



The Start of Inequality

Evidence from Italian Time-Use Data

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Abstract

The thesis consists of three empirical studies which explore the origins of various social inequalities arising at early ages. Italian Time Use Survey data from 2003 and 2009 is used. First, the educational and developmental gradients in childcare are under observation. More educated parents are expected not only to spend more time with children, i.e. the education gradient in child care, but also to alter their childcare time in order to cater children's developmental needs more, i.e. the developmental gradient in childcare. The empirical results show that: (i) highly educated mothers alter the composition of active childcare time to suit children's developmental needs more than less educated mothers; (ii) the developmental gradient in fathers' childcare time only exists for certain activities and child ages; (iii) interesting time-use patterns of compensation emerge for couples with different educational backgrounds. Second study compares the time use of children from single-mother and intact families, using propensity score matching. The time diaries of children between age 3 and 10 years are scrutinized. Given the multitude of literature on the negative aspects of witnessing parental break-up, and being raised by a single-mother, the results are somewhat surprising. No systematic and large differences in the use of free time between the treatment and the control group. The greatest difference concerns daily meals with parent(s) that are about a quarter of an hour shorter in single-parent families. Third empirical study adds the perspective of different parental investments by children's birth order which serves as an indicator of relative disadvantage. The analytical sub-sample consists of families with two and three children aged from 3 to 11 years. The contribution to available studies is (i) connecting the diaries of both parents and all children in the family by place codes, which enables to (ii) scrutinize the link between birth order and parental childcare investments by parental education. Results indicate that each day second-born children receive on average 88 minutes and third-born children 114 minutes less interactive care compared to their first-born sibling, while controlling for children's age, gender, and other characteristics. The disadvantage arising from birth-order is about 47 minutes smaller if mother has secondary or tertiary education. Siblings fixed effects models underline that the differences in investing time in children are greater between families than inside families.



Jury: Fabrizio Bernardi (EUI, Supervisor), Maria Letizia Tanturri (University of Padua), Martin Kohli (EUI), Jonathan Gershuny (University of Oxford) (via video)

Bio

Marit Rebane is a researcher in social sciences. Marit has defended her PhD in Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute, and holds an MSc in Sociology from the University of Oxford. After studying and living in the UK, Italy, France, and India she is currently settled in Estonia with her children, and working at the Department of Economics and Finance at the Tallinn University of Technology. Her research interests cover the causes and consequences of social inequalities, time use studies, the role of education, child well-being, public economics, economic policy, and research methodology.