Trajectories of Children’s Organized and Unorganized Leisure Time and Young Adult Outcomes

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I. Introduction

Research documents the pervasive influences of the intergenerational transmission of social advantage. Higher levels of parental economic, social, human, and physical capital translate into children’s more advantageous educational, employment, relational, and health outcomes over their life course (Coleman 1988, Smeeding, Erikson and Jäntti 2011). Research has yet to identify how parental transfers of money and time matter for children’s transitions to adulthood. A few qualitative studies emphasize social class differences in parenting strategies, styles and orientations as mechanisms of intergenerational social and cultural capital transmission but quantitative studies that examine effects of parental time investments on children’s young adult transitions are lacking social and cultural capital resources through parenting (Amato and Fowler 2002, Betts et al. 2013, Bronte-Tinkew, Moore and Carrano 2006, Chambers et al. 2000, Crosnoe and Trinitapoli 2008, de Graaf and Kalmijn 2001, Glasgow et al. 1997, Lareau 2002, Lareau 2011, Lee 2013, Pope and Mueller 1976, Simons et al. 1991). We address part of this gap in this analysis. We examine how specific elements of class differences in parenting behaviors and styles – e.g. organized or unorganized leisure activities – are associated with children’s educational and health outcomes in young adulthood.

II. Literature Review

Ample research has examined the transmission of social resources from parents to children because transfers of resources intergenerationally may produce more unequal societies (Erikson and Goldthorpe 2002, Pope and Mueller 1976, Simons et al. 1991, Swartz 2009, Van Ijzendoorn 1992). Parental transfer of economic and time resources to children through young adulthood is commonplace historically, and today more prolonged because of the expansion of higher education and more precarious economic circumstances (Furstenberg Jr 2010, Swartz 2009). Intergenerational flows of social resources from parents include education (Currie and Moretti 2002), human capital (Parcel and Menaghan 1990), income (Carlson and Magnuson 2011, de Graaf and Kalmijn 2001, Hill and Duncan 1987) and family stability (Pope and Mueller 1976).

In contrast, Lareau (2002, 2011) examined how parenting behaviors and styles were associated with children’s outcomes. She documents that middle class families adopt practices of “concerted cultivation” to foster children’s abilities and skills, whereas working class and poor parents emphasize strategies of “natural growth.” Specifically, these class-differentiated styles of parenting translate into more active coordination and involvement of parents with children’s educational and leisure activities,
more conversation with children to instill stronger language and reasoning skills, and ongoing interventions of parents with their children’s schools, doctors, and other institutional actors. Working and poor class parents are more authoritarian in interactions with children, less directly involved in coordinating or participating in children’s educational and leisure activities, and less connected with children’s social institutions. Lareau finds concerted cultivation produces better cognitive and social outcomes among children Consistent with her study, research indicates that children in low socioeconomic status, minority, and single parent families spend less time in high-energy and adult-supervised activities that promote positive developmental trajectories and more time in unorganized and sedentary activities that reduce cognitive and physical functioning (Bohnert, Fredricks, and Randall 2010; Hofferth and Moon 2012). Girls generally spend less time than boys in sports and electronic games and more time studying, doing housework, and in unorganized leisure with friends, activities that presage adult differences in time use (Bianchi and Robinson 1997; Larson 2001).

SES-linked childrearing practices and parenting styles are a contributing factor to the higher rates of childhood and adult obesity, depression, and mental and physical health disorders among children in lower SES families (Dwyer, Sayer and Timberlake 2010, Ogden et al. 2002, Parcel and Menaghan 1990, Statistics 2005) The child development literature documents that children’s more frequent participation in organized activities, meaning those that are organized by adult participation or oversight, is associated with various positive outcomes in childhood and adolescence such as better cognitive skills and academic achievements (Heaven and Ciarrochi 2008, Hsin 2009, Lareau 2011, Smeeding, Erikson and Jäntti 2011, Van Ijzendoorn 1992), less risky and delinquent behaviors (Bronte-Tinkew, Moore and Carrano 2006, Duncan, Ziol-Guest and Kalil 2010, Hansen, Skorups and Arrington 2010, Maggi et al. 2012) and better health outcomes (Crosnoe and Trinitapoli 2008, Driscoll, Russell and Crockett 2008, Fuemmeler et al. 2012, Lee 2013, Repetti, Taylor and Seeman 2002)

What is not clear from these studies is whether children’s time in adult-organized or unorganized leisure activities have a direct effect on young adult outcomes, net of parental economic investments, parenting styles, and parent-child relationship quality. Organized activities is associated with young adult education and health outcomes and studies have yet to attempt to disentangle independent and joint influences of parenting styles, family resources, and children’s activity time on developmental outcomes (Bianchi and Robinson 1997, Liana C. Sayer, Suzanne M. Bianchi and John P. Robinson 2004, Milkie, Nomaguchi and Denny 2015). Our study contributes to this literature by using nationally representative longitudinal panel data to systematically examine how class differences in young and adolescent children’s organized and unorganized leisure activities are associated with young adult education and health outcomes.

III. Data

We use three waves of the Child Development Supplement linked with individual and family files from the PSID (Panel Study of Income Dynamics), a a national representative longitudinal study. The
CDS-I was collected in 1997 on a sample of 3,563 children aged 12 and under in 2,395 eligible PSID families with a response rate of 88%. The CDS-II did follow-up interviews in 2002 with 2,907 children aged 5 to 19 in 2,019 PSID families (91% response rate). The CDS-III follow-up interviews in 2007 with 1,506 children aged 10 to 19 (90% response rate). The CDS and the core PSID contain data on children and parent’s characteristics, and a broad array of measures on family environment, parenting styles and practices, and developmental outcomes (physical and mental health, academic achievement, cognitive ability, social relationships with family and peers). The 24 hour weekday and weekend time diary component of the survey provides a unique opportunity to determine how organized and unorganized time across early childhood and adolescence influence young adult outcomes. broad range of developmental outcomes, parenting, time diaries and etc).

Our analysis sample includes children who completed time diaries in all three waves of the CDS waves (n=1041). This restriction allows us to examine change from early childhood through adolescence in children’s time in six organized and unorganized leisure activities: active, cognitive, electronic game, television, relaxation, events, We then examine associations between children’s organized and unorganized leisure time, child and time-constant and time-varying family characteristics (child gender, age, child race-ethnicity, maternal education, employment and age, family structure, number of siblings, home environment, parenting style, and parental mental health) and children’s young adult educational and health outcomes. Time diaries in CDS data was collected in one day of weekday and another day of weekend. These time diaries were utilized to create weekly hours per activities. For example, if child spent 1 hour in a weekday and 2 hours in a weekend day, weekly time was calculated as Equation 1.

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\text{Weekly time spent for an activity} = (\text{Weekday time diary } \times 5) + (\text{Weekend day time diary } \times 2) \quad \text{Eq. 1}
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If the activity is done with parent (father, mother, step-father, step mother) or other adults (adult relatives, grand paretns and other adults), those activities were classified as organized activities with adult guidance. In contrast, activities done with friends, non adult relatives or nobody were classified as unorganized activities without any guidance of adults.

IV. Preliminary Results and Analysis Plan

Table 1 shows descriptive differences in boys’ and girls’ organized and unorganized time in our six measures of leisure. Results indicate that at each wave boys spend more time than girls in both organized and unorganized active leisure in 2002 and 2007, and in electronic games at all waves. Boys also spend more time in organized television but girls spend more time in unorganized television in 2002 and 2007. Girls spend more time in both organized and unorganized time cognitive leisure and relaxing than boys in 2002 and 2007, and in events in 2007. At each wave, for all children, substantially more time is spent in organized leisure activities than unorganized ones. The results are particularly surprising for electronic games, television, and relaxing, activities other research suggests are commonly done with friends. We plan to test additional specifications of organized and unorganized time to ensure our measures reflect active adult engagement or direction of the activity and not copresence.
In next steps we plan to use structural equation models to examine how variation in organized and unorganized leisure time is linked with young adult education and health outcomes, net of child and family characteristics, measures of the home environment, and controls for parenting style and warmth. (Gunzler et al. 2013). Reskin stated we need to motivates studies can answer ‘how’ ascriptive inequality works on mechanisms in multiple levels of society instead of ‘why’ this type of inequality happens (Reskin 2003). In her statement, mechanism is a pathways to connect interpersonal, societal, organizational mechanisms in a society can see causal links of social phenomena (Werts and Linn 1970). In this format of research design, Path Analysis or Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is an effective tool uses path diagrams are powerful research method to see how parent’s class is associated with other influential mediators and affect the children’s outcome (dependent variable) such as academic achievement and cognitive skill acquisitions (Acock 2013, Bollen 2014).

There are many advantages of using SEM than regression analysis since the model can contain more appropriate inference frame for the types of causal analysis and can apply more complicated medication models in a single analysis with latent variables in pathways (Bollen 2014, Gunzler et al. 2013). With this longitudinal national representative data, we plan to see trajectories of effect of one specific measure of parenting style, organized and unorganized leisure time and it’s associations with children’s outcome with time variant & invariant family indicators throughout 10 years by PSID CDS data.
V. References


