

Proceedings of the 2000 Fourth International Conference of German Socio-Economic Panel Study Users (GSOEP 2000)

Editorial Introduction

by Elke Holst, Dean R. Lillard, and Thomas A. DiPrete

This volume of the Vierteljahrshefte collects papers presented at the Fourth International Conference of German Socio-Economic Panel Study Users (GSOEP2000) held in Berlin, July 5 through July 7, 2000. The fourth in the series, this collection of conference papers attests to the continuing development and growth of the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP).

That growth was evidenced not only by conference presenters from eleven different countries and a wide range of social science disciplines but also by the diverse set of research questions the GSOEP was used to address. Twenty-nine papers and ten posters were presented at GSOEP2000, selected from more than twice that many submissions. The papers and conference sessions allowed both new and experienced GSOEP users to give and get insights on their own research as well as the research of other social scientists.

Readers and current users who wish to learn more about the history and structure of the German Socio-Economic Panel, the data common to all articles in this volume, should be sure to read the article immediately following this introduction. That article describes the various samples that are included in the SOEP and provides an overview of the data themselves. It is the article that the DIW recommends GSOEP data users cite in their scholarly work.

This volume contains abbreviated versions of most of the papers presented at GSOEP2000. While longer versions will surely find their ways into scholarly journals, this volume gives a preview of that research. In addition to the keynote address, the papers are organized around seven themes.

1) Keynote address. *This paper, presented as the keynote address, examines patterns of part and full-time work of women with children in four countries. It offers interesting insights into the differences across Germany, Britain, the Netherlands, and Sweden in patterns of women's work just before and after the birth of a child.*

2) Occupational choice and career experiences. *Using data from three different countries, this set of papers investigates different aspects of career choice and the link between early and later career outcomes.*

3) Earnings and income mobility. *These papers investigate different ways to measure and understand how a population or particular individuals move through the distribution of earnings and income over time.*

4) Work/family processes and socio-economic outcomes. *These papers use the GSOEP data to investigate how diverse outcomes vary with time, immigrant status and the unification of East and West Germany. They present provocative evidence that challenges some conventionally held notions about overall life satisfaction, the housing quality of immigrants, and the timing of first-births.*

5) Job mobility and unemployment. *These papers use GSOEP data to examine the correlation between labor market outcomes and peculiarities in the structure of the German labor market. The papers frame their analysis using labor economic models of job choice, job mobility and wage determination.*

6) The structure of inequality. *The study of inequality across various groups (women versus men, immigrants versus non immigrants, the population of different countries) and over time unify the papers in this section. Data from three countries are used to investigate how differences in income and earnings across these groups vary with political and social institutions.*

7) Health, aging, and retirement. *The study of how outcomes vary as the age and health status of the population changes unifies the papers in this section. These papers use data from four countries to explore the economic and physical well-being of various groups including the elderly and those who lost jobs.*

8) Family processes and socio-economic outcomes. *The papers in this section explore factors related to*

the upward mobility of children in Germany. These papers are unified by their attention to human capital as a means of mobility.

As is evident, the GSOEP2000 conference papers collected here range over a wide set of topics of particular relevance in current policy debates. The papers take advantage of the strengths of the GSOEP data, both its richness as a source of information on diverse outcomes and the ever-increasing length of the panel. Many of the papers also demonstrate the insights to be gained from cross-national comparative research.

The organization of a conference and the preparation of the proceedings of a conference require the coordinated effort of many people. We would like to thank more people than space allows. To those not mentioned we extend our gratitude here. We extend special thanks to the other members of the program committee, Kenneth A. Couch, Roland Habich, and Heike Solga, without whom we would have been less efficient (and had less fun) in reviewing the conference abstracts and selecting papers. At the DIW Berlin, Christine Kurka, Uta Rahmann, Sabine Kallwitz, Floriane Weber, and Gabi Freudenmann attended to the numerous details involving travel, space, catering and other arrangements without which no conference can succeed. As usual, their humor and good nature pervaded and provided levity to every step of the organization process. Martha Bonney and Esther Gray of Syracuse University were efficient and patient as they managed the editing and formatting of these papers in this volume. The technical assistance needed to produce this volume was expertly and efficiently provided by Ellen Müller-Gödtel and Harald Trabold of the DIW Berlin. The conference also benefited from the participation and diligence of the session chairpersons: Richard Burkhauser (Cornell University and DIW Berlin), Irwin L. Collier (Freie Universität Berlin), Janet Z. Giele (Brandeis University), Paul R. Gregory (University of

Houston and DIW Berlin), Christof Helberger (Technische Universität Berlin), Hildegard Maria Nickel (Humboldt Universität Berlin), Bengt-Arne Wickström (Humboldt Universität Berlin and DIW Berlin), and Jürgen Wolters (Freie Universität Berlin and DIW Berlin). These individuals graciously limited enthusiastic presenters to their allotted time will simultaneously sparking lively and informative discussions. We would also like to especially thank Richard V. Burkhauser and Gert G. Wagner. Their long-standing commitment to the GSOEP, both in the production of the data and in their individual research, has been and continues to be instrumental in advancing the sort of cross-national research represented by the articles in the volume.

The GSOEP2000 conference continued the tradition to honor best papers presented at the conference. The program committee chose papers by David N. Margolis, Véronique Simonnet, and Lars Vilhuber ("Early Career Experiences and Later Career Outcomes: A Comparison of the United States, France and Germany"), Michaela Kreyenfeld ("Timing of First Births in East Germany after Unification"), and Andrew E. Clark, Ed Diener, and Yannis Georgellis ("Lags and Leads in Life Satisfaction: A Test of the Baseline Hypothesis") as best papers presented at GSOEP2000. Two of those papers are published here. These papers exemplify thoughtful and provocative research that takes advantage of the strengths of the GSOEP data to shed insight on important questions of policy relevance. In recognition of their outstanding contributions, these authors received cash awards funded by the Vereinigung der Freunde des DIW ("Friends of the DIW Berlin").

We thank this organization for their continuing support of the DIW and the authors for their diligence in preparing excellent papers. Finally, we thank each other.

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