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Introduction

Social mobility scholars increasingly recognise that traditional two-generation models of intergenerational social mobility provide an insufficiently nuanced picture of the nature of intergenerational movement between social classes. In particular, two-generation models, by design, make it impossible to calculate the extent of longstanding class immobility extending over multiple generations, and to establish how much of the class mobility observed between fathers and children constitutes a reversal of the mobility fortunes of fathers. Drawing on the British Cohort Study (BCS) which follows a nationally representative sample of individuals born in 1970, we show that around one third of all immobility within the salariat class (professional and managerial occupations) constitutes longstanding immobility spanning at least three generations, and that people born to salariat class fathers are much less likely to experience downward mobility if their families have been ‘up’ for more than one generation. We examine the potential influence on mobility chances in the third generation of socioeconomic differences between fathers who nominally share the same class position but have different intergenerational mobility histories. We find that fathers who were themselves born into the salariat rather than upwardly mobile into it tend to have higher incomes, are more likely to be homeowners, are more likely to hold a university degree and less likely to have no qualifications, are more likely to have sent their child to a private school, and are more likely to have sent their child to university. These factors partially explain the differing mobility chances of their children.

Literature review

In recent years scholars have begun taking a multigenerational approach to the study of social mobility, going beyond a traditional two-generation focus on the relationship between origins and destinations as indexed by the socioeconomic positions of parents and children, to bring grandparents, great grandparents, and

sometimes even more distant ancestors into the picture (Pfeffer 2014). This shift has been driven by the recognition that the implicit assumption behind two-generation mobility models of a Markovian relationship between origins and destinations is implausible and that there is good reason to believe that a person's socioeconomic fortunes are likely to depend not just on the social position of their parents but also on that of family members in earlier generations (Mare 2011). It has also been motivated by the realisation that traditional two-generation models of intergenerational social mobility are likely to provide a misleading picture of the extent of social fluidity, for example by rendering invisible longstanding class immobility extending over multiple generations and making it impossible to establish the extent to which class mobility between fathers and children simply constitutes a reversal of the mobility fortunes of fathers.

That grandparents do affect grandchildren's outcomes over and above the effects of parents has been confirmed by a growing number of studies. Direct effects of grandparental class positions on the class destinations of grandchildren, net of the effects of parental class, have been observed for a range of countries including Australia (Allingham 1967), Britain (Chan and Boliver 2013), Canada (Goyder and Curtis 1977), Germany (Hertel and Groh-Samberg 2014), Sweden (Chan and Boliver 2014; cf. Erola and Moisio 2007) and the United States (Beck 1983; Hertel and Groh-Samberg 2014). Grandparental class positions have also been found to have independent effects on children's educational aspirations and educational attainment in Britain (Moulton et al 2015; Plewis and Bartley 2014), while direct impacts of grandparents educational attainment on that of grandchildren have been observed for Chile (Celhay and Gallegos 2015), China (Zeng and Xie 2014), Taiwan (Chiang

and Park 2015), Denmark (Mollegaard and Jaeger 2015) and Sweden (Lindahl et al 2015). Other studies have demonstrated direct effects of grandparents' income on grandchildren's educational attainment in the United States (Wightman and Danziger 2014); of grandparents' income on grandchildren's income in Sweden (Lindahl et al 2015); and of grandparents' wealth on grandchildren's wealth in England (Clark and Cummins 2014) and the United States (Pfeffer and Killewald 2015). Some studies have found direct effects of the socioeconomic positions of great-grandparents and even more distance ancestors (Mare and Song 2014; Clark and Cummins 2014; Lindahl et al 2015).

In contrast, a small number of studies have found no direct effect of grandparental characteristics on grandchildren's outcomes. Warren and Hauser's analysis of data from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study, for example, reported that "the schooling, occupational status, and income of grandparents have few significant effects on the educational attainment or occupational status of their grandchildren when parents' characteristics are controlled" (Warren and Hauser 1997: 561). Similarly, in their analysis of data for the Netherlands, Bol and Kalmijn found that "three grandparental resources - educational attainment, occupational status, and cultural resources - affect the grandchild's educational attainment only if we do not control for parental characteristics" (Bol and Kalmijn 2015: 168). The null findings of these studies does not necessarily call into question the positive grandparent effect observed in the studies cited previously; they are, after all, concerned with different time periods, study populations, and combinations of dependent and independent variables. However, these null-finding studies do highlight that multigenerational social mobility processes are unlikely to operate exclusively via direct grandparental effects. Much

of the emerging body of research on multi-generation social mobility processes has focused on establishing whether and if so how grandparents directly affect grandchildren – for example, Zeng and Xie (2014) show that co-resident grandparents have an influence on the attainment levels of grandchildren in China but non-co-resident and deceased grandparents do not. Rather less attention has been paid, in contrast, to establishing the extent to which the gross effect of grandparents characteristics on grandchildren's outcomes are in fact mediated by factors at play in the parental generation. In particular, it seems likely that parents who nominally occupy the same social class position will differ substantially from one another with respect to other socioeconomic characteristics, such as education and income, as a result of their own intergenerational mobility histories.

In light of the above this paper analyses survey data containing information on the social class positions of three generations of family members in Britain to answer the following questions:

(1) How much class immobility in Britain is in fact longstanding class immobility, extending over multiple generations?

(2) How much of the class mobility observed between fathers and children constitutes a reversal of the mobility fortunes of fathers?

(3) Do fathers who nominally occupy the same social class position differ with respect to their other socioeconomic characteristics depending on their own intergenerational mobility histories?

(4) To what extent are the net effects of grandparents' class positions on grandchildren's class outcomes mediated by the other socioeconomic characteristics of fathers who occupy nominally the same social class position?

Data and methods

The following analysis draws on data from the British Cohort Study (BCS). The BCS is a prospective longitudinal study that follows all those born in Britain in one week in 1970. Eight sweeps have been conducted to date: in 1970 (at birth), 1975 (age 5), 1980 (age 10), 1986 (age 16), 1996 (age 26), 1999-2000 (age 29-30), 2004-2005 (age 34-35), 2008 (age 38) and 2012 (age 42).

In the first sweep cohort members' parents were asked about the occupations of their fathers, that is, cohort members' paternal and maternal grandfathers. This information was coded at the time to the Registrar General's class schema – a set of official governmental social class categories in use in 1970 – which distinguishes between six classes: Class 1 (professionals), Class 2 (managers) Class 3 (routine non-manual workers), Class 4 (skilled manual workers), Class 5 (semi-skilled manual workers) and Class 6 (unskilled manual workers). For the purposes of this analysis we focus on paternal grandfathers and create a dichotomous variable in order to differentiate between classes 1 and 2 (which we term the 'Salariat') and classes 3 through 6 (which we term 'Non-Salariat').

Information about the occupational class positions of cohort members' fathers was also collected in several sweeps. For consistency's sake we used the Registrar General class schema to create a dichotomous variable distinguishing between salariat and non-salariat class fathers using information obtained when cohort members were 10 and 16 years of age (taking the highest class position at either age to minimise the incidence of missing values).

Cohort members' own class positions are identified using information collected in the most recent sweep at age 42. Again, for consistencies sake we, we distinguish between salariat and non-salariat class positions derived from the Registrar General's class schema.

Parental income is based on information provided by parents when cohort members' were aged 10. The categories used were quite crude and so we divided the income distribution into approximate thirds.

Parental housing tenure is taken from information recorded when cohort members were born. We distinguish between those homeowners (bought outright or buying through a mortgage), those renting from their local council, and others (mainly private renters).

Father's highest qualification is taken from the first sweep and distinguishes between those who are educated to degree level or above, below degree level, or have no qualifications.

Child's schooling is based on information from the age 16 survey. We distinguish between those who attended private fee-paying secondary schools and those who attended free-of-charge state-funded secondary schools.

Child's highest qualification is taken from information obtained from cohort members at age 42. We dichotomise this variable to distinguish between those who do and who do not have a university degree.

The working sample consists of 2953 cohort members. Our analysis proceeds as follows. First, we use simple percentages to explore how common different class mobility trajectories were for the 1970 cohort according to two-generation (father → child) and three-generation (paternal grandfather → father → child) perspectives. Second, we calculate the odds of the third generation ending up in a salariat class position depending on the salariat/non-salariat class positions of fathers and paternal grandfathers.

We then turn to compare fathers in the same class position but with different mobility histories to see whether they differ in terms of their highest qualification, their family income, their housing tenure, whether their child attended a private or state school, and whether their child achieved a university degree or not. Finally, we use binary logistic regression models to explore the extent to which the above differences between fathers in nominally the same class position help explain the different mobility chances of their children.

Absolute mobility rates from a two-generation and three-generation perspective

We turn first to consider how common different intergenerational mobility trajectories are from a two-generation and three-generational perspective. Table 1 reports the prevalence of each of the eight possible combinations of grandfather's father's and child's class in the BCS data, based on a dichotomised distinction between salariat and non-salariat class positions. Column 4 of Table 1 reports the percentages obtained when considering only father's and child's class, while Column 5 reports the percentages once grandfather's class is brought into the picture.

Table 1. Absolute mobility rates from a two-generation and three-generation perspective (N=2953)

Grandfather's class	Father's class	Child's class	Two-generation perspective	Three-generation perspective
Salariat	Salariat	Salariat	22.4%	7.7%
Non-Salariat				14.7%
Salariat	Non-Salariat	Salariat	25.9%	3.5%
Non-Salariat				22.5%
Salariat	Salariat	Non-Salariat	14.1%	3.4%
Non-Salariat				10.7%
Salariat	Non-Salariat	Non-Salariat	37.6%	4.3%
Non-Salariat				33.3%

The two-generation perspective shows that 22.4% of BCS children had been immobile within the salariat. However, the three-generation perspective reveals that around a third of these immobile salariat class children had salariat origins extending back to their grandfather's generation (7.7% of all children and 34.4% of children immobile within the salariat).

The two generation perspective shows that 25.9% of children had been upwardly mobile into the salariat. Strikingly, the vast majority of upwardly mobile children had non-salariat origins extending back to their grandfather's generation (22.5% of all children and 86.9% of all children upwardly mobile into the salariat).

14.1% of children had been downwardly mobile into the non-salariat, but strikingly few had salariat origins extending back to their grandfather's generation (3.4% of all children and 24.1% of all children downwardly mobile into the salariat); on the contrary, the vast majority of downwardly mobile children had only been 'up' for one generation (10.7% of all children and 75.9% of all downwardly mobile children). In other words, most downward mobility in generation 3 represents a return to the class position held in generation 1.

Finally, the two-generation perspective also shows that 37.6% of children had been immobile within the non-salariat. The vast majority these immobile non-salariat children had been in that class extending back to their grandfather's generation (33.3% of all children and 88.6% of all immobile non-salariat children).

Relative mobility chances from a three-generation perspective

Turning to a consideration of relative mobility chances from a three-generation perspective, Table 2 compares the likelihood of children ending up in the salariat depending on the class positions held by their fathers and grandfathers.

Table 2. Relative mobility chances across three generations				
Grandfather's class	Father's class	Child in salariat class	Child's odds of salariat class	Odds ratio
Salariat	Salariat	69.3%	2.3	1.6 to 1
Non-Salariat	Salariat	58.0%	1.4	
Salariat	Non-Salariat	44.3%	0.8	1.1 to 1
Non-Salariat	Non-Salariat	40.3%	0.7	

It is clear that children of salariat fathers were considerably more likely to remain in the salariat rather than experience downward mobility if their father had been born into that class (69.3%) than if he had been upwardly mobile into the salariat (58.0%) – with an odds ratio of 1.6 to 1.

Children of non-salariat parents, on the other hand, were only slightly more likely to move up to the salariat if their father had been downwardly mobile into the non-salariat (44.3%) than if their father had been born into that class (40.3%) – an odds ratio of 1.1 to 1.

The impact of fathers' social mobility histories on their socioeconomic characteristics

So far it has been established that, with respect to absolute mobility rates, the vast majority of downwardly mobile children had only been 'up' for one generation, and that, with respect to relative mobility rates, children born to salariat class fathers were much less likely to experience downward mobility if their family had been 'up' for more than a generation. This section turns to consider whether fathers who occupy salariat class positions differ with respect to their other socioeconomic

characteristics depending on their personal intergenerational mobility histories – if so this may help explain the differing mobility prospects of their children.

Table 3 shows that fathers who were upwardly mobile into the salariat class are less likely to be in the top third of the family income distribution (45.5%) compared to fathers who were born into the salariat (54.7%); and they are less likely to be homeowners (77.9% compared to 85.5%). This may reflect the fact that upwardly mobile fathers are less likely than fathers born into the salariat to have the social capital needed to access high paying jobs, and are less likely to be able to draw on the economic resources of parents to assist with buying their own homes.

Upwardly mobile salariat class fathers are also less likely to hold degree qualifications (24.1% compared to 36.5%) and they are more likely to have no formal qualifications (30.3% compared to 22.7%). These differences in educational attainment are perhaps unsurprising given that many of the fathers in this study would have been teenagers in the period before the expansion of higher education in the 1960s and the raising of the school leaving age to 16 (the age at which secondary educational qualifications are typically taken) in the early 1970s.

Salariat class fathers also differ significantly, depending on their own intergenerational mobility histories, with respect to the rates at which they sent their

Table 3. A comparison of the socioeconomic characteristics of fathers broken down by father's current class position and personal intergenerational mobility history (percentages)

Class origin		Parental family income			Parental housing tenure			Father's highest qualification			Child's schooling		Child's highest qualification	
Grandfather's class	Father's class	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Home-owner	Renting council house	Other	Degree	Below degree	No qualifi c-ations	Private school	State school	Degree	Below degree
Salariat	Salariat	54.7	26.3	19.0	85.5	5.2	9.3	36.5	40.8	22.7	19.1	80.9	37.7	62.3
Non-Salariat		45.5	35.7	18.8	77.9	11.9	10.2	24.1	45.6	30.3	5.6	94.4	25.6	74.4
Salariat	Non-Salariat	17.3	40.1	42.6	59.4	29.3	11.4	6.1	36.5	57.4	2.2	97.8	20.9	79.1
Non-Salariat		20.0	43.0	37.0	47.5	41.3	11.2	3.4	35.7	60.9	1.7	98.3	12.2	87.8

child to a private rather than a state school. Just 5.6% of upwardly mobile salariat class fathers made use of private schools for their child compared to 19.1% of salariat class fathers born into that class, most likely reflecting differences in income reported above, in the extent to which grandparents might be called upon to help pay for school fees, and perhaps in their own schooling histories.

Salariat class fathers who were upwardly mobile were also less likely to see their child go on to gain a university degree, at 25.6% compared to 37.7% for salariat class fathers born into that class. One likely factor is that, as shown above, upwardly mobile salariat class fathers were less likely themselves to have gone to university which may influence their expectations for their children as well as their ability to help their children navigate the education system successfully to gain access to university at a time (the mid-1980s) when the British higher education system was not yet a mass system.

Mediating effect of fathers' other socioeconomic characteristics on children's mobility chances

The final section of this paper turns to consider whether the different socioeconomic characteristics of fathers who occupy nominally the same salariat class position but hail from different class origins impact on children's class mobility chances.

Table 4 reports the results of a series of binary logistic regression models predicting the odds of achieving a salariat class rather than a non-salariat class destination in the child generation. Of particular interest is the comparison between those with salariat class fathers who were upwardly mobile from non-salariat origins (the first contrast category) and those with salariat class fathers who were born into that class (the reference category).

Table 4. Binary logistic regression analysis predicting the odds of achieving a salariat rather than a non-salariat class position in the child generation (figures are odds ratios, asterisks indicate p<0.05)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Grandfather's → Father's class class							
Salariat → Salariat (ref cat)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Non-Salariat → Salariat	0.61*	0.66*	0.62*	0.67*	0.67*	0.71*	0.76
Salariat → Non-Salariat	0.35*	0.44*	0.40*	0.47*	0.39*	0.42*	0.58*
Non-Salariat → Non-Salariat	0.30*	0.37*	0.35*	0.41*	0.34*	0.41*	0.61*
Parental household income							
Top third (ref)		1.00					1.00
Middle third		0.72*					.84
Bottom third		0.57*					.70*
Parental housing tenure							
Bought/buying house (ref)			1.00				1.00
Renting council house			0.59*				0.79*
Other			0.66*				0.81
Father's highest qualification							
Degree (ref)				1.00			1.00

Below degree				0.58*			0.84
No qualifications				0.38*			0.61*
Child's schooling							
Private school (ref)					1.00		1.00
State school					0.41*		1.04
Child's highest qualification							
Degree (ref)						1.00	1.00
Below degree						0.14*	0.15*

From Model 1 we see what we saw earlier, that children are more likely to end up in the salariat if their father was in the salariat and particularly if their grandfather also occupied a salariat class position.

Model 2 controls for parental household income which can has a large a significant effect on children's chances of reaching the salariat and brings about a small reduction in the odds ratio for having an upwardly mobile salariat class father rather than a father born into that class (from 0.61 to 1 to 0.66 to 1).

Model 3 controls for parental housing tenure and this too has a large a significant effect on children's chances of reaching the salariat but produces only a negligible change in the odds ratio related to having an upwardly mobile rather than immobile salariat class father (from 0.61 to 1 to 0.62 to 1).

Model 4 controls for father's highest qualification which also has a large a significant effect on children's chances of reaching the salariat and brings about

a small reduction in the odds ratio for having an upwardly mobile salariat class father rather than a father born into that class (from 0.61 to 1 to 0.67 to 1).

Model 5 controls for whether the child went to a private or a state school which again is a strong predictor of mobility chances and modestly reduces the odds ratio (from 0.61 to 1 to 0.67 to 1).

Model 6 controls for whether or not the child gained a university degree, which can be seen to have a particularly large effect on mobility chances in the child generation, and to bring about the largest reduction so far in the odds ratio comparing upwardly mobile salariat class fathers to immobile ones (from 0.61 to 1 to 0.71 to 1).

Model 7 controls for all of the parental socioeconomic factors at once. In this final model, four of the other socioeconomic characteristics of fathers, besides their social class, remain significant, namely: if the family household income was in the bottom third rather than the top third of the distribution; if the parental home was rented from the council rather than owned by the family; if the father had no qualifications rather than a degree; and if the child had less than a degree. Controlling for all of these factors, the contrast between having an upwardly mobile salariat class father rather than a father born into the salariat is notably reduced (from 0.61 to 1 to 0.76 to 1) and is no longer statistically significant. The biggest factor appears to be whether or not the child achieved a degree qualification or not, suggesting that the effect of salariat class fathers'

mobility histories on their children's chances of 'staying up' operates substantially through its impact on the length of children's educational careers.

Conclusions

Our analysis of data for Britain shows that a three-generation perspective provides a more nuanced picture of social mobility processes than the traditional two-generation approach. We show that there is a high degree of longstanding immobility within the salariat class spanning three – and possibly more – generations, and that people born to salariat class fathers are much less likely to experience downward mobility if their families had been 'up' for more than one generation. We find that fathers who were themselves born into the salariat, rather than upwardly mobile into it, tend to have higher incomes, are more likely to be homeowners, are more likely to hold a university degree and less likely to have no qualifications, are more likely to have sent their child to a private school, and are more likely to have sent their child to university. These factors – particularly whether or not children achieve a university degree – help to explain why getting up doesn't necessarily mean staying up. On the contrary, those who have been up for multiple generations have the best chance of staying up, due at least partly to the fact that their fathers tend have a stronger purchase on their own salariat class positions and the resources such a position provides.

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