

13.9.2025

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**Title**

College application behavior: who is strategic? : does it help?

**Publication year**

2007

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education. - 54 (2007) 6, S. 885 - 905

**Inventory number**

23262

**Keywords**

Ausland : Israel : Hochschulwesen allgemein ; Ausland : Israel : Forschung, Hochschullehrer

**Abstract**

The paper examines whether college application behavior assists members of privileged social groups to preserve their advantages in diversified higher education systems. The study is based on a survey conducted in Israel in 1999 on a sample of 4,061 freshmen in the research universities and the academic colleges, which are often perceived as the second tier of higher education. The findings show that strategic application behavior helps less able children of academic parents to achieve the summit of higher education: studying lucrative fields of study at the research universities. Mizrachim, the disadvantaged Jewish ethnic group, are strategic when applying for lucrative fields of study, but it does not affect their actual enrollment. Strategic application behavior helps Arabs, the most disadvantaged group in Israel, increase their odds of achieving the 'worst' option, studying non-lucrative fields in colleges. Talented women successfully practice strategic behavior when applying for lucrative fields of study. The effects of strategic application behavior are, thus, mixed. It helps in preserving socio-economic and ethnic inequalities, but also helps in reducing gender inequality among talented students. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Ayalon, Hanna, E-Mail:

**13.9.2025**

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