

ABSTRACT

Title: Entering Higher Education – Gender and Class Perspectives
Language: English
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This thesis studies the entrance to higher education, and how different categories of students act in times of recession, in relation to the admission system and when choosing educational track. The purpose has been to develop both a comprehensive and a fine-grained understanding of educational participation and attainment.

The thesis consists of three papers, along with an integrating essay that further explains and discusses the three studies as an integrated research project. There is also a Swedish language summary written in easy language.

The empirical basis of all three studies has been register data for full birth cohorts. In the first study, six cohorts born in the middle of the 1970s are analysed. In the following two studies the cohort born in 1974 is further analysed. The registers primarily contain educational data, but also background information such as parents' education and income is available. These registers are linked on an individual level which makes it possible to follow the individuals' educational choices and attainment until they are 30 years old. Two multivariate analysis methods have been used: binary logistic regression and Cox regression.

In the early 1990s there was an economic recession, which was associated with an increased matriculation rate among intermediate and working class students. However, at the end of the decade when the private sector recovered, the development concerning matriculation was different for men and women from these classes. Possible explanations are that the educational choices are still quite gender traditional, and the gender segregated labour market. In addition, men from lower classes are generally educationally low achieving which limits their competitiveness in the admittance system.

There are different paths to higher education, the primary purpose being to provide a "second chance" for who like to change trajectory later in life. However, the study showed that these paths primarily facilitated the entrance for upper middle class students and among them men in particular.

Higher education has undergone a large expansion, which has led to an increased diversity of educational options. Class and gender differentiation is studied both regarding attractiveness (prestige) and field of study. Students coming from upper middle class are particularly successful in entering the most attractive programmes. One of the explanations is that women from the upper middle class is the highest achieving group of students. They can therefore successfully compete for a place of study in all types of programmes.