Extended Abstract for:
Field of Study and Future Fertility

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January, 2025
PRELIMINARY and INCOMPLETE.
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1 Introduction

Fertility rates have been declining globally in recent decades, with total fertility rates (TFR) now below replacement in most developed countries. This decline has significant implications such as slower population growth, economic challenges, and strain on social security systems due to population aging (Harper, 2014; Doepke et al., 2023; Bloom et al., 2023). While the causes and consequences of declining fertility rates have been extensively studied, we know relatively little about the role of education – particularly field of study. This gap is surprising given that many key determinants of fertility decisions are shaped by education choices, including wages, opportunity costs, career disruptions, work schedules, and life aspirations (Kearney et al., 2022; Kearney and Levine, 2022). In this paper, we take a step back and study causal impacts of education on fertility rates, specifically focusing on field of study.

While the field of study is an important determinant of labor market opportunities and gender gaps (Altonji et al., 2012a, 2016; Patnaik et al., 2021; Humphries et al., 2024), much less is known about the impacts on fertility. Field of education has been found to be a stronger predictor of childlessness and first-birth rates than the level of education (Lappegård and Rønsen, 2005; Hoem et al., 2006). Using linked Swedish administrative labor market, education, and medical birth records, we also find that field-specific gaps exceed the gap between college and high school graduates. For example, 82.5% of women with education degrees have had a child by age 35, while 15 percentage points fewer women with law degrees and 9 percentage points fewer women with science degrees have had a child by age 35. In comparison, the difference is only

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6 percentage points between the average high school graduate and the average college graduate.[1] These field-specific gaps, however, can reflect a range of factors that affect both fertility and education choice. For example, those who become elementary and pre-school teachers may both choose their education, occupation, *and* be more likely to have children based on their passion for teaching and spending time with children. This makes it challenging to identify and estimate causal effects. We follow the recent literature using college application data to compare individuals with similar stated preferences for college programs combined with randomness around admission cut-offs for oversubscribed college programs. This empirical strategy was first proposed by Kirkebøen et al. (2016) and has been utilized to estimate the causal effect of field of study in high school (Dahl et al., 2023) and college (Altmejd, 2018; Heinesen et al., 2022; Humphries et al., 2023) on labor market outcomes and assortative mating in the marriage market (Kirkebøen et al., 2021).[2] It is important to study fertility separately from marriage and assortative mating due to the decoupling of marriage and childbearing (Smock and Greenland, 2010; Hayford et al., 2014; Guzzo and Hayford, 2020). Is there a causal effect of field of study on future fertility? Our preliminary estimates suggest positive effects on fertility for enrolling in law and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields for women. We do not find significant effects of enrollment in any field on the fertility outcomes of men. We push this literature in a new direction by estimating causal effects of field of college education on fertility.

Prior research on education's causal effects on fertility has primarily focused on education *level* rather than *field*. Most studies focus on women at low levels of education and rely on increases in the duration of compulsory schooling for identification: compulsory schooling law reforms (Black et al., 2008; Monstad et al., 2008; Silles, 2011; Cygan-Rehm and Maeder, 2013; Fort et al., 2016; Chen and Guo, 2022), age at school entry policies (McCrary and Royer, 2011), and the raising of school leaving age (ROSLA) in the UK (Geruso and Royer, 2018; Cummins, 2022). Most of these papers find that increasing education of women reduces teenage pregnancy rates.[3] The effect on total fertility is either found to be negative or insignificant (Monstad et al., 2008; Cygan-Rehm and Maeder, 2013; Fort et al., 2016; Cummins, 2022).

Research on the causal effects of education beyond the post-secondary level remains scarce, but includes a few notable papers. Grönqvist and Hall (2013) study an education reform in Sweden in which vocational tracks in upper secondary school were prolonged from two to three years and the curricula were made more academic. They find that women who enrolled in the new programs were significantly less likely to give birth early in life. There is however, no statistically significant effect on men's fertility decisions. Humlum et al.

[1] Note that we are awaiting data for additional years, so we can study completed fertility for all the cohorts in our sample, however, these gaps are similar at age 45 for the the cohorts we observe.

[2] Similarly, Artmann et al. (2021) use admission lotteries for four oversubscribed programs in the Netherlands, and find that field of study matters for partner choice. Their working paper versionArtmann et al. (2018) also report effects on fertility, where they only find a significantly positive effect for male doctors.

[3] Fort et al. (2016) is an exception, not finding evidence of this negative relationship between womens' education level and teenage fertility.

(2017) use discontinuities in college admission in Denmark to show that the timing of college enrollment affects family formation. Finally, Virtanen et al. (2024) use discontinuities in admission to secondary and tertiary education in Finland. They find that increasing educational attainment for women increases the probability that they have children by their later thirties. However, they do not find any significant effects for men. We contribute to the literature by showing that not only the level, but also the field, of education is an important determinant of fertility decisions.

What could be driving the (positive) effects of field of study on fertility? The key to answering this question is understanding what changes at college admission thresholds.

To better understand the mechanisms driving these fertility effects, we will explore several channels: whether income effects dominate negative substitution effects, labor market opportunities and choices, the role of benefits and leave policies (including means-testing and employer variation), assortative mating patterns, relationship stability, and partner leave-taking behavior. Several papers document a strong association between college field and occupation (Black et al., 2003; Altonji et al., 2012b, 2016; Kinsler and Pavan, 2015; Altonji et al., 2016; Ransom and Phipps, 2017; Arcidiacono et al., 2020; Sloane et al., 2021). We will analyze how measures of occupational hours, skill demands, and flexibility change at college admission thresholds for those at the margin, and more broadly build on foundational work in family economics to illuminate how education choices shape both career trajectories and family formation decisions in contemporary labor markets.[4] This is important for understanding determinants of fertility more broadly, and how fertility rates can be affected by policy.

Our preliminary findings suggest that the field of education specialization may be as consequential as overall educational attainment. In future research, we will continue exploring these intricate relationships. Key areas of inquiry include the long-term impacts of education-specific family policies, the interactions between emerging work configurations and family formation, and the nuanced ways different professional fields shape reproductive choices. This evolving understanding moves beyond simplistic economic models, revealing fertility as a dynamic process influenced by a complex interplay of economic opportunities, policy environments, technological capabilities, and social expectations.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 describes the Swedish institutional setting and data. Section 3 describes our empirical strategy. We then present our empirical results in Section 4. Finally, Section 5 concludes.

[4]For more on the literature on family formation see e.g. Becker 1960; Mincer 1963; Becker 1965; Becker and Lewis 1973; Willis 1973; Heckman and Walker 1990; Francesconi 2002; Sheran 2007; Keane and Wolpin 2010; Goldin 2014; Adda et al. 2017; Bronson and Sanin 2024.

2 Institutional Setting and Data

In this section, we describe relevant institutional details (Section 2.1) and the Swedish administrative data (Section 2.2) to put the empirical analysis into context. In Section 2.3, we present summary statistics on the enrollment field gaps in labor market and fertility outcomes.

2.1 Institutional Setting

College admission in Sweden is predominantly conditional on high school grade point average (GPA), but other factors also affect the admission score, including the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude test (SweSAT), high school track and course choices, and labor market experience.[5] For example, only academic STEM track graduates have the qualifications to enroll in *all* 4-year STEM college majors without additional supplementary courses, and only students in the science line are directly qualified for *all* 4-year college majors. College admission is largely centrally administered. A college application includes a rank-ordered list of up to 12 college-program choices.[6] Selectivity varies greatly across college majors and individual programs: the 4-year programs in medicine, law, and humanities are the most selective.[7] Higher education is tuition-free for all students and largely financed by the central government. College students are eligible for universal financial aid of which around one third of the total amount is a grant (or scholarship) and the remaining two thirds are provided as a loan. Student aid is largely independent of parental resources but means-tested on student income and the maximum eligibility period is 240 weeks (the equivalent of 12 semesters or six enrollment years). Student loans are subsidized, and the loan repayment plan was income-contingent for those in our sample.[8]

Sweden has a variety of "family-friendly" policies intended to help families balance children and careers. In the years we study, parents are allotted a total of 16 months of leave for each child of which two months are earmarked to each of the parents. During 13 of these months, parents that were employed at least 240 days before leave receive higher benefits based on past income. Abortion access is relatively unrestricted with free abortion until the 18th week of pregnancy, and later abortions are only allowed if the fetus is deemed unable to survive. Healthcare is universal and free-of-charge for children. Childcare is highly subsidized and enrollment is 70% for 1-2 year old children and 90% for 3-6 year old children. These institutions are

[5] Öckert (2010) describes the college admission process for the earlier cohorts, while Altmejd (2018) describes it for the later cohorts. The SweSAT has become a more important factor over time, particularly after 1991, and it was the key factor for admission for more than a third of our sample. All the details can be found in the Higher Education Act 1992:1434 and the Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100.

[6] In this respect, the college application in Sweden is similar to, for example, Norway (Kirkebøen et al., 2016), Denmark (Humlum et al., 2017; Heinesen et al., 2022), Chile (Hastings et al., 2013; Bordon and Fu, 2015). Altmejd et al. (2021) directly compare college application in Sweden to Croatia, Chile, and the United States.

[7] We provide more descriptives and details in Appendix A.1.

[8] The students in our sample are enrolled in college during the pre-2001-reform study aid regime as detailed in Joensen and Mattana (2020).

described in more detail in Appendix A. It is important to keep this setting in mind when interpreting the empirical results—fertility choices are not, in this setting, likely to be driven by the direct monetary costs of children. The sizes of effects may well differ in places like the US where direct costs of healthcare and childcare are higher and family support is lower.

2.2 Swedish Administrative Data

NOTE: The data in this preliminary draft is the same as was used in Humphries et al. (2023) and Gallen et al. (2025). We expect to receive an update in early 2025 with higher education application data going back to 1977 and outcomes through 2023, allowing us to observe completed fertility for many more cohorts.

From the Higher Education registry, we observe the level and field of every college enrollment spell and degree since 1993. We classify all academic programs into two levels (≤ 3 years; ≥ 4 years) according to the SUN2000Niva code and nine fields (1. education; 2. humanities and arts; 3. social sciences and services; 4. math, natural, life and computer sciences; 5. engineering and technical sciences; 6. medicine; 7. health sciences, health and social care; 8. business; 9. law) according to the SUN2000Inr code. The Swedish education nomenclature (SUN2000) codes build on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED97), and we group programs into majors according to the first digit of the SUN2000Inr code. We single out business and law from the social sciences major and medicine from the health sciences major to better compare to previous literature. Some of the 3-year programs have few students, so we group them into STEM (science, math, engineering) and non-STEM (humanities, social science) majors. Students in the 3- and 4-year education and health sciences majors (excluding medicine) look similar on observables and labor market outcomes, so the 3- and 4-year programs are grouped together.[9]

As discussed in the prior section, college applicants are screened based on their high school course choices and GPA. Some of them are also admitted based on high performance in the SweSAT on which we have overall test scores and sub-scores on every attempt through the Department of Applied Educational Science at *Umeå Universitet*. We have access to the complete histories of college applications and admissions from 1993 onwards through the Swedish National Archives. These include the complete set of admission scores in each admission group as we basically observe the complete data from the college admission process.

We merge several administrative registers via a unique individual identifier. Labor market data are collected and administered by Statistics Sweden (SCB). The primary source of labor market data is the longitudinal integration database for health insurance and labour market studies (LISA) that contains yearly observations during the period 1990-2013 on earnings, social transfers, employment, sector, and occupation. Our primary income measure is earnings (that most closely proxies labor market productivity). We also

[9] Appendix A.1 provides more details and descriptives by college major.

plan to analyse occupation outcomes to study how occupational characteristics may influence fertility. We construct measures of the types of jobs women do in terms of skill requirements and workplace flexibility.[10] These data also include the level and field of highest completed education, information on enrollment in education, age, civil status, family status, and some information on household composition; including the number of children in various age-groups and the identity of the partner for married couples and for unmarried couples cohabiting with common (biological or adopted) children.

We merge education and labor market data with health data collected and administered by the National Board of Health and Welfare ("*Socialstyrelsen*"). This includes the Medical Birth Registry (MFR), containing all births between 1973 and 2012; the Prescribed Drug Register (LMED), which includes all prescriptions from July 2005 through 2013; and the National Patient Register (NPR), which includes all in-patient care (1987-2013) and outpatient doctor visits including day surgery and psychiatric care from both private and public caregivers (2001-2013), but *not* primary care.

Our sample includes all individuals who are born between 1965-1983 and reside in Sweden.

2.3 Descriptives

Table 1 shows how earnings and birth outcomes at 35 years old vary by field of initial enrollment, with enrollment in education being the comparison category. Individuals who enroll in STEM, business, and law programs have the highest earnings at age 35. Initial enrollees in humanities degrees have the lowest earnings. About 83% of women who enroll in an education program have had a child by age 35, and have had on average 1.7 children. Women who enroll in higher-earning and professional degrees delay having children and have fewer of them by age 35. For example, women who enroll in law and business programs are about fifteen and twelve percentage points less likely to have had a child by age 35, and have 0.5 and 0.4 fewer births on average. It is interesting women who enroll in 3-year and 4-year humanities and social science programs are the least likely to have a child by age 35, where they are also earning the least on average.

[10] The first 3-digits of the Swedish occupation code (SSYK96) have an almost one-to-one mapping to the international ISCO88 code that we use to merge with the O*Net data to construct measures of workplace flexibility.

Table 1: Income (all students) and Fertility Outcomes (women) by Field of Study of First College Enrollment

First Enrollment	Income (1000s)	Any Childbirth (women)	Number of Childbirths	Age at First Birth
Non-STEM (3-year)	16.610***	−0.177***	−0.516***	2.304***
	(0.794)	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.034)
STEM (3-year)	72.132***	−0.099***	−0.329***	1.407***
	(0.678)	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.037)
Business (3-year)	140.249***	−0.085***	−0.331***	2.183***
	(1.694)	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.038)
Health Sciences	15.980***	−0.022***	−0.052***	−0.027
	(0.435)	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.023)
Humanities	−5.164***	−0.233***	−0.643***	2.581***
	(1.369)	(0.006)	(0.013)	(0.061)
Social Sciences	41.573***	−0.177***	−0.524***	2.300***
	(1.378)	(0.005)	(0.011)	(0.046)
Science and Math	46.991***	−0.160***	−0.470***	2.409***
	(0.987)	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.040)
Engineering	135.336***	−0.125***	−0.421***	2.967***
	(0.936)	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.035)
Medicine	182.170***	−0.070***	−0.185***	2.412***
	(2.094)	(0.007)	(0.017)	(0.062)
Business	118.473***	−0.115***	−0.398***	2.286***
	(1.335)	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.036)
Law	135.466***	−0.149***	−0.494***	2.831***
	(1.902)	(0.005)	(0.012)	(0.052)
Mean for Education	214.337	0.825	1.680	28.338
Observations	587,060	289,052	289,052	276,801

Notes: This table reports the college field gaps in income and fertility outcomes for individuals whose initial enrollment is in a given field. The reference category is education. Income is the average of the yearly earnings between ages 33 and 37 for both men and women. "Any Childbirth" is an indicator if a woman has a childbirth in the birth registry by age 35 and "Number of Childbirths" counts the number of births by age 35. Finally, "Age at First Birth" shows the age at which a woman had their first birth. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

3 Empirical Strategy

Our empirical strategy adapts the design from Kirkebøen et al. (2016) to the Swedish setting. In particular, we take ranked lists from the centralized college application process. Similar to many centralized college application processes, individuals submit a ranked list of specific programs (fields of study) at specific institutions. Following Kirkebøen et al. (2016) and our prior work (Humphries et al., 2023), we focus on regression discontinuity analyses where we collapse application data to the field of study. Next, we consider the pairs of applications where the applicant's GPA put them near the threshold and where they would not have already been admitted to a program higher on their list. Like Kirkebøen et al. (2016), this setup gives us individuals who are just-below or just-above the threshold for being admitted to a specific major and is the top program where they could be admitted. This approach additionally allows us to look at RD estimates for admission into a particular major, conditional on the next-best major. Here we focus on the GPA admission threshold, excluding those who have already been admitted to higher ranked programs based on any other admissions criteria.

Using this approach, we consider 2SLS regressions of the following form:

$$Y = \sum_{j \neq k} \beta_{jk} D_j + X'\delta_k + \gamma_{jk} + \epsilon_k$$

$$D = \sum_{j \neq k} \alpha_{jk} Z_j + X'\lambda_k + \eta_{jk} + \nu_{jk}, \ \forall \ j \neq k,$$

where j is the individuals' preferred field and k is the next-best field. D_j is an indicator for enrolling in field j while Z_j is an indicator for being above the GPA threshold for admissions to that major. γ_{jk} is a fixed effect for top program (j) and next-best program (k) and X is a vector of controls including birth cohort and functions of the running variable.

4 Results

In the college applications data, we see if students score above the admissions thresholds based on high school GPA or the Swedish SAT. These discontinuities result in regression discontinuities similar to those used in Kirkebøen et al. (2016). The first panel of Figure 1 shows that at the admissions threshold for a particular program there is a average jump of over 60 percentage points in being admitted. If instead of admissions we consider enrolling in the same major, we see that there is a seventeen percentage point jump at the admissions cutoff. This evidence shows that those barely missing the cutoff for admission are much less likely to be admitted to a program, and that this causes students to be less likely to enroll in that major. Table 2 shows the increase in admission, enrollment, and graduation in the same field from crossing the admission cutoff threshold for individual fields of study.

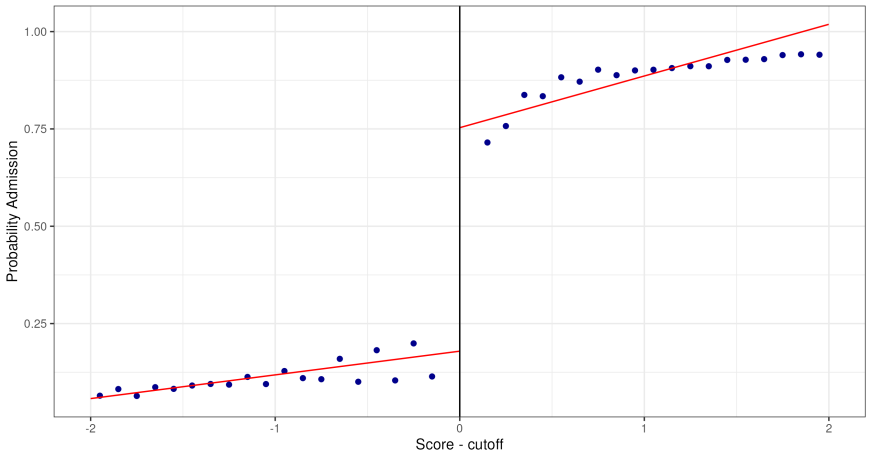
One validation of the quasi-random variation at the cutoff is checking how relevant pre-treatment variables vary across the admissions threshold. Figure 2 shows how ninth-grade GPA varies across the college admissions threshold. There is no sign of a discontinuity at the cutoff.

Table 2: Reduced Form: Education Outcomes

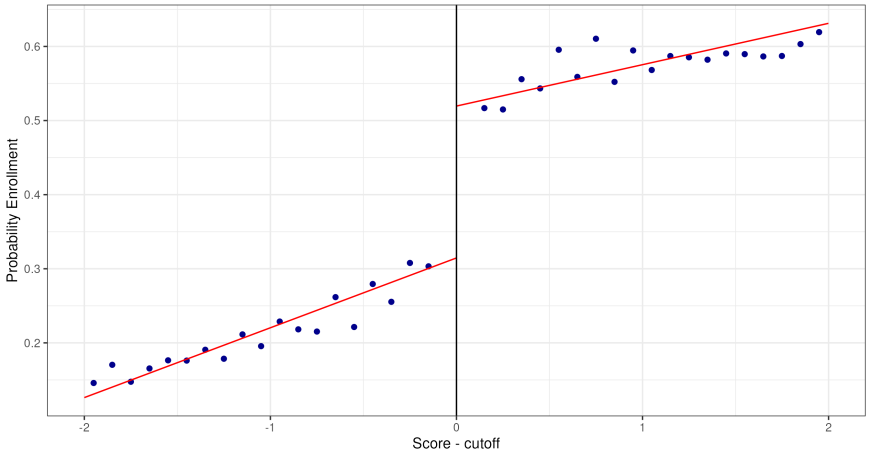
Threshold Field	Admission	Enrollment	Graduation
Non-STEM (3-year)	0.527***	0.111***	0.014
STEM (3-year)	0.575***	0.185***	0.062***
Business (3-year)	0.623***	0.214***	0.038***
Health Sciences	0.617***	0.166***	0.146***
Education	0.597***	0.124***	0.079***
Humanities	0.529***	0.114***	0.005
Social Sciences	0.615***	0.167***	0.046***
Science and Math	0.613***	0.187***	0.066***
Engineering	0.626***	0.319***	0.170***
Medicine	0.627***	0.250***	0.168***
Business	0.655***	0.206***	0.077***
Law	0.695***	0.281***	0.211***
Observations	302,795	302,795	302,795
R^2	0.490	0.131	0.093

Notes: This table shows the reduced form estimating the effect of the GPA and SweSAT admissions threshold discontinuities on admission, enrollment, and graduation in the same field. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

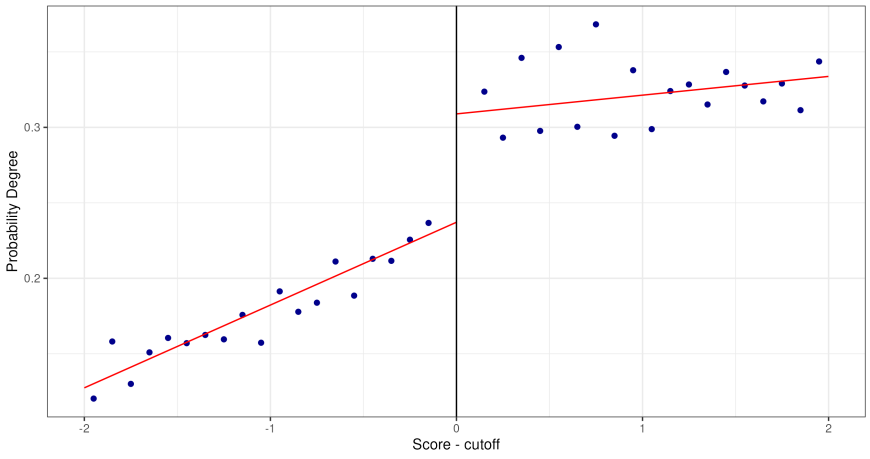
Figure 1: Reduced Form: College Outcomes



College Admission



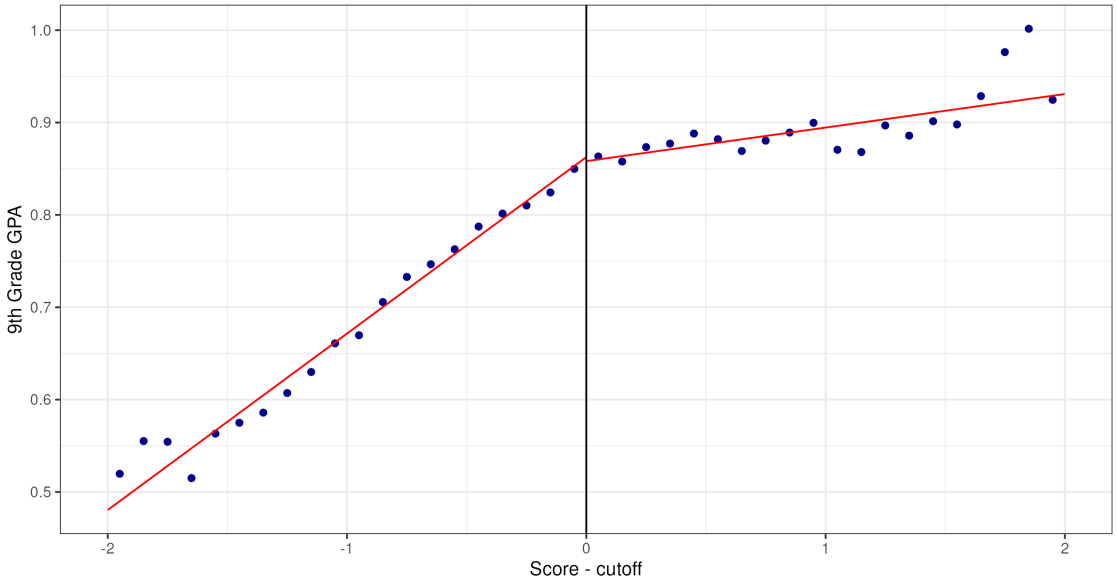
College Enrollment



College Graduation

Notes: These RD figures plot the reduced form using the GPA and SweSAT admissions threshold discontinuities on admission, enrollment, and graduation in the same field.

Figure 2: Balance at Admission Cut-offs



Notes: This figure shows how a pre-treatment measure, 9th grade GPA, varies at the admissions cutoff using the high school GPA and SweSAT admissions thresholds.

4.1 Labor Market Outcomes

Next we estimate returns to enrolling in a college field on earnings at age 35 years old, pooling men and women. Table 3 shows two-stage-least-squares estimates of the effect of enrollment in different fields. Consistent with the literature (see e.g. Kirkebøen et al. 2016), Medicine, Law, Business, and Engineering have the highest returns, while Humanities and other short non-STEM programs have no significant causal return. The results are robust to using different functional forms of the running variable.

Table 3: Causal Effect of Enrollment Field on **Labor Income** (in 1000 SEK) at 35 years old

First Enrollment	2SLS (q=1)	2SLS (q=3)	2SLS (q=5)
Non-STEM (3-year)	−5.297	4.286	3.571
	(16.170)	(16.194)	(16.175)
STEM (3-year)	49.130**	64.575***	61.420***
	(19.837)	(19.847)	(19.837)
Business (3-year)	44.861***	54.346***	53.200***
	(17.177)	(17.207)	(17.176)
Health Sciences	13.142	21.382**	20.433*
	(10.610)	(10.679)	(10.685)
Humanities	23.210	32.445	31.550
	(25.788)	(25.878)	(25.868)
Social Sciences	45.215***	55.321***	53.940***
	(15.196)	(15.225)	(15.213)
Science and Math	25.212	41.746**	39.203**
	(16.727)	(16.707)	(16.714)
Engineering	63.357***	81.445***	78.632***
	(17.481)	(17.418)	(17.426)
Medicine	150.841***	165.100***	161.142***
	(21.480)	(21.363)	(21.350)
Business	86.159***	98.423***	96.812***
	(15.553)	(15.394)	(15.353)
Law	109.934***	122.178***	120.510***
	(17.852)	(17.819)	(17.807)
Observations	262,923	262,923	262,923

Notes: This table reports the causal effect of enrolling in a college field using the admissions cutoffs as an instrument. Income is the average of the yearly earnings between ages 33 and 37 for both men and women. The three columns show results assuming a linear (q=1), a cubic (q=3), and quintic (q=5) functional form of the running varible on either side of the cutoff. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

4.2 Results on Fertility Outcomes

Finally, we show preliminary results of the effect of enrollment field on future fertility. Tables 4 and 5 show the effect of enrollment field on fertility for women using birth records. Tables 6 and 7 show the effect of enrollment field on sharing a household with children for men.

If we find a significant effects of enrollment in a field, we mostly find positive causal effects. For example, Table 4 shows that enrolling in short business, four-year engineering, and law programs *increases* the probability of having had a child by age 35 by fifteen percentage points. The effect of a short STEM degree increases the probability by about 25 percentage points. We find similar patterns in Table 7 when looking at the quantity of children, where enrolling in a law or short-STEM program increases the expected number of children by 35 years old by 0.3 and 0.5 children. We find almost identical results from children variables constructed from the household composition information. Looking at Tables 6 and 7, we do not find significant results of enrollment on having children in the household for men.

Table 4: Causal Effect of Enrollment Field on **Any Childbirth** at 35 years old (women)

First Enrollment	2SLS (q=1)	2SLS (q=3)	2SLS (q=5)
Non-STEM (3-year)	0.055	0.065	0.062
	(0.074)	(0.074)	(0.073)
STEM (3-year)	0.246**	0.282***	0.273***
	(0.097)	(0.098)	(0.098)
Business (3-year)	0.153**	0.171**	0.167**
	(0.065)	(0.067)	(0.066)
Health Sciences	0.035	0.054	0.051
	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.048)
Humanities	−0.190	−0.187	−0.191
	(0.145)	(0.145)	(0.145)
Social Sciences	−0.027	−0.005	−0.011
	(0.071)	(0.072)	(0.072)
Science and Math	0.104	0.141*	0.133*
	(0.074)	(0.074)	(0.074)
Engineering	0.131*	0.172**	0.164**
	(0.073)	(0.074)	(0.073)
Medicine	0.100	0.134*	0.125
	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.081)
Business	0.078	0.103*	0.099*
	(0.055)	(0.056)	(0.056)
Law	0.146**	0.170***	0.164***
	(0.061)	(0.062)	(0.062)
Observations	104,082	104,082	104,082

Notes: This table reports the causal effect of enrolling in a college field using the admissions cutoffs as an instrument. "Any Childbirth" is an indicator if a woman has a childbirth in the birth registry by age 35. The three columns show results assuming a linear (q=1), a cubic (q=3), and quintic (q=5) functional form of the running varible on either side of the cutoff. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 5: Causal Effect of Enrollment Field on **Number of Childbirths** at 35 years old (women)

First Enrollment	2SLS (q=1)	2SLS (q=3)	2SLS (q=5)
Non-STEM (3-year)	−0.101	−0.077	−0.079
	(0.167)	(0.167)	(0.166)
STEM (3-year)	0.463**	0.544**	0.531**
	(0.219)	(0.222)	(0.221)
Business (3-year)	0.168	0.208	0.204
	(0.146)	(0.150)	(0.149)
Health Sciences	−0.005	0.037	0.035
	(0.114)	(0.116)	(0.115)
Humanities	−0.588*	−0.581*	−0.587*
	(0.314)	(0.315)	(0.314)
Social Sciences	−0.176	−0.126	−0.134
	(0.159)	(0.162)	(0.161)
Science and Math	0.218	0.302*	0.290*
	(0.169)	(0.170)	(0.170)
Engineering	0.192	0.286*	0.275
	(0.166)	(0.168)	(0.168)
Medicine	0.265	0.344*	0.328*
	(0.191)	(0.191)	(0.191)
Business	0.101	0.158	0.153
	(0.126)	(0.130)	(0.129)
Law	0.259*	0.312**	0.305**
	(0.138)	(0.142)	(0.141)
Observations	104,082	104,082	104,082

Notes: This table reports the causal effect of enrolling in a college field using the admissions cutoffs as an instrument. "Number of Childbirths" counts the number of births by age 35 for women. The three columns show results assuming a linear (q=1), a cubic (q=3), and quintic (q=5) functional form of the running varible on either side of the cutoff. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 6: Causal Effect of Enrollment Field on **Any Children in HH** at 35 years old (men)

First Enrollment	2SLS (q=1)	2SLS (q=3)	2SLS (q=5)
Non-STEM (3-year)	−0.015	0.019	0.020
	(0.119)	(0.121)	(0.121)
STEM (3-year)	0.027	0.063	0.065
	(0.116)	(0.117)	(0.117)
Business (3-year)	0.065	0.093	0.094
	(0.107)	(0.109)	(0.109)
Health Sciences	0.035	0.054	0.061
	(0.109)	(0.110)	(0.110)
Humanities	0.194	0.205	0.212
	(0.180)	(0.180)	(0.180)
Social Sciences	−0.048	−0.015	−0.013
	(0.092)	(0.094)	(0.094)
Science and Math	−0.056	−0.015	−0.011
	(0.103)	(0.105)	(0.105)
Engineering	0.006	0.052	0.055
	(0.108)	(0.110)	(0.110)
Medicine	0.091	0.137	0.137
	(0.118)	(0.121)	(0.120)
Business	−0.013	0.027	0.029
	(0.095)	(0.097)	(0.097)
Law	−0.053	−0.012	−0.010
	(0.096)	(0.099)	(0.099)
Observations	87,551	87,551	87,551

Notes: This table reports the causal effect of enrolling in a college field using the admissions cutoffs as an instrument. The outcome variable is an indicator for whether a man ever had a child in the household since the age of 25. The three columns show results assuming a linear (q=1), a cubic (q=3), and quintic (q=5) functional form of the running varible on either side of the cutoff. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 7: Causal Effect of Enrollment Field on **Number of Children in HH** at 35 years old (men)

First Enrollment	2SLS (q=1)	2SLS (q=3)	2SLS (q=5)
Non-STEM (3-year)	0.152	0.216	0.219
	(0.249)	(0.253)	(0.253)
STEM (3-year)	0.088	0.153	0.160
	(0.246)	(0.249)	(0.249)
Business (3-year)	−0.019	0.038	0.042
	(0.222)	(0.226)	(0.226)
Health Sciences	0.024	0.063	0.075
	(0.229)	(0.232)	(0.232)
Humanities	0.584	0.606	0.618
	(0.378)	(0.379)	(0.379)
Social Sciences	0.104	0.168	0.175
	(0.192)	(0.197)	(0.197)
Science and Math	−0.106	−0.033	−0.020
	(0.218)	(0.221)	(0.222)
Engineering	0.111	0.192	0.204
	(0.229)	(0.234)	(0.234)
Medicine	0.361	0.453*	0.456*
	(0.254)	(0.260)	(0.260)
Business	−0.077	−0.003	0.005
	(0.201)	(0.206)	(0.206)
Law	−0.054	0.025	0.031
	(0.204)	(0.210)	(0.210)
Observations	87,551	87,551	87,551

Notes: This table reports the causal effect of enrolling in a college field using the admissions cutoffs as an instrument. The outcome variable is the maximum number of children that a man ever had in the same household since the age of 25. The three columns show results assuming a linear (q=1), a cubic (q=3), and quintic (q=5) functional form of the running varible on either side of the cutoff. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

5 Concluding Remarks and Plans

Our preliminary analysis reveals that enrollment in some higher-paying college fields is associated with increased fertility outcomes for women, particularly prior to age 35. While these findings are preliminary, they suggest an important relationship between educational specialization and future fertility. Current data limitations constrain our observation window, though a new expanded dataset will enable analysis of completed fertility patterns across many more cohorts.[11] We further plan to explore the effect on birth timing and spacing across cohorts, and integrate contraceptive and fertility treatment records (Gallen et al., 2025). The hundreds of enrollment thresholds offer opportunities to examine how field characteristics like flexibility and income potentially influence fertility decisions.

To better understand the mechanisms driving these fertility effects, we will explore several channels: whether income effects dominate negative substitution effects, labor market opportunities and choices, the role of benefits and leave policies (including means-testing and employer variation), assortative matching patterns, relationship stability, and spousal leave-taking behavior. Our analysis will incorporate measures of occupational hours, skill demands, and flexibility – building on foundational work in family economics (e.g. Becker and Lewis 1973; Heckman and Walker 1990; Francesconi 2002; Sheran 2007; Keane and Wolpin 2010; Goldin 2014; Adda et al. 2017; Bronson and Sanin 2024). This research aims to illuminate how educational choices shape both career trajectories and family formation decisions in contemporary society.

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[11] Our current application data starts in 1993 and our outcomes go until 2012. The new data will have college applications starting in 1977 and outcomes through 2023.

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