Educational and Occupational Careers in a Swedish Cohort

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Till mina kära
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Study II  Family resources and mid-life level of education: a longitudinal study of the mediating influence of childhood parental involvement
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Introduction

Social stratification is a classic research area within sociology concerning the distribution of power, property and prestige in society. Scholars within this field typically investigate processes whereby individuals come to occupy different positions in the social order (Grusky 2006). This thesis contains four studies that explore two fundamental issues in research on social stratification: family background and gender. In addition, two essential outcomes of stratification processes are analysed: educational attainment and occupational attainment.

All four empirical studies investigate a cohort of Swedish metropolitan children born in 1953. The data come from the Stockholm Birth Cohort Study (SBC), created in 2004/2005 through a probability matching of two previously established datasets; the Stockholm Metropolitan Study 1953-1985 and the Swedish Work and Mortality Database (Stenberg et al. 2007). The Stockholm Metropolitan Study includes all children born in 1953 and living in the Stockholm metropolitan area on November 1, 1963. Professor Kaare Svalastoga at Copenhagen University initiated the project; by the end of the 1950s, he proposed a longitudinal cohort study involving all Nordic capitals (Stenberg 2013). In 1961, he launched a research program that included four research streams: (i) Social mobility over lifespans and generations, with a special focus on the importance of education; (ii) Membership in groups and organisations (an important aspect of what we often refer to today as social capital); (iii) Social adjustment and deviant behaviour, both positive and negative; and (iv) Companion selection and family formation. Professor Carl-Gunnar Janson, head of the project in Stockholm, later summarised the over-arching goal of the research project as studying the manner and degree to which social origins, early personal resources and childhood experiences of the cohort are reflected in their social situation and behaviours during youth and young adulthood (Janson 2000). The Swedish Work and Mortality Database contains administrative register data on all individuals born before 1985 and living in Sweden in 1980 or 1990. It was created to study how work, income and labour market positions combine to influence health, disease and mortality.

By matching these two existing datasets, the SBC Study now provides a 50-year follow-up of the original 1953 birth cohort. The SBC Study has been carefully presented elsewhere (Stenberg 2013; Stenberg et al. 2007) and a detailed description of the data is available at the projects official webpage:
www.stockholmbirthcohort.su.se. The high relevance and quality of the data is confirmed by the more than 140 research reports and academic journal articles are based on SBC data. Data from the SBC Study have been used in research covering a diverse set of academic disciplines, including sociology, criminology, epidemiology, psychology and economics.

All four empirical studies in this thesis use both the survey- and register-data included in the SBC Study. Although each study can be read and understood separately, their unifying theme relates to the broader issues of how social inequalities change or remain constant across time and space. At a less abstract level, the studies involve factors reproducing socio-economic and gender differences in educational and occupational attainment. To understand how socio-economic resources and status of the family of origin are associated with educational and occupational attainment in the studied cohort, I devote particular focus to the role of within-family interactions and childhood preferences.

The central role given to attitudes, preferences and other beliefs in the causal chain from origin (i.e., what is given) to destination (i.e., what is achieved) stems from the role of family background in life outcomes as being one of the most valued findings in sociology. In research on social stratification, a crucial issue concerns how to accurately describe the conditions of the original position, in both theoretical and empirical terms. Objectively defined positions are often used in research on social stratification; for example, one can focus on social class in terms of employment conditions or socio-economic status in terms of education and earnings. In this thesis I use different concepts and indicators to capture what I broadly define as socio-economic resources and status of families in the SBC cohort.

However, sociologists have been less successful in showing the explanatory value of their findings regarding the role of family background in life outcomes (Hout and DiPrete 2006; Morgan 2005). For example, though we know that the social class of origin matters for a diverse set of outcomes over an entire life course, our ideas about the fundamental mechanisms that transmit and reproduce class based inequalities in society are still vague. In my view, differences in educational and occupational outcomes in society are difficult to explain unless we consider factors in children’s home environments. Similarly, the equalisation of formal opportunities for educational and occupational attainment between men and women renders occupational gender segregation inexplicable unless preferences based on historical legacies of gender are brought into theoretical frameworks and empirical analyses.

Thus, to analyse children’s outcomes in terms of educational and occupational attainment it is fruitful to devote attention to factors in the home environment and individual preferences. This latter aspect is contentious, as scholars are often reluctant to analyse preference-based explanations for social stratification. One reason may be concerns over “blaming the victim”,

where less advantageous outcomes in terms of educational or occupational positions are interpreted as consequences of faulty choice. However, these premises are hard to sustain when preferences and family background or preferences and occupational gender segregation are concurrently analysed.

Due to the unequal opportunity structures of society, it is sometimes argued that aspirations and preferences are only alternative indicators of attainment and therefore have no autonomous explanatory power. For example, Bourdieu (2003:74) claims that investigating aspirations will only show us that “…individuals have hoped for nothing that they have not obtained and obtained nothing that they have not hoped for” because objective conditions determine aspirations by determining the extent to which they can be satisfied. I would argue that it still is possible and valuable to empirically analyse how aspirations and preferences intervene in the causal chain between origin and destination, as I do in this thesis. This theme fits well with the original purpose of the Stockholm Metropolitan Study, which, from its inception, was designed to analyse attitudes and behaviours of children and youngsters that “…vary by the social positions, internal interactions and value systems of the family of origin” (Janson 2000: 147).

As for educational outcomes, I show that active parental participation in a child’s schooling is useful regardless of the parent’s own level of education; however, the extent of parental participation is clearly influenced by parents’ level of education and other socio-economic resources, as well as their attitudes towards school and education. As for occupational outcomes, the research questions in this thesis are concerned with the interplay between occupational gender segregation and labour market stratification. For children’s occupational gender preferences, my results show that children’s occupational status preferences mediate the influence of parental socio-economic status. I interpret this as evidence on how labour market structures interact with factors in the family of origin to influence a child’s occupational preferences. When children in the SBC Study were asked about their occupational preferences in the 1960s, high-status, professional occupations in the Swedish labour market rarely included significant shares of female employees (Nermo 1996; Stanfors 2007).

Because people seldom achieve their explicit goals, a narrative where individual motives cause events can also be criticised as overly assumptive (Tilly 1998). However, an over-socilized view of individuals provides little space for individual behaviour or opportunities to change social situations. The important role I find for active parental participation in children’s educational outcomes leaves much room for individual agency from parents to influence their children’s educational success.

In studies on occupational gender segregation, preference-based explanations are seen as filling a gap in research when demand-side explanations cannot provide an answer (Charles and Grusky 2004; Correll 2004; Hakim 2002; Okamoto and England 1999). Whether children of well-educated,
high-status parents in the 1970s were actually forerunners of change in gender attitudes, as suggested by Myers and Booth (2002) and Shu and Marini (1998), has not actually been fully corroborated in my studies. In fact, I find that adherence to traditional gender roles is not an important mediator between family socio-economic status and gender-atypical occupational preferences for girls or boys in this cohort. This refutes one hypothesised mechanism where children of socio-economically privileged families would have developed a more critical mind-set towards traditional gender roles that led them, or at least allowed them, to break with occupational gender stereotypes.

As for gender-atypical occupational preferences, instead occupational status concerns seem to have been important. I find occupational status preferences are associated with breaking traditional occupational gender roles among girls but with conserving them among boys. Considerations regarding occupational status and gender-type are suggested to be central mechanisms linking socio-economic status of families to children’s achieved occupational attainment (England 2010; Gottfredson 1996; Gottfredson and Lapan 1997). Had girls from advantaged family origins not aspired to maintain the social position of their up-bringing, it seems unlikely that they would have accepted male-dominated occupations to the same extent.

Still, in order to be more successful in showing the explanatory value of our findings regarding the role of gender and family background in life outcomes, sociologists must learn more about how aspirations and preferences are actually translated into actions or choices. In my thesis, I go on to investigate whether childhood gender-atypical occupational preferences were associated with adult occupational attainment among women in the studied cohort. Previous research show that welfare state regimes and labour market development at macro-level are important factors for women’s employment decisions (Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001; Ferrarini 2006). My empirical analyses show that occupational careers among women also are related to factors at individual level. Particularly childhood gender-atypical occupational preferences are important to consider here.

In another of my studies, I show that different aspects of parental educational involvement are differently related to children’s level of education as adults. Both parental beliefs regarding schooling, including their aspirations for their children’s continued education, and active parental participation mediated the influence of socio-economic resources in the family of origin on children’s school grades, the so called “primary effects” of family of origin that denote how children of advantaged social origin tend to perform better at school (Boudon 1974). For subsequent educational choices – attainment of a diploma from compulsory, secondary, or tertiary education – parental educational aspirations for their children were an important mediator of socio-economic resources in the family of origin. This finding suggests that while several aspects of the home environment are involved in
forming the premises for educational-decision making in terms of school grades, aspirations are specifically important for decisions to continue formal education.

Education is a primary factor in upward social mobility; this is generally considered a normatively positive phenomenon. However, it has also been noted that education is the prime strategy that more well-off parents use to hand over privilege to their children (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bowles and Gintis 1976). Quantitative research into school-directed parent-child interactions attempts to approach a complex system of family values about identity, relationships and culture by studying survey responses on parent-child interactions. The research efforts to capture the home environment by differentiating forms of goal-directed involvement tend to reflect a normative view that some parent-child interactions are more highly valued activities. Typically, these parent-child interactions are prime examples of the “concerted cultivation” that white, middle class parents engage in (Lareau 2011).

Even though developments of educational and work values in children are important concerns for most parents, how they are expressed may differ. In connection, it is important to note that the positive effect of school-directed social capital or parental educational involvement on children’s educational achievement and attainment may also, at least in part, be a creation of those ascribing or allocating talent and educational success onto students. As Tilly (1998:30) writes, “Noticing that school performance of children correlate with the social positions of their parents, researchers attribute those differences in performance to ‘family background’ rather than considering that teachers and school officials may shape those performances by their own categorical responses to parental social position”. Because they view active parental interest and participation in their children’s schooling as a valued activity, school staff may develop positive views on children whose parents are active.

To conclude, my thesis investigates how individual educational and occupational outcomes are structured by their family or origin and gender, with focus on within family-interactions, in terms of parental attitudes to and active participation in children’s schooling, and individual preferences in terms of occupational status and gender preferences. Although the factors that I investigate may not all have fateful consequences, they are involved in reproducing socio-economic and gender differences in educational and occupational careers. In this regard I share a strong commitment to the rhetoric of equal opportunity that has been raised in social stratification research, where, for example, Jonsson et al. (2011:514) writes that:

“[A]ll ascriptive constraints on choice, even those pertaining to purely horizontal inequalities, are inconsistent with a commitment to an open society. By this logic, all types of origin-by-destination association are problematic be-
cause they imply that human choice has been circumscribed, a circumscription that is wholly determined by the accident of birth.” (italics in original).

In the following, this introductory chapter summarises each study in my dissertation and suggest opportunities for further research, before addressing ethical concerns.

Summary of the four studies

In the first two studies, I investigate how children’s educational outcomes are influenced by family background, measured in terms of parental human capital (Study I) and family socio-economic resources (Study II). In both studies, within-family interaction patterns regarding children’s schooling are introduced as an additional variable that influences the association between family background and children’s educational outcomes. During the period under study, the direct costs of education (e.g., tuition fees) decreased, as did class differences in living conditions. However, socio-economic differences in terms of educational achievement and attainment still remained. The overarching objective of Studies I and II is to investigate these socio-economic differences in educational achievement and attainment by focusing on factors related to the home environment.

Study I, “Social capital, human capital and parent-child relation quality: interacting for children’s educational achievement?”, was co-authored with professor Sten-Åke Stenberg at the Swedish Institute for Social Research, Stockholm University. Our first goal was to investigate the interrelationship between family social capital and parental human capital. Parental human capital has not only been related to resources that make social capital more available, but it has also been suggested that the utility of social capital for children’s education is higher when embedded in a high human capital context. Our second goal was to investigate whether the quality of the parent-child relationship interacted with social capital with respect to children’s educational achievement. Our study focused on the family social capital directly related to children’s school work. The data used in the study was for a subsample of the SBC that comprised about 3,100 children whose parents were interviewed. We found that parents with more human capital offered their children more social capital. The subsequent OLS regressions showed that social capital (when present in the family) was directly related to children’s school grades, and its utility for achievement did not depend on parental human capital. Because such social capital was less available in families with less human capital, we concluded that more social capital would benefit disadvantaged children. We also found that a situation with a combination of high levels of social capital and good parent-child relationships
was most beneficial for children’s educational achievement. Therefore, we urge researchers to include the emotional climate of family relationships when addressing parental support with children’s schooling.

In Study II, “Family resources and mid-life level of education: a longitudinal study of the mediating influence of childhood parental involvement”, my purpose was to investigate differences in the level of attained education by socio-economic family background. I drew on the concept of parental involvement, which is popular among educators and policy-makers. My question was whether parental involvement in children’s schooling at age 14 acted as a mediator between family resources and level of attained education at age 54. Using structural equation modelling, I analysed a subsample of the SBC cohort whose parents were interviewed. I investigated several of the commonly used indicators of involvement, including parental involvement beliefs and parental involvement practices. Involvement beliefs included parental educational aspirations for their children and parental agreement with school curriculum. In terms of parental involvement practices, I focused on whether parents were talking with their children about school, reading their children’s schoolbooks, and helping their children with homework. I found that parental educational aspirations were an important mediator between family resources and attained level of education in mid-life, while other involvement forms were only related to academic performance. I also found that parental involvement was positively associated with socio-economic resources of the family. Here I argued that current increased expectations and demands on parental participation and knowledge of the school system pose challenges to many families and may further increase the importance of family socio-economic resources on children’s educational outcomes.

Studies III and IV focused on occupational preferences during childhood. During the early years of the SBC cohort, the gender balance of the Swedish labour market was quite different from today. The majority of mothers were housewives, female labour force participation was low and high-status occupations were clearly male-dominated. In this gender-stereotypical labour market context, I was interested to analyse factors that influenced some children to develop gender-atypical occupational preferences and to what extent gender-atypical occupational preferences in childhood were associated with adult occupational attainment.

In Study III, “Gender-atypical occupational preferences in childhood – findings from a Swedish cohort”, I analysed factors behind childhood gender-atypical occupational preferences. Specifically, I analysed two hypotheses regarding mediating factors on the association between family socio-economic status and children’s gender-atypical occupational preferences. The first hypothesis contended that childhood occupational status preferences would mediate the association among girls but not among boys. Given that high-status occupations were most often male-dominated at the time,
strong occupational status preferences would provide girls with a strong reason to accept male-dominated occupations. The second hypothesis contended that non-traditional gender roles, in terms of leisure time interests and friendship sex composition, would mediate the association among both boys and girls. Parents with higher socio-economic status may have had more egalitarian attitudes towards gender and may have encouraged their children to question traditional gender roles. This, in turn, may have facilitated children to develop gender-atypical occupational interests and preferences.

Using structural equation modelling, I analysed data for all children in the SBC cohort. The results showed that acceptance of gender-atypical occupations was generally uncommon among children in the studied cohort. Boys were generally more reluctant to accept female-dominated occupations than girls were to accept male-dominated occupations. I found that a major part of the association between family socio-economic status and children’s gender-atypical occupational preferences was mediated by their occupational status preferences. Furthermore, children with non-traditional gender roles were more likely to accept gender-atypical occupations.

In Study IV, “High-status employment among women – a longitudinal study of the role of occupational gender preferences in childhood”, my purpose was to analyse the link between childhood occupational preferences and adult occupational attainment among women in the SBC cohort. The occupational careers of women growing up in the 1960s were influenced by developments in the Swedish labour market and Welfare State as well as by increased challenges to traditional gender division of labour. Using logistic analysis, I investigate if gender-atypical occupational preferences at age 13 were associated with high-status occupational attainment at age 37. The results showed that stronger gender-atypical occupational preferences were positively related to attainment of high-status occupations. This association was remarkably robust considering the presence of confounding effects of childhood occupational status preferences and family socio-economic status.

I discussed the association between early gender-atypical occupational preferences and attainment of high-status occupations in adulthood within the perspective of. I argued that girls who were more willing to accept male-dominated occupations in childhood may have been more able as adults to benefit career-wise from the political reforms and major labour market changes of the period. Meanwhile, women who were unwilling to accept male-dominated occupations may have compromised their status preferences while finding enough or indeed more satisfying gender-typical career choices within the enlarged service sector.
Further research

My thesis investigates how educational and occupational outcomes of children in a Swedish cohort were structured by their family of origin and gender. The overall finding is that in regard to individual outcomes later in life, a person’s position at birth, both in terms of gender and parents, is often mediated by the actions and attitudes of their parents or by the preferences they develop themselves. Although individual-level variables that are predictive of attainment patterns, such as aspirations and preferences, will often coincide with factors related to the home environment and the family (Morgan 2005), it is beneficial to specify observed associations in terms of mediating effects in processes related to social reproduction. I have been able to provide new insights on the role of aspirations and preferences for group differences in actions and outcomes.

While educational aspirations and expectations of parents and children – and, most likely, teachers – make up an important set of influential individual-level variables, other factors such as personality characteristics and cognitive ability may also provide important insight. The richness of data in the Stockholm Birth Cohort Study makes empirical investigations of these additional mediating variables possible at the individual level. A recent study based on data from the SBC Study investigated sibling correlations in incomes. They used indicators of parents’ propensity to plan ahead and willingness to postpone benefits to the future, shedding further light on the role of the family for children’s economic prospects (Björklund, Lindahl and Lindquist 2010). Similar parental characteristics have been found associated with children’s chances for upward social mobility (Alm 2011), which underscores the benefits of data on within-family interactions for studying individual life courses.

In this thesis, I assessed the influence of parental participation in schooling for educational outcomes net of children’s prior capacity for achievement (measured by their scores on a cognitive test). Thereby, I obtained less biased although conservative estimates of the role of parental participation, in effect controlling for prior environmental influences on children’s ability, including influences pertaining to prior parental participation and involvement in children’s schooling. In addition, and as expected, children’s cognitive ability by itself is clearly an influential factor for their educational outcomes. Further research can use SBC data to investigate how children’s cognitive abilities influence their life course.

Understanding the mechanisms of educational decision-making is not only important for our knowledge of group differences in levels of attained education, but it is also important for studies on the type and status of occupations. Increasingly, access to occupations has become restricted for people who lack the proper educational qualifications. High school and university
students are clearly over-represented in studies of the early career development process (Whiston and Keller 2004); using SBC data, career outcomes of socially disadvantaged children can also be fruitfully investigated. A study by Bäckman and Nilsson (2011) found that the association between precarious living condition in childhood and labour market exclusion and welfare receipts in mid-life was mediated by children’s deviant behaviour and educational achievement.

In recent years, an interest in the “subconscious gendering of men’s and women’s self-expressive career decisions” (Cech 2013:748) has expanded among sociologists, particularly in the U.S. (Charles and Bradley 2009; Correll 2004; England 2010). In this line of research, the reproduction of occupational sex-segregation is related to beliefs on innate differences between men and women that continue to permeate our identities. Occupational sex-segregation is here believed to be reproduced because of the cultural emphasis on individual self-expression and self-realisation through educational and occupational choices. The persistence of sex-typing over time, in terms of gender stereotypes, individual self-concepts, and personality characteristics relevant to gender, has been shown elsewhere (Lueptow, Garovich-Szabo and Lueptow 2001). Admittedly, the conceptualisation and measurement of gender roles that is available through the SBC Study is not fully comme-il-faut in research today. Here it is fruitful to continue exploring central expressions of gender role norms where data in SBC may shed new light on the role of gender in educational and occupational choice.

Also other Swedish databases are relevant in this regard. For example, data on successive cohorts may be particularly valuable when assessing how gendered self-assessments and gendered career choices have evolved over time. In Sweden, such data are available through a study based at Gothenburg University called “Evaluation-through-Follow-Up” that covers nine different cohorts born between 1948 and 1998.

The rich information that is available in SBC on cohort lives from childhood through their 60s is also an excellent source for studying how social stratification processes evolve during a life course. For example, occupational careers of cohort members may be studied in more detail by investigating how earnings development or early retirement is related to family and childhood values.

In my dissertation, I investigate female high-status occupational attainment. The occupational careers of women in the SBC cohort are also inter-

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1 In passing, it may be noted that the research project as it was initially outlined by professor Svalastoga was not meant to include girls at all because their social mobility and importance as future household breadwinners was assumed to be restricted compared with that of boys. Boys, defined as the “weaker sex”, were also expected to exhibit more deviant behavior and ill-health and would therefore be of greater interest for the project’s third research stream (Jansson 2000; Stenberg 2013).
esting for other research purposes. Given that women in this cohort were raised by the “housewife generation” but grew up to be one of the first generations of women in steady and gainful employment, several important questions regarding the influence of childhood values and preferences for women’s careers and family formation are revealed. Are their mothers’ attitudes to female labour market participation and the household division of labour important for their careers? Are their own work and family values in childhood related to their part-time employment and employment response to the birth of children?

For a further understanding of the interplay between childhood occupational preferences and female occupational attainment, I would suggest that more focus is required on contextual level factors such as labour demand, education policies, and policies supporting female employment. For these purposes, a cross-country comparison using both individual-level and macro-level variables, as well as investigations that link institutional developments over time to occupational preferences and outcomes of sequential cohorts, could prove informative.

Finally, it would be fruitful to address more carefully how generalisations to wider contexts can be accomplished from investigations based on data from a cohort born in Stockholm in 1953. More generally, my studies aim to improve our understanding of processes related to educational and occupational stratification. Studying a birth cohort relies on the assumption that members of the cohort experience transition events within the same historical time, characterized by specific sociocultural resources, constraints and opportunities (Elder Jr 1999; Marshall et al. 2001). The outcomes of the transitions that cohort members make – for example, from school into work or from dependency into own family responsibilities – depend largely on both structural opportunities and constraints as well as on individual resources. Contexts change over time and differ between societies. Opportunities and constraints that faced the Stockholm Birth Cohort members are not exactly the same that young people today will face in the course of their lives. Still, the mechanisms and processes that shape individual life courses tend to be more general than specific (Laub and Sampson 2003), and stratification processes based on gender or conditions in the family of origin will remain at the heart of sociology.

Ethical considerations

The research presented in this thesis was carried out on the basis of ethical permissions received for the project from the Karolinska Institute Regional Ethics Committee, decision 2003-12-01, case 739, dnr 03-629, and from the Stockholm Regional Ethical Review Board and The Swedish Research
Council (Dnr 04-628T, 2008/1991-32; and Dnr 825-2007-7487, respectively). I have only had access to de-identified data and have had no access to any form of personal identification numbers of the participants.
References


Sammanfattning

I denna avhandling undersöker jag olika faktorer som påverkar skolresultat och yrkespreferenser i barndomen samt förklarar utbildningsnivå och yrkesstatus som vuxen. Data kommer från den longitudinella svenska studien "Född i Stockholm på femtiotalet" (SBC) som omfattar 15 117 individer födda 1953. I avhandlingen ingår fyra separata studier.

De två första studierna berör faktorer som påverkar barnens utbildningsresultat och jag fokuserar på sambandet på samspelet i uppväxtfamiljen. Dessa studier är begränsade till de barn vars mammor intervjuades 1968, då barnen var 14-15 år gamla. I den första studien undersöks hur föräldrarnas utbildning, delaktighet i barnens skolgång och känslomässiga relation till barnen påverkar barnens skolbetyg vid 15 års ålder. Resultaten visar att föräldrar aktivitet i samband med att gå på föräldramöte, prata om skolan och hjälpa till med läxor, är positiv för barnens skolbetyg oavsett föräldrarnas utbildning och med statistisk kontroll för barnen kognitiva förmåga. Studien visar att föräldrar med högre utbildningsnivå är de mest aktiva, vilket gör att barn till högre utbildade föräldrar i större utsträckning kan dra nytta av fördelarna med aktiviteterna. En god föräldra-barn relation påverkar also barnens skolresultat positivt och när relationen var god påverkade föräldrarnas aktivitet barnens skolbetyg ännu mer positivt.

I den andra studien studerar jag i vilken mån sambandet mellan familjens socio-ekonomiska resurser och barnens utbildningsnivå som vuxna förklaras av föräldrarnas engagemang i barnens skolgång. I den här studien ingår barnens betyg vid 15 år, som ju utgör en viktig urvalsmekanism till gymnasiestudier och i förlängningen till högre utbildning. Dessutom tar jag hänsyn till barnens kognitiva förmåga. Den statistiska modellen är en s.k. strukturell ekvationsmodell som underlättar när vi vill se komplexa samband mellan faktorer som antas följa på varandra. I modellen skiljer jag mellan tre typer av engagemang: föräldrarnas förväntningar på barnen, deras inställning till skolan och deras aktiva deltagande i barnens skolgång. I modellen skiljer jag mellan tre typer av engagemang: föräldrarnas förväntningar på barnen, deras inställning till skolan och deras aktiva deltagande i barnens skolgång. Jag antar då att föräldrarnas förväntningar på barnen och inställning till skolan påverkade hur aktiva de sedan var under barnens skolgång. Resultaten visar att föräldrar med mer socio-ekonomiska resurser hade högre förväntningar på barnen, en mer positiv inställning till skolan och var mer aktiva i barnens skolgång. Föräldrarnas förväntningar och inställning till skolan påverkade också graden av aktivitet i barnens skolgång. Alla tre typer av engagemang var relaterade till de vuxna barnens utbildningsnivå, men bara föräldrarnas förväntningar på barnen för-
medlade sambandet från socio-ekonomiska resurser till utbildningsnivå direkt. Föräldrarnas inställning till skolan och deras aktiva deltagande förmedlade sambandet indirekt, via barnens betyg.


I den fjärde studien undersöker jag bara kvinnor i SBC. Jag analyserar om könsatyseriska yrkespreferenser i barndomen påverkar sannolikheten att de som vuxna arbetar i högstatusyrken. Resultaten visar att flickor med könsatyseriska yrkespreferenser ofta kom att arbeta i högstatusyrken som vuxna, jämfört med flickor vars yrkespreferenser var mer könsatyseriska. Detta samband mellan könsatyseriska yrkespreferenser i barndomen och yrkestillhörighet i vuxen ålder kvarstod efter att hänsyn tagits till effekten af faktorer i uppväxtfamiljen och flickornas statuspreferenser. Resultaten kontextuali- seras mot bakgrund av de under 1960-talet framväxande kraven på lika rättigheter för män och kvinnor samt den familjepolitiska utvecklingen mot en tvåförsörjarmodell som präglat senare decennier.
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“Cecilia! What are you doing here?!” A former classmate I hadn’t seen for at least 25 years asked this question at the University entrance. “I thought you were going to be a farmer?”

“Ahhmm, well, now I’m doing a Ph.D.”

As the youngest child of two university professors, albeit with sheep, I myself am not overly surprised by my choice of occupation. First and foremost, this thesis is for you, Mamma och Pappa. For some of us, vocational development is about tracking. The most important thing I believe you have given me as a researcher is to view society as based on human action and a moral imperative to consider my work in a greater political perspective. Although political issues are at the core of my research interest, this dissertation may not be the best example of policy-related research. This can be taken as evidence that I have adjusted well to the research practice in the field: “…we have very little to say to policy-makers. Our work looks inward to the academic concerns of the community of scholars that makes up the RC [RC28, Research Committee on Social Stratification of the International Sociological Association]” (Hout and DiPrete 2006:14).

Although pursuing an academic career may have been my determined route, my journey certainly hasn’t been swift. I want to thank my tutors, Kenneth Nelson and Sten-Åke Stenberg, for having the patience, trust, and even distance, to allow me to search, study, and contemplate. Your friendly tolerance has helped me at times when I, as Turgenev’s Rudin, have been caught with a dreamy torrent of words but no meaning in life and paralysed by the forcible thought of doing good. Kenneth – I am convinced that without my respect for you and your stalwart supervision I would never have finished this dissertation. Sten-Åke – without you I would never have begun nor had the wish to go through with it.

There are many other colleagues who should also be mentioned here. Yerko, my partner in crime – it has been a pleasure to worry about our dissertation writing together. I look forward to new worries in coming projects!

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Thank you also to Reidar and others at CHESS for providing me with data and letting me work and chatter in your beautiful localities.

These remaining words are for my non-sociologist friends, in order of appearance.

Mamma and Pappa, Salle and Clara – what a luxury to be raised by you! Thank you for so much love as to make me rather immune to the fear of humiliation, although it might not better my academic prospects. Salle – thank you for taking me to Victoria, and all the table tennis and soccer! Clara and Janne – thanks for letting me stay over-night and all the laughs before bedtime!

Axel, dear neighbour and best friend for the first decade of my life – without you, childhood would have been completely different. Sitting Bull och Gal!

Kattis and Annika – I hope you can hear my footsteps as I climb the stairs to wake you up a summer morning. I always miss you at the farm when you’re not around.

Anna – of course your own dissertation would contain an acknowledgement of the length of the articles. You are Love!

Edvin and later Elsa, Vera och Harriet! Hur skulle man kunna vara nåt annat än glad när man får vara er faster-mostor? Här snackar vi framtidsförhoppningar!

Rebecca – you have taught me to endlessly and shamelessly wonder about life. About 40 years left to figure things out, bezrat hashem!

Henrik – how did you nestle in? Forever grateful that you did, kompis, badmintongud, själsbroder!

Petra – with the biggest heart! Given this last year, just imagine what the future might bring!

Ms. Maria Paddolog and Soulman Erik – Surely now will be the time to find out more about Söråker.

Very stylish Freddan and one-and-only Emilia! You two went through the same process, and showed that it is worthwhile to persist.

My brothers, Ko Aung Moe Zaw, Ko Zaw Zaw Htun, Ko Soe Moe – you are an inspiration and your struggle is a reminder of what real problems are like.

Staffan – you turn speculation into insights. That, my friend, is a gift well-needed with a buddy like me!

Fredrik’s family – thank you for your appreciation and loving kindness. I think you are all wonderful!

Världens bästa Jamshid – such a beautiful and loyal friend you are! Now is time to go for some nice food!
Matlaget – the incarnation of food for thought and body. When life is dull, we still shine!

Tallen-mammorna, Kristina, Monica and Therese – I am glad to be part of this four-horse team. Thank you for sharing the joys and worries of parenthood.

Suus – we have so many things to do now! To you, I dedicate ‘The Hand-clapping Song’, which we can play on repeat.

And to those I am happy to meet every day. Fredrik – no one can make me feel so convinced that my best is good enough. I believe I will need you around for a long time! Axel och Samuel, vad roligt det är att vara med er! Nu ska vi vara tillsammans under ett helt sommarlov.

To anyone I have not mentioned, know that I will be forever embarrassed and you can claim me on an ice-cream any time. The story of my life is not mine; it’s the story of my family and friends!

And finally... Dear dissertation, many times have you been sacrificed! Now, at last, I hope we can make peace.

Frescati, April 2014
Cecilia von Otter