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On Intergenerational Transmission of Reading Habits in Italy: Is a Good Example the Best Sermon?

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Abstract:

The intergenerational transmission of preference and attitudes has been less investigated in the literature than the intergenerational transmission of education and income. Using the Italian Time Use Survey (2002-2003) conducted by ISTAT, we analyse the intergenerational transmission of reading habits: are children more likely to allocate time to studying and reading when they observe their parents doing the same activity? The intergeneration transmission of attitudes towards studying and reading can be explained by both cultural and educational transmission from parents to children and by imitating behaviours. The latter channel is of particular interest, since it entails a direct influence parents may have on child's preference formation through their role model, and it opens the scope for active policies aimed at promoting good parents' behaviours. We follow two fundamental approaches to estimation: a "long run" model, consisting of OLS intergenerational type regressions for the reading habit, and "short run" household fixed effect models, where we aim at identifying the impact of the role model exerted by parents, exploiting different exposure of sibling to parents' example within the same household. Our long run results show that children are more likely to read and study when they live with parents that are used to read. Mothers seem to be more important than fathers in this type of intergenerational transmission. Moreover, the short run analysis shows that there is an imitation effect: in the day of the survey children are more likely to read after they saw either the mother or the father reading.

Text: See [Discussion Paper No. 6038](#)



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