What we want and what we see: Preferences, perceptions and judgments about inequality and meritocracy

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Citation for published version (APA):
Steijn, S. R. (2016). What we want and what we see: Preferences, perceptions and judgments about inequality and meritocracy.

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RELATIVE INTEREST OF CO-AUTHORS AND PHD CANDIDATE PER EMPIRICAL CHAPTER

CHAPTER 2: PROBLEMATIC INEQUALITY? PREFERENCES, PERCEPTIONS AND JUDGMENTS ABOUT (NON-) MERITOCRATIC REWARDS IN THE NETHERLANDS

First author: S.R. Steijn
Co-authors: H.G. van de Werfhorst and B.M. Burgoon

The research question underlying the data collection was formulated by the PhD candidate, after which the (co-)authors jointly applied for and subsequently developed a questionnaire for the LISS-panel wave on economic success. Almost all statistical analyses on this data (the analyses for figure 6, 7 and 8 were done by B.M. Burgoon) were conducted by the PhD candidate, who wrote a first draft of the chapter. Afterwards, the chapter was jointly revised.

CHAPTER 3: JUDGMENTS ABOUT MERITOCRATIC REWARDS AND DEMAND FOR REDISTRIBUTION.

First author: S.R. Steijn
Co-authors: H.G. van de Werfhorst and B.M. Burgoon

Chapter 3 is also based on the jointly developed questionnaire. The research question was formulated by the PhD candidate, who conducted the statistical analyses and wrote a first draft of the chapter. Afterwards, the chapter was jointly revised.

CHAPTER 4: FAILING MERITOCRACY? INEQUALITY AND CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS.

First author: S.R. Steijn
Co-author: H.G. van de Werfhorst

The research question was formulated by the PhD candidate, who conducted the statistical analyses and wrote a first draft of the chapter. Afterwards, the chapter was jointly revised.

CHAPTER 5: PERCEIVED INEQUALITY AND GENERALIZED TRUST

First author: S.R. Steijn
Co-author: B. Lancee

The authors worked jointly on various earlier versions of this chapter. For the version in this dissertation, the PhD candidate conducted the statistical analyses and wrote a first draft of the chapter, based on earlier (un)published joint work. Afterwards, the chapter was jointly revised.
Based on the conviction that it is important to carefully assess the social legitimacy of existing inequalities, in *What we want and what we see: preferences, perceptions and judgments about inequality and meritocracy*, Sander Steijn aims to contribute to our understanding of how people think about inequality. In doing so, he pays specific attention to the concept of meritocracy, understood as the ideal of rewarding people on the basis of their own merits. Meritocracy is often put forward as a normative legitimation of existing inequalities. Steijn argues that our understanding of how people think about the meritocratic functioning of our society is severely underdeveloped.

In this dissertation Steijn studies how the meritocratic ideal is reflected in how people think about inequality. The dissertation consists of four empirical chapters, which are binded by the conviction that research on public opinion about inequalities needs to actively distinguish between preferences that people have about the distribution of inequalities, the perceptions that people have about the actual distribution of inequalities and finally the judgments that results from the comparison between the preferred and the perceived distribution of inequalities. The first two empirical chapters of the dissertation concern the development and operationalization of a new, original conceptualization of attitudes about inequality, focused on the comparison between (non-) meritocratic preferences and perceptions. This new conceptualization is examined empirically with newly collected Dutch survey data. The second part of the dissertation (also consisting of two empirical chapters) examines perceptions of inequality and meritocracy from a country-comparative perspective.