

Who's Your Daddy? A Comparison of Intergenerational Mobility of Socioeconomic Status for Sons and Daughters.

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Abstract. Intergenerational mobility is of immense interest to social scientists, in part due to the persistence of the quest for the “American Dream”. Intergenerational mobility is a gauge of the opportunities each group has to increase their privilege, class, and income. In addition, mobility helps researchers understand the way our society creates class structures. Many studies have addressed intergenerational mobility, focusing on socioeconomic status (SES) of the fathers and its effect on their sons. Other studies have looked at father's effect on son's and daughter's occupational mobility. The effect of father's SES on daughter's SES has been overlooked thus far. This study examined the intergenerational mobility of SES and if there are differences in the transmission of father's SES to their sons and daughters. Secondary data analysis of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1979-2002) was used for the analysis. An alternative model was created in order to examine three sets of relevant theories; individual, structural, and gender-level. Univariate, bivariate and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression were utilized for analysis. Bivariate analysis shows that men have higher SES than women. OLS regression results indicate that father's SES has a positive effect on their children's SES, net of other factors, but no statistical difference was found between sons and daughters.

1. Introduction

The income inequalities between men and women have been explained by three different theoretical approaches: the individualist model, the structural model, and the gender model. Individual theorists explain income inequalities as a result of differing amounts of human capital. Individuals have agency and make rational choices regarding the costs versus benefits (time and effort vs. increased wage and prestige) when making decisions concerning investments in human capital [2]. Therefore the degree of value an individual's parents place on human capital investments, such as education, affects the individual's own attainment [3]. In addition, employers make decisions on wages based on the level of productivity enhancing skills an individual holds [2]. The structural model argues that independent of individual attributes, income inequalities are based on the hierarchal economic position in which workers are located. Workers in the primary segment or positions are paid higher wages with increased benefits compared to those in the secondary segment or positions [4]. The gender model maintains that income inequalities are based upon a process of devaluation and sorting that places women into lower level and stereotypically female positions [5]. Independent of individual attributes, women therefore lack the opportunity to obtain equal wages with men. For this study an alternative model was created to examine these three theoretical approaches and their ability to explain trends in intergenerational mobility.

2. Experiment, Results, Discussion, and Significance

This study examined the intergenerational mobility of socioeconomic status and what, if any differences there are in the transmission of father's socioeconomic status to their sons and daughters. Secondary data analysis of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1979-2002) was used for the analysis. A conceptual model was created in order to examine three sets of relevant theories; individual, structural, and gender-model. Based on the three model segments three hypothesis were tested; (1) Net of other factors, as father's socioeconomic status increases respondents' socioeconomic status increases, (2) Women will have lower socioeconomic status than men, net of other factors, and (3) Father's socioeconomic status will more positively contribute to son's socioeconomic status than daughter's socioeconomic status.

Univariate and bivariate analysis were used to obtain descriptive statistics for the full sample as well as separated by men and women. Ordinary least squares regression was used to examine the independent effect of the independent variables on respondents' socioeconomic status, net of other factors. An adjusted R-squared of 0.29 was found from OLS regression (significant at the .000 level), suggesting that the model explains approximately 29% of the variance in socioeconomic status. The separate analysis by sex also reports statistically significant R-squared values of 0.35 (35%) and 0.23 (23%) for men and women respectively.

OLS regression analysis yielded support for hypothesis 1. For the full sample, for every one increase in father's socioeconomic status the respondent's socioeconomic status increases by 0.33. OLS also lends support to hypothesis 2, net of other factors, being female results in a reduction of 0.33 in socioeconomic status. Hypothesis 3 was not supported. No statistical difference, though, was found between men and women's socioeconomic status relative to that of their father's, net of other factors. Thus supporting individual theorists, that parents effect their children's status through contributions to their human capital, independent of gender [3].

OLS regression Analysis for Conceptual Model										
(Dependent Variable = SES)										
Variables:										
Independent Variables:										
Individual-level factors:										
Age (years)										
Urban (0,1)										
Father's SES										
Urban @ age 14 (0,1)										
Structural-level factors:										
Work hours per week										
Number of jobs										
Gender:										
Female										
Occupational sex segregation										
% Married (0,1)										
Number of children										
% Minority (0,1)										
(Constant)										
Adjusted R²										
N=										
	Unstd.	¹	std.	Unstd.	¹	std.	²	Unstd.	¹	std.
	0.00		0.00	0.02		0.02		-0.01		-0.01
	0.40	***	0.09	0.41	***	0.08		0.32	***	0.07
	0.33	***	0.41	0.34	***	0.41		0.30	***	0.40
	0.12		0.02	0.13		0.02		0.11		0.02
	0.03	***	0.21	0.02	***	0.14	◊	0.03	***	0.25
	-0.02	***	-0.05	-0.03	***	-0.09	◊	0.00		0.01
	-0.33	***	-0.08							
	0.52	***	0.16	0.88	***	0.19	◊	0.20	**	0.06
	0.42	***	0.09	0.50	***	0.11		0.33	***	0.08
	0.10	***	0.06	0.16	***	0.09	◊	0.04		0.03
	-0.09		-0.02	-0.22	*	-0.04		0.03		0.01
	-2.13	***		-2.62	***			-1.70	*	
	0.29	***		0.35	***			0.23	***	
	4685			2496				2189		

¹ = *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05
² effect size greater = > 1.96 or < -1.96

3. Conclusions

The most interesting finding in this study was the lack of significant difference between father's effect on son and daughter's socioeconomic status. With results consistently indicating a difference between men and women's socioeconomic status it is surprising that women would receive the same contribution from their fathers as their male counterparts.

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