

# Female Optimism?

Determinants of aspirated occupational status at the end of compulsory school in German-speaking Switzerland

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### Background

- While horizontal segregation of the labour market is very persistent, vertical segregation is decreasing in favour of women (Charles 2005).
- In German-speaking countries, studies on gender differences in the desired occupational status are rare. International studies indicate that female pupils aim for a higher occupational status than male pupils (z.B. Rojewski und Kim 2003).

### Research Question

- Do female pupils in German-speaking Switzerland have higher career aspirations than male pupils at the end of compulsory schooling?
- Do the determinants of occupational aspirations show varying gender-specific effects?

### Theory

- **Orientation towards the same sex parent:** The children do not orient themselves at the highest status in the family, but at that of the same-sex parent (Shu and Marini 1998).
- **Marriage market:** Women can maintain their status through the marriage market as well as through the labour market (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997).
- **Gender roles:** Both the theory of gender-specific socialisation (Eccles 1986) and the theory of human capital (Becker 1985) assume that gender role conceptions affect career choice. Women with more traditional role conceptions should aspire to a lower occupational status.

### Hypothesis

- H1:** Female pupils aspire a higher occupational status than male pupils.
- H2:** The higher the status of the same-sex parent, the higher the aspired occupational status.
- H3:** The positive effect of striving to maintain status on the desired occupational status is greater for male pupils than for female pupils.
- H4:** The more traditional the gender role concepts, the higher the aspirated occupational status of the boys. The more traditional the gender role concepts, the lower the aspirated occupational status of the girls.

### Data

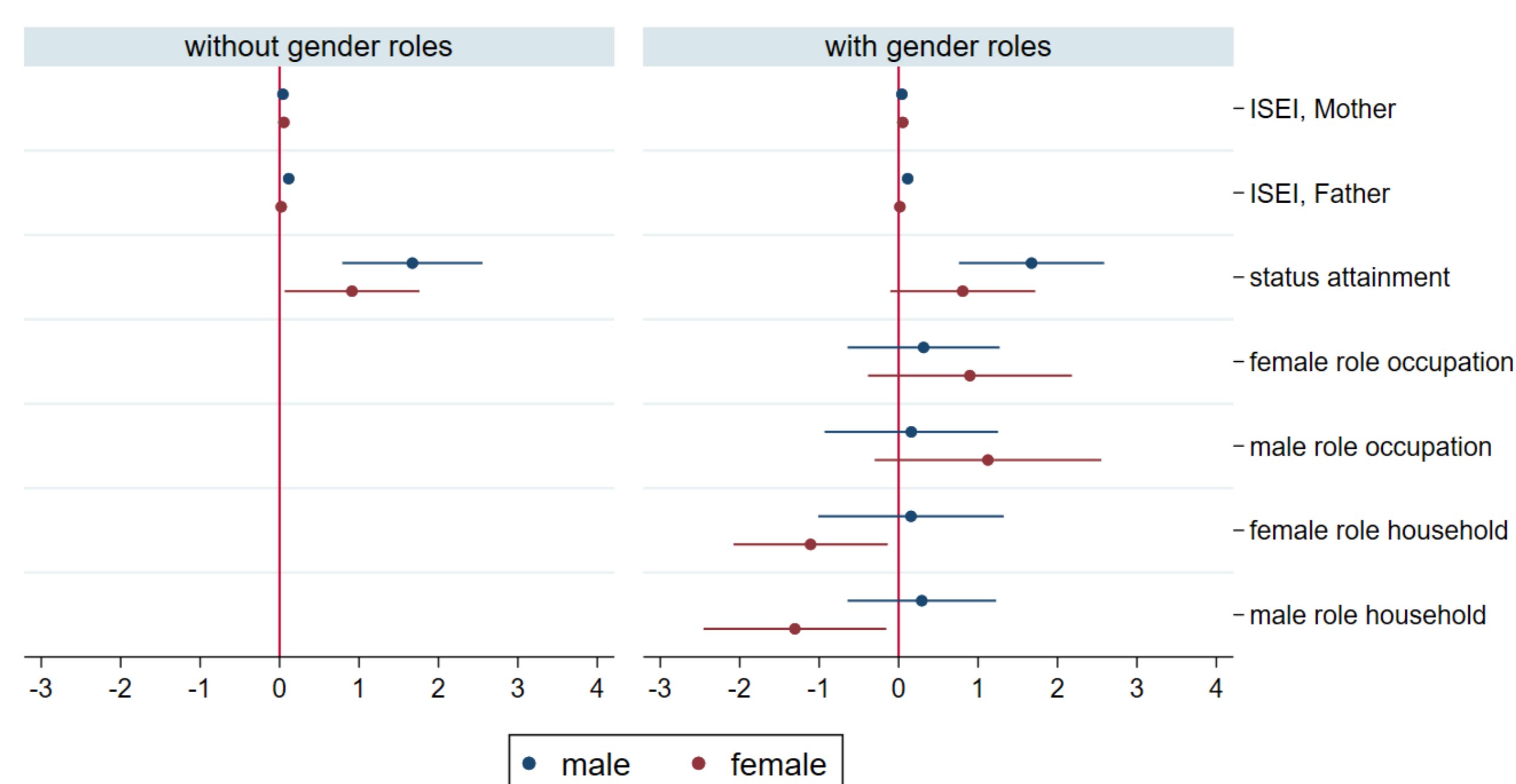
- Data from the panel study: **Determinanten der Ausbildungswahl und der Berufsbildungschancen** (DAB-Panel)
- The analysis sample contains **2626** students. To counter missing values in the model variables, **50 imputed data sets** were generated using **chained equations**.
- In the analyses, ideas about the role of the man/woman in the household and at work are taken into account. Higher values in the role conceptions point to traditional gender roles.

### Results

Fig. 1: Gender differences. Coefficient plot of OLS regression to predict aspirated occupational status (models with and without control of the proportion of men in the desired occupation.)



Fig. 2: Gender-specific mechanisms. Coefficient plot of OLS regression to predict aspirated occupational status (models with and without gender role control.)



Data: DAB-Panel, Data of waves 1-3, own calculations. Estimates based on  $m=50$  imputed data sets. Standard errors clustered by school classes.  
Model variables: ISEI, desired occupation (dependent variable); gender; ISEI, Mother; ISEI, Father; status attainment; gender role concepts; school type, school grades (German, mathematics); migration background; plans for remaining in the general school system after the 9th grade; linear and quadratic male proportion in the desired occupation (only in gender difference models); single parents (only in the models for gender-specific effects of determinants)

### Conclusion

- Controlling for school type, grades, training plans after the 9th grade and migration background **girls** aspire a **significantly higher occupational status**. This difference disappears as soon as the proportion of men in the desired occupation is controlled for.
- **Male pupils** orient themselves in their aspired occupational status exclusively at the **status of the father**. For **female pupils**, **no effect** of the stronger orientation towards the **mother's status** could be found.
- For **male pupils**, the expected **positive effect** can be found between **maintaining status** and aspiring occupational status. For **female students**, this **effect disappears** as soon as their **role expectations** are controlled.
- **Gender roles** have **no effect** on the desired occupational status of **male pupils**. For **female pupils**, more **traditional ideas** about the role of men and women in the household lead to a **lower desired occupational status**.

### References

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