

Intergenerational Mobility in Switzerland

Status Transmission in Upper Class Families from 1924 to 1980

Subject

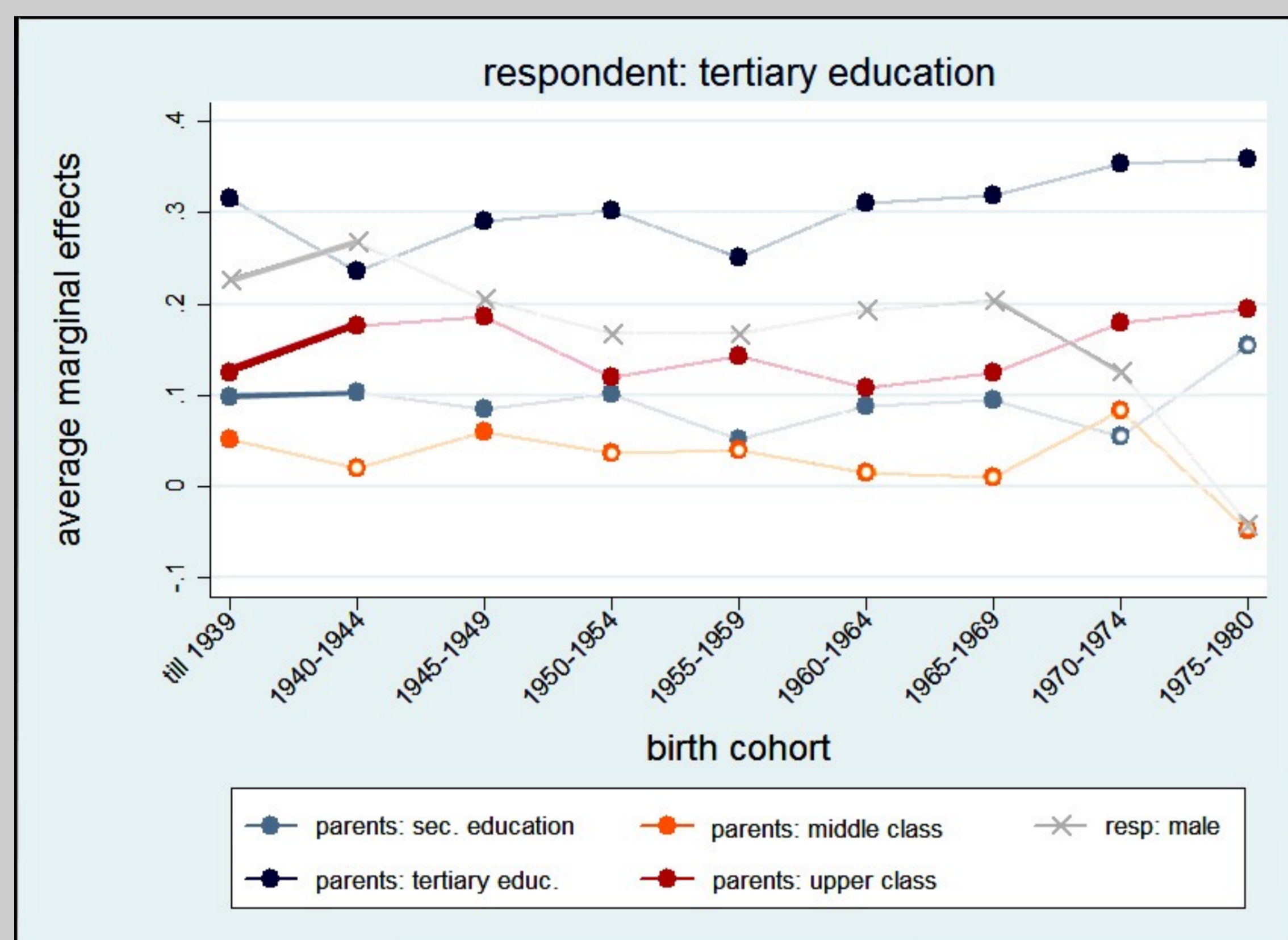
Switzerland defines itself as a meritocracy (cf. Becker/Hadjar 2009, Solga 2008). As a consequence, there should be no correlation between the social origin and the status of the respondent, when controlling for his/her achievements. Seeing that previous studies have failed to find a coherent trend, I combine multiple datasets and different statistical methods to overcome said insufficiency.

Due to limited space, I will only show, how upper class families transmit their privileged situation onto their children.

Current state of research

Concerning the intergenerational mobility of education and class in Switzerland, 9 studies have been conducted so far (time span: 1991-2010). While 5 studies have found an increased mobility (Lamprecht/Graf 1991, Buchmann/Sacchi 1998, Joye et al. 2003, Stamm/Lamprecht 2005 and Hadjar/Berger 2010), 4 stated no change (Buchmann et al. 1993, 1996 and 2007, Bergmann et al. 2002).

For Germany, the results are similar: Breen and Luijkx (2004) observed that social mobility with respect to class has stayed constantly low, while educational mobility has increased (Breen et al. 2009).



Explanation of the charts:

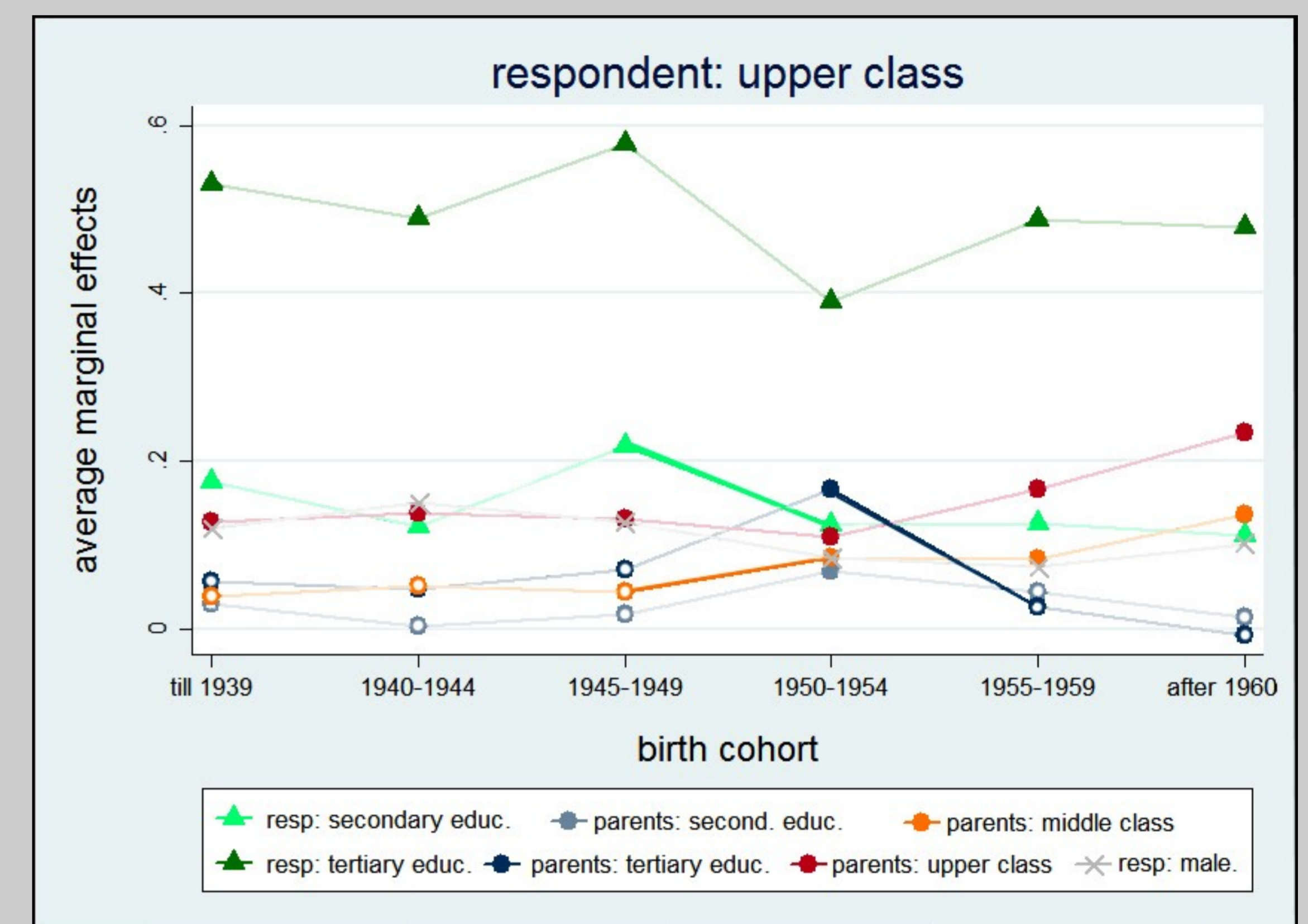
Solid lines: Significant change between cohorts.

Hollow markers: No significant difference to the reference group (i.e. primary education, low class and female).

Baseoutcome: Low class.

Significance level: 95%

How to interpret: A person born between 1955 and 1959 has a 50 percentage point higher possibility of belonging to an upper class if he/she has a tertiary education instead of no further education after finishing compulsory education.



Central findings

1. According to the difference tests, the possibility of completing a tertiary education does not seem to be influenced by the independent variables, except for the fact that women are getting better possibilities of higher education.
2. The possibility of achieving a tertiary education is primarily influenced by parents' tertiary education, followed by respondents' sex and parents belonging to an upper class.

Conclusions:

Intergenerational mobility concerning higher education remained pretty stable over the succession of birth cohorts. Respondents whose parents already hold a tertiary education have the highest possibility of achieving a tertiary education.

Central findings

1. The difference tests show hardly any significant changes concerning the influence of the independent variables on the possibility of belonging to an upper class.
2. Respondents with a tertiary education have the highest possibility of belonging to an upper class. However, because tertiary education depends strongly on social origin, the meritocratic principle isn't fulfilled.
3. Surprisingly, a secondary education has the same influence on belonging to an upper class as parents belonging to an upper class.

Conclusions:

Intergenerational mobility concerning belonging to an upper class remained stable over the succession of birth cohorts. The possibility of belonging to an upper class depends mostly on the respondents' tertiary education. Unexpectedly, respondents' achievement of a secondary education has the same effect as parents belonging to the upper class.

Statistical model

I used a Multinomial Logit-Model to estimate my model with the following independent variables (full model):

- Respondents' and parents' education
- Parents' class
- Respondents' sex
- Birth cohorts
- Datasets

I calculated discrete change effects of the average marginal effects of the independent variables.

To evaluate if there's a significant change in mobility between the different birth cohorts, I performed difference tests for interactions between the birth cohorts and the different independent variables.

Operationalization

Education:

- **Primary education:** No further education after completing compulsory school
- **Secondary education:** High school graduation or completed apprenticeship
- **Tertiary education:** University degree or university of applied sciences degree

CASMIN (Goldthorpe 2000):

- **Upper Class:** Service class I + II, non-farm petty bourgeoisie w. employees.
- **Middle Class:** Non-farm petty bourgeoisie without employees, technicians and skilled manual workers, routine non-manual employees.
- **Low class:** Farmers, semi- and unskilled manual workers.

Used datasets

10 datasets:

- Berufsverlauf und Berufsidentität im sozio-techn. Wandel (1989)
- ISSP (1998 and 1999)
- SHP (1999 and 2004)
- ESS (2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010)

The 10 datasets include 19232 observations. After excluding respondents older than 75 years and younger than 30 (dependent variable: tertiary education), respectively 40 years (dependent variable: upper class), 15108 / 9890 observations remain.

Literature

Breen, Richard and Ruud Luijkx, 2004: Social Mobility in Europe between 1970 and 2000. 37-75 in: Richard Breen (Hg.), Social Mobility in Europe. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Breen, Richard, Ruud Luijkx, Walter Müller and Reinhard Pollak, 2009: Nonpersistent Inequality in Educational Attainment. Evidence from Eight European Countries. American Journal of Sociology 114 (5): 1475-1521.

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Joye, Dominique, Manfred M. Bergman and Paul S. Lambert, 2003: Intergenerational Educational and Social Mobility in Switzerland. Swiss Journal of Sociology 29 (2): 263-291.