Do more Educated Mothers have more Conscientious Children?
Social Origin and Personality Development in the Early Life Course

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The importance of conscientiousness in predicting unequal outcomes in the life course leads to the question of whether differences in this trait have their origins in social stratification. Parenting practices have been shown to vary across socioeconomic strata and to influence children’s outcomes in different ways. The main objective of this paper is to identify whether mothers in Germany differ in their parenting practices by their social origin, and whether these affect the development of conscientiousness in early childhood. The study analyzes data from the SOEP (2003-2005), in which children are observed at three measurement points: 0-23 months, 2-3 years, and 5-6 years (N=519). A Structural Equation Model with MPLUS 6 is estimated using a WLSMV-Estimator. Results indicate that the association between social origin and conscientiousness is partly mediated by the parenting practices of the mother. In this sense they can be identified as a specific mechanism for generating social inequality.