

Book review: The Role of Kin in Intergenerational Mobility

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Lehti, Hannu: *The Role of Kin in Educational and Status Attainment*.

Hannu Lehti's dissertation reminds us of the existence of a community, namely the role of relatives for the social position of an individual. The theme of the book raises hope, that individuality is not a dominant feature of modern life in the 2020s.

The importance of family for a child's attainment has previously been examined by focusing on the relationship between the parents' social status and the child's future attainment. The role of grandparents, aunts, and uncles in a child's achievements has also been studied. However, previous studies have not taken into account the effect of both maternal and paternal side relatives. The dissertation attempts to fill this gap by considering how the lineage and sex of a parent explain the effect of a relative by applying an evolutionary social science approach.

The sociological framework, of the theory section, is amplified by the evolutionary explanations, which frame the motives of relatives to participating in childcare. The theory section explains how the involvement of relatives in the child's upbringing can be understood on an evolutionary basis. An evolutionary perspective reveals the role of relatives, during the early phases of a child's life, which gives roots to the family tree. These evolutionary roots reflect the invisible part beneath the surface, that sociology, which is strictly limited to cultural frames, cannot detect. The author wants to reveal these roots thus that the reader understands the behavior of the extended and immediate family members more comprehensively.

The theoretical framework of the book is based on both evolutionary and social literature. Through these two perspectives, it explains the role of relatives from the standpoint of social mechanisms as well as natural selection approaches. The evolutionary explanations are based on kin selection, parental investment theory, and the theory of paternity uncertainty. The social mechanisms of the book describe individuals as rational actors.

Readers, who know well the scientific sociological literature, can find familiar concepts in the book, such as, human and social capital, the theory of relative risk aversion, and modernization theory.

The author reveals the evolutionary roots beneath the soil, in the theory section, and uncovers their role behind social mechanisms. To reveal more of the roots, the author relies on the Hamilton (1964) rule, which is based on the altruistic behavior of relatives that evolved through natural selection. According to the rule, the more genes individuals' share, the more altruistic assistance they give to one another. However, only a child's mother can be completely certain of the shared genes. Fathers can never be completely sure that a child is his genetic kin. Thus the relatives from the mother's side can be more certain of genetic relationships and that is why they often invest more in their nephews and nieces than the relatives from the father's side do. The biological aspects are a great example of the author's theoretical approach to carefully dig the soil out the roots of the family tree so, that the reader can see the biological predispositions behind the social mechanisms.

The book contains four empirical articles, which all use quantitative methods. These articles study the impact of the mother, father, grandparents, aunts, and uncles on the child's socioeconomic and educational achievements. The first article shows, which of the socioeconomic resources of mother and father explain the child's socioeconomic achievement. The second article examines the effect of parental unemployment on the child's education attainment using a sibling design. The third article extends the review to the aunt and uncle. The fourth article studies, how socioeconomic resources of grandparents and shared lifetime between grandparents and grandchildren influence grandchildren's secondary education attainment. The articles have been summarized in an easy-to-read synopsis, following a page-long description of the methodology, including the most important aspects of the research.

The title of the dissertation does not reveal, in what country the studies have been conducted. However, this becomes clear to the reader at the beginning of the introduction. The empirical work has been conducted with Finnish register data. Also, a separate chapter on country context has been included in the book. This section presents the Finnish education system, social security system, and gender equality, which is on a high level compared to other countries. The reader is reminded, that in Finland, the importance of social institutions, throughout the human lifespan, is greater than in a liberal Central European or North American system. The purpose of the chapter is, of course, to describe the context of the phenomenon being studied, but at the same time, it seems to reduce the expectations the reader has for the role of relatives. After reading the evolutionary explanations, the institutions presented in this chapter, which undermine the social inheritance, bring the reader from the naturalistic explanations back to today's Finland.

The author has used multilevel modeling as a research method in the articles of the dissertation. In multilevel models, the siblings are clustered according to their families. Such modeling allows estimating the proportion of all the characteristics that siblings share for example genes and shared environment. However, as the author points out that the effect of genes was not possible to dissolve from a shared environment with his method. Still, multilevel modeling, and other methodological aspects, provide interesting reading for quantitative research enthusiasts. Research, based on quantitative methods, provides valid arguments due to the traditional methods used. For people, who are familiar with quantitative methods, a few numerical values can uncover more than long textual explanations. Even qualitative oriented researchers should not dismiss this book, because of its quantitative methods. The book presents all the necessary results, that the role of relatives can be understood without even reading the methodology section.

Building the theory of the book on the literature of two scientific disciplines follows the multidisciplinary trend of the 21st century, which provides readers a broader understanding of the phenomenon. Combining the views of the disciplines requires the author to understand multiple aspects to avoid a fragmented outcome. Such a comprehensive attempt to approach the phenomenon brings to mind the Renaissance age of *Uomo Universals*, or universal geniuses, such as Leonardo da Vinci, who mastered a wide range of scientific disciplines as well as art. In my opinion, Hannu Lehti, in his dissertation, has managed to combine the evolutionary and sociological explanations into one comprehensive work, which is pleasant to read both due to its multidisciplinary approach and due to clear structure. I recommend the book especially for those interested in the role of relatives in socioeconomic attainment, but also for today's *Uomo Universals*, who like to combine theories.