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### Not on the same track?

*Tracking age and gender inequality in education*

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## Samenvatting

Hoewel mannen vele jaren meer onderwijs genoten dan vrouwen, verdween dit voordeel voor mannen en sloeg dit zelfs om in een nadeel in het laatste deel van de twintigste eeuw. Naar deze omslag wordt ook wel gerefereerd als de ‘genderrevolutie’. Op bijna iedere indicator van onderwijsprestaties overtreffen meisjes tegenwoordig jongens. Met betrekking tot lezen, schrijven en behaalde cijfers was het al tientallen jaren zo dat meisjes de jongens voorbijstreven, maar ondertussen behalen meisjes ook bij de exacte vakken gelijke of zelfs hogere uitkomsten. Deze omslag lijkt door te zetten, waardoor het voordeel voor vrouwen in onderwijsprestaties alleen maar groeit.

Ondanks dat de genderrevolutie in bijna alle westerse landen plaatsvond, bestaan er grote verschillen tussen de landen in het moment van het omslagpunt en de mate van genderongelijkheid. Het percentage vrouwen in het hoger onderwijs is bijvoorbeeld veel hoger in Scandinavië dan in de Angelsaksische of continentale landen, en ook het omslagpunt vond veel eerder plaats in Scandinavië. Ondanks dat ongelijkheden in het onderwijs in grote mate bijdragen aan ongelijkheden in de sociale positionering van individuen in de samenleving, aangezien onderwijskwalificaties gerelateerd zijn aan, onder meer, kansen op de arbeidsmarkt, inkomen, kansen op de huwelijksmarkt en gezondheid, kan bestaand onderzoek de verschillen in genderongelijkheid in het onderwijs tussen landen en over de tijd nog altijd niet volledig verklaren.

Om genderverschillen over de tijd en tussen landen te verklaren, focussen we in dit proefschrift op de rol van de inrichting van onderwijssystemen. Ondanks dat de inrichting van het onderwijssysteem de specifieke educatieve trajecten van jongeren vormgeeft, en daardoor een cruciale rol heeft in het genereren van onderwijsniveaus en ongelijkheden, is de invloed van onderwijssysteemkenmerken op genderverschillen zelden onderzocht. In dit proefschrift concentreren we specifiek op één systeemkenmerk, namelijk de leeftijd waarop schoolsystemen scholieren selecteren in verschillende onderwijsniveaus (leeftijd van tracking). Gedurende de onderwijs carrière vinden allerlei transitie plaats waarin studenten worden samengevoegd in specifieke onderwijstrajecten op basis van hun onderwijs capaciteiten en aspiraties, bijvoorbeeld wanneer studenten van primair naar secundair onderwijs gaan of van secundair naar tertiair onderwijs. Specifiek de eerste transitie is van groot belang, aangezien deze keuze ook gevolgen heeft voor mogelijkheden later in de onderwijsloopbaan. Bijvoorbeeld, in Nederland worden studenten rond de leeftijd van 12 jaar geselecteerd in verschillende onderwijstrajecten zoals vmbo, havo of vwo. Wanneer een student naar het vmbo gaat, wordt het een stuk lastiger om later in de schoolcarrière naar de universiteit te gaan. Niet

onmogelijk, maar wel lastig. De leeftijd waarop studenten worden ingedeeld in deze belangrijke onderwijstrajecten verschilt aanzienlijk tussen landen. Waar dit al op je 12<sup>e</sup> gebeurt in Nederland, gebeurt dit op je 14<sup>e</sup> in Italië en pas op je 16<sup>e</sup> in Zweden. In dit proefschrift onderzoeken we in hoeverre de leeftijd waarop dit selectiemoment plaatsvindt van invloed is op genderverschillen in onderwijsuitkomsten.

Waarom verwachten we dat specifiek de ‘leeftijd van selectie’ van belang is voor genderverschillen in het onderwijs? Jongens en meisjes ontwikkelen zich op verschillende tempo's en langs andere paden, denk bijvoorbeeld al aan de puberteit die bij jongens één tot anderhalf jaar later inzet dan bij meisjes. Doordat jongens en meisjes zich op verschillende tempo's ontwikkelen en op verschillende momenten door moeilijke fases heen gaan, zijn de discrepanties tussen jongens en meisjes niet constant gedurende de schoolcarrière. Oftewel, doordat verschillen tussen jongens en meisjes in cognitieve vaardigheden, non-cognitieve vaardigheden (voorbeelden zijn zelfdiscipline, doelgericht gedrag, focus of aandacht erbij houden etc.), gedrag en verwachtingen niet stabiel zijn over de levensloop, verwachten we dat het moment waarop belangrijke beslissingen moeten worden gemaakt in het onderwijs, die gevolgen hebben voor de gehele schoolcarrière, van essentieel belang is. Wanneer een belangrijk keuzemoment precies samenvalt met een moment dat dan wel jongens dan wel meisjes in een lastige fase zitten, kunnen relatief kleine verschillen tussen jongens en meisjes op jonge leeftijd zich binnen bepaalde schoolsystemen omzetten in grote verschillen in onderwijsuitkomsten op latere leeftijd.

Het doel van dit proefschrift is meer inzicht te krijgen in genderverschillen over de tijd en tussen landen door te onderzoeken in hoeverre het moment waarop schoolsystemen studenten selecteren in onderwijstracks van invloed is op genderverschillen in onderwijsprestaties. De hoofdvraag van dit proefschrift is: in hoeverre is de leeftijd waarop studenten in onderwijsniveaus worden ingedeeld gerelateerd aan verschillen in onderwijsuitkomsten tussen mannen en vrouwen? Ik onderzoek deze vraag aan de hand van vier empirische studies.

In het eerste empirische hoofdstuk onderzoek ik in hoeverre onderwijshervormingen aangaande het moment van tracking een effect hebben op genderverschillen in opleidingsniveau. Aangezien de verschillen tussen jongens en meisjes in onderwijsprestaties gedurende de middelbare school groter worden in het voordeel voor meisjes, verwacht ik dat wanneer er op een later moment geselecteerd wordt, dit voordelig is voor meisjes. Ik bestudeer dit aan de hand van een cohortdesign op basis van data van de European Social Survey (ESS), die ik heb aangevuld met informatie over tracking leeftijd voor 21 Europese landen tussen 1929 en 2000. Ik vind, in lijn met mijn verwachting, dat onderwijshervormingen die het moment van tracking hebben uitgesteld het aantal voltooide jaren opleiding van vrouwen ten opzichte van die van mannen hebben bevorderd, zelfs wanneer we controleren voor allerlei andere

belangrijke factoren (zoals vraag op de arbeidsmarkt en gender ideologisch klimaat). Dit betekent een latere leeftijd van selectie bijdraagt aan het groeiende onderwijssucces van vrouwen.

In het eerste empirische hoofdstuk ligt de focus op genderverschillen in het opleidingsniveau, oftewel verticale genderongelijkheid. Wellicht studeren vrouwen in laat-trackende landen langer door, maar blijven ze in dezelfde sectoren en belanden ze in vergelijkbare banen als in vroeg-trackende landen. In dat geval heeft de tracking leeftijd weinig invloed op algehele genderongelijkheid, aangezien verschillen op de arbeidsmarkt en in inkomen vergelijkbaar zullen blijven. Daarom onderzoek ik in het tweede empirische hoofdstuk in hoeverre onderwijshervormingen aangaande het moment van tracking invloed hebben op zowel verticale als horizontale gendersegregatie, oftewel genderverschillen in studierichting. Ik bestudeer dit aan de hand van een cohortdesign op basis van data van de European Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) dat ik aanvul met data over de tracking leeftijd voor 20 Europese landen tussen 1966 en 2006. De resultaten suggereren dat onderwijshervormingen aangaande tracking invloed hebben op zowel verticale als horizontale gendersegregatie. Opnieuw vind ik dat onderwijshervormingen die het moment van tracking hebben uitgesteld verticale gendersegregatie vergroot, aangezien latere tracking het aantal voltooide jaren opleiding van vrouwen ten opzichte van die van mannen bevordert. Daarnaast tonen onze resultaten aan dat latere tracking horizontale gendersegregatie vermindert, aangezien zowel mannen als vrouwen eerder een studierichting gaan volgen die gedomineerd wordt door het andere geslacht wanneer het moment van tracken wordt uitgesteld.

In de eerste twee hoofdstukken ligt de focus op verschillen tussen mannen en vrouwen in opleidingsniveau aan het einde van de schoolloopbaan. Mogelijk leiden verschillende mechanismen tot een groter voordeel voor vrouwen in zowel vroege als laat selecterende systemen, wat erop wijst dat het mechanisme afhangt van de institutionele setting. Om meer te weten te komen over het onderliggend mechanisme, onderzoek ik in het derde empirische hoofdstuk, aan de hand van een longitudinaal perspectief, in hoeverre genderverschillen in de onderwijsloopbaan zich verschillend ontwikkelen in onderwijssystemen met een andere tracking leeftijd en op welk moment in de onderwijs carrière tracking (de meeste) gevolgen heeft voor genderongelijkheid in het onderwijs. Ik beargumenteer dat zowel vroege als late selectie positief kan uitpakken voor vrouwen. Om de man-vrouw kloof in het onderwijs gedurende de onderwijsloopbaan te onderzoeken maak ik gebruik van een groot aantal datasets (PIRLS, TIMSS, PISA, PIAAC en ESS) die informatie bevatten over prestaties in wiskunde en taal en opleidingsniveau van respondenten in verschillende landen op verschillende leeftijden en in verschillende stadia van onderwijs. Differences-in-differences modellen wijzen uit dat tracking, ongeacht de leeftijd waarop het plaatsvindt, tot op zekere hoogte gunstig is

voor vrouwen. De genderkloof in het voordeel voor vrouwen lijkt altijd te vergroten wanneer er een tracking moment heeft plaatsgevonden. De impact van tracking op genderongelijkheid is echter veel groter wanneer onderwijssystemen laat tracken dan wanneer ze op een jongere leeftijd tracken.

In het vierde empirische hoofdstuk concentreer ik me op de intersectie tussen geslacht en sociaaleconomische status. In de voorgaande empirische hoofdstukken ligt de focus op geslacht, in dit hoofdstuk laat ik zien dat ook andere categorieën belangrijk zijn voor ongelijkheid en richt ik me specifiek op verschillen tussen mannen en vrouwen met een verschillende sociaaleconomische achtergrond. Veel studies laten zien dat een latere leeftijd van tracking sociale ongelijkheid vermindert. In dit hoofdstuk onderzoek ik in hoeverre in laat-trackende landen de sociale ongelijkheid tussen zowel jongens als meisjes vermindert. Ik beargumenteer dat mensen met een verschillende sociaaleconomische achtergrond van elkaar verschillen in hun culturele opvattingen over gender, rolpatronen en hun plaats in het onderwijs. Ik verwacht dat een latere leeftijd van tracking sociale ongelijkheid vermindert voor meisjes, maar niet voor jongens. Ik maak gebruik van een differences-in-differences design aan de hand van data van de PIRLS en PISA, die informatie bevatten over de leesvaardigheid van jongens en meisje gedurende de onderwijsloopbaan. In deze modellen onderzoek ik of de impact van tracking op sociale ongelijkheid in leesprestaties verschilt tussen jongens en meisjes. In lijn met mijn verwachting, vind ik dat een latere leeftijd van tracking sociale ongelijkheden in leesprestaties vermindert voor meisjes. Latere tracking heeft echter geen invloed op sociale ongelijkheid voor jongens.

Kortom, uit de empirische hoofdstukken blijkt dat de inrichting van het onderwijssysteem, en specifiek het moment waarop schoolsystemen leerlingen selecteren voor verschillende schoolloopbanen, van belang is voor genderongelijkheid in onderwijsuitkomsten. Aangezien genderverschillen niet constant zijn, is het moment waarop scholieren belangrijke onderwijsbeslissingen moeten maken van essentieel belang voor ongelijkheden in het onderwijs op latere leeftijd. Een belangrijke taak van scholen is het bieden van gelijke kansen voor scholieren met allerlei verschillende kwaliteiten en achtergronden. Vandaar dat het van belang is om te onderzoeken of scholen niet specifieke groepen in de samenleving beter faciliteren dan anderen. Momenteel doen meisjes het steeds beter in het onderwijs, en schoolsystemen die op een laat moment selecteren dragen hieraan bij. Ondanks dat het positief is dat meisjes, en ook meisjes uit lage sociale klassen, beter floreren in schoolsystemen die op een later moment selecteren, is de keerzijde dat jongens het ten opzichte van meisjes minder goed doen. Het is daarom van belang dat toekomstig onderzoek bestudeert in hoeverre de onderwijsuitkomsten van jongens, en zeker van jongens uit lage sociale klassen, gestimuleerd kan worden in deze laat-trackende systemen. Een schoolstelsel waarin allerlei verschillende

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## **About the Author**

Lotte Scheeren was born in Sliedrecht, The Netherlands, on February 4 1992. In 2013, she obtained her Bachelor's degree in Sociology and, in 2015, obtained her Research Master's degree in Sociology and Social Research cum laude both at Utrecht University. As part of her Research Master, she did an internship at Statistics Netherlands. The present dissertation is the result of a PhD position she started in 2015 at the Department of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam under the supervision of Herman van de Werfhorst and Thijs Bol. This research was affiliated with the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) and the Interuniversity Center for Social Science Theory and Methodology (ICS). As of March 2020, Lotte works as a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam. Her research interests include social stratification and mobility, gender, the sociology of education, religion and quantitative methodology.



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In the past decades a female dominance in educational attainment emerged, a phenomenon coined “the rise of women”. This dissertation focuses on the role of the educational institutional context, more specifically the tracking age, in understanding gender inequality. In four empirical studies, it is examined whether the age at which educational systems track affects gender differences in various educational outcomes. High quality repeated cross-national surveys are used, that assess respondents in several countries at different ages and educational stages. Studying various educational outcomes at different moments in the educational career across a large number of countries and birth cohorts, allows me to examine how gender gaps in education develop differently in societies with different tracking ages. This dissertation highlights the importance of the setup of the education system for gender inequality and, more specifically, shows that the age at which educational systems track affects gender differences in various educational outcomes.

Lotte Scheeren obtained her Research Master’s degree in Sociology and Social Research cum laude in 2015 at Utrecht University. The research for this dissertation was conducted at the Department of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam. She was affiliated with the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) and the Interuniversity Center for Social Science Theory and Methodology (ICS). She currently works as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Amsterdam.