



Out-of-home care experienced children's educational careers

- What can be learnt from studies
of their educational pathways?

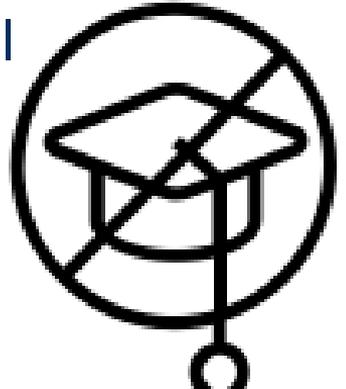
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Key messages

- Target cognitive ability and basic academic skills/school performance at an early age
- Continuously provide opportunities for reaching the highest (possible) educational levels
- Address expectations, aspirations and more ambitious educational choices

Background

- Children in out-of-home care (OHC) tend to perform poorly in the educational system
 - Risk factor for later life outcomes
- Yet, a limited understanding of their educational disadvantage



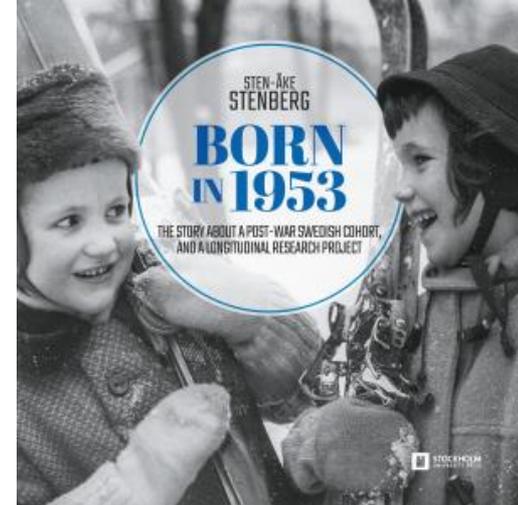
A series of studies...

- ...on what explains OHC experienced children's educational disadvantage
 - Map out educational careers
 - Examine the educational gap
 - Examine educational pathways
 - Explain the educational gap



Data and material

- Stockholm Birth Cohort Multigenerational Study (SBC Multigen)
- Around 14,600 individuals born 1953
- Survey and administrative register data
- Birth to retirement age



Groups

- OHC before age 13 – most <2 yr in care and due to family-related reasons

Compared to:

- Majority population
- (Child welfare contact before age 13)

The Swedish child welfare system

- 'Family-service oriented' with some 'child protection' practices
- During the 1953 cohort's childhood years:
 - Strong belief in OHC (high prevalence)
 - Strong social selection into OHC

The Swedish educational system

- Egalitarian – ideas of equal opportunities
 - 9-year compulsory school with little tracking
 - Adult education opportunities
 - Fully subsidized education at all levels
- During the 1953 cohort's schooling years:
 - Upper secondary education less common

The life course – overview



Background characteristics



- OHC experienced children had more socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and lower cognitive ability
- ...but quite similar to children with child welfare contact

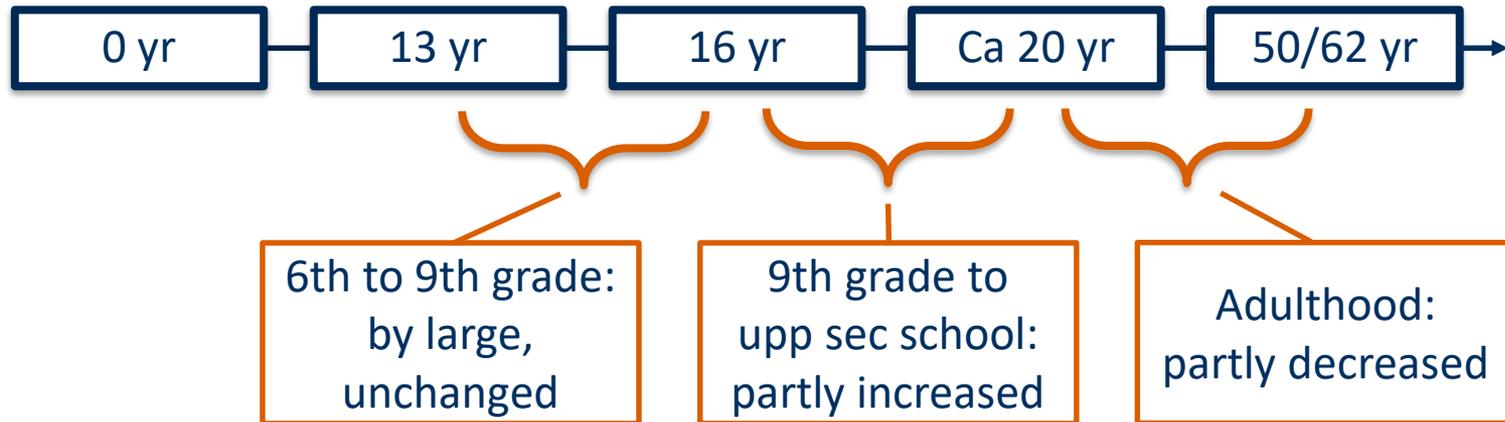
Educational careers



- OHC experienced children had lower aspirations, achievements and attainment – less ambitious choices (given the same achievements)
- ...but similar or better outcomes than children with child welfare contact

The educational gap

Ca 50% of OHC experienced children utilized adult education to get an upper secondary education diploma



Educational pathways



- Are similar; cognitive ability and previous achievements had the largest influence on later outcomes
- ...but these factors were weaker in the OHC group, whilst the family's attitude to education was more important

What explains the educational gap?

- An 'unequal distribution of predictors', i.e. lower cognitive ability and more disadvantaged socioeconomic conditions in the birth family
- ...but also a poorer 'return/output' of these factors
- ...and 'choice-based explanations'

Conclusions

- OHC experienced children's educational careers are characterized by lower aspirations, poorer achievements and less ambitious choices
- This educational gap persists into (late) midlife, but changes over the life course
- By large, OHC experienced children's educational pathways do not differ from their peers'
- Their underachievement may be understood by 'general' theories of educational inequality

Key messages – implications

Target cognitive ability and basic academic skills/school performance at an early age

- May require systematical assessments and more intervention studies

Continuously provide opportunities for reaching the highest (possible) educational levels

- May include adult education initiatives and support for higher education

Address expectations, aspirations and more ambitious educational choices

- Must include a focus on adults in the 'surrounding' systems



Thanks for
listening!

References

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