Empirical Studies on Sources of Inequality

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# 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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Göran Lindqvist

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Director of Research Stockholm School of Economics Professor and Head of the Department of Economics Stockholm School of Economics

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Stockholm, April 6, 2014

Anna Sandberg

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## Introduction

This thesis consists of four self-contained chapters that empirically explore sources of economic inequality, using data from experiments, sports competitions, and Swedish registers.

The first three chapters assess the importance of gender, nationality and family background as determinants of unequal outcomes. Each chapter addresses this issue from a different perspective. The first chapter looks at discrimination, addressing whether individuals are treated differently based on their gender and nationality. The second chapter investigates gender differences in behavior, while the third chapter looks into how family background affects choices individuals make later on in life.

The fourth and final chapter explores how the design of choice environments can influence whether individuals choose to implement unequal outcomes.

A short summary of each chapter follows.

## Competing biases: Effects of gender and nationality in sports judging

The equestrian sport dressage is the only Olympic sport with subjective performance evaluations in which male and female athletes compete as equals, and international dressage competitions include judges and athletes of both genders and of many nationalities. Thus, these competitions provide a rare opportunity to explore gender bias and nationalistic bias in the same setting, using naturally occurring data on repeated high-stakes decisions of professional decision makers. In this paper, I use a unique data set of 89,124 scores from top-level dressage competitions between 2007 and 2012. For each performance by an individual athlete, the data include the scores given by each of the five judges on the panel, allowing for clean identification of in-group biases. Overall, I find robust evidence of nationalistic bias but no gender bias. Further analyses suggest that nationalistic bias may crowd out gender bias in international contexts. Moreover, the nationalistic bias is largest in championships and team competitions, indicating that nationalistic bias is positively correlated with the salience of national identity. Finally, I find that judges are influenced by the nationality of the other members of the judging panel. Judges give higher scores to athletes who are of the same nationality as one of the other judges on the panel, thus reinforcing each other's nationalistic biases. Consequently, having at least one judge from the same country as oneself can have a large impact on an athlete's final score, as the scores from all judges on the judging panel are affected. This might indicate that judges engage in vote trading.

> Gender differences in initiation of negotiation: Does the gender of the negotiation counterpart matter? (with K. Hederos Eriksson)

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.

#### INTRODUCTION

The importance of family background and neighborhood effects as determinants of crime (with K. Hederos Eriksson, R. Hjalmarsson and M. Lindquist)

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

### *Omission effects in fairness behavior* (with M. Gärtner)

We investigate whether individuals are more prone to act selfishly if they can passively allow for a self-serving outcome to be implemented (omission) rather than having to make an active choice (commission). In most settings, active and passive choice alternatives differ in terms of factors such as defaults, costs of taking an action, and awareness. Isolating the distinction between active and passive choices in an experiment, we find no omission effect in fairness behavior. This suggests that increased selfishness through omission, as observed in various economic choice situations, is driven by these other factors rather than a preference for selfish omissions.

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