This book offers the first report on data obtained from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), a cohort of 18 819 UK babies born in the 21st century. It presents an original approach to the study of child health and development by considering social and health conditions as sources of capital. For instance, family resources (father, mother and relatives) and neighbourhood are studied as sources of social capital, ethnicity, religion and language as sources of cultural capital, and parents’ health as a source of human capital. Doing so, the authors open a general concern that inequalities are not only rooted in adults but are the result of geographical, (neighbourhood) and cultural (ethnicity) domains, as is shown throughout the book.

The first chapter describes how MCS was planned, what objectives it pursued and what were the policy context and the methods used. Then a series of chapters present the distribution of variables within the sample in terms of: household structure, parents language, neighbourhood conditions (chapter 2), socio-economic conditions, including prenatal care (chapter 3), children’s health (chapter 5), and parenthood and parenting (chapter 7). Chapters 6 and 8 bring more analytically elaborated answers, which we expect to see in a book of this type, describing how socioeconomic and physical environments affect child development (gross and fine motor coordination, and communicative gestures), and how family characteristics and employment affect mothers’ mental health (satisfaction in life and depression). The final chapter presents the conclusions, a summary of the information and answers for the questions asked in the introduction of the book.

Most chapters are accompanied by a considerable number of graphs and tables that are easy to interpret. Although the book is the result of a multidisciplinary effort, chapters show coherence and cohesion. An introductory discussion at the beginning of each chapter summarises the state of knowledge and helps the reader to be situated within the context to be developed. Subsequently, a plan of the chapter clarifies the measures and methods used. All chapters deal with issues of class (i.e., education and occupation), ethnicity and neighbourhood inequalities and the manner in which they are related to other variables such as prenatal care, poverty, child’s health, etc. Although this sometimes adds complexity to the discussion, it considerably enriches its content. Methodological topics are appropriately presented. For instance, comparison of different definitions of poverty (chapter 3), the use of positive child health indicators such as adequate environment (being breastfed) and health status (improved and living with a non-smoking mother during infancy; chapter 5), and especially measurement of the father’s involvement in the child’s care and parenting attitudes (chapters 7 and 8) are assets of this publication. The discussions in the text and the concluding chapter are clear and focus on the research questions, always leading to policy recommendations.

This book is an excellent introduction to the dynamics of family structure, ethnicity and social position and its effect on child health and development. Researchers on child health in developing countries will find in it helpful information about methods, definition of variables, presentation and policy implications of the results. Concepts of human, social and cultural capital overlap with the concept of CARE used by many researchers in international nutrition. Thus, the book will also be a useful reference for those workers in the field. Likewise, this work should be of interest to policy makers and government agencies around the world.

Beatriz E Alvarado

Mortality, Biochemistry, Diet and Lifestyle in Rural China. Geographical Study of the characteristics of 69 Counties in mainland China and 16 Areas in Taiwan

Children of the 21st century. From birth to 9 months


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