

Information Inequality

the Class, Gender, and Race of Knowledge Domains

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Outline

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- 1 Introduction
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Why care about information inequality?

- Differences in information capacity itself are, by definition, a dimension of 'inequality';

1. Most of us are in this room because we try to understand the origins or cures of inequality.
2. Were also all here because we like learning for the sake of knowledge, so I probably don't have to argue too much for this idea of the current value of knowledge.
3. I argue that a concept I am calling information inequality - or knowledge inequality - is important as both an outcome and cause of social inequality.
4. So, while I argue that knowledge inequality is important from both ends of the causal argument, in this research I focus on the idea that social status causes knowledge inequality.

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- Differences in information capacity itself are, by definition, a dimension of 'inequality';
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- Information is a potential cause of later inequality in outcomes and access to resources.

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Research Question

How does the status gap in knowledge vary by domain?

1. The field of sociology has long studied the production of knowledge in science inequalities in knowledge careers; and information diffusion and its consequences. Many studies have evaluated information seeking behaviors and needs. But the tendency has either been to study knowledge in one specific domain (e.g., health) or to reduce knowledge across all domains to a single test score – and hence we know shockingly little about the everyday knowledge stock of Americans.
2. So I wanted to perform a wide scan analysis of knowledge inequality, looking at who has and does not have knowledge in different domains, and how those inequalities might compare to each other.

General Social Survey
Pew Research Center (21)
Kaiser Family Foundation
Health Information National Trends Survey (8)
Integrated Health Interview Series
Annenberg National Health Communication Survey
USC's Understanding America Study (3)
Rand American Life Panel (2)
National Financial Capability Studies (3)
21st Century Americanism survey
Global Views American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy
Outlook on Life Survey
State of the First Amendment surveys
Chicago Survey of Amer. Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy

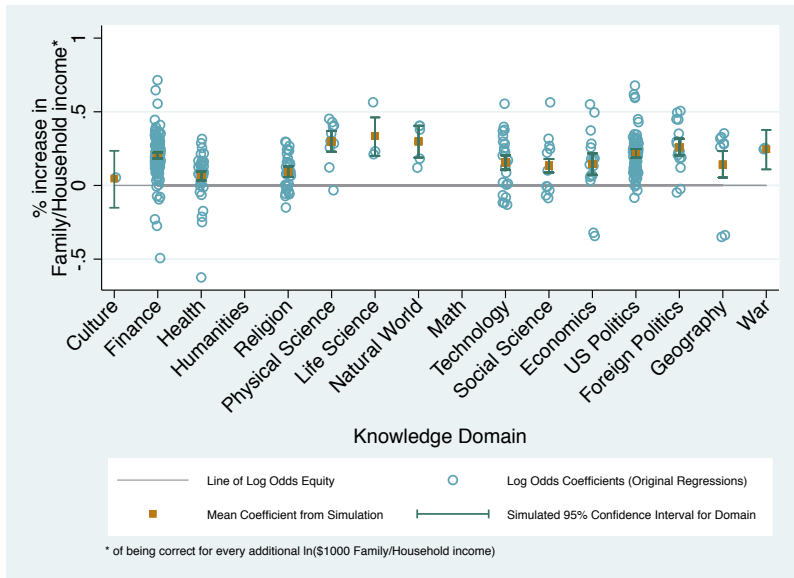
Domains

history
natural world
physical science
biological science
technology
math
culture
geography
domestic politics
foreign politics
economics
finance
health
religion
pop culture
war

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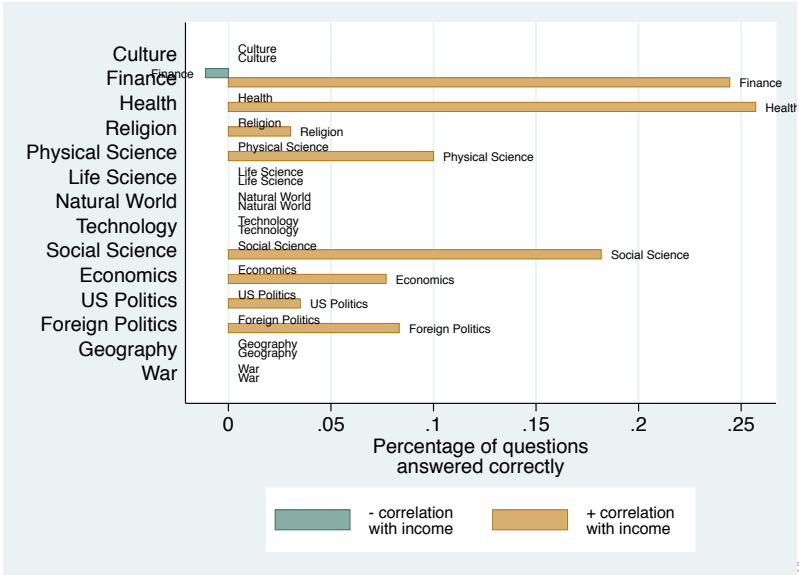
Income correlates with mean knowledge advantage in 13/16 domains

1. As a reminder, this is after controlling for education - making this a conservative test for the effect of income (since in effect we are controlling twice for class).



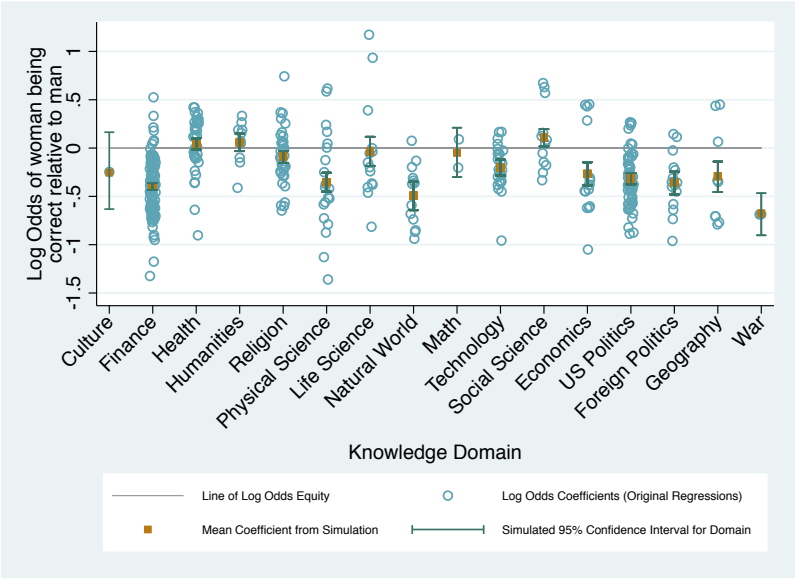
Income predicts correct answer in > 5% questions in 6 domains

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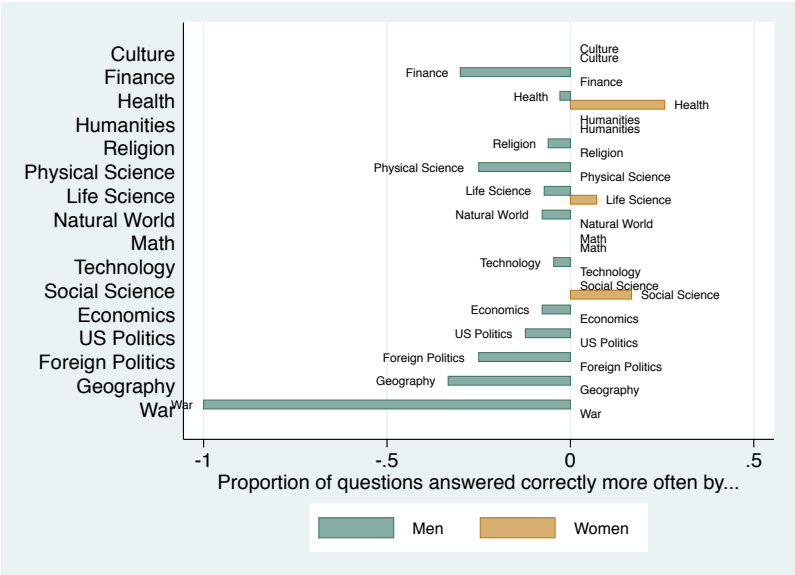
No mean gender difference in 5/16 domains

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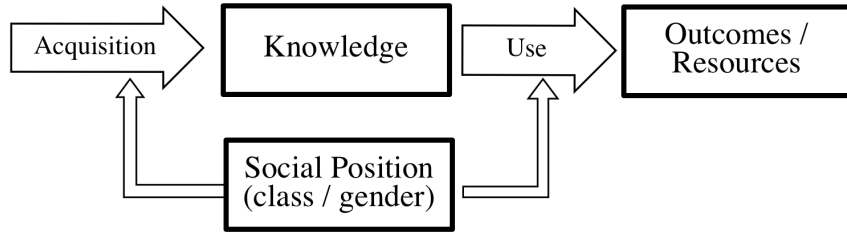


Men answer greater proportion of questions correctly in 65% of domains

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Acquisition and use of knowledge



1. Findings are consistent with the model that implies:
2. — demographic characteristics affect the knowledge an individual has, and
3. — using knowledge to access resources.
4. Understanding the broad demographic patterns can help us move toward better understanding of the mechanisms behind them.