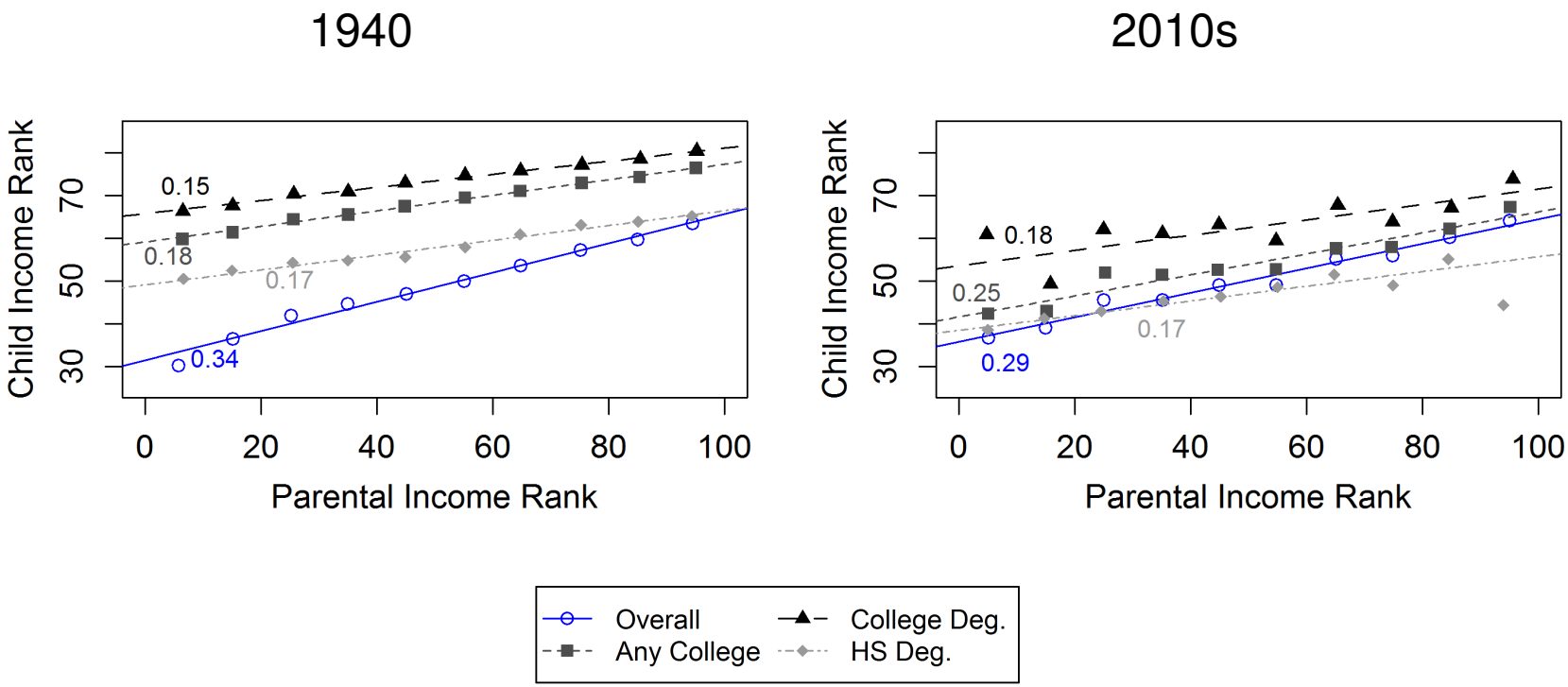
# Changes in the College Mobility Pipeline Since 1900

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2024 Summer Institute–DAE

# College has become more regressive over time

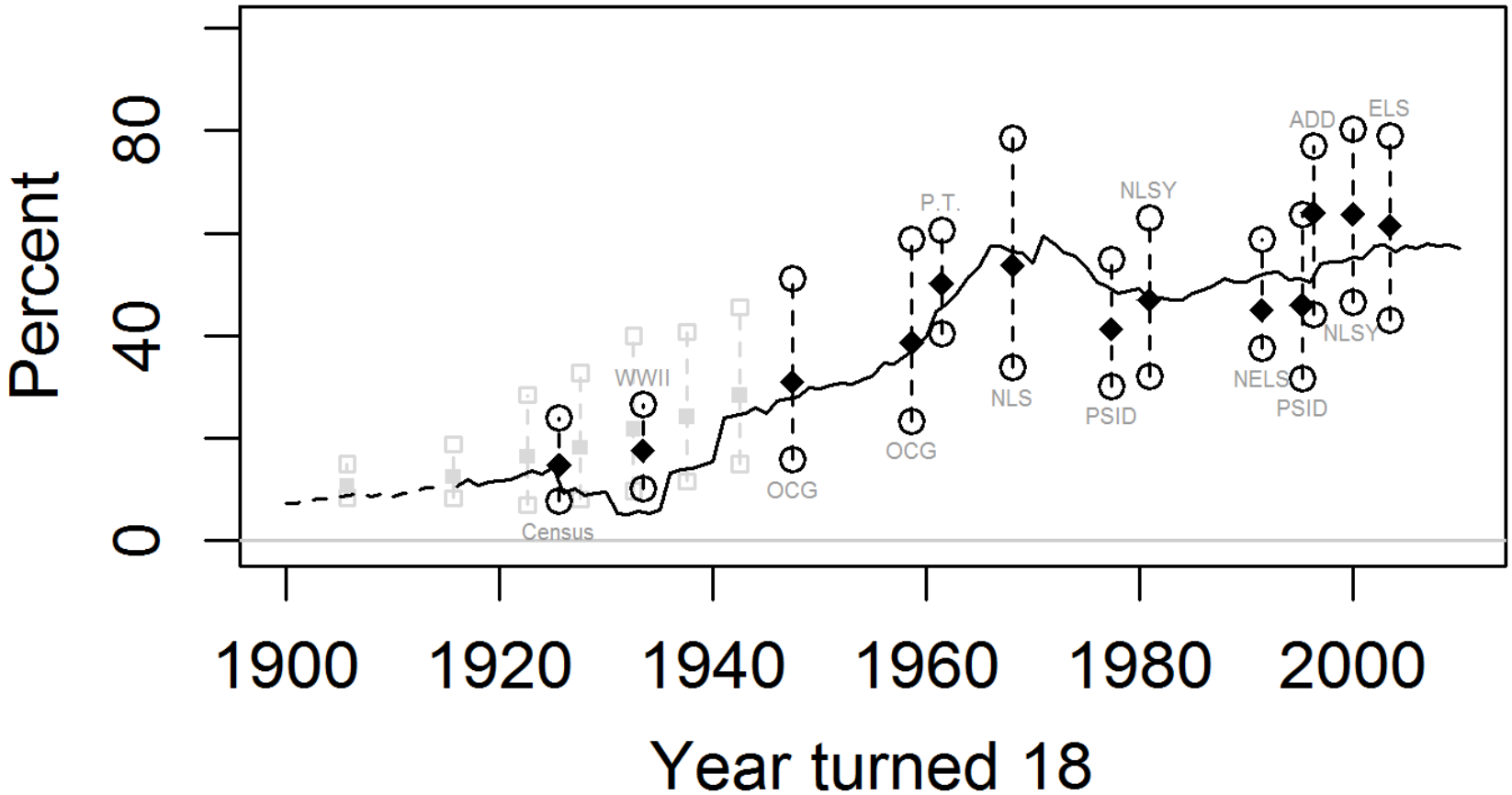



Note: Binned scatterplots and slopes of income rank among employed age 31-35 men by father's predicted income rank overall, for college graduates, for people who had completed at least one year of college, and for high school graduates who had not completed any years of college. Source: IPUMS, Census Linking Project, Saavedra and Twinam (2020), and NLSY97.

# This paper: document + decompose regressivity

- **Research question:** Why do high-status sons gain more from college than low-status sons now but not in the past?
- **Method:** Decompose selection into college attendance, pre-college test scores, institution, degree program by parental SES over time
- **Data:** Bring together longitudinal survey waves 1900s-on
  - Link 1910–50 censuses to each other, WW2 enlistment records, college registers
  - Harmonize post-WW2 surveys, administrative records
  - Each contain information on parental status, kids' early-30s incomes, pre-college test scores, major/institution choice

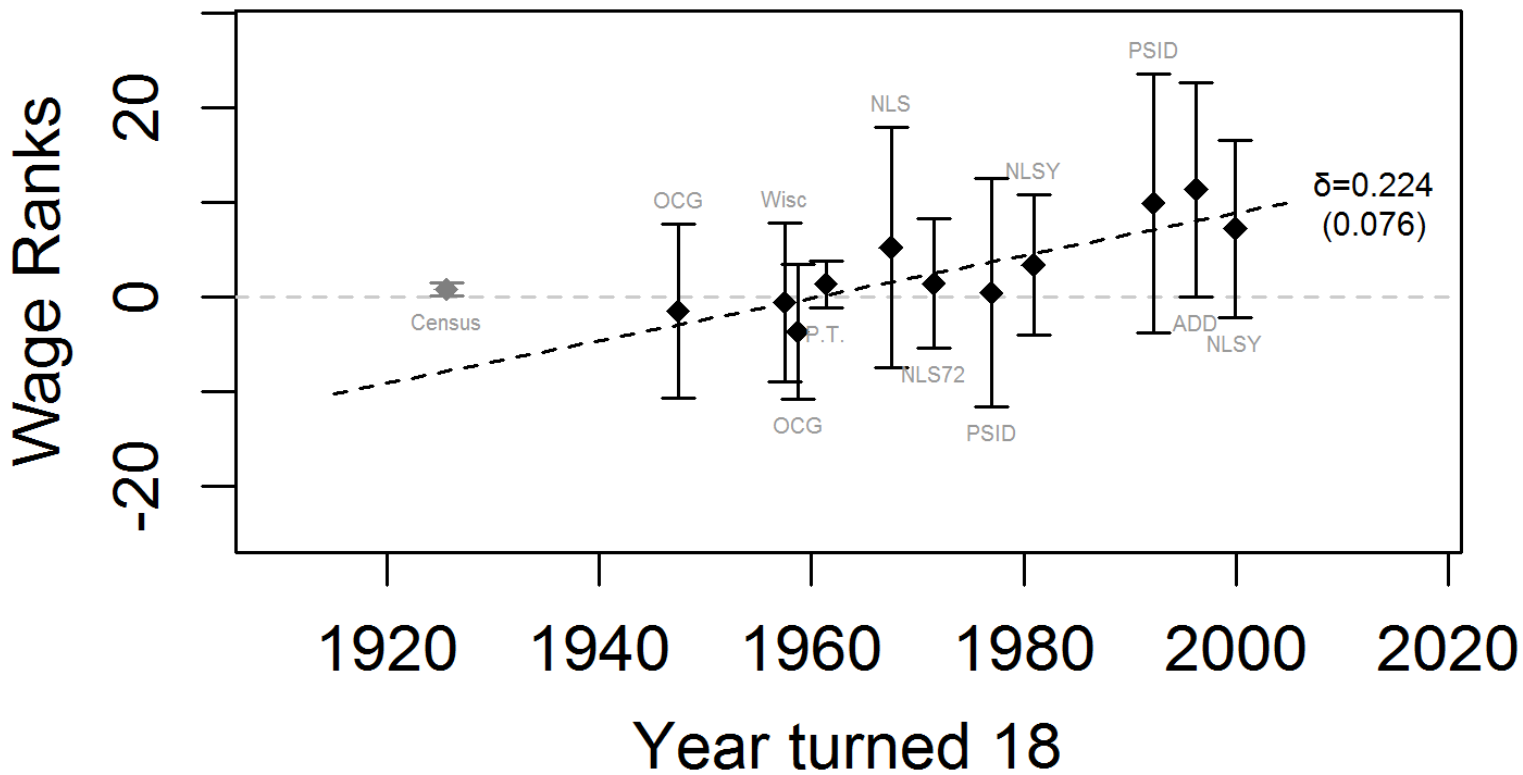
# College-going stratified by SES right after WW2




Note: Share of men between ages 30 and 35 who had completed at least one year of college overall (black diamond) or among those from the bottom or top tercile of family incomes when age 14-17 (circles). Points in gray show same for older men when other data are unavailable. The solid line reports the same overall average educational outcomes for men 28–42 in the 1940–2000 Censuses and 2006–2021 ACS.

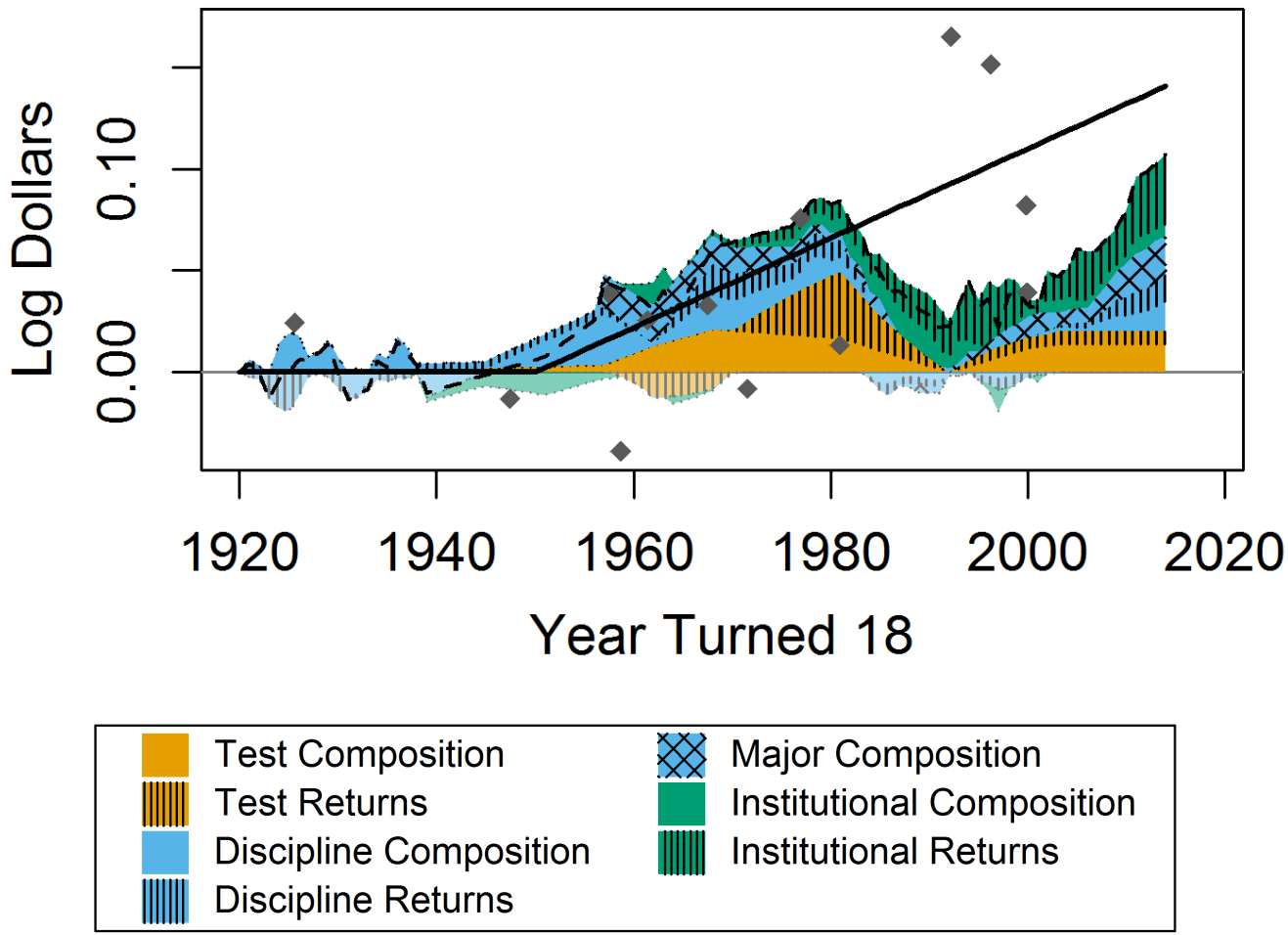
# Income gains tilt more towards rich college grads

$$Wage_{it} = \alpha_t FamInc_{it} + \beta_t Coll_{it} + \delta_t \left( FamInc_{it} \times Coll_{it} \right) + \zeta_t + \epsilon_{it}$$




Note: The trend line is the estimated $\delta$ and standard error, parameterizing $Coll_{it}$ as indicating at least one year of college. Dataset-specific estimates and 95-percent confidence intervals are estimated with separate $\delta_t$ terms for each dataset. All regressions are weighted using standardized survey weights.

# Relative Contributions to Rising Regressivity




Note: This figure decomposes the rise in regressivity of US college enrollment – shown by scaling the non-parametric (gray dots) and parametric (black lines) estimates to a comparison between students from top- and bottom-tercile parental incomes. The dotted line shows the sum of the 7 components.

# College generates less social mobility now than in past

- Other than 1960s–70s, little status-based selection on cognitive skill measures
- Declining lower-income enrollment in high-return majors has long mattered:
  - Engineering right after World War II
  - Computer science since 2000
- Post-1980, institutional stratification becomes important:
  - Private, more selective schools begin to generate higher alumni wages
  - After 2000, lower-income students tend towards lower value-added schools
- Female college patterns largely *progressive* till 2000s, when these same patterns also arise