

Essays on Inequality, Gender and
Family Background

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To my family

Foreword

This volume is the result of a research project carried out at the Department of Economics at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE).

This volume is submitted as a doctor's thesis at SSE. In keeping with the policies of SSE, the author has been entirely free to conduct and present her research in the manner of her choosing as an expression of her own ideas.

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Introduction

This thesis consists of five self-contained chapters that empirically explore the role of gender and family background in generating socioeconomic inequality.

The first two chapters investigate two different driving forces behind the gender pay gap. The first chapter studies the persistence of the occupational segregation by gender, while the second chapter examines gender differences in negotiation behavior.

The three subsequent chapters assess to what extent background characteristics account for variations in three different types of socioeconomic outcomes. The third chapter focuses on criminal activity, the fourth on cognitive ability and the fifth and final chapter studies income.

A short summary of each chapter follows.

Occupational segregation by sex: The role of intergenerational transmission

Occupational segregation by sex is a persistent feature of labor markets all around the world. I provide a new perspective on why men and women continue to enter different occupations by investigating the intergenerational transmission of the sex composition of occupations using Swedish register data. I find that the more sex-stereotypical the occupations of parents are, the more sex-stereotypical the occupations of their children will be. The intergenerational associations are stronger between children and their same-sex parent than between children and their opposite-sex parent, and stronger for sons than for daughters. I also show that the intergenerational associations between children and their same-sex parent are only partially accounted for by children entering the same occupation or group of occupations as their same-sex parent.

*Gender differences in initiation of negotiation:
Does the gender of the negotiation counterpart matter?*
(with A. Sandberg)

In this study, we investigate if and how gender differences in the propensity to initiate a negotiation are affected by the gender of the counterpart in the negotiation. We enlist 204 Swedish students to take part in an experiment in which they have to decide whether to initiate a negotiation for higher compensation. In line with previous research, we find that men are more likely than women to initiate a negotiation: 42 percent of the male and 28 percent of the female participants initiate a negotiation. The gender difference, however, is only large and statistically significant when the negotiation counterpart is a woman. With a female negotiation counterpart, women are less likely than men to initiate a negotiation by 24 percentage points, while with a male negotiation counterpart, the gender difference is only 5 percentage points and not statistically significant. This result suggests that the gender of the negotiation counterpart should be taken into consideration when analyzing gender differences in initiation of negotiation.

*The importance of family background and neighborhood effects
as determinants of crime*
(with R. Hjalmarsson, M. Lindquist and A. Sandberg)

We quantify the importance of family background and neighborhood effects as determinants of criminal convictions and incarceration by estimating sibling and neighborhood correlations. At the extensive margin, factors common to siblings account for 24 percent of the variation in criminal convictions and 39 percent of the variation in incarceration. At the intensive margin, these factors typically account for slightly less than half of the variation in prison sentence length and between one-third and one-half of the variation in criminal convictions, depending on crime type and gender. Neighborhood correlations, on the other hand, are quite small. We, therefore, conclude that these large sibling correlations are most likely generated by family influences and not by neighborhood influences. Further analysis shows that parental criminality and family structure contribute more to sibling similarities in crime than parental income and education or neighbor-

hood characteristics. The lion's share of the sibling crime correlations, however, is unexplained by these factors. Finally, sibling spacing in age also matters – closely spaced siblings are more similar in their criminal behavior than widely spaced siblings.

IQ and family background: Are associations strong or weak?

(with M. Jäntti and A. Björklund)

For the purpose of understanding the underlying mechanisms behind intergenerational associations in income and education, recent studies have explored the intergenerational transmission of abilities. We use a large representative sample of Swedish men to examine both intergenerational and sibling correlations in IQ. Since siblings share both parental factors and neighbourhood influences, the sibling correlation is a broader measure of the importance of family background than the intergenerational correlation. We use IQ data from the Swedish military enlistment tests. The correlation in IQ between fathers (born 1951-1956) and sons (born 1966-1980) is estimated to 0.347. The corresponding estimate for brothers (born 1951-1968) is 0.473, suggesting that family background explains approximately 50 percent of a person's IQ. Estimating sibling correlations in IQ, we thus find that family background has a substantially larger impact on IQ than has been indicated by previous studies examining only intergenerational correlations in IQ.

Gender and inequality of opportunity in Sweden

(with M. Jäntti and L. Lindahl)

We explore the equality of opportunity in long-run income among Swedish men and women by investigating to what extent income inequality is due to differences in circumstances, i.e., factors beyond individuals' control, such as parental income and gender. The key idea is that a society has achieved equality of opportunity if there is no income inequality that is due to circumstances. Analyzing men and women separately, we find that circumstances account for up to 31 percent of income inequality among men and up to 25 percent among women. We conclude that there is greater equality of opportunity among women than among men. When we analyze men and

women together, and treat gender as a circumstance, at most 38 percent of income inequality can be attributed to circumstances. Gender accounts for up to 13 percent of income inequality, making gender the single most important circumstance in accounting for inequality in long-run income in Sweden.

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