



East-West differences in the relative importance of own and father's education for self-assessed health

Nan Dirk de Graaf
Christiaan Monden



Inequality in health

social gradient in health important indicator for inequality

There are substantial health differences across Europe. Levels of morbidity and mortality are higher in the post-socialist societies of Central and Eastern Europe compared to Western European countries



Explaining health

- One factor that might contribute to explaining this variation is the simultaneous examination of one's own educational position and that of the family of origin. This type of study originated in the social epidemiological literature



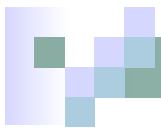
Sociological perspective

1. People are socialized in the family of origin.
2. sociological theories of the family and social support point at the impact that parents' social position can have on health during adulthood through parental resources and behaviour.
3. How are intergenerational social mobility and health related. A new classification of models required.



Two questions

- (1) To what extent does the relative association between own and father's education on the one hand and adult health on the other hand differ between post-socialist and capitalist societies in Europe?
- (2) To what extent does educational intergenerational mobility condition these relative associations?



New aspects:

We are not aware of any study that has taken a cross-national comparative perspective.

Moreover, for post-socialist countries in particular, little is known about the relative importance of own and father's social position



Hypotheses on differences between East and West

- *equality under socialism* hypothesis:

the relative effect of father's education is smaller in post-socialist societies.




- *family support hypothesis:*

the relative effect of father's education on adult health is stronger in post-socialist societies than in Western societies.



Mobility hypothesis

- *Father's education relatively more important for the downwardly mobile and own education relatively more important for the upwardly mobile*



New EUREQUAL-data to test the hypotheses:

We have three waves of the European Social Survey (ESS) 2002/3; 2004/5; 2006/7

Post-socialist countries are still underrepresented in the first 3 waves of ESS, therefore we enrich our sample with data from the EUREQUAL project that includes representative surveys in 13 post-socialist societies.



Data

NOW: 15 post-socialist and 17 capitalist countries

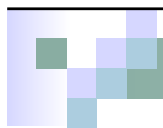
Age selection: 25-75 years of age

We control for sex, age and age squared



How is health measured:

- “How would you describe your health in general? The answer categories were (Eurequal/ESS)
 1. “Very poor/Very bad”
 2. “Poor/Bad”
 3. “Average/Fair”
 4. “Good”
 5. “Excellent/Very good”



Father's
Education

Own education

	Basic	Sec. low	Sec. high	Tertiary	Total
Basic	3.42	3.64	3.59	3.66	3.44
	<i>11,171</i>	<i>518</i>	<i>341</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>12,113</i>
Sec. Low	3.82	3.83	3.80	3.81	3.82
	<i>7,420</i>	<i>4,564</i>	<i>1,319</i>	<i>321</i>	<i>13,606</i>
Sec. High	3.98	4.01	4.00	4.02	4.00
	<i>8,208</i>	<i>5,531</i>	<i>8,642</i>	<i>2,114</i>	<i>24,495</i>
Tertiary	4.03	4.13	4.16	4.20	4.13
	<i>3,922</i>	<i>3,088</i>	<i>4,753</i>	<i>4,765</i>	<i>16,528</i>
Total	3.75	3.96	4.03	4.12	3.89
	<i>30,703</i>	<i>13,701</i>	<i>15,055</i>	<i>7,283</i>	<i>66,742</i>



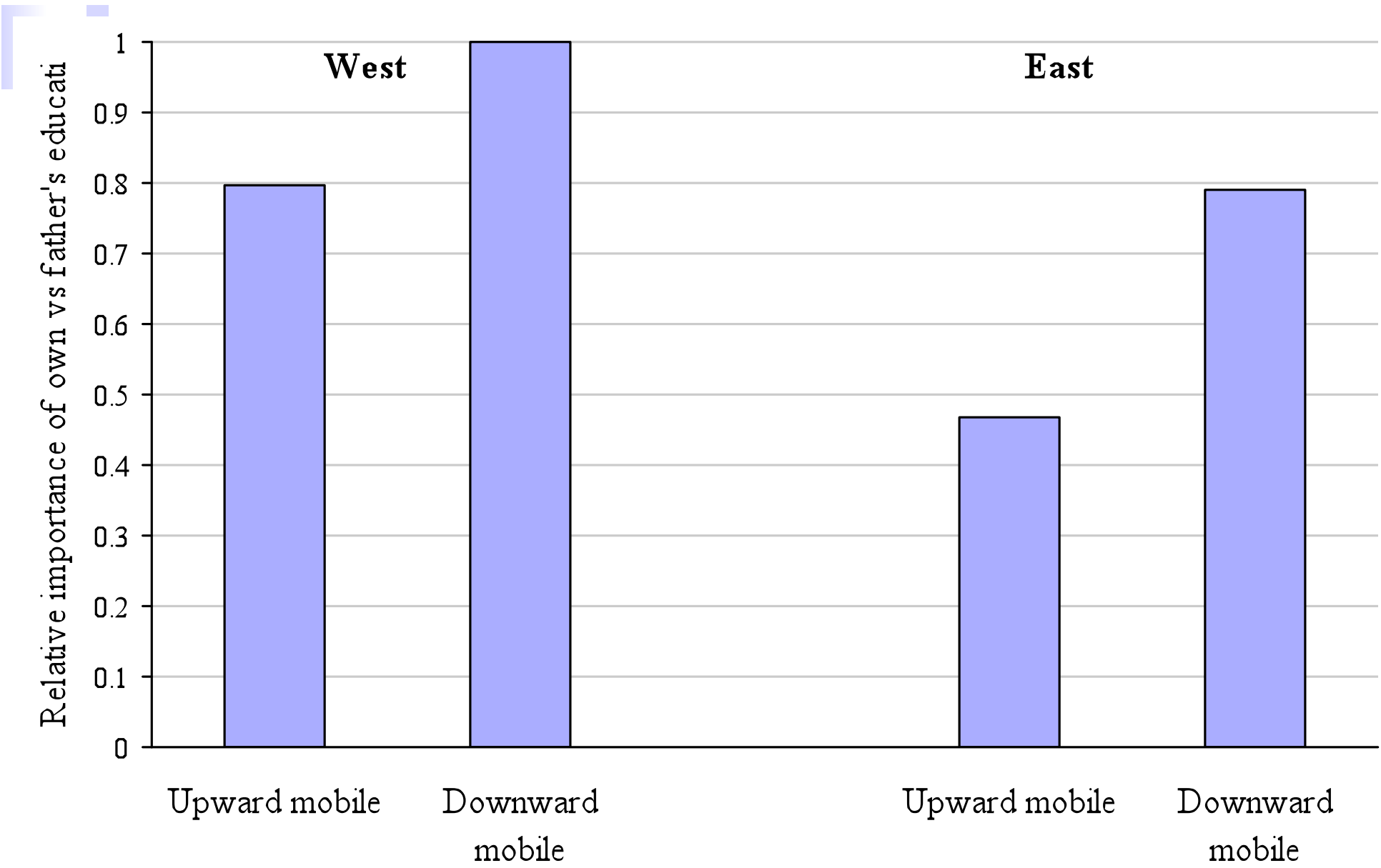
Own education	Father's education				
	Basic	Sec. low	Sec. high	Tertiary	Total
Basic	2.75	3.07	3.12	3.20	2.81
	<i>3,857</i>	<i>593</i>	<i>179</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>4,670</i>
Sec. Low	3.07	3.34	3.34	3.44	3.21
	<i>4,272</i>	<i>3,325</i>	<i>902</i>	<i>201</i>	<i>8,700</i>
Sec. High	3.15	3.44	3.56	3.56	3.42
	<i>4,876</i>	<i>5,717</i>	<i>7,791</i>	<i>1,293</i>	<i>19,667</i>
Tertiary	3.25	3.60	3.65	3.68	3.59
	<i>1,243</i>	<i>1,544</i>	<i>3,353</i>	<i>2,178</i>	<i>8,318</i>
Total	3.06	3.42	3.57	3.63	3.37
	<i>12,431</i>	<i>10,189</i>	<i>11,243</i>	<i>3,459</i>	<i>37,322</i>



Specific non-linear models

Finally, we aim to make a methodological contribution by applying non-linear regression models that fit the theory especially well. These models originated in sociological studies concerned with social mobility and voting (De Graaf and Ultee 1987; De Graaf and Ultee 1990), and are originally designed by Michael Sobel

See for a tutorial www.jtolsma.nl





Conclusions

- **The results show first of all clear differences in health between East and West as well as differences in the relative associations.**
- **Secondly, family support hypothesis stating that social origin is more important for self-assessed health in post-socialist countries seems to hold.**

However, we cannot test directly whether people in these societies rely more on the resources their parents currently provide and, on average, the burden of providing help and care to parents is higher.




- **Thirdly, intergenerational mobility is important for the relative effects of own and father's education. In Western Europe, for those who are downwardly mobile only their own education matters, whereas for downwardly mobile their own education is about three times more important than their father's education. The later also holds for the downwardly mobile in Eastern Europe. For upwardly mobile however, their own education is of equal importance as their father's education.**



Why father more important for upwardly mobile?

- If you start with poor health not much can be done anymore to improve it
- If you start with good health as a child you can harm it easily in adulthood



What are the implications of this analysis for the study of social health inequalities across Europe?

- First, we showed that the East-West divide seems a relevant distinction across European societies. The reasons for this divide are not well-understood yet.
- Second, this study emphasizes the importance of taking into account social mobility. Many studies look at both childhood and adult social position, but most often no attention is paid to their combination. This studied showed not only that the combination can be important but, more importantly, that the effects of the combination may differ across societies.