GENERATION SOCIALA PROBLEM
En studie av hur unga vuxna ackumulerar sociala problem

av

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Akademisk avhandling

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Abstract


Young people is at the center of many of the rapid changes taking place in contemporary society and has to deal with the uncertainties that follows. One uncertainty is linked to the transition between leaving full time studies and entering employment were unemployment has become a natural step in becoming an adult. Hence the "becoming" has become a longer period of time in young people’s lives. The economic crisis in many European countries in recent years are the cause of many problems young people experience today. In relation to this brief background the thesis examines how social problems i.e. unemployment, deprivation, dependent on social welfare, low education and disability (affecting a person’s ability to work) is accumulated over time. The thesis point of departure is what Merton (1968) described in terms of The Matthew effect according to the Gospel of St. Matthew:

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

It is the last part of this “effect” that is the center of attention. The research questions are: is there such a thing as the Matthew effect and if so how this process can be understood. Theoretically the study at hand elaborates the accumulation process by drawing on the concept of marginalization and social exclusion.

By analyzing changes over time (3 years) in the five social problems described above (unemployment, deprivation etc.) for 64236 young people in the age of 19 to 25 years living in Sweden it is possible to describe patterns of social problem and how and why one specific problem or social problems in combination may lead to the accumulation of problem over time. These results are also combined with data from in-depth interviews with young people that have accumulated social problem over time. It is argued that the combination of research methods gives a better understanding to the phenomenon at hand.

The theoretical contribution relates to a better understanding of the process of accumulation of social problems for young people and to a better understanding of different steps in the accumulation process as well as central fault lines in this process. These findings can be used in practice for pinpointing groups of young adults in need of more as well as less support in handling and overcoming social problem and the transition from school to work.

Keywords: Accumulation of social problems, marginalization, social exclusion.

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