0.0050073 0.085660  0.058455 0.9533858
 Consequences6        0.0462024 0.085417  0.540903 0.5885745
 Consequences7        0.0439872 0.085715  0.513178 0.6078265
      Framing2       -0.0384973 0.063726 -0.604105 0.5457739
      Framing3       -0.0337691 0.064866 -0.520601 0.6026450
      Framing4        0.0059251 0.067649  0.087587 0.9302050
  Incdistance2       -0.0547481 0.046733 -1.171506 0.2413955
        Merit2        0.1732069 0.098561  1.757355 0.0788573
        Merit3        0.1822501 0.096643  1.885815 0.0593199
        Merit4        0.0905843 0.093233  0.971594 0.3312526
        Merit5       -0.0783589 0.092746 -0.844880 0.3981780
        Merit6        0.0760643 0.091997  0.826814 0.4083423
        Merit7        0.0307650 0.096480  0.318876 0.7498207
        Merit8        0.0306521 0.096385  0.318018 0.7504715
        Merit9        0.1131339 0.095237  1.187923 0.2348639
  Opportunity2        0.0936128 0.056236  1.664641 0.0959844
  Opportunity3        0.0086825 0.056562  0.153502 0.8780021
---
Number of Obs. = 2009
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Consequences1
      Framing1
  Incdistance1
        Merit1
  Opportunity1
```

Subgroup Analysis: Centre-left vs. centre-right – DV1 on Interview Types

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Interview Types (centre-left)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level Estimate Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
        mixed    0.14030 0.079631  1.7618 0.078098
 legitimizing    0.22042 0.088876  2.4801 0.013133 *
---
Number of Obs. = 4096
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
  criticizing
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Interview Types (centre-right)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level Estimate Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
        mixed    0.11730 0.099877  1.1744 0.240237
legitimizing    0.25554 0.110613  2.3103 0.020874 *
---
Number of Obs. = 3489
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
  criticizing
```

Subgroup Analysis: Left vs. centre vs. right – DV1 on Interview Types

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Interview Types (left)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level Estimate Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
       AGG        0.18556  0.10237  1.8126 0.069894
       AGG        0.29761  0.11634  2.5582 0.010522 *
---
Number of Obs. = 2115
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Attribute Level
       AGG
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Interview Types (right)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level Estimate Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
       AGG        0.14886  0.17224 0.86422 0.387467
       AGG        0.41587  0.18976 2.19151 0.028415 *
---
Number of Obs. = 1508
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Attribute Level
       AGG
```

AMCE Estimates for regression of dv1 on Interview Types (centre)

```
------------------------------------------
Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE):
------------------------------------------
 Attribute Level Estimate Std. Err z value Pr(>|z|)
       AGG       0.089965  0.12153 0.74024  0.45915
       AGG       0.129759  0.13389 0.96915  0.33247
---
Number of Obs. = 1981
---
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

--------------------
AMCE Baseline Levels:
--------------------
 Attribute Level
       AGG
```

Figure F.6: Aggregated effects (interview type, excl. merit)

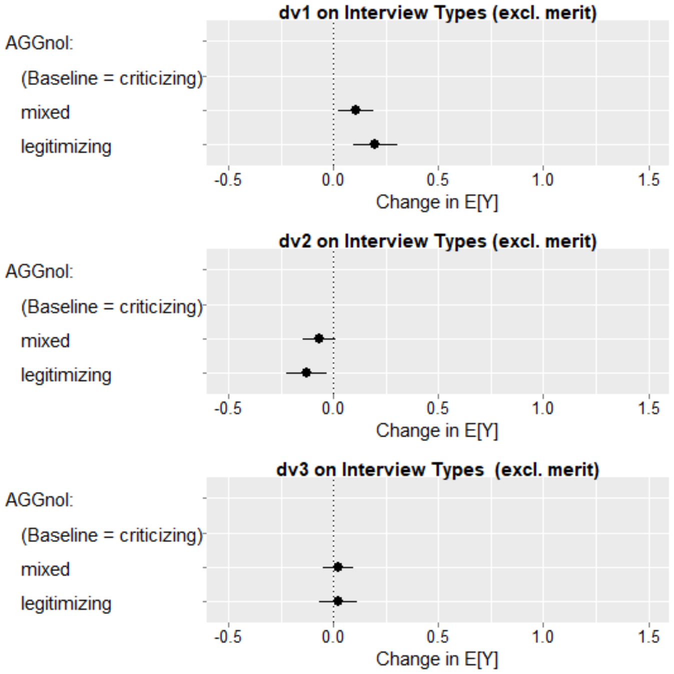


Figure F.7: Illustrating effect sizes - dv3 on interview types, income and party preference

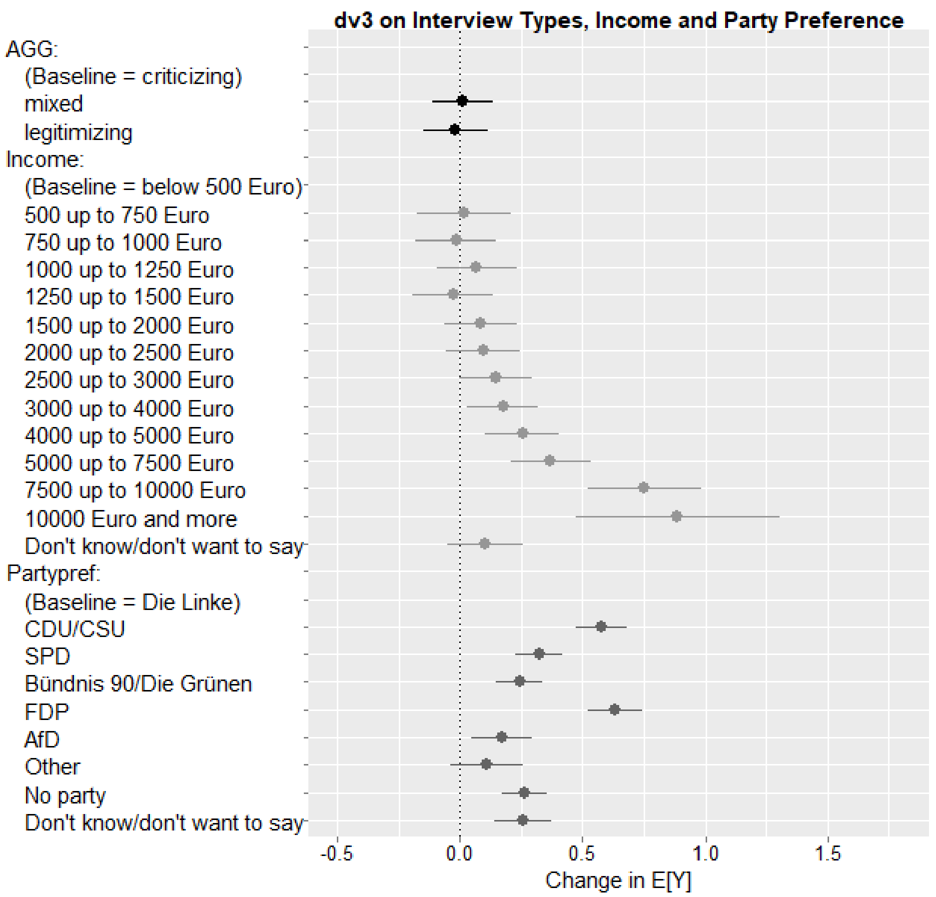


Figure F.8: Subgroup analysis – AMCE estimates by political self-allocation

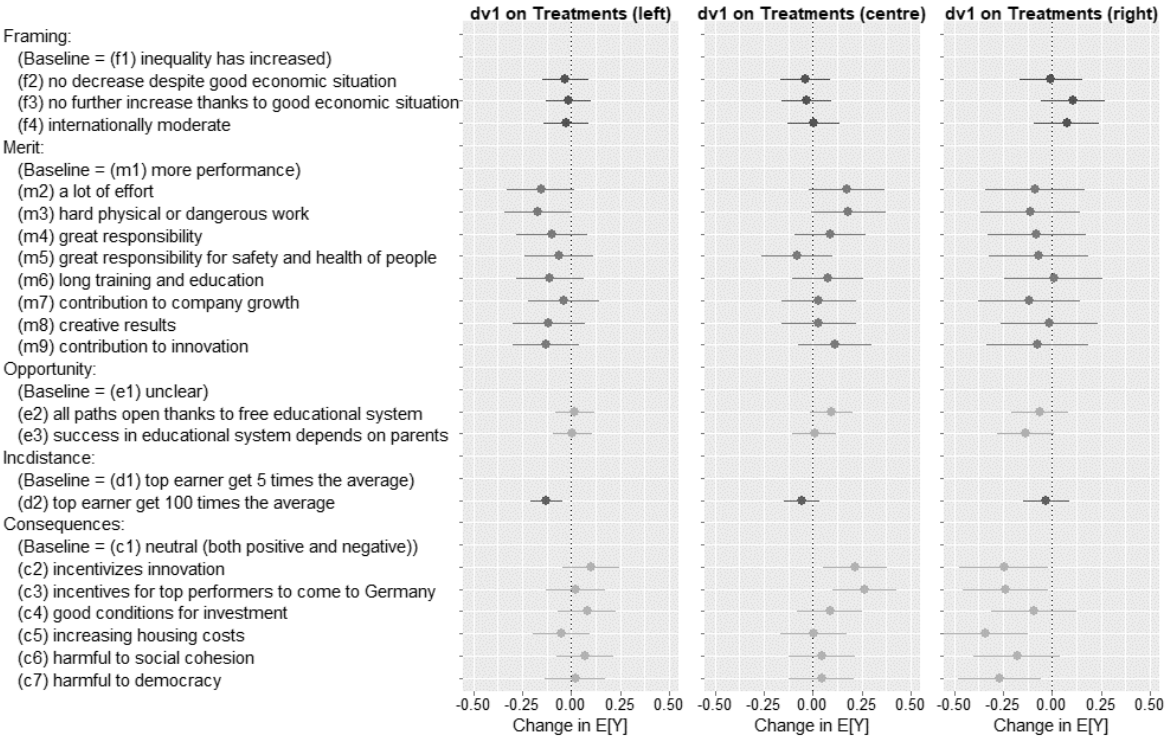
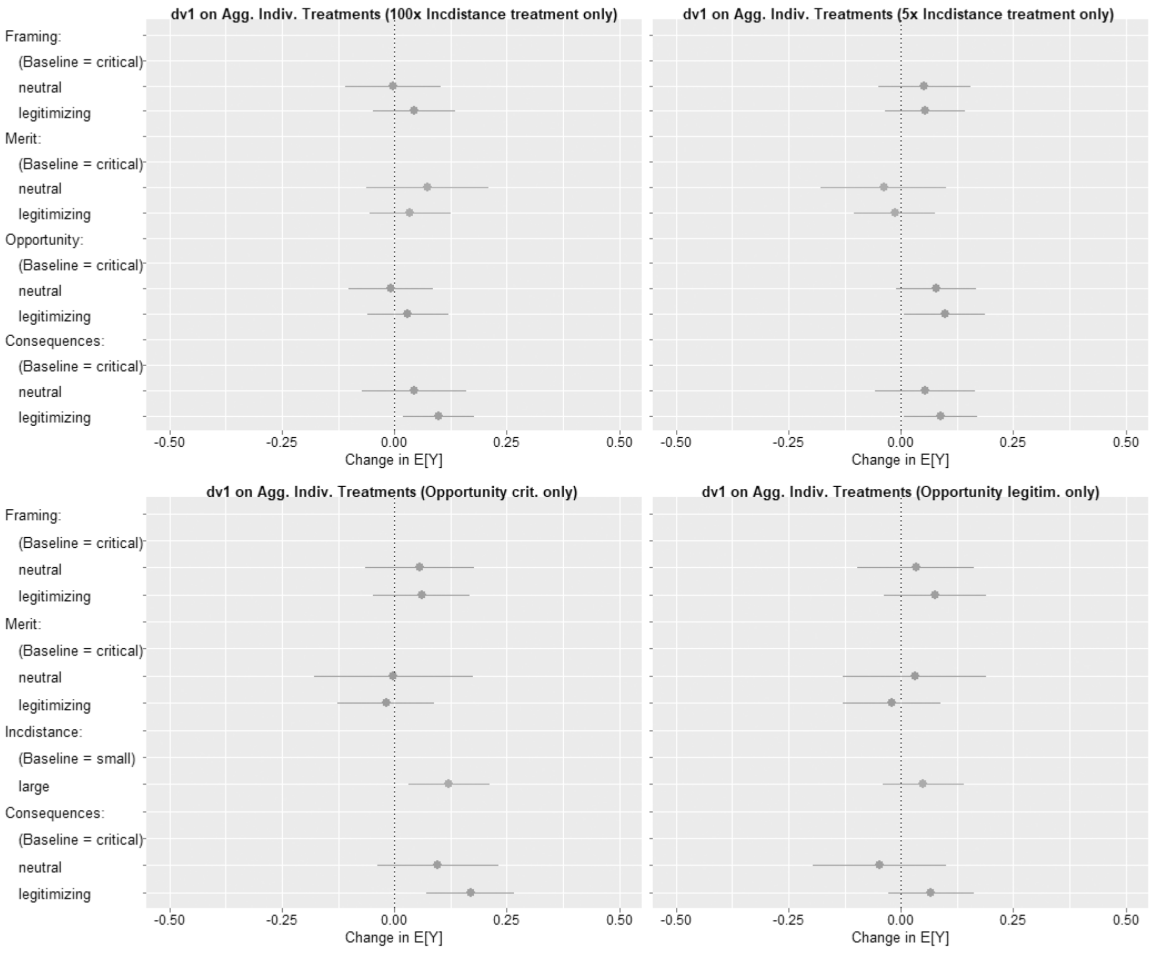


Figure F.9: Subgroup analysis – income distance and equality of opportunity treatments



F.5 R code

```
### 1 PREPARE STATISTICAL SOFTWARE (R PACKAGES) ###

#LOAD PACKAGES
library(readr) #for Import of csv-files
library(haven) #for Import of sav-file SPSS
library(dplyr) #for data preparation (renaming)
library(cjoint) #for conjoint analysis
library(labelled) #to remove labels in column before recoding (income groups)
library(sjPlot) # for descriptive statistics
library(ggplot2) # for scatterplot DVs

### 2 LOAD DATA ###
dfall <- haven::read_sav("raw/D-P21-15113 Uni Duisburg-Essen Conjoint - FINAL.sav")

### 3 PREPARE DATA ###

# 3.1 RENAME VARIABLES
df1 <- dfall
df1 <- df1 %>% rename(
  Framing = c_0035,
  Merit = c_0036,
  Opportunity = c_0037,
  Incdistance = c_0038,
  Consequences = c_0039,
  Income = v_120,
  Partypref = v_83)

# 3.2 CREATE DATAFRAMES FILTERED FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLE NA VALUES (=77) (not required with
    argument subset=df$var<77)
df2 <- df1
df2 <- df2 %>% filter(v_62<6)
df2 <- df2 %>% filter(v_63<6)
df2 <- df2 %>% filter(v_64<6)    # df2 for all three dependent variables

df2b <- df1
df2b <- df2b %>% filter(v_62<6)
df2b <- df2b %>% filter(v_63<6)    # df2b for dv1 and dv2 only

df2c <- df1
df2c <- df2c %>% filter(v_62<6)  # df2c for dv1 only (used in subgroup analyses)

df2c_ic <- df2c
df2c_ic <- df2c_ic %>% filter(Income<77)  # additionally remove NA from Income variable


# 3.3 CREATE DATAFRAME FOR RESPONDENTS WHO ACCOMPLISHED ATTENTION CHECK (AC)
df1_ac <- df1
df1_ac <- df1_ac %>% filter(v_65==1)
df1_ac <- df1_ac %>% filter(v_66==1)
df1_ac <- df1_ac %>% filter(v_67==1)
df1_ac <- df1_ac %>% filter(v_68==0)
df1_ac <- df1_ac %>% filter(v_69==0)
df1_ac <- df1_ac %>% filter(v_70==0)
df1_ac <- df1_ac %>% filter(v_71==0)
df1_ac <- df1_ac %>% filter(v_72==0)
df1_ac <- df1_ac %>% filter(v_73==0)


# 3.4 CREATE ADDITIVE INDEX VARIABLE INEQUALITY ACCEPTANCE, based on filtered dataframes
    df2 (=index) and df2b (=index2)
df2_index <-df2
df2_index$index <-df2_index$v_62 - df2_index$v_63 + df2_index$v_64 + 4   #v_63 with reverse
    coding, therefore subtract; plus 4 to avoid values <1

df2_index2 <-df2b
df2_index2$index2 <-df2_index2$v_62 - df2_index2$v_63 + 5   #index without v_62 and v_63
    only; v_63 subtracted (reverse coding, see above), plus 5 to avoid values <1


# 3.5 RECODE TREATMENTS INTO CRITICIZING, NEUTRAL, LEGITIMIZING; -1=C 0=N 1=L
dfg2 <- df1
dfg2$Framing <- labelled::remove_labels(dfg2$Framing)
dfg2$Framing %>% attr('labels') #to verify removal of labels
dfg2$Framing <- case_when(dfg2$Framing == 1 ~ 0,
                          dfg2$Framing == 2 ~ -1,
```

```
                        dfg2$Framing == 3 ~ 1,
                        dfg2$Framing == 4 ~ 1) #Recoding

dfg2$Merit <- labelled::remove_labels(dfg2$Merit)
dfg2$Merit <- case_when(dfg2$Merit == 1 ~ 0,
                        dfg2$Merit == 2 ~ 1,
                        dfg2$Merit == 3 ~ -1,
                        dfg2$Merit == 4 ~ 1,
                        dfg2$Merit == 5 ~ -1,
                        dfg2$Merit == 6 ~ 1,
                        dfg2$Merit == 7 ~ 1,
                        dfg2$Merit == 8 ~ 1,
                        dfg2$Merit == 9 ~ 1)

dfg2$Opportunity <- labelled::remove_labels(dfg2$Opportunity)
dfg2$Opportunity <- case_when(dfg2$Opportunity == 1 ~ 0,
                              dfg2$Opportunity == 2 ~ 1,
                              dfg2$Opportunity == 3 ~ -1)

dfg2$Incdistance <- labelled::remove_labels(dfg2$Incdistance)
dfg2$Incdistance <- case_when(dfg2$Incdistance == 1 ~ 1,
                              dfg2$Incdistance == 2 ~ -1)

dfg2$Consequences <- labelled::remove_labels(dfg2$Consequences)
dfg2$Consequences <- case_when(dfg2$Consequences == 1 ~ 0,
                               dfg2$Consequences == 2 ~ 1,
                               dfg2$Consequences == 3 ~ 1,
                               dfg2$Consequences == 4 ~ 1,
                               dfg2$Consequences == 5 ~ -1,
                               dfg2$Consequences == 6 ~ -1,
                               dfg2$Consequences == 7 ~ -1)


# 3.6 CREATE DATAFRAME dfg4 WITH Tcount, AGG, AGGnol. Coding VIA EXCEL (EXPORT AND REIMPORT
    csv files)

dfg3 <-
    data.frame(dfg2$v_62,dfg2$v_63,dfg2$v_64,dfg2$Framing,dfg2$Merit,dfg2$Opportunity,dfg2$
    Incdistance,dfg2$Consequences,dfg2$Income,dfg2$Partypref,dfg2$v_34)
write.csv(dfg3, "tidy\\dfg3.csv", row.names=FALSE) # Export CSV-File
dfg4 <- read_delim("raw/dfg4.csv", delim = ";", escape_double = FALSE, trim_ws = TRUE)
dfg4R <- read_delim("raw/dfg4r.csv", delim = ";", escape_double = FALSE, trim_ws = TRUE)
    #Dataframe including Reduced Tcount-Variables


#3.7 CREATE DATAFRAME dfg5 (WITHOUT NA VALUES FOR DV1) USED IN SUBGROUP ANALYSES AND dfg6
    (AS MERGED DATAFRAME WITH df2_index VARIABLE) USED IN ANALYSIS OF INDEX VARIABLE
dfg5 <- dfg4
dfg5 <- dfg5 %>% filter(v_62<6)   # REMOVE NA VALUE (=77) FROM DV1

dfg6 <- dfg5 %>% filter(v_63<6)   # REMOVE NA VALUE (=77) FROM DV2 to reduce dfg5 to same
    data structure as df2_index
dfg6 <- dfg6 %>% filter(v_64<6)   # REMOVE NA VALUE (=77) FROM DV3 to reduce dfg5 to same
    data structure as df2_index
dfg6<-data.frame(dfg6,df2_index$index)  #Merge dfg6 with index variable from df2_index

#3.8 CREATE DATAFRAME dfg8 (WITHOUT NA VALUES FOR DV1 and DV2 AND MERGED WITH df2_index2
    VARIABLE)
dfg7 <- dfg4
dfg7 <- dfg7 %>% filter(v_62<6)
dfg7 <- dfg7 %>% filter(v_63<6)
dfg8<-data.frame(dfg7,df2_index2$index2)


#3.9 CREATE JITTERED SCATTERPLOTS FOR DV ITEM CORRELATIONS

df4 <- df1
df4 <- df4 %>% filter(v_62<6)
df4 <- df4 %>% filter(v_63<6)
df4 <- df4 %>% filter(v_64<6)

df4$AV1 = factor(df4$v_62, levels = c("1","2","3","4","5"), ordered = TRUE)
df4$AV2 = factor(df4$v_63, levels = c("1","2","3","4","5"), ordered = TRUE)
df4$AV3 = factor(df4$v_64, levels = c("1","2","3","4","5"), ordered = TRUE)

df5 <- data.frame(df4$AV1,df4$AV2,df4$AV3)

ggplot(df5, aes(df4.AV2, df4.AV1)) +
```

```
  geom_jitter(na.rm=TRUE, width = 0.2, height = 0.2, alpha=0.4, size=0.1) +
  xlab("Government should redistribute (1=stronlgy disagree, 5=strongly agree)") +
  ylab("Distribution of income is fair (1=strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree)") +
  coord_equal()

ggplot(df5, aes(df4.AV3, df4.AV1)) +
  geom_jitter(na.rm=TRUE, width = 0.20, height = 0.20, alpha=0.4, size=0.1) +
  xlab("Top earners deserve their income (1=stronlgy disagree, 5=strongly agree)") +
  ylab("Distribution of income is fair (1=strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree)") +
  coord_equal()

ggplot(df5, aes(df4.AV1)) +
  geom_bar(width = 0.4) +
  xlab("") +
  scale_x_discrete(limits = rev(levels(df5$df4.AV1))) #serves to reverse order of bars

ggplot(df5, aes(df4.AV2)) +
  geom_bar(width = 0.4) +
  xlab("")

ggplot(df5, aes(df4.AV3)) +
  geom_bar(width = 0.4) +
  xlab("")


### 4 PREPARE CONJOINT ANALYSIS ###

# 4.1 DEFINE BASELINES
baselines <- list()
baselines$Partypref <- "5"  #defining Die Linke as baseline (in order to show Partypref
    estimates on comparable axis values as Income estimates)

# 4.2 DEFINE LABELS

attribute_list <- list()
attribute_list[["Framing"]] <- c("(f1) inequality has increased","(f2) no decrease despite
    good economic situation", "(f3) no further increase thanks to good economic situation",
    "(f4) internationally moderate")
attribute_list[["Merit"]] <- c("(m1) more performance","(m2) a lot of effort", "(m3) hard
    physical or dangerous work", "(m4) great responsibility", "(m5) great responsibility
    for safety and health of people", "(m6) long training and education", "(m7)
    contribution to company growth", "(m8) creative results", "(m9) contribution to
    innovation")
attribute_list[["Opportunity"]] <- c("(e1) unclear","(e2) all paths open thanks to free
    educational system", "(e3) success in educational system depends on parents")
attribute_list[["Incdistance"]] <- c("(d1) top earner get 5 times the average","(d2) top
    earner get 100 times the average")
attribute_list[["Consequences"]] <- c("(c1) neutral (both positive and negative)","(c2)
    incentivizes innovation","(c3) incentives for top performers to come to Germany","(c4)
    good conditions for investment","(c5) increasing housing costs","(c6) harmful to social
    cohesion","(c7) harmful to democracy")
attribute_list[["Income"]] <- c("below 500 Euro","500 up to 750 Euro","750 up to 1000
    Euro","1000 up to 1250 Euro","1250 up to 1500 Euro","1500 up to 2000 Euro","2000 up to
    2500 Euro","2500 up to 3000 Euro","3000 up to 4000 Euro","4000 up to 5000 Euro","5000
    up to 7500 Euro","7500 up to 10000 Euro","10000 Euro and more","Don't know/don't want
    to say")
attribute_list[["Partypref"]] <- c("Die Linke","CDU/CSU","SPD","Bündnis 90/Die
    Grünen","FDP","AfD","Other","No party","Don't know/don't want to say") #note: baseline
    changed above
attribute_list[["Tcount"]] <- c("most
    criticizing","2","3","4","5","6","7","8","9","10","most legitimizing")
attribute_list[["TcountR"]] <- c("most criticizing","2","3","4","5","most legitimizing")
attribute_list[["Tcountnol"]] <- c("most criticizing","2","3","4","5","6","7","8","most
    legitimizing")
attribute_list[["TcountnolR"]] <- c("most criticizing","2","3","4","most legitimizing")
attribute_list[["AGG"]] <- c("criticizing","mixed","legitimizing")
attribute_list[["AGGnol"]] <- c("criticizing","mixed","legitimizing")

attribute_list_agg <- list()
attribute_list_agg[["Framing"]] <- c("critical","neutral", "legitimizing")
attribute_list_agg[["Merit"]] <-  c("critical","neutral", "legitimizing")
attribute_list_agg[["Opportunity"]] <-  c("critical","neutral", "legitimizing")
attribute_list_agg[["Incdistance"]] <-  c("small","large")
attribute_list_agg[["Consequences"]] <- c("critical","neutral", "legitimizing")
```

```r
### 5 CONJOINT ANALYSES ###

# 5.1 MAIN ANALYSES DV1,2,3,index,index2
results_DV1 <- amce(v_62 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df1, subset=df1$v_62<77, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_DV1)
plot(results_DV1,  main="dv1 on Treatments", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))

results_DV2 <- amce(v_63 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df1, subset=df1$v_63<77, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_DV2)
plot(results_DV2,  main="dv2 on Treatments", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))

results_DV3 <- amce(v_64 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df1, subset=df1$v_64<77, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_DV3)
plot(results_DV3,  main="dv3 on Treatments", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))

results_index <- amce(index ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df2_index, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_index)
plot(results_index,  main="Index on Treatments", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))

results_index2 <- amce(index2 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df2_index2, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_index2)
plot(results_index2,  main="Index2 on Treatments", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))


# 5.2 PASSED ATTENTION CHECK (AC) ONLY
results_DV1_AC <- amce(v_62 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df1_ac, subset=df1_ac$v_62<77, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_DV1_AC)
plot(results_DV1_AC,  main="(passed AC only)", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))

results_DV2_AC <- amce(v_63 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df1_ac, subset=df1_ac$v_63<77, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_DV2_AC)
plot(results_DV2_AC,  main="(passed AC only)", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))

results_DV3_AC <- amce(v_64 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df1_ac, subset=df1_ac$v_64<77, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_DV3_AC)
plot(results_DV3_AC,  main="(passed AC only)", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))

#DV1 on T, IC, PP TO SHOW EFFECT SIZE
results_DV1_IC_PP <- amce(v_62 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences
    + Income + Partypref, data=df1, subset=df1$v_62<77, cluster=TRUE, baselines =
    baselines)  #baselines list to choose baselinelevel for PP
summary(results_DV1_IC_PP)
plot(results_DV1_IC_PP,  main="dv1 on Treatments, Income and Party Preference",
    text.size=10, level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences","Income","Pa
    rtypref"), xlim = c(-0.5,1.9))


## 5.3 AGGREGATING TREATMENTS ##

# DVs on Recoded Ternary Treatments
results_recoded <- amce (v_62 ~ Framing + Merit + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=dfg2, subset=dfg2$v_62<77)
summary(results_recoded)
```

```
plot(results_recoded, main="dv1 on Aggregated Individual Treatments",
    level.names=attribute_list_agg, text.size =10 , group.order =
    c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim= c(-0.2,0.2))

results_recoded2 <- amce (v_63 ~ Framing + Merit + Opportunity + Incdistance +
    Consequences, data=dfg2, subset=dfg2$v_63<77)
summary(results_recoded2)
plot(results_recoded2, main="dv2 on Aggregated Individual Treatments",
    level.names=attribute_list_agg, text.size =10 , group.order =
    c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim= c(-0.2,0.2))

results_recoded3 <- amce (v_64 ~ Framing + Merit + Opportunity + Incdistance +
    Consequences, data=dfg2, subset=dfg2$v_64<77)
summary(results_recoded3)
plot(results_recoded3, main="dv3 on Aggregated Individual Treatments",
    level.names=attribute_list_agg, text.size =10 , group.order =
    c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim= c(-0.2,0.2))

#DV1 on Tcount, TcountR, Tcountnol (excl merit), TcountR (excl. merit)
results_Tcount <- amce(v_62 ~ Tcount, data=dfg4R, subset=dfg4R$v_62<77)
summary(results_Tcount)
plot(results_Tcount,  main="dv1 on Tcount", colors = c("black"), level.names =
    attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_TcountR <- amce(v_62 ~ TcountR, data=dfg4R, subset=dfg4R$v_62<77)
summary(results_TcountR)
plot(results_TcountR,  main="dv1 on TcountReduced", colors = c("black"), level.names =
    attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_Tcountnol <- amce(v_62 ~ Tcountnol, data=dfg4R, subset=dfg4R$v_62<77)
summary(results_Tcountnol)
plot(results_Tcountnol,  main="dv1 on Tcount (excl. merit)",colors = c("black"),
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_TcountnolR <- amce(v_62 ~ TcountnolR, data=dfg4R, subset=dfg4R$v_62<77)
summary(results_TcountnolR)
plot(results_TcountnolR,  main="dv1 on TcountReduced (excl. merit)", colors = c("black"),
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

#DVs on AGG
results_AGG <- amce(v_62 ~ AGG, data=dfg4, subset=dfg4$v_62<77)
summary(results_AGG)
plot(results_AGG,  main="dv1 on Interview Types", colors = c("black"), level.names =
    attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_AGG2 <- amce(v_63 ~ AGG, data=dfg4, subset=dfg4$v_63<77)
summary(results_AGG2)
plot(results_AGG2,  main="dv2 on Interview Types", colors = c("black"), level.names =
    attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_AGG3 <- amce(v_64 ~ AGG, data=dfg4, subset=dfg4$v_64<77)
summary(results_AGG3)
plot(results_AGG3,  main="dv3 on Interview Types", colors = c("black"), level.names =
    attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

#DVs on AGGnol
results_AGGnol <- amce(v_62 ~ AGGnol, data=dfg4, subset=dfg4$v_62<77, )
summary(results_AGGnol)
plot(results_AGGnol,  main="dv1 on Interview Types (excl. merit)", colors = c("black"),
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_AGGnol2 <- amce(v_63 ~ AGGnol, data=dfg4, subset=dfg4$v_63<77)
summary(results_AGGnol2)
plot(results_AGGnol2,  main="dv2 on Interview Types (excl. merit)", colors = c("black"),
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_AGGnol3 <- amce(v_64 ~ AGGnol, data=dfg4, subset=dfg4$v_64<77)
summary(results_AGGnol3)
plot(results_AGGnol3,  main="dv3 on Interview Types  (excl. merit)", colors = c("black"),
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

#DVs on AGG + Income + Partypref
results_AGG_IC_PP <- amce(v_62 ~ AGG + Income + Partypref, data=dfg4, subset=dfg4$v_62<77,
    baselines = baselines)
summary(results_AGG_IC_PP)
plot(results_AGG_IC_PP,  main="dv1 on Interview Types, Income and Party Preference",
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.8))
```

```r
results_AGG_IC_PP2 <- amce(v_63 ~ AGG + Income + Partypref, data=dfg4, subset=dfg4$v_63<77,
    baselines = baselines)
summary(results_AGG_IC_PP2)
plot(results_AGG_IC_PP2,  main="dv2 on Interview Types, Income and Party Preference",
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-1.8,0.5))

results_AGG_IC_PP3 <- amce(v_64 ~ AGG + Income + Partypref, data=dfg4, subset=dfg4$v_64<77,
    baselines = baselines)
summary(results_AGG_IC_PP3)
plot(results_AGG_IC_PP3,  main="dv3 on Interview Types, Income and Party Preference",
    colors = c("black","#969696","#636363"),level.names = attribute_list,xlim = c(-
    0.5,1.8))

#index and index2 on AGG + Income + Partypref
results_index_AGG_INC_PP <- amce(df2_index.index ~ AGG + Income + Partypref, data=dfg6,
    baselines=baselines)
summary(results_index_AGG_INC_PP)
plot(results_index_AGG_INC_PP,  main="Index on Aggretate Treatments, Income and Party
    Preference", level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_index2_AGG_INC_PP <- amce(df2_index2.index2 ~ AGG + Income + Partypref, data=dfg8,
    baselines=baselines)
summary(results_index2_AGG_INC_PP)
plot(results_index2_AGG_INC_PP,  main="Index2 on Aggretate Treatments, Income and Party
    Preference", level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))



# 5.4 SUBGROUP ANALYSES

#SUBGROUPS INCOME, DV1 ON TREATMENTS
results_DV1_LI <- amce(v_62 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df2c_ic, subset=df2c_ic$Income<6, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_DV1_LI)
plot(results_DV1_LI,  main="dv1 on Treatments (low income)", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))

results_DV1_HI <- amce(v_62 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df2c_ic, subset=df2c_ic$Income>5, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_DV1_HI)
plot(results_DV1_HI,  main="(medium + high income)", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))


#SUBGROUPS ICLow (1-7) and ICHigh (8-13), DV1 ON AGG
results_AGG_ICL <- amce(v_62 ~ AGG, data=dfg5, subset= dfg5$Income %in% c(1,2,3,4,5,6,7))
summary(results_AGG_ICL)
plot(results_AGG_ICL,  main="dv1 on Interview Types (low income)", colors = c("black"),
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_AGG_ICH <- amce(v_62 ~ AGG, data=dfg5, subset= dfg5$Income %in% c(8,9,10,11,12,13))
summary(results_AGG_ICH)
plot(results_AGG_ICH,  main="dv1 on Interview Types (high income)", colors = c("black"),
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))


#SUBGROUPS POL SELF ALLOC, DV1 ON TREATMENTS
results_DV1_PPL <- amce(v_62 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df2c, subset=df2c$v_34<6, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_DV1_PPL)
plot(results_DV1_PPL,  main="dv1 on Treatments (left)", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))

results_DV1_PPC <- amce(v_62 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df2c, subset= df2c$v_34==6, cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_DV1_PPC)
plot(results_DV1_PPC,  main="dv1 on Treatments (centre)", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))

results_DV1_PPR <- amce(v_62 ~ Merit + Framing + Opportunity + Incdistance + Consequences,
    data=df2c, subset=df2c$v_34 %in% c(7,8,9,10,11) , cluster=TRUE)
summary(results_DV1_PPR)
```

```
plot(results_DV1_PPR,  main="dv1 on Treatments (right)", level.names = attribute_list,
    group.order=c("Framing","Merit","Opportunity","Incdistance","Consequences"), xlim = c(-
    0.5,0.5))


#SUBGROUPS Centre-Left (1-5) and Centre-Right (6-10), DV1 ON AGG
results_AGG_CL <- amce(v_62 ~ AGG, data=dfg5, subset= dfg5$Leftright %in% c(1,2,3,4,5,6))
summary(results_AGG_CL)
plot(results_AGG_CL,  main="dv1 on Interview Types (centre-left)", colors = c("black"),
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_AGG_CR <- amce(v_62 ~ AGG, data=dfg5, subset= dfg5$Leftright %in% c(6,7,8,9,10,11))
summary(results_AGG_CR)
plot(results_AGG_CR,  main="dv1 on Interview Types (centre-right)", colors = c("black"),
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))


#SUBGROUPS Subgroup Left (1-4), Centre (5) and Right (6-10), DV1 ON AGG
results_AGG_L <- amce(v_62 ~ AGG, data=dfg5, subset= dfg5$Leftright %in% c(1,2,3,4,5))
summary(results_AGG_L)
plot(results_AGG_L,  main="dv1 on Interview Types (left)", colors = c("black"), level.names
    = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_AGG_C <- amce(v_62 ~ AGG, data=dfg5, subset= dfg5$Leftright %in% c(6))
summary(results_AGG_C)
plot(results_AGG_C,  main="dv1 on Interview Types (centre)", colors = c("black"),
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))

results_AGG_R <- amce(v_62 ~ AGG, data=dfg5, subset= dfg5$Leftright %in% c(7,8,9,10,11))
summary(results_AGG_R)
plot(results_AGG_R,  main="dv1 on Interview Types (right)", colors = c("black"),
    level.names = attribute_list, xlim = c(-0.5,1.5))
```

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