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Amelie Constant and Klaus F Zimmermann

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**Amelie Constant**, IZA, Bonn and University of Pennsylvania  
**Klaus F Zimmermann**, German Institute for Economic Research (DIW); IZA, Bonn;  
University of Bonn and CEPR

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Centre for Economic Policy Research  
90–98 Goswell Rd, London EC1V 7RR, UK  
Tel: (44 20) 7878 2900, Fax: (44 20) 7878 2999  
Email: [cepr@cepr.org](mailto:cepr@cepr.org), Website: [www.cepr.org](http://www.cepr.org)

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Occupational Choice Across Generations\***

There are few studies on occupational choices in Germany, and second-generation occupational choice and mobility is even less investigated. Such research is important because occupations determine success in the labour market. In a country like Germany occupations also reflect a general socio-economic standing. This Paper looks at the patterns of employment in Germany, analyses how individual men and women access jobs given their family background, and investigates why men and women have different occupational distributions. Based on the German Socio-Economic Panel we estimate multinomial logit models of occupational choice for the children of immigrants as well as for natives. Our findings are surprisingly similar for both natives and immigrants. For both Germans and immigrants, we find that gender significantly and differentially affects occupational choice, and that individuals with more education choose higher-ranking jobs. The role of experience is important for natives and qualified individuals only. Germans are more likely to choose occupations similar to their fathers' occupation when their father is in the white collar or professional category. In stark contrast, the immigrants' occupational choice is more influenced by their mother's education and not by their fathers' occupation.

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Amelie Constant  
University of Pennsylvania  
3718 Locust Walk  
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6298  
USA  
Email: [aconstan@pop.upenn.edu](mailto:aconstan@pop.upenn.edu)

Klaus F Zimmermann  
IZA - Institute for the Study of Labour  
PO Box 7240  
D-53072 Bonn  
GERMANY  
Tel: (49 228) 3894 200/118  
Fax: (49 228) 3894 210  
Email: [zimmermann@iza.org](mailto:zimmermann@iza.org)

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper we examine the patterns of occupation of full time workers in Germany. In particular, we are interested in the determinants of occupational choice and how they differ by gender and ethnicity. The question we address is whether human capital or family background characteristics are the driving force behind the choices of individuals and whether women and immigrants have equal opportunities to jobs.

Previous research on occupational choice focuses on the neoclassical human capital theory (Becker, 1964). Boskin's (1974) study on men and women in the US confirms three hypotheses: workers choose occupations that (i) maximize the discounted present value of potential lifetime earnings, (ii) entail the lowest training costs, and (iii) offer the lowest discounted present value of expected earnings foregone due to unemployment. The last two hypotheses are less important for white males. Schmidt and Strauss (1975) in their study on the occupational choice of workers in the US find that race and sex strongly determine occupational choice. They interpret these results as strong evidence of race and sex discrimination. Few studies have looked at the occupational choice of natives and migrants in Germany. Such research, however, is important because occupations determine earnings and, thus, earnings differentials, as well as success in the labor market (Zimmermann, 1998). In a country like Germany occupations also reflect a general socio-economic standing.

Numerous intergenerational studies have established the importance of family background as a determinant of the economic status of children. For the US, Behrman and Taubman (1976), based on data on white twin males, find a positive correlation between fathers' and sons' socioeconomic status. In another study, they find that the

intergenerational elasticity of earnings is greater for sons and nonwhites, and is even greater when parental income increases (Behrman and Taubman, 1990). More recently, family background is found to exert greater influence on economic status than was previously believed (Solon et al., 1991), with the father's employment being strongly significant for self-employment, although there are racial differences (Hout and Rosen, 1999). Chiswick (1977) has investigated the earnings transmission for immigrants. Recent studies investigate the role of family structure for the outcomes for children and find it less relevant when controlled for mothers' education, parental employment and family income (Ginther and Pollak, 2003). An increase in parental compulsory schooling decreases the school dropout rates of kids (Oreopoulos, Page and Stevens, 2003).

For studies outside the US, Heckman and Hotz (1986) find that parents' education has a positive effect on the earnings of Panamanian men, and mother's education has the largest effect. Behrman and Wolfe (1984) find similar results for women in Nicaragua. Contrary to findings in the US, Gang and Zimmermann (1999) find that the father's education is more important than the mother's education for the educational attainment of German children, but parental schooling plays no role for the educational attainment of immigrant children. Black, Devereux, and Salvanes (2003) confirm for Norway that parents with higher education levels have children with higher education levels, but reveal by a natural experiment that there is little evidence that this correlation is causal. Ermisch and Francesconi (2000) study the association between British childhood parental employment and subsequent education of the children; they find that mother's full-time employment in early childhood has a negative effect on educational attainment.

Couch and Dunn (1997) find a positive and significant correlation on the earnings of fathers and sons for both the US and Germany. In contrast, they observe that the mothers' and daughters' correlation is not significant for Germany. While it is significant for the US, this correlation is much lower than that of fathers' and sons. In their study of the first, second, and third generation immigrant earnings in Israel, Epstein and Lecker (2001) find that their intergenerational earnings mobility has an inverse U-shape. That is, the second generation has the highest earnings. Although the third generation's earnings are higher than the first, the third generation does not assimilate into the local population. A slow integration across generations is also found by a study on the children of immigrants in Denmark (Roshom et al., 2002).

Studies on the determinants of occupational success in Britain find that the most important determinant is the father's social class at birth, and that the foundations of occupational success are determined early in life (Harper and Haq, 1997). The findings of Iannelli (2002) for European countries suggest that there is both a significant direct and indirect effect of parental education on young peoples' occupational destinations; about half of it operates through the education of the kids. Others have studied the occupational mobility of workers. Chiswick's (1978) results on the occupational mobility of immigrants in the US show that immigrants experience downward occupational mobility at arrival but with additional years of residence they improve their occupational status. Similarly, Bauer and Zimmermann (1999) in their study on the occupational mobility of ethnic Germans find evidence of downward mobility by gender, immigration status, and human capital at entry. However, ethnic Germans with higher skills are able to reach their original occupational status within 14 years of residence in Germany. Studies on the intergenerational income

mobility in the US find that there is less mobility than was previously believed (Solon, 1992, and Zimmerman, 1992).<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, the populations under study are the West Germans and the guestworkers. By guestworkers we denote a subgroup of economic immigrants who were actively recruited in their home countries by German employers. The recruitment started in the mid 1950s, peaked after the Berlin Wall was erected, and came into a halt during the first oil shock in 1973. These immigrants came exclusively from Italy, Spain, Greece, the former Yugoslavia, and Turkey, under specific bilateral agreements between the respective countries, to help build Germany's economic miracle.<sup>2</sup> Immigration to Germany after 1973 is mainly linked to family reunification. The dominant immigrant ethnic group for the last 25 years is the Turks. Although the migration of guestworkers at the time was as high as the great migration in the US in the 1920s, Germany, until recently, had not acknowledged having migration issues, calling its migrants guestworkers. The term strongly alludes to the temporary intentions by German employers, as well the acceptance of temporary migration on the part of the guestworkers themselves. Throughout this paper we use the terms immigrants and guestworkers interchangeably.

In our empirical strategy we follow Schmidt and Strauss (1975). First, we examine occupational choice within the human capital framework. Further, we augment the human capital model by incorporating the role of family background and family characteristics on occupational choice. Our results are summarized as follows: for both the German and

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<sup>1</sup>Zimmerman (1992) acknowledges that the intergenerational transmission of status may be stronger in some parts of the income distribution than in others.

<sup>2</sup>Immigrants were also recruited from Portugal, but they were in smaller numbers and most of them have returned to Portugal. This study does not consider Portuguese immigrants.



guestworker populations we find significant gender differences with women being sorted into white or professional jobs. Overall, we confirm the human capital hypothesis whereby individuals with more education choose higher ranking jobs. Whereas the role of experience is important for qualified natives it is of no importance for immigrants. For Germans, the father's occupation is significant only when the father is in the white collar category. Whereas father's occupation is not significant for guestworkers, parents' education is. Our results with respect to human capital and gender are similar to the Schmidt and Strauss (1975) results. Results with respect to father's occupation confirm earlier results on occupational attainment in Britain.

The paper is structured as follows: in section 2 we specify the empirical methodology, and in section 3 we describe the data set and the variables employed in the analysis, as well as the rationale behind our decision. Section 4 analyzes the demographic and occupational characteristics of our samples by gender and ethnicity. Section 5 presents and discusses our research findings, and section 5 concludes.

## **2. Econometric Methodology and Empirical Implementation**

### **2.1 The Econometric Model**

We assume a utility maximization model where rational individuals are assumed to have preferences over a set of  $j$  different alternatives as:

$$\begin{aligned}
 U(\textit{alternative } 0) &= \beta_0 x_0 + \epsilon_0 \\
 U(\textit{alternative } 1) &= \beta_1 x_1 + \epsilon_1 \\
 &\dots\dots\dots \\
 U(\textit{alternative } J) &= \beta_j x_j + \epsilon_j
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{1}$$

where  $\epsilon$  is the random error associated with that choice. We observe  $Y$  for choice  $j$  if

$$U(\text{alternative } j) > U(\text{alternative } k) \quad \forall j \neq k \quad (2)$$

The disturbances are assumed to be independently<sup>3</sup> and identically distributed as a log Weibull distribution. Then, the choice probabilities given the covariates are:

$$P(Y=j|X) = \frac{e^{\beta_j X_i}}{\sum_{k=0}^J e^{\beta_k X_i}} \quad (3)$$

where  $i$  indexes the individuals, and  $j$  indexes the alternative occupational choices,  $j = 0, 1, \dots, J$  with  $j+1$  nominal, unordered outcomes. To identify the model, we impose the normalization  $\beta_0 = 0$ .

Specifically for our analysis of occupational choice  $Y$  indicates occupations. We consider 5 distinct outcomes, thus,  $j = 0, 1, \dots, 4$ . The explanatory variables in  $X$  consist of a set of human capital variables, such as education and experience, individual specific characteristics, and family background variables like parental education and occupation. These variables are the same for all choices, but their effects on the probability are allowed to differ for each outcome. These independent variables are expected to affect the individual's probability of being in a given occupation. We can predict the probability that an individual will choose one of the 5 occupations considered. According to the human capital theory, individuals will more likely choose the occupation that offers the highest discounted present value of potential future earnings. The probabilities are, therefore,

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<sup>3</sup> The Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives (IIA) is a restrictive assumption. McFadden (1973) suggested that in cases where the outcome categories "can plausibly be assumed to be distinct and weighed independently in the eyes of each decision maker," a multinomial logit model can be safely used.

$$P(Y=j|X) = \frac{e^{\beta_j X_i}}{1 + \sum_{k=0}^4 e^{\beta_k X_i}} \quad (4)$$

The log-odds ratios that an individual will choose occupation  $j$  over occupation  $k$  are given by:

$$\ln \left[ \frac{P_j}{P_k} \right] = X_i (\beta_j - \beta_k) \quad (5)$$

The rest of the “contrasts” are computed by taking the difference between two of the known parameters as follows:

$$\beta_{k,p|q} = \beta_{k,p|r} - \beta_{k,q|r} \quad (6)$$

where outcome  $r$  is the reference category. That is, we compare outcomes  $p$  versus  $q$  for attribute  $k$ . The model is solved with maximum likelihood estimation. The resulting estimates are unbiased, consistent, asymptotically normal, and asymptotically efficient. Moreover, the likelihood function is globally concave, ensuring the uniqueness of the ML estimates.

## 2.2 The Data

The empirical analysis is based on nationally representative data from the German Socioeconomic Panel (GSOEP). The GSOEP is administered by DIW Berlin, the German Economic Institute (SOEP Group, 2001). It is a longitudinal database that started in 1984 with a sample of about 12,000 respondents, 3000 of whom were guestworkers from Turkey, Italy, the former Yugoslavia, Spain and Greece. After unification, the survey was

extended to East Germans and immigrants from other countries, especially ethnic Germans and East Europeans. An important feature of GSOEP in our context is that it oversamples foreigners and also provides information on their pre-immigration profiles and the level of their socio-political integration into the German community.

Our analysis is based on the 1996 wave of the GSOEP, which we chose because it was in the middle of the decade and a good year for the German economy, and we focus on the West German and guestworker populations. The immigrant sample refers to the 5 nationalities that largely compose the guestworkers. It includes the foreign-borns and those guestworkers who are born in Germany and who may even have German citizenship. An important question we seek to answer is whether there are gender differences, thus, we look at both men and women. We include only the civilian labor force who are not in training, or self-employed (except for independent farmers), and who are aged 16 to 60 years old. Further, we consider only those individuals who are not certified with a disability and have valid answers to all the relevant variables.

For the purpose of this study, we consider only full time workers, which reduced the samples to 1830 Germans and 767 guestworkers. This also raised the minimum age to 18 for men, and 19 and 20 for immigrant and German women respectively. The sex composition of the final samples is as follows: 1275 German men, 555 German women, 514 Guestworker men, and 253 Guestworker women. We acknowledge that by considering only full time workers the male to female ratio is about 2.3. We choose full time workers because they have a stronger attachment to the labor market, they choose their occupation more responsibly, and they make a long term commitment. Part-time workers may often choose their job symptomatically, and this might confound our results.

### **2.3 Construction of the occupational choice and the independent variables**

The dependent variable measuring occupational choice indicates 5 distinct occupations. The GSOEP asked respondents to indicate their occupation classified under the broad rubrics of: blue collar, self-employed, in training, white collar, and civil service.<sup>4</sup> After we eliminated the self-employed and the students, we carefully recoded these occupations to correspond to the broad categories of occupations used in the Schmidt and Strauss (1975) study. We, therefore, have the following five occupational categories: professional, white collar, craft, blue collar, and menial. Table 1 presents the coding of the grouping. All five distinct dimensions of occupational choice are analyzed separately as dependent variables within the multinomial logit framework. These categories are defined such that they are not perfect substitutes. As Table 1 shows, there is a distinctive ranking of the occupations under study. Occupations in the higher-numbered categories offer not only higher pay but more prestige and social status, as well. This is particularly true for Germany, where economic and social hierarchies are salient.

We now introduce the independent variables. A standard set of human capital and socioeconomic status (SES) measures are entered as covariates in the model. Our main interest is how these characteristics influence individuals to choose a certain occupation. Human capital is captured by years of education and experience. For immigrants, the years of education variable includes both pre- and post-migration education. Because of the specificity of the German educational system the years of education variable also

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<sup>4</sup> By broad rubrics we mean that, for example, the blue collar occupation includes skilled and unskilled workers, as well as foremen, and master craftsmen.

embodies vocational training.<sup>5</sup> This is a better measure of human capital because in addition to formal education it includes the effect of training on occupational attainment. We expect more years of education to sort individuals into higher professions and away from menial jobs. For the guestworker sample only, we included German language proficiency as another form of human capital.<sup>6</sup> Those immigrants who speak German fluently will be more likely to choose higher ranked professions, as well as they will be less likely to face employer discrimination. Language fluency propels differential access to certain occupations. It is important to recognize that German is not the spoken language in any of the guestworker countries of origin. The years of potential experience is entered as a control variable, and is calculated as “age minus years of education minus 6.”

To capture gender differences we include the sex variable which takes the value of 1 if the respondent is male and 0 if female. In a world of equal opportunity, and in the absence of discrimination and segregation we would expect to find no gender differences in occupations.<sup>7</sup> Differences in personal tastes should be the only factor, *ceteris paribus*. However, human capital is likely to have a different effect on males and females.

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<sup>5</sup> Vocational training is a unique feature of Germany's educational system and an important part of formal education for non-University goers who want to access skilled jobs. We include here trade/agricultural apprenticeship, business school, technical college, and college or university education. In Germany there are three types of high school: the trade-oriented Hauptschule - which is the least exigent - the apprenticeship-oriented Realschule, and the most demanding, University-track Gymnasium.

<sup>6</sup> Studies on immigrant earnings assimilation have found that fluency in the host country's language significantly increases earnings (Chiswick and Miller, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Constant and Massey (2003) assess the separate effects of occupational segmentation and discrimination in the allocation of occupations and wages. Their results indicate a high degree of initial occupational segmentation, with immigrants being less able to translate their human capital into a good first job.

We extend the basic human capital model to include family background characteristics. The structure of the family when the individual was growing up may affect not only the individual's social skills but also human capital investments and tastes. To answer the question of whether family background determines the probability of choosing a particular occupation we added the following variables, pertaining to family background: Father's education is a continuous variable that denotes the father's years of formal education and vocational training. Similarly, mother's education is a continuous variable for the mother's years of education. These variables include vocational training. Mothers in Germany are largely involved with child rearing. Hence, one should expect to find a strong effect of mothers education on the occupational choice of children. In particular, those individuals whose mothers are more educated will more likely choose a higher ranked occupation.

On the other hand, labor market know-how and professional connections, that can influence occupational choice, are more likely to be inherited from the father; namely from the father's occupation. In a more traditional society like Germany, the father may be the central role model. For the father's occupation we constructed a series of dummy variables and we classified them in the same manner as the dependent variable, except for two digressions. First, we created an additional occupational category, father other, that includes the fathers who are self-employed, free lance, not employed, sick, retired, or POWs.<sup>8</sup> The majority of observations in this group are in the self-employed category and especially those who have small businesses of 10 or less employees. Second, for the

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<sup>8</sup> The omission of these observations would reduce our sample to a non estimable level.

guestworker sample only, we were forced to group the craft, white collar, and professional categories into one category (father white) because we had very few observations in each category. Unfortunately, the GSOEP does not provide any information about the mother's occupation. Overall, we expect that parental characteristics may exert a differential effect on sons and daughters through sex-typing.

### **3. Empirical Findings**

#### **3.1 Characteristics of the Sample Populations**

Table 2 presents and contrasts selected demographic and labor market characteristics of the four sample populations under study, as indicated by the "raw" data. Columns (1) and (2) refer to German men and women who were born and raised in the former West Germany while Columns (3) and (4) refer to guestworker men and women, living in the former West German territory. The guestworker sample includes immigrants who were born in Germany or migrated at a young age. In spite emigration, many guestworkers are living in Germany with their families for more than 25 years.

West Germans are, on average, more educated than the guestworkers and have about the same years of experience as the guestworkers. German men are, on average, the oldest group while German women are the youngest. Table 2 clearly shows that Germans and guestworkers have different occupational distributions. There are striking gender differences, as well. The overwhelming majority of Germans in our sample, as a whole, are in the professional category. Sixty percent of the German women are in the professional category, as opposed to 48 percent for German men. The next highest



percentage for German women is in the white collar category, while for men it is in the blue collar category. In contrast, guestworkers are mostly in the blue collar occupations. In particular, 73 percent of guestworker men are in the blue collar category (as opposed to 31 percent of German men). Although the preponderance of guestworker women lies in the blue collar category, we find that one-quarter of the guestworker women in our sample are in the professional category. This is a much smaller percentage compared to German women, but it is quite dramatic compared to guestworker men and to their fathers' occupation.

In addition, these summary statistics indicate that there is some link between the father's and the children's occupation. The majority of German fathers for both men and women are in the blue collar category. Nonetheless, it seems that German men and especially German women are able to move away from blue collar jobs and into higher ranked occupations. The next highest occupation for German fathers is "other" and professional. This is not so for guestworkers. The majority of the guestworker fathers are in the "other" category, and the next highest category is blue collar. Guestworker fathers in the craft, white, or professional categories are virtually non-existent. The educational distribution of the German and guestworker parents is mostly striking. German fathers and mothers have, on average, 10 years of education. In contrast, guestworker parents have, on average, 50 percent less years of education, while guestworker mothers have even less than that. Oddly, the mothers of both German and guestworker men have one year less of education than the mothers of women. Overall, the majority of guestworkers report speaking German well, although, a larger percentage of women (9 percent more) speak German well. Lastly, both the German and guestworker samples are male dominated.

### 3.2 Multinomial Logit Estimates

This section presents the results of the human capital and family background multinomial logits for both West Germans and immigrants. Specifically, it presents the log odds ratios of choosing pairings of occupations. There are 10 unique and distinct comparative choices.

We first discuss the multinomial logit results for the West Germans. Table 3 presents the results of the human capital multinomial logit. The first column shows the odds of choosing an occupation among the 5 alternatives. Table 3 reveals significant differences in the odds of choosing an occupation between German men and women. The coefficients on the sex variable are numerically larger than the coefficients of the other variables. Men are more likely to choose the blue collar or craft categories over any other alternative. Conversely, these results show that German women have a higher probability of choosing a white collar or professional category over any other alternative. Of course, we realize that choices are in part the result of preferences and part the result of chances and discrimination. Unfortunately, we are unable to disentangle these parts. Our tentative explanation is that existing laws, and restrictive traditional practices may inhibit women from accessing more full-time blue collar or craft occupations even when they want to.

Our results support the human capital hypothesis. The years of education variable is significant and positive in almost all comparisons. Additional years of education prompt Germans into always choosing the higher-numbered occupation, *ceteris paribus*. In fact, the years of education coefficient is larger and more significant when the contrast between occupations is big. For example, an additional year of education increases the odds of becoming a professional as opposed to a menial worker. Each additional year of education

increases the probability of becoming a professional. As expected, more educated Germans are able to climb up the job hierarchy. These results are in congruence with earlier findings in the US (e.g., Schmidt and Strauss, 1975).

The coefficients of the experience variable are significant, but have enigmatic signs. We find that Germans with more experience choose the menial category over blue collar and even over white collar; they also choose the craft category over the blue or white collar categories, and the professional category over blue or white collar. We suspect that the experience variable captures the age distribution of individuals. Our explanation for these results is, therefore, that in Germany individual workers make their occupational choices early in life and they usually stay within that occupation, in a broad sense. For example, those who have chosen the menial category will always choose that category even if they have accumulated a lot of experience. With more experience menial workers might be rewarded more financially, but they will not be able to make a leap into a higher ranked category.<sup>9</sup> This also applies to the craft category workers who choose craft over blue and over white collar. Besides, changing occupations entails high transaction, retraining, and opportunity costs. This is especially true if there is labor market dichotomy. However, for individuals in the upper ranked categories, such as white collar and professional, it is possible to change occupations with additional years of experience. More experience in this case entails seniority, and through promotions workers in the white collar category may effectively choose the professional category. In sum, more experience - which indicates older workers - will drive workers to choose the same occupation in which they are in.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, a construction worker with 30 years of experience will never become a professor.

When we compare Tables 3 and 4 we see that the inclusion of parental characteristics does not really change the coefficients of the sex variable, of education and experience. With regards to the estimation of parental background characteristics in Table 4, we were surprised to find that father's or mother's education are not significant determinants of occupational choice for Germans. We suspect that this is due to the small variation in these variables.<sup>10</sup> In a uniform and traditional society like Germany, the majority of individuals grow up in households with both parents where almost all fathers and mothers have about the same years of education.

On the other hand, our results confirm the idea that people follow their father's occupation (Columns 8-12). We find that, for West Germans, the father's occupation is statistically significant and has a differential impact on their occupational choice in a number of cases. Note that in the estimations, menial is the reference category. We find that Germans whose father is in the white collar category (Column 10) choose white collar over blue collar jobs; and Germans whose father is in the professional category (Column 11) choose the professional category over blue collar and the professional category over white collar. When the father is in the father other category, workers choose to be in the craft group and away from blue collar.<sup>11</sup> In sum, father's occupation is important only for the higher-numbered occupations. This finding is consistent with Behrman and Taubman

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<sup>10</sup> We also run the model with parental education alone. We found that only the father's education matters and only when Germans choose the professional group versus the blue collar, craft, and white collar groups.

<sup>11</sup> Recall that the *F\_other* category includes self-employed fathers. We suspect that there might be some similarities between this category and the craft category. On the other hand, if the self-employed guestworkers are those who migrated as blue collar but with time in Germany they were able to open their own business, then our results point to an occupational upward mobility for the guestworker children.

(1990) on the intergenerational elasticity of income and with Zimmerman (1992) (see Footnote 1).

We now investigate the multinomial logit results for the guestworkers. Tables 5 and 6 present the estimation results for the immigrant samples. Similar to the results for Germans, we find that immigrant women choose higher-numbered occupations, while immigrant men choose the blue collar and craft categories over any other occupation. Human capital, mainly years of education, is significant in choosing higher occupations. Each additional year of schooling increases the odds of becoming a professional as opposed to a menial worker. Fluency in German language increases the probability of choosing a higher ranked occupation but only when the alternative is choosing menial or blue collar; it has no effect on the choice of blue collar against menial. Both of these human capital variables (education and speaking German well) exert strong and positive differential effects on the occupational upgrading of immigrants.

Yet, the estimation results on the experience variable in Table 5 clearly indicate that guestworkers in Germany are led into a lower numbered occupation with additional years of experience. These results reinforce our earlier explanation on Germans. Those workers who made the “wrong” choice earlier in life, are confined in that occupation for the rest of their productive lives. Moreover, these results confirm that the older workers are in the lower ranked occupations. Similar to the German results, the last row of Table 5 shows that more years of experience induce immigrants to choose the professional category over the white collar category.

The role of the parental characteristics is presented in Table 6. With the exception of the experience variable, where the coefficients became smaller in absolute terms, the

coefficients of sex and education largely remained the same in comparison to Table 5. Different from the Germans, the occupations of the father are not significant for most of the log odds combinations.<sup>12</sup> Immigrants are more likely to chose blue collar over white collar occupation when their father is in the other occupation category. With regards to the parental education we find that a more educated immigrant mother exerts significant influence on the occupational choice of children but only when choosing a professional over a blue collar category.<sup>13</sup> More educated immigrant fathers exhibit no significant effects on the occupational choices of their kids independent of the alternative under study. In the case of the West Germans, parental education was completely ineffective.

#### **4. Discussion**

In this paper we employed data from the German Socio-economic Panel (GSOEP) to predict the occupational choice of men and women in Germany across generations. For both Germans and immigrants we find some surprisingly similar results. Sex significantly and differentially affects occupational choices even after we control for human capital and other characteristics, with women being sorted into white or professional jobs. Unlike the US where individuals can alter their occupational choices over time, individuals in Germany make their choices early on and are in a way “stuck” with them. For example, the German educational system emphasizes ‘tracks’ and individuals must choose the right track from

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<sup>12</sup> Recall that the variable father white includes the craft, white, and professional categories, and the reference category is father in a menial occupation.

<sup>13</sup> As we did for Germans, here too we run the model with parental education alone. We found that both the father’s and the mother’s education matters. That is, more educated parents may stir their children away from menial and blue collar jobs and inspire them to choose a higher numbered occupation.

the age of 6. In that context, the role of parents is crucial. West Germans have an inherited advantage of being natives. Moreover, Germans whose father is in a white collar occupation have access to valuable social connections and more chances for economic success. Overall, we find some signs of persistence in the occupational choices for Germans, but not for immigrants.

In general, we find that guestworkers are concentrated in the “traditional migrant occupations.” They are indeed at a disadvantage with regards to family background characteristics. Yet, we find that guestworker women are able to break the barriers and attain higher ranked occupations than their fathers.

In conclusion, we find that in Germany individuals from different family backgrounds do not face equal options. We find some evidence that individuals inherit their social status and their position in the occupational distribution. Family background affects occupational choices both directly through genetic endowment, social connections, and wealth, and indirectly through education. More education increases the probability of occupational upgrading. That is, more educated individuals have a higher probability of advancing into occupations that offer higher earnings and social status. Our results confirm earlier results on occupational attainment.

Our results with respect to family background influence on the occupational choice are not as powerful as the results of intergenerational studies on earnings. We realize that this study is a study on occupational choice and not on earnings. Nonetheless, because earnings, occupations, and economic status are interlinked in Germany we had expected to find a stronger influence of parental characteristics on occupational choice.

TABLE 1: OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES

Constructed Dependent Variable		GSOEP Contents
Menial	(0)	Unskilled Blue Collar Workers, Unskilled White Collar Workers
Blue Collar	(1)	Trained Blue Collar Workers, Semi-Skilled and Skilled Blue Collar Workers
Craft	(2)	Industry and Other Foremen, Independent Farmers, and Master Craftsmen
White Collar	(3)	Semi-skilled White Collar Workers, Low and Middle Level Civil Servants
Professional	(4)	Professional, Semi-professional, Managerial, Upper and Executive Level Civil Servants



TABLE 2. SELECTED MEAN CHARACTERISTICS OF FULL TIME WORKERS BY GENDER AND ETHNICITY

	WEST GERMANS		IMMIGRANTS	
	MEN (1)	WOMEN (2)	MEN (3)	WOMEN (4)
Age in years	39	36	38	37
Total Education in years	12	12	10	10
Experience in years	21	19	22	21
Speak German well (in %)	100	100	66	72
Menial (in %)	2	7	11	18
Blue collar (in %)	31	15	73	45
Craft (in %)	10	2	5	1
White collar (in %)	9	17	3	11
Professional (in %)	48	60	8	25
Father in menial occupation (in %)	5	6	8	6
Father in blue collar (in %)	36	37	27	23
Father in craft (in %)	7	6	1	2
Father in white collar (in %)	7	5	1	0
Father in professional (in %)	19	22	2	2
Father in other occupation (in %)	25	23	61	68
Father's education in years	10	10	5	5
Mother's education in years	9	10	3	4
Number of Observations	1275	555	514	253

Source: Own calculations from GSOEP

TABLE 3: WEST GERMAN SAMPLE; HUMAN CAPITAL MULTINOMIAL LOGIT RESULTS  
(Coefficients and t-ratios)

Dependent Variable: log odds	Constant	Sex	Education	Experience
In (Blue Collar / Menial)	2.111 (1.529)	1.887* (6.677)	-0.060 (-0.474)	-0.034* (-2.772)
In (Craft / Menial)	-5.263* (-3.297)	2.644* (6.362)	0.373* (2.64)	0.003 (0.221)
In (White Collar / Menial)	-3.127* (-2.154)	0.347 (1.189)	0.455* (3.471)	-0.036* (-2.736)
In (Professional / Menial)	-8.839* (-6.294)	0.375 (1.386)	0.997* (7.870)	0.003 (0.219)
In (Craft / Blue Collar)	-7.375* (-6.989)	0.757* (2.139)	0.433* (4.842)	0.037* (3.877)
In (White / Blue Collar)	-5.238* (-6.082)	-1.540* (-8.018)	0.515* (6.763)	-0.002 (-0.272)
In (Professional / Blue Collar)	-10.951* (-14.204)	-1.512* (-9.307)	1.057* (15.585)	0.037* (5.489)
In (White Collar / Craft)	2.136 (1.954)	-2.297* (-6.387)	0.082 (0.906)	-0.04* (-3.54)
In (Professional / Craft)	-3.576* (-3.723)	-2.269* (-6.634)	0.624* (7.995)	-0.0005 (-0.053)
In (Professional / White Collar)	-5.713* (-8.105)	0.028 (0.171)	0.542* (9.379)	0.039* (4.763)
Log Likelihood		-1855.593		
$\chi^2$		869.413		
No. of Observations		1830		

\* indicates significance at the 5 per cent level in a two-tailed test ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Own calculations from GSOEP

TABLE 4: WEST GERMAN SAMPLE; MULTINOMIAL LOGIT RESULTS, HUMAN CAPITAL AND FAMILY BACKGROUND (Coefficients and t-ratios)

Dependent Variable	Constant	Sex	Education	Experience	Father's Education	Mother's Education	Father Blue collar	Father Craft	Father White collar	Father Professional	Father Other
ln(B/M)	3.102 (1.929)	1.918* (6.730)	-0.026 (-0.203)	-0.033* (-2.573)	-0.135 (-1.813)	0.052 (0.678)	-0.535 (-0.829)	1.024 (0.855)	-1.298 (-1.606)	-0.526 (-0.673)	-0.649 (-0.960)
ln(C/M)	-3.782* (-2.074)	2.663* (6.365)	0.387* (2.691)	0.001 (0.047)	-0.128 (-1.593)	-0.014 (-0.167)	-0.607 (-0.812)	1.635 (1.286)	-1.341 (-1.355)	-0.125 (-0.139)	0.277 (0.361)
ln(W/M)	-1.723 (-1.025)	0.349 (1.187)	0.459* (3.436)	-0.034* (-2.456)	-0.141 (-1.820)	0.049 (0.608)	-0.832 (-1.237)	0.842 (0.687)	-0.311 (-0.381)	-0.142 (-0.177)	-0.591 (-0.841)
ln(P/M)	-8.011* (-4.947)	0.393 (1.438)	0.984* (7.614)	0.007 (0.578)	-0.094 (-1.289)	0.037 (0.491)	-0.434 (-0.670)	1.568 (1.313)	-0.575 (-0.725)	0.612 (0.793)	-0.340 (-0.503)
ln(C/B)	-6.884* (-5.982)	0.745* (2.093)	0.413* (4.601)	0.034* (3.399)	0.006 (0.139)	-0.066 (-1.330)	-0.072 (-0.158)	0.612 (1.119)	-0.043 (-0.061)	0.401 (0.722)	0.926* (2.042)
ln(W/B)	-4.825* (-5.005)	-1.568* (-8.077)	0.486* (6.302)	-0.001 (-0.115)	-0.006 (-0.155)	-0.003 (-0.055)	-0.297 (-0.857)	-0.181 (-0.389)	0.987* (2.183)	0.384 (0.925)	0.058 (0.157)
ln(P/B)	-11.113* (-13.052)	-1.524* (-9.262)	1.010* (14.771)	0.040* (5.793)	0.040 (1.182)	-0.015 (-0.386)	0.101 (0.345)	0.544 (1.474)	0.723 (1.785)	1.138* (3.284)	0.309 (0.997)
ln(W/C)	2.059* (1.687)	-2.313* (-6.391)	0.072 (0.795)	-0.035* (-3.013)	-0.013 (-0.244)	0.063 (1.090)	-0.225 (-0.444)	-0.793 (-1.265)	1.030 (1.421)	-0.017 (-0.028)	-0.868 (-1.701)
ln(P/C)	-4.229* (-3.923)	-2.269* (-6.591)	0.597* (7.580)	0.007 (0.674)	0.034 (0.756)	0.051 (1.035)	0.173 (0.372)	-0.068 (-0.124)	0.765 (1.115)	0.738 (1.349)	-0.617 (-1.337)
ln(P/W)	-6.288* (-7.709)	0.044 (0.262)	0.525* (8.922)	0.041* (4.885)	0.046 (1.205)	-0.012 (-0.271)	0.398 (1.170)	0.726 (1.632)	-0.264 (-0.645)	0.755* (1.977)	0.251 (0.705)
Log L											-1812.870
$\chi^2$											954.859
Obs.											1830

Note: M = Menial, B = Blue Collar, C = Craft, W = White Collar, P = Professional

\* indicates significance at the 5 per cent level in a two-tailed test ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Own calculations from GSOEP

TABLE 5: IMMIGRANT SAMPLE; HUMAN CAPITAL MULTINOMIAL LOGIT RESULTS  
(Coefficients and t-ratios)

Dependent Variable: log odds	Constant	Sex	Education	Experience	Speak German Well
In (Blue Collar / Menial)	-0.357 (-0.538)	1.538* (7.372)	0.069 (1.202)	-0.0006 (-0.058)	0.1642 (0.763)
In (Craft / Menial)	-7.152* (-4.016)	2.809* (3.656)	0.195 (1.465)	0.002 (0.135)	1.846* (2.361)
In (White Collar / Menial)	-3.563* (-2.773)	-0.241 (-0.651)	0.276* (2.701)	-0.080* (-4.259)	1.724* (3.048)
In (Professional / Menial)	-9.201* (-7.869)	-0.270 (-0.836)	0.737* (8.292)	-0.033* (-2.283)	2.134* (4.421)
In (Craft / Blue Collar)	-6.795* (-4.013)	1.271 (1.687)	0.127 (1.014)	0.003 (0.174)	1.682* (2.207)
In (White / Blue Collar)	-3.206* (-2.669)	-1.779* (-5.265)	0.207* (2.209)	-0.079* (-4.500)	1.560* (2.835)
In (Professional / Blue Collar)	-8.844* (-8.387)	-1.808* (-6.344)	0.667* (8.635)	-0.032* (-2.537)	1.970* (4.267)
In (White Collar / Craft)	3.588 (1.773)	-3.051* (-3.772)	0.080 (0.534)	-0.083* (-3.199)	-0.121 (-0.130)
In (Professional / Craft)	-2.048 (-1.071)	-3.080* (-3.914)	0.541* (3.889)	-0.035 (-1.573)	0.287 (0.327)
In (Professional / White Collar)	-5.637* (-4.019)	-0.029 (-0.074)	0.460* (4.567)	0.047* (2.402)	0.409 (0.606)
Log Likelihood			-709.95		
$\chi^2$			357.06		
No. of Obs.			767		

\* indicates significance at the 5 per cent level in a two-tailed test ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Own calculations from GSOEP

TABLE 6: IMMIGRANT SAMPLE; MULTINOMIAL LOGIT RESULTS, HUMAN CAPITAL AND FAMILY BACKGROUND (Coefficients and t-ratios)

Log Odds	Constant	Sex	Education	Experience	Speak German	Father's Education	Mother's Education	Father Blue Collar	Father White	Father Other
ln(B/M)	-0.593 (-0.783)	1.487* (6.903)	0.093 (1.575)	0.002 (0.201)	0.185 (0.822)	-0.015 (-0.558)	-0.055 (-1.890)	0.590 (1.196)	1.350 (1.154)	0.086 (0.179)
ln(C/M)	-6.903* (-3.681)	2.833* (3.640)	0.213 (1.579)	-0.003 (-0.124)	1.906* (2.408)	-0.056 (-0.884)	-0.003 (-0.048)	-0.228 (-0.253)	1.680 (1.020)	-0.082 (-0.093)
ln(W/M)	-3.940* (-2.806)	-0.467 (-1.209)	0.326* (3.055)	-0.040 (-1.794)	1.226* (2.060)	0.015 (0.339)	-0.006 (-0.135)	0.483 (0.783)	.34E-03 (0.000)	-1.172 (-1.666)
ln(P/M)	-10.261* (-7.627)	-0.364 (-1.072)	0.752* (8.062)	-0.007 (-0.392)	1.742* (3.468)	0.015 (0.384)	0.046 (1.165)	1.162 (1.666)	1.843 (1.429)	-0.033 (-0.045)
ln(C/B)	-6.309* (-3.568)	1.347 (1.766)	0.121 (0.959)	-0.006 (-0.217)	1.721* (2.236)	-0.041 (-0.687)	0.052 (0.852)	-0.818 (-1.014)	0.329 (0.257)	-0.168 (-0.210)
ln(W/B)	-3.346* (-2.554)	-1.954* (-5.500)	0.233* (2.376)	-0.043* (-1.997)	1.041 (1.801)	0.030 (0.777)	0.049 (1.336)	-0.107 (-0.205)	-1.350 (-1.117)	-1.258* (-1.974)
ln(P/B)	-9.667* (-7.883)	-1.851* (-6.121)	0.659* (8.056)	-0.009 (-0.569)	1.557* (3.237)	0.031 (0.890)	0.101* (3.019)	0.572 (0.937)	0.492 (0.576)	-0.119 (-0.178)
ln(W/C)	2.963 (1.384)	-3.301* (-4.000)	0.112 (0.730)	-0.037 (-1.119)	-0.680 (-0.713)	0.071 (1.031)	-0.003 (-0.037)	0.711 (0.778)	-1.679 (-1.005)	-1.090 (-1.113)
ln(P/C)	-3.358 (-1.629)	-3.197* (-3.991)	0.538* (3.786)	-0.004 (-0.118)	-0.164 (-0.183)	0.071 (1.078)	0.049 (0.730)	1.390 (1.442)	0.163 (0.114)	0.049 (0.049)
ln(P/W)	-6.321* (-4.041)	0.103 (0.255)	0.426* (4.050)	0.033 (1.412)	0.516 (0.733)	.43E-03 (0.010)	0.051 (1.232)	0.679 (1.010)	1.842 (1.458)	1.139 (1.444)
Log L					-687.424					
$\chi^2$					402.114					
Obs					767					

Note: M = Menial, B = Blue Collar, C = Craft, W = White Collar, P = Professional

\* indicates significance at the 5 per cent level in a two-tailed test ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Own calculations from GSOEP

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