

Perceptions and preferences about meritocracy in international comparison

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The Meritocracy black box

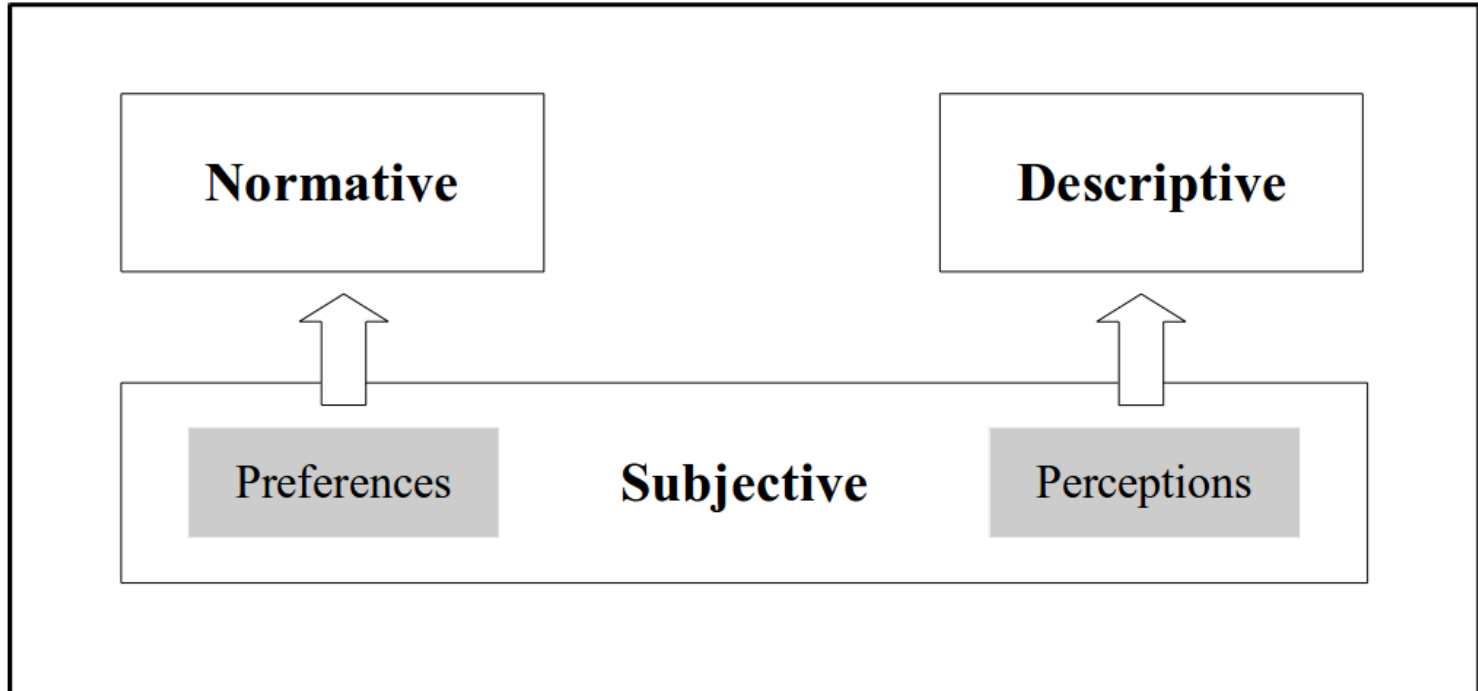


"the idea of meritocracy may have many virtues, but clarity is not one of them" (Sen, 2000, p.1)

Background

- "The rise of meritocracy" (Young, 1962)
 - Merit: Effort + Talent
- "Meritocracy and economic inequality" (Arrow, Bowles & Durlauf, 2000)
- "The meritocracy myth" (McNamee & Miller, 2004)
- "Meritokratie als Legitimationsprinzip" (Hadjar, 2008)

Conceptual links



Studying the subjective dimension of meritocracy

Research

- Kunovich, S. and Slomczynski, K. M. (2007). Systems of Distribution and a Sense of Equity: A Multilevel Analysis of Meritocratic Attitudes in Post-industrial Societies. *European Sociological Review*, 23(5):649–663
- Hadjar, A. (2008). *Meritokratie Als Legitimationsprinzip*. VS Verlag, Wiesbaden.
- Duru-Bellat, M. and Tenret, E. (2012). Who's for Meritocracy? Individual and Contextual Variations in the Faith. *Comparative Education Review*, 56(2):223–247
- Reynolds, J. and Xian, H. (2014). Perceptions of meritocracy in the land of opportunity. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 36:121–137.
- Newman, B. J., Johnston, C. D., and Lown, P. L. (2015). False Consciousness or Class Awareness? Local Income Inequality, Personal Economic Position, and Belief in American Meritocracy. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(2):326–340.
- Solt, F., Hu, Y., Hudson, K., Song, J., and Yu, D. E. (2016). Economic inequality and belief in meritocracy in the United States. *Research & Politics*, 3(4):2053168016672101.

Studying the subjective dimension of meritocracy

Research

- Kunovich and Slomczynski (2007), ISSP 1992

Examples

- 6 items of "reasons for pay" plus "the government should provide jobs for everyone who wants one" (reverse coded)
- Duru-Bellat and Tenret (2012), ISSP 2009
 - perceptions (what is) and beliefs (what should be), but use of single indicators and no measurement concerns
- Reynolds and Xian (2014), GSS
 - Meritocratic and non-meritocratic perceptions (get ahead battery from GSS) "...how important you think it is for getting ahead in life"

Studying the subjective dimension of meritocracy

Research

Reynolds and Xian (2014)

Examples

Rotated factor loadings for meritocratic and non-meritocratic elements.

	Unrestricted solution		
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Meritocratic elements (3 items, alpha: 0.58)			
Having a good education yourself	0.58		
Ambition	0.81		
Hard work	0.80		
Non-meritocratic elements (7 items, alpha: 0.75)			
Friends & family (4 items, alpha: 0.71)			
Coming from a wealthy family			0.75
Having well-educated parents			0.70
Knowing the right people			0.69
Having political connections			0.68
Discrimination (3 items, alpha: 0.69)			
A person's race		0.80	
A person's religion		0.73	
Being born a man or a woman		0.77	
Variance	2.15	1.93	1.65

Note: Only factor loadings over 0.4 are presented. The results are from a principle components factor analysis

Studying the subjective dimension of meritocracy

Research

- Use of "beliefs" for perceptions / preferences

Examples

- Mostly focused in either perceptions or preferences
- Wide use of non-meritocratic items reverse coded as meritocratic

Limitations

- Except for Reynolds and Xian (2014), scarce discussion and empirical test about the measurement of meritocracy
- Except for Duru-Bellat and Tenret (2012), links between perceptions and preferences are not addressed.



A conceptual proposal for studying meritocracy

-Meritocracy:

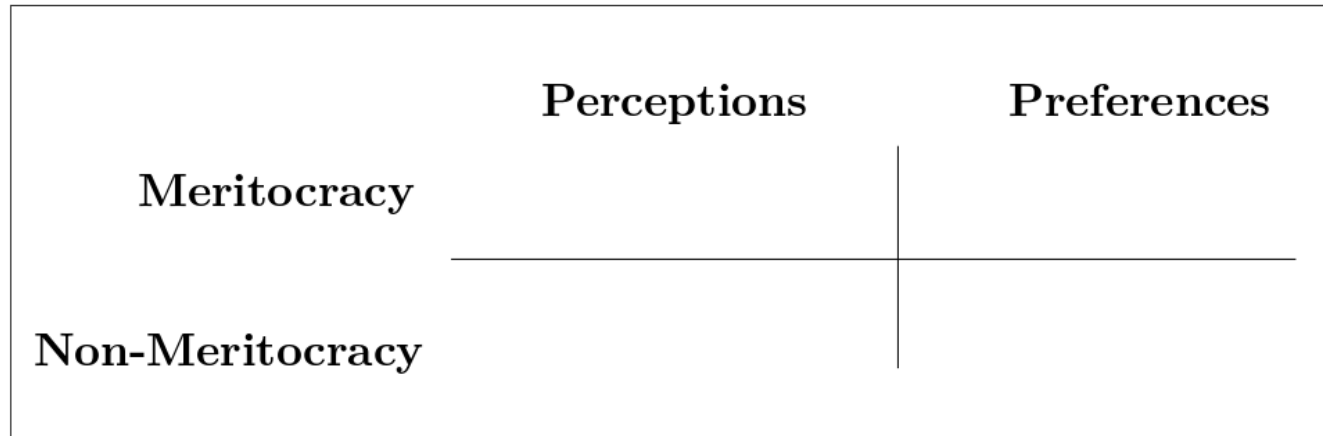
- perceptions (ej: effort is rewarded)
- beliefs (ej: effort should be rewarded)

-Non-meritocracy

- perceptions (ej: contacts for getting a job)
- beliefs (ej: it is ok to use contacts for getting a job)

A conceptual proposal for studying meritocracy

A bi-dimensional conceptualization of the subjective dimension of meritocracy

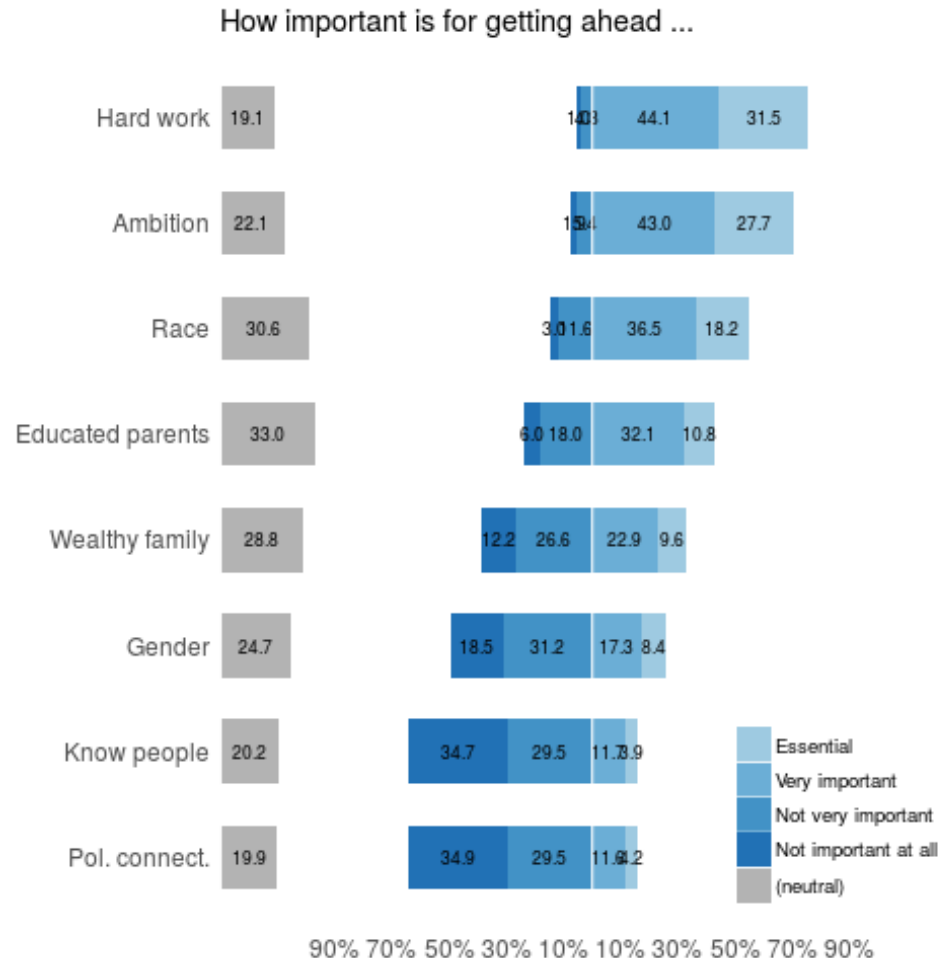


Testing the model

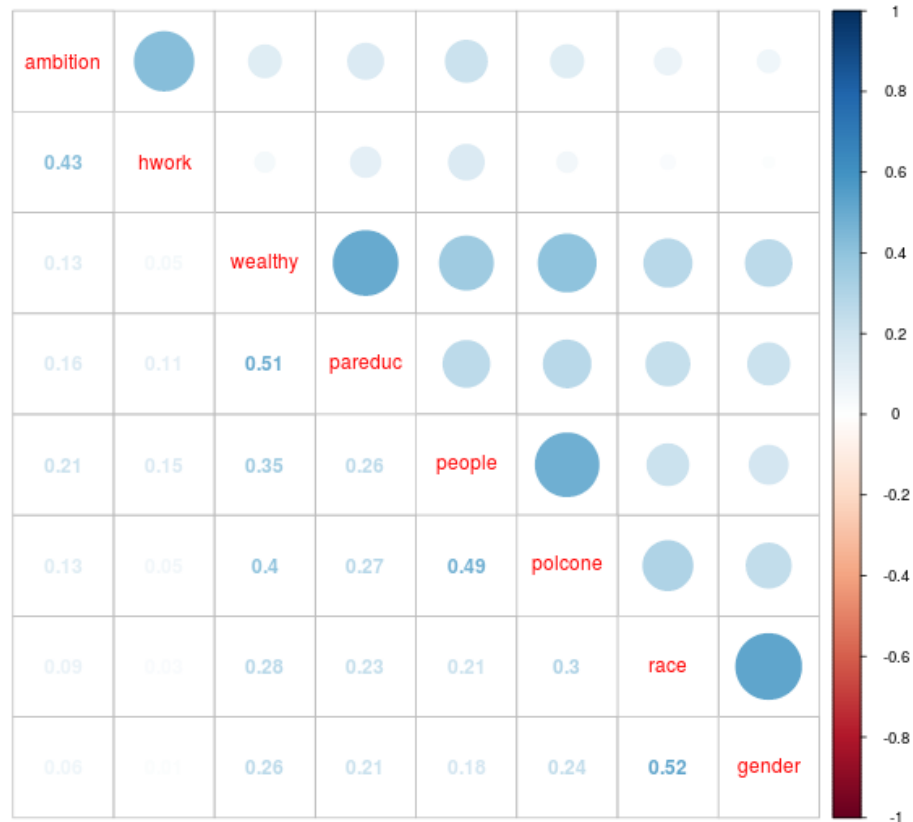
Objective

- To propose and test an operationalization for the bi-dimensional conceptualization of the subjective dimension of meritocracy
- Data: ISSP 2009
- Variables
 - *perceived meritocracy*: getting ahead battery
 - *preferred meritocracy*: reasons for pay battery

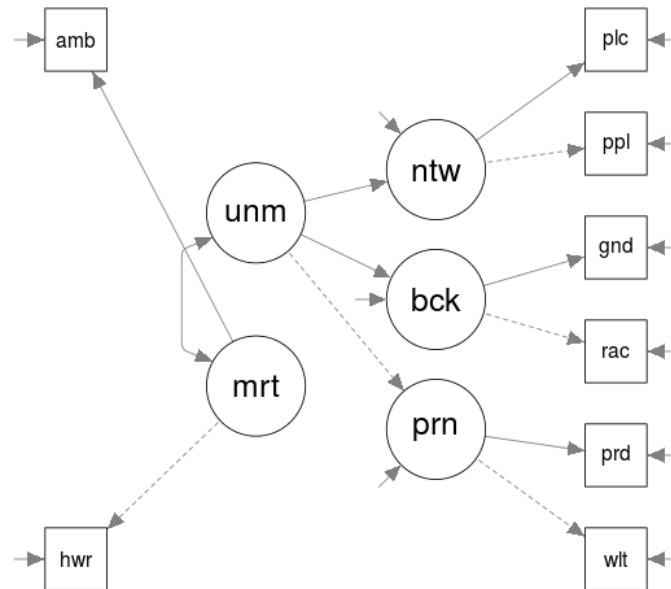
A. Meritocratic Perceptions: Descriptives



A. Meritocratic Perceptions: Correlations

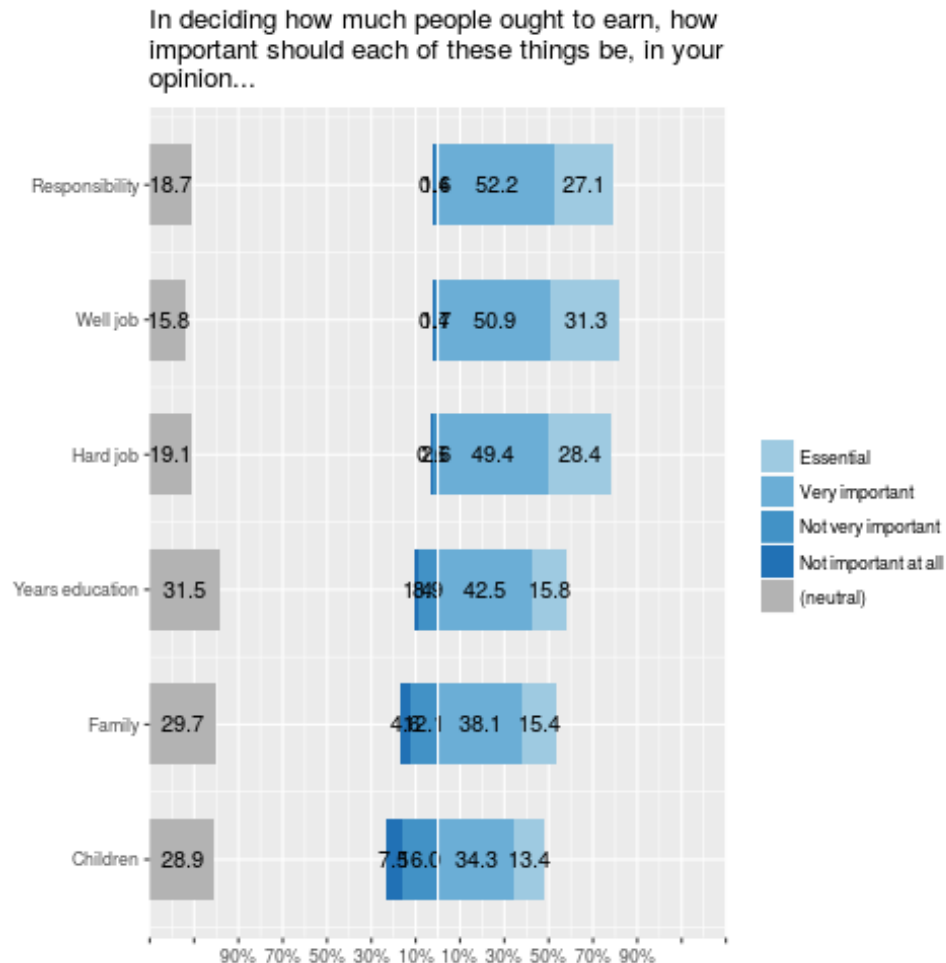


A. Meritocratic Perceptions: Measurement Model



Fit: $\chi^2=1,984.8$ (16), $CFI=.98$, $RMSEA=0.047$

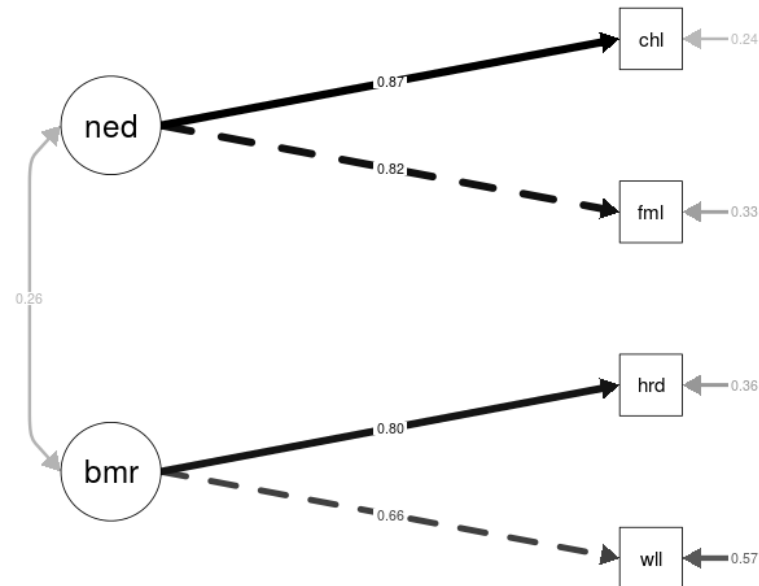
B. Meritocratic Preferences: Descriptives



B. Meritocratic Preferences: Correlations

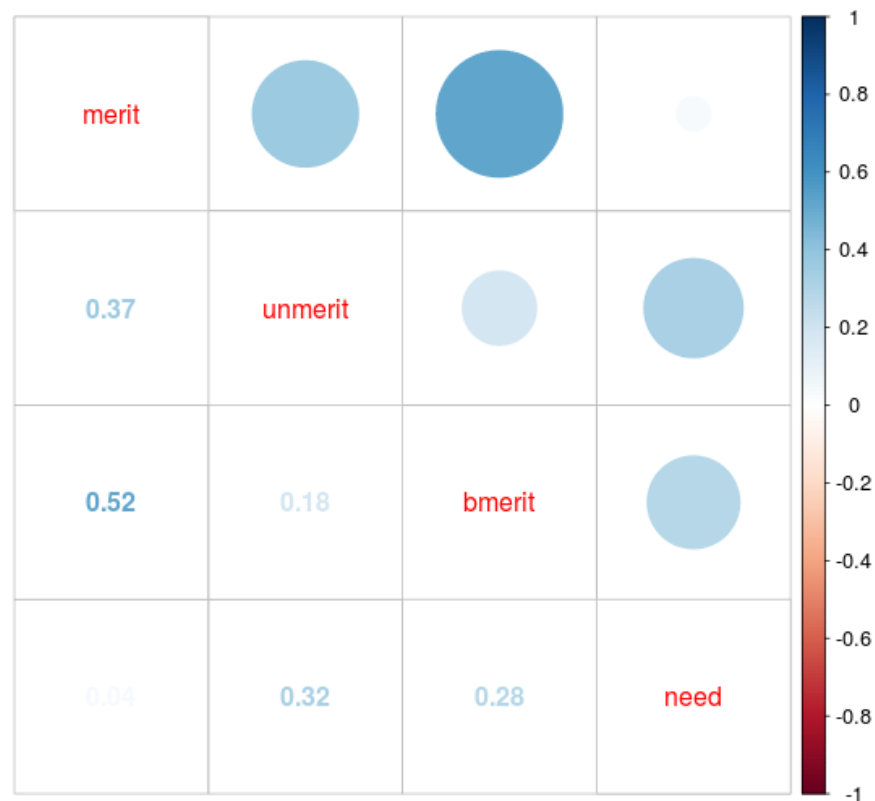


B. Meritocratic Preferences: Measurement Model

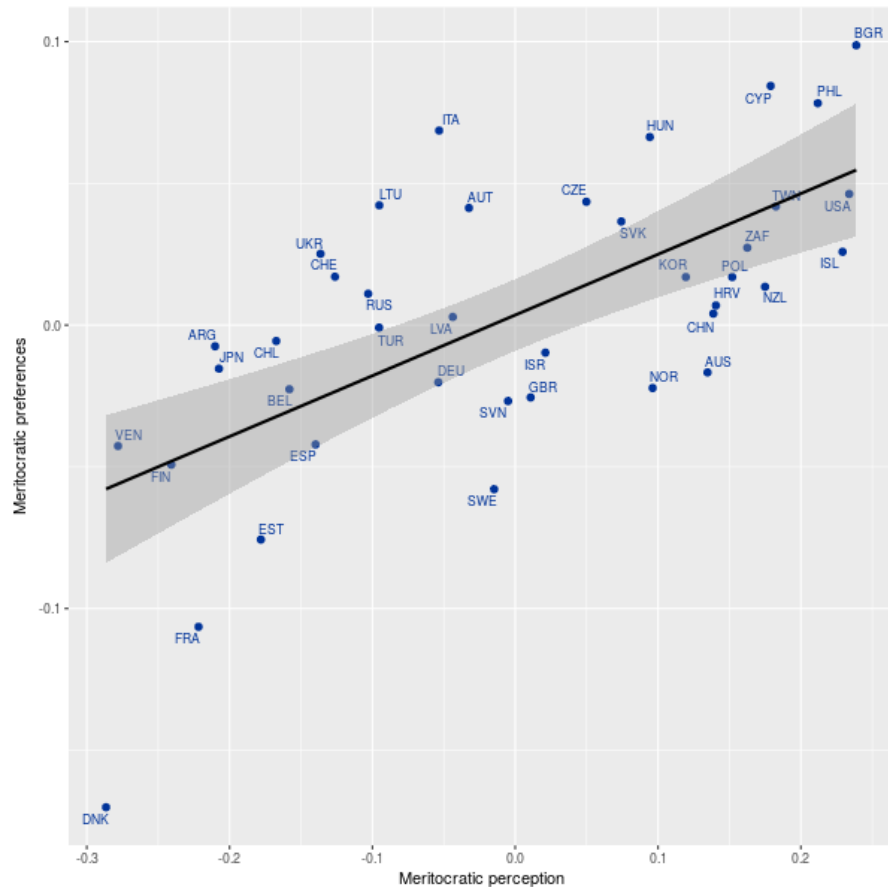


Fit: *WLSMV*, $\chi^2=27.45$ (1), $CFI=1.00$, $RMSEA=0.022$

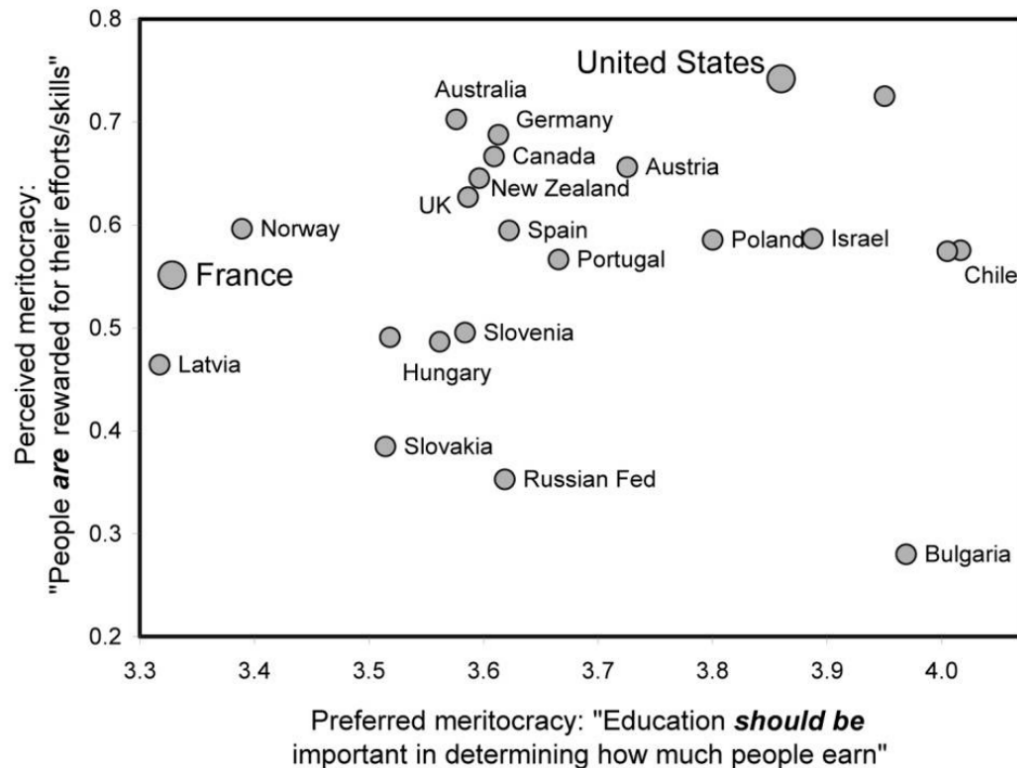
Perceptions and Preferences correlations



Perceptions and preferences in international comparison



Comparison with Duru-Bellat and Tenret (2012)



Discussion

- Fuzziness of merit
- Different and unconnected empirical approaches
- Comprehensive bi-dimensional framework
- Seems to work so far, but needs further research

References

[1] M. Duru-Bellat and E. Tenret. "Who's for Meritocracy? Individual and Contextual Variations in the Faith". In: *Comparative Education Review* 56.2 (may. 2012), pp. 223-247. ISSN: 0010-4086. DOI: 10.1086/661290. (Visited on 08/06/2015).

[2] S. Kunovich and K. M. Slomczynski. "Systems of Distribution and a Sense of Equity: A Multilevel Analysis of Meritocratic Attitudes in Post-Industrial Societies". En. In: *European Sociological Review* 23.5 (ene. 2007), pp. 649-663. ISSN: 0266-7215, 1468-2672. DOI: 10.1093/esr/jcm026. (Visited on 05/18/2016).

[3] J. Reynolds and H. Xian. "Perceptions of Meritocracy in the Land of Opportunity". In: *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 36 (jun. 2014), pp. 121-137. ISSN: 0276-5624. DOI: 10.1016/j.rssm.2014.03.001. (Visited on 08/13/2015).

[4] A. Sen. "Merit and Justice". In: *Meritocracy and Economic Inequality*. Ed. by K. J. Arrow, S. Bowles and S. N. Durlauf. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 5-16. ISBN: 978-0-691-00467-9 978-0-691-00468-6.

[5] M. Young. *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1962.

Comments most welcome!

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