

Frederick de Moll (Goethe University Frankfurt)

## **Social inequality in family life and parental beliefs about their child's home learning opportunities**

Presentation at the OSC seminar on April 23, 2018

Drawing on the ethnographic work of Annette Lareau (2011) and the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu (1986), I will address three main research questions: The *first* research question refers to Lareau's contention that variation in how children grow up should be conceptualized in terms of qualitative differences. I investigate whether the qualitative distinctions that she observed among American working-class and middle-class families, can also be found in Germany using a quantitative sample. Methodologically speaking, family life is thought of as a categorical latent variable. Family life involves parenting practices as well as children's own practices. The study takes a new approach to analyze families by combining the parents' perspective on family life with children's own account of their afternoon activities. The *second* question is concerned with how different types of family life relate to social class, controlling for other family characteristics such as immigration status. The hypothesis is that how parents and children go about their daily lives reveals a class-based logic of family life, at least with respect to the three domains outlined by Lareau: language use, organization of daily life and parental interventions in school. The *third* research question refers to parental habitus, which is measured by different parental beliefs about children's learning opportunities at home. Up to now, there is a lack of research that aims to validate Lareau's interpretations of parenting practices by examining parents' own perceptions of family life and of their ability to arrange for learning opportunities at home.

To answer these research questions, I use primary survey data of children in third and fourth grade and their parents ( $N = 1069$ ), who participated in the EDUCARE-study ("Childhood Education and Care from the Perspective of Policy Makers, Professionals in Kindergartens and Primary Schools, Parents, and Children", funding: Volkswagen Foundation), which was carried out in Germany from 2010 to 2016.

Latent class analyses reveal different constellations of cultural family practices that make up four types of family life with elementary school children. Two of those types closely resemble the two parenting styles that Lareau describes as *Concerted Cultivation* and *Accomplishment of Natural Growth* respectively. In general, the results support the notion of class-based cultural logics of family life. However, correlational findings regarding parents' perceptions of their child's learning opportunities at home contest Lareau's notion that working-class parents are less eager to arrange for academically relevant experiences for their children. In fact, at least some lower-class parents seem disenchanted with their opportunities to help their child succeed in school (see for similar results from qualitative research Chin & Phillips, 2004).