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When lines of class division run through families: Comparing mother's and father's influence on social destiny

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ABSTRACT

The importance of both parents' occupation on the social destiny of women and men have often been documented. However, studies have not explained how the mother's influence differs from that of the father and in particular when both parents have different and unequal social positions. We argue that these differences shed light on distinct factors that underlie social class reproduction: the position of the social class in the economic hierarchy and gender role imitation. To evaluate the relative importance of each of those factors, we compare the father's and mother's influence and we examine more particularly families in which the mother has a higher position than the father. We use data from the French Labor Force Survey and a six classes version of the European Socioeconomic Classification. Results show that the position in the economic hierarchy plays the first role to explain social reproduction. Gender role imitation plays a secondary role that can offset the role of economic hierarchy in some particular family configurations. The strength of inheritance of a class from a parent to a child depends therefore on an interplay between the position of the class in the economic hierarchy, the parent gender, and the child gender.

1. Introduction

In his famous defense of the conventional approach to social class, John Goldthorpe wrote that "lines of class division and potential conflict run between, but not through, families" (Goldthorpe, 1984: 469). We shall here take the opposite stand: if social class is defined by the position in the labor market as in the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero (EGP) schema, it is distinctly defined for each individual and therefore families can be composed of individuals belonging to different social classes. Accepting this premise and the definition of class that goes with it, we shall focus on how social class divisions among families affect social class mobility and how does it interact with the gender of the family members. The objective is to shed light on gender differences in how both parents' social class influence the social destiny of their children[1].

Following the idea that the family has only one social class position, the literature on social mobility has traditionally relied on the father's position over the mother's position to identify the family's social class. This has provoked famous and heated debates (Acker, 1973; Goldthorpe, 1983; Stanworth, 1984; Heath & Britten, 1984). Since then, most studies have been conducted into the dominance framework (Thaning & Hällsten, 2020) that attributes to the family the highest social class among the spouses (Erikson, 1984). However, many studies have shown that models that rely on the dominance approach cannot account for social mobility when one takes into account the mother's, the father's and the respondent's class position or their socioeconomic status (Vallet, 1991; Beller, 2009; Hout, 2018; Thaning & Hällsten, 2020). This is because the class position and the socioeconomic status of each parent have effects that are partially independent of that of the other parent. Those results call for the use of a joint approach that takes into account the market position of both spouses (Heath & Britten, 1984).

The fact that mothers matter for social mobility research seems therefore to be settled. Another question that has been less investigated is whether mothers and fathers matter differently (see however Zhu & Grusky, 2022). Investigating gender differences in how parents influence the social destiny is important, because it sheds light on different underlying mechanisms that explain social class reproduction. There are indeed two main explanations for the importance of mothers in social mobility and those explanations have different consequences for the role of gender in social reproduction. Mothers can matter because they transmit resources that help the child to attain the social class that she/he aims to attain. Depending on the theory, it can be the highest possible social class or a social class that allows to avoid downward

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mobility (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997). In that case, mothers should influence women and men, as most resources for attaining a class position should not be gender specific.

Mothers can also matter because of gender roles. In that case, the influence of the mother should be much stronger on women than on men. This second explanation questions the traditional dominance approach that gives to the family the highest position held by one of its members. If gender roles matter, it means that people do not necessarily attempt to attain the highest economic position in the family, but the position of the parent of the same gender. On the contrary, the traditional dominance approach supposes that economic hierarchy matters more than gender role to explain social class reproduction.

Investigating gender differences in social mobility can therefore help understanding how and why people aim to attain a particular social class and the respective importance of economic hierarchy and gender role in that process. In that perspective, we shall therefore examine in detail to what extent children tend to follow their father or their mother and how does it depend on the social class of each parent. We shall improve on the existing literature on the effect of the mother by investigating how this effect depends on the inequalities within families. More particularly we shall focus on how mother matters in families in which the mother has a higher position in the economic hierarchy. We shall argue that such an approach sheds light on the respective importance of those two mechanisms that underlie social class reproduction: gender role imitation and the will to avoid downward mobility by reproducing a social class that has the same hierarchical level.

Assessing the respective influence of each parent implies to use a joint approach. It does not require however to abandon the concept of dominance, but rather to redefine it to make it useful for such an approach. We propose to use the concept of dominance to describe the fact that one parent has more influence than the other on the trajectory of her or his children. We distinguish social class dominance and gender dominance. Social class dominance refers to the fact that a social class can have more influence than others, gender dominance to the fact that one gender can have more influence than the other. Describing which parent has the most important influence and how does it depend on gender and social class amounts therefore to investigate social class and gender dominances. Thus, dominance becomes a subject of empirical investigation rather than a way to assign only one class to the family with an order of dominance a priori defined.

In the first part of the paper, we re-examine the theoretical literature on the importance of mothers for social class analysis, we defend our new way to conceptualize dominance, and we propose a set of hypotheses regarding the importance of gender role and economic hierarchy in social mobility and their consequences for social class dominance and gender dominance. In light of the theoretical literature, we propose to consider that economic hierarchy is the primary factor to explain dominance and that gender role imitation is a secondary factor. We propose a set of sub-hypotheses that are implied by these hypotheses.

In the second part of the paper, we test those hypotheses by using the French Labor Force Survey and by investigating the differences between the father's and mother's influences on social class mobility. We use surveys from 2003 to 2020. We have 425,814 respondents, 207,061 men and 218,753 women. Social class is coded with a six classes version of the ESeC classification (Rose & Harrison, 2007). We use three dimensional contingency tables with the respondent's, the mother's, and the father's social class. Data are analyzed with different types of log-linear models so as to distinguish inheritance, upward and downward mobility.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. A controversy that defined the main contemporary approaches: conventional, individual, joint and dominance

The increasing participation of women in the labor market has early on provoked a debate on their place in social stratification research (for more comprehensive reviews of this debate, see Sorensen, 1994; Vallet, 2001). In 1973, in the *American Journal of Sociology* Joan Acker famously described social stratification research as a case of "intellectual sexism". A decade after this accusation, a fruitful debate in the journal *Sociology* followed the publication of *Social Mobility and Class structure in Modern Britain* by John Goldthorpe, a book in which women were not analyzed. In 1983, in *Sociology* Goldthorpe defended his approach that he called the conventional view, and it was followed in 1984 by a critic by Michelle Stanworth (1984), another by Heath and Britten (1984), a reply by Goldthorpe (1984) and a seminal article by Robert Erikson (1984) in which he proposed the so-called dominance approach. This debate is particularly important because it helped establish the main concepts and approaches that are still in use today: the conventional and the dominance approaches; the individual approach, and the joint approach.

Goldthorpe is well-known for his defense of the conventional approach. According to him, in the conventional approach, the class position is determined by the head of family because she/he is the one who has the strongest commitment to the labor-market participation. Therefore, the social class of the other participants, mostly the women, is "indirectly determined". This has for Goldthorpe an important number of consequences. Notably, that the life chance of women depends on the class of their husband rather than their own class. Goldthorpe considers that this approach, far from legitimizing inequality, shed light on the inequality of power and advantage. The use of the family head is therefore a consequence of gender inequality. Moreover, for Goldthorpe, the fact that women increased their participation to the labor market is not sufficient to change the conventional approach, because this participation is often conditional to the men's social class.

Stanworth (1984: 164) considers that Goldthorpe "closes off some of the most intriguing issues in class analysis", because the conventional approach obscures the "extent to which the class experience of wives differs from that of husbands (…) and the class experience of married women is more often than not, proletarian". According to her, the fact that the women's engagement in the labor market is weaker than the men's is a reason to ignore her class position only if it is supposed that the family is a unit and that a single representative is to be found. Stanworth considers on the contrary that the family does not have to be considered as a unit. She argues that such an approach does not take into account the feature of wives' employment and wives' dependency: the fact that their employment enhances their life condition, and that they do not share the same orientation to class action as their husband. It follows from Stanworth's argument that class analysts should adopt an individual approach in which only the individual's position in the labor market counts and not the family's position.

In an earlier paper, Britten and Heath (1983) had proposed a joint approach for which both positions on the labor market have to be taken into account. In the 1984 paper, Heath and Britten defend this approach against Goldthorpe and they insist on doing so because women's own class explain their voting and fertility behavior.

In the same issue, Robert Erikson proposed another solution. He considers that taking into account all possible couples of occupations as the joint approach is too complicated and that class analysis needs to reduce this complexity. He proposes therefore to build an index of dominance. Some classes are viewed as dominant and the social class of the family is the dominant class.

2.2. Some recent developments: mothers' matter

In the 80′s, many papers argued that mothers matter to explain social mobility (Rosenfeld, 1978; Pearson, 1983; Heath & Britten, 1984; Hayes, 1987; Stevens and Boyd, 1980); this debate partly waned since the 90′s in favor of the conventional and the dominance approaches (Beller, 2009; Thaning & Hällsten, 2020). Although the dominance approach became the standard approach, there still were subsequently and consistently papers arguing that "mothers matter" to explain social class mobility (Vallet, 1991; Hayes & Miller, 1993; Beller, 2009; Hout, 2018), socioeconomic status (Thaning & Hällsten, 2020; Erola & Jalovaara, 2017), and educational attainment (Kalmijn, 1994; Korupp et al., 2002; Ballarino et al., 2021).

Those papers have not only showed that mothers matter in the sense that there is a statistical relation between the mother's position and the children's position, but also that ignoring the mother's position leads to biased general conclusions about social mobility. For example, Ballarino et al. (2021:1) studying educational inequalities argue that the dominance approach is not tenable for it "underestimates the association between parental education and respondent's education when parents have a similar educational title, while it overestimates it when a wider education gap is found between parents." To take another example, Beller (2009) argues that the conventional approach concludes that there was no change in social fluidity for men in the US. Using both mother's and father's positions she shows on the contrary that social fluidity declines for those born after 1960.

Apparently more remote, the paper by Engzell et al. (2020) is particularly interesting to reveal the serious bias than can provoke the ignorance of the mother's position. The objective of the paper is to investigate whether the grands-parents' effect in status transmission could be attributed to a bad measurement of the parent's social position. The paper argues that it is mostly the case and among the bad measurements that contribute to create an artificial grand-parent's effect, there is the ignorance of the mother's position.

2.3. Mothers matter: so, what?

In 1984, Goldthorpe replied in advance to those different results that showed that mothers matter. Commenting the paper by Heath and Britten (1984), he replied that he certainly did not imply that the position of women did not make a difference. He considered however that the fact that the women position does make a difference should not change the conventional view. He argued that the objective is not to explain the maximum of variance, but to identify and describe social groups which have an identity or a strong consistency. He argues against Britten and Heath that the groups they study have a low consistency and that using them will lead to "large amounts of quite artefactual class mobility" (Goldthorpe, 1984: 492). This argument is also used latter in the *Constant flux*, Erikson and Goldthorpe contend that the joint approach leads to too many classes and make the frontiers between them less clear (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992, p. 238).

However, as many papers have shown, ignoring the mother's position does not only reduce the variance explained, but it leads to serious bias and therefore to false interpretations. It is true that the joint approach advocated by Britten and Heath finds itself in a difficult position against the argument that it generates too much mobility. This problem stems from the fact that a joint approach challenges classical representations of social class and raises important and fundamental questions that go beyond the simple addition of a variable in a statistical analysis. Firstly, it breaks with the traditional approach that the unit of the social structure is the family and that the family has only one social class. Secondly, it creates an important number of classes, whereas class analysis generally assumes a low number of them. Thus, it does not seem to describe what is commonly called social class. The EGP schema for example has 11 classes, but in fact, most of the time researchers collapse it to reduce the number of classes (often between six and eight classes). Even with a six-classes schema, the joint approach obtains 36 classes or 15 classes if we do not distinguish the mother's and the father's social class. Clearly, as Goldthorpe underlines, it can generate social classes that are not very consistent, have a low identity and an important mobility between them.

We shall not underestimate the importance of convenience in the success of the conventional and the dominance approaches. It certainly is theoretically easier to consider that a family has only one social class and to use only one class which is considered as dominant. To this regard, it seems comprehensible that the dominance approach of Erikson appeared as a good compromise: it takes into account the mother's position, but it keeps the number of classes low and only one class by family. The numerous analyses of the impact of the mother's position on the labor market have however proved that this compromise may often be too costly and can't justify to entirely ignore the position of the non-dominant spouse when it is possible to use it.

There is therefore a strong dilemma between those two positions: on the one hand, it seems difficult to argue that we can ignore the mother's position even though it is clearly demonstrated that it matters; on the other hand, the joint approach can lead to a stronger challenge to the traditional social class analysis that it is generally acknowledged.

Reworking social class theory so as to better make sense of lines of class division among families is beyond the scope of this paper. However, we can adopt a provisional pragmatic point of view: there is not one way to characterize individual's social origin and the measure we need to use depends on the question we ask. We already know that from the extensive literature on income, social class, and educational mobilities. The comparisons in this literature already showed that using different measures of social position can lead to different and conflicting results (Breen et al., 2016). This shows that social stratification is complex and made of numerous dimensions. All dimensions cannot always be considered at the same time and there is a compromise to make between realism and parsimony.

Adopting a conventional-dominance approach or a joint approach is more or less convenient depending on the statistical techniques that are used. Using a joint approach breaks with the usual representation of a mobility table with the same categories for the origin and for the destiny. Social origin is defined by a combination of two categories, whereas destiny with only one of those two categories. Unless we used the spouse's social class, it is no longer possible to assess the absolute immobility in percentage, as the percentage of people staying in the diagonal of a square mobility table. In that case, when we want such an estimation of absolute mobility, it seems we have no other choice that using a kind of dominance or conventional approach. We could also use the spouse's social class: it would be theoretically consistent, but it would lead to use a very big mobility table and, as underlined by Goldthorpe, this table would show quite a large amount of artefactual mobility.

However, social mobility research is not only about evaluating the amount of absolute mobility, it is about understanding the relation between social origin and social position. In that process, taking into account the fact that there are social class divisions within families should be a legitimate subject of inquiries. If social class is defined by the type of occupation someone holds in the labor market, there are class inequalities within families. As Stanworth emphasized, this inequality clearly raises interesting and fundamental issues that should be investigated and that are hidden by the traditional and the dominance approaches. Moreover, when using multivariate techniques such as log-linear models, we do not encounter the problem of overestimating class mobility as the objective is not to measure in percentage terms the amount of mobility. We can specify models in which both parents are taken into account and compare the relative weight of each influence or their interaction. A joint approach leads therefore to many important and interesting questions that are perfectly tractable using common statistical tools.

Up to know, the joint approach has been mostly used to argue that

mothers matter. A joint approach is however interesting not only because it would better estimate the strength of the relation between origin and position, but because it can shed light on many other mechanisms that are hidden in a conventional or a dominance approach. Taking both spouses into consideration and breaking the family's unity paves the way for many interesting questions: to what extent the father's and the mother's influence are different? What class shall the children attain? The dominant one? The one of the parents of the same gender? Are there differences between men and women in attaining the dominant social class?

Goldthorpe contends that gender inequalities explain the conventional view: this amounts however to assume their existence without studying them. Using the joint approach is on the contrary a way to better understand those inequalities by understanding to what extent the father's position is more important and whether it is always true or how it has changed with the increase of female's employment.

2.4. Social class dominance and gender dominance

Investigating the role of both parents can be done in light of a re-examination of the concept of dominance. I shall argue that the construction of the dominance order scale by Erikson suffers from a problematic assumption. Erikson defines the dominance of a social class by the strength of its influence. He writes that to build the dominance order:

"we have to make an assumption about which of the two categories that (…) has the greatest impact upon ideology, attitudes, behavior, and consumption patterns of the family members. We ought also to consider which category has most importance for the life chances of the children in the family" (Erikson, 1984: 504).

Then Erikson adds "We assume that categories of higher qualifications dominate categories of lower" (Erikson, 1984: 504) and "when both spouses are at the same qualification level, non-manual categories dominate manual categories" (Erikson, 1984: 505). The order of dominance given by Erikson is in Table 1.

Erikson's assumptions are quite convenient because they allow to derive a priori the order or dominance from the qualification order and from the distinction between manual and non-manual classes. The problem is that those assumptions should be tested and it is quite plausible that they are at least partially wrong. For example, social mobility research has often shown that classes at the top but also at the bottom have higher reproductions rates. Moreover, contrary to what Erikson assumes, blue collars may have stronger reproduction rates than nonprofessional white collars.

Considering dominance as reflecting the level of qualification is misleading if the objective is to measure social class immobility, because the strength of reproduction of a social class is not rising linearly with qualification. Therefore, the traditional dominance approach can underestimate social immobility. For example, the traditional dominance approach gives to a family an intermediate position if the mother has such a position and the father a manual class position. However, we can suppose that a son has more chances to reproduce the lower manual class of his father than the intermediate class of his mother, as manual class are known to have strong immobility rates. We can also suppose that there is some gender role imitation in one's trajectory, which should encourage the son to follow his father. In such a situation however, if the son follows his father, the dominance approach measures a mobility trajectory.

Table 1
Erikson's Order of dominance.

Order of dominance of social class (most dominant at the top).
Self-employed professionals
Employed professionals, higher managerial and civil servants
Farmers
Smallholders
Large scale proprietors
Same scale proprietors
Small scale proprietors
Self-employed without employees
Intermediate non manuals
Routine non manual, higher level
Skilled manual workers
Routine non manual, lower level
Unskilled manual workers
Students
No independent occupational category

In social mobility research, social class dominance should therefore better be defined by the relative strength of inheritability of social classes: the dominant class of the family is the one that is most often reproduced by the children (accounting however for marginal effects or the sizes of the classes in the population). The order of social class dominance can thus be defined as the hierarchy of the strength of inheritance of each social class. In that perspective, instead of having an order of dominance that is defined a priori, the order of dominance among social classes should be empirically investigated. To this regard, the relation between social class dominance and the economic hierarchy is far from clear, because, as we've mentioned, the social classes in which social reproduction is the highest are not all at the top of the hierarchy. In particular the farmers and the manual class have high reproduction rates. We can suppose that a social class dominance depends on its resources, but also on other mechanisms. The strength of class identity notably may be an important factor to explain the reproduction of a social class.

A joint approach allows to study the order of dominance between social classes and to make it an empirical phenomenon to investigate. It also allows to extend the notion of dominance to gender dominance. When we study the inheritance of social class, we can explain this inheritance by the characteristics of the social class, whether it is a manual or non-manual class or whether it is highly ranked in the economic hierarchy. When we use both parents' market position, we can suppose that children reproduce the social class of one parent rather than the other not only because of the particular social class of that parent but because of her/his gender. Individuals can thus attempt to attain firstly the social class of the parent of the same gender or of one specific gender. Gender studies have for long described the dominant position enjoyed by men. The father could therefore also be the reference that people try to follow irrespective of her/his social class. We can thus extend the notion of dominance to gender and define gender dominance as the gender of the parent that has the strongest influence on the children. In that perspective, we can call father's dominance the fact that the children's social class is more correlated to the father's social class than to the mother's social class, and the mother's dominance the reversed situation.

Gender dominance raises numerous interesting questions: is gender dominance a simple consequence of social class dominance? Is the mother dominant when she has a higher economic position? More generally, how social class and gender dominance are interrelated?

2.5. Resource transmission, inequality and dominance

We shall now try to answer those questions starting from existing theories of social class mobility. We shall therefore come back to why mother should matter and how it can be framed into the existing theories of social class reproduction.

The mother's occupation can be important for at least three reasons (Vallet, 1991): the gendered segmentation of the market; the mother's occupation raises the level of resource of the family, and the woman can serve as a role model. The first mechanism does not necessarily reflect an influence of the mother's position on the daughter's destiny. Because the labor market is strongly segregated by gender (Chang, 2004; Levanon & Grusky, 2016), women have more chances to have the same position as their mother than their father. This can partly be explained by the fact that they share a common characteristic, to be a woman, and that this

characteristic is correlated to the position that someone can have in the labor market. In traditional log-linear models applied to mobility tables, the effect of the segmentation of the market is measured by the marginal effects and does not affect the measure of the association between the origin and the position. It shall be noted that this gendered segregation of the labor market can itself also be a product of gender differences in inheritances (Zhu & Grusky, 2022).

The second mechanism, the accumulation of resources that follows from the position in the economic hierarchy, implies that, contrary to the conventional and the dominance views, it is not the same to have, for example, two parents that are professionals than just one of them. In such a situation, we can suppose that the mother brings all types of additional resources that are associated to the attainment of a particular social class: income but also network or cultural resources. At the level of class analysis (as opposed to occupation or microclass), most of those additional resources should be gender neutral: they should benefit to the sons as well as to the daughters. Conversely, the resources given by the father should benefit to the daughters and the sons. This should imply that the two parents have an important influence on all children, mostly irrespective of their gender.

The third mechanism is gender role imitation: children have different ambitions depending on their gender and the occupation of their parent (Polavieja & Platt, 2014; Weeden et al., 2020; Zhu & Grusky, 2022). If someone takes her/his parents as reference to assess whether she/he is mobile, the answer may depend on which parent does she/he choose. The traditional dominance approaches assumes that it is the parent with the highest position that serves as a reference, but it could also be the parent with the same gender. Thus, daughters that attain a social class identical to their mother, but inferior than their father, may not consider themselves as downwardly mobile. In fact, women are more often measured as downwardly mobile (Bukodi & Paskov, 2020) and it may be in part because they preferred or are encouraged to follow the path of their mother who more often has a lower social class than their father.

Existing theories of social mobility are mostly constructed on the basis of economic hierarchy and resource transmission. The most well-known model, the Breen-Goldthorpe model (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997) supposes that people only aim at avoiding downward mobility (see Breen & Yaish, 2006 and Barone et al., 2021 for some extensions of the model). In this model it is assumed that there is one social class by family and that it is the highest in the economic hierarchy. Gender role imitation is ignored.

In traditional theories, the position of the social class in the economic hierarchy appears therefore as the sole factor for explaining social class mobility. In the more empirical literature, the situation is similar: the dominance approach is the most common approach and it is an approach that does not give any importance to gender imitation. We shall take the literature as a starting point to formulate our hypotheses. We shall therefore suppose that the position of the social class in the economic hierarchy is indeed the most important factor to explain inheritance. Formulating this hypothesis will allow us to test to what extent the literature was right to almost exclusively focus on this mechanism.

In accordance with our previous discussions, we also suppose that the gender role imitation plays an important role to explain inheritance. We propose therefore to describe this role as a second order effect that modulates the importance of the first mechanism. We have therefore the following two hypotheses:

H.1. To explain social class inheritability, the position of the social class in the economic hierarchy trumps the gender role imitation.

H.2. To explain social class inheritability, gender role imitation plays a second order role that modulates the importance of the position of the social class in the economic hierarchy.

For each of those two general hypotheses, we shall propose three different sub-hypotheses that predict the respective strength of the mother inheritance and the father inheritance. One might think that the respective roles of mothers and fathers have changed in the last decades. In the recent cohorts, most of French women work and the family with the unique male bread-winner is less and less common (Vallet, 1986; Meurs et al., 2010). Moreover, there have been an increasing number of more complex families and changes in marital patterns (see Tach 2015; Régnier-Loilier, 2019 for France). Despite those change, in France, the inequality between men and women remains pervasive. Since the 1990, gender inequality has been stable (Meurs, 2014), women are earning less than the men and men are therefore still the major source of income (Morin, 2014). Moreover, women have more interruptions of activity and part-time work, especially after they have children (Meurs et al., 2010), Goldthorpe's observation (1984) that the men have a stronger participation to the labor market is therefore still true almost forty years later.

If inheritance is foremost determined by the position in the economic hierarchy and if the father has on average a higher position and a stronger commitment to the labor market, we can suppose that fathers should have on average a stronger influence than mothers. Moreover, because this inequality has not changed a lot, we can expect that this stronger influence of men has not changed or only marginally.[2] We formulate therefore the following sub-hypothesis:

H1.1. : Because of their higher position in the labor market, the father should be dominant for both genders.

This first sub-hypothesis follows from the first hypothesis that the social position in the economic hierarchy is the most important factor and from the fact that men have a higher position. We can however add a second sub-hypothesis that follows from the second hypothesis, that gender role plays a second-order role. We suppose therefore that the influence of the father will be stronger on men than on women.

H2.1. : the father's dominance should be more important on men than on women.

If we suppose that fathers are more often dominant because of the social class they have and not because of a gender dominance, it means that this father dominance should be reversed when the mother has a hierarchically higher position. In that case, she should be the main provider of resource and the reference category to avoid downward mobility. Following the first general hypothesis, we can therefore propose two additional sub-hypotheses:

H1.2. : When the mother has a hierarchically higher position, she should be dominant for both genders.

H2.2. : When the mother has a hierarchically higher position, she should be more dominant for women than for men.

The previous sub-hypothesis compares the strength of the influence of the father and the mother, irrespective of their social class. The general hypothesis that the social class inheritability is explained by its position in the economic hierarchy shall also allow to make some predictions concerning the interaction between the order of social class dominance and gender. We shall suppose that if the strength of inheritability of a social class depends mostly on its position in the economic hierarchy, there should not be a strong interaction between the order of inheritance of social classes and the gender. Such a strong interaction would mean for example that the social class "Professional" would be more inherited than "Blue collar" only for men (or only for women). In that case, there would not be a general order of dominance, but one which varies by gender. It would mean that gender imitation would be important enough to contribute to define the order of dominance of

[2] See Hayes (1990) that found that in Australia daughters do inherit the class location of their mother, but "there has been has been no change in the strength of this association during the postwar era." (p. 368)

Table 2
Social class schema.

Economic hierarchy	Social class	Description	ESeC social class	ESeC description
1 (Highest)	Class 1	Professionals, managerial occupations, and large employers	Class 1	Large employers, lower and higher-grade professional, administrative and managerial occupations
			Class 2	Lower grade professional, administrative and managerial occupations
2	Class 2	Intermediate Occupations	Class 3	Intermediate occupations
2	Class 3	Small employers and self-employed in non-professional occupations	Class 4	Small employer and self-employed occupations (exc agriculture)
2	Class 4	Farmers	Class 5	Self-employed occupations (agriculture)
3 (Lowest)	Class 5	Blue collars	Class 6	Lower supervisory and lower technician occupations
			Class 8	Lower technical occupations
			Class 9	Routine occupations
3 (Lowest)	Class 6	Lower white collars	Class 7	Lower services, sales and clerical occupations

social class. We propose therefore the following hypothesis:

H1.3. : The order of social class dominance is the same for both parents and both genders.

It means that when we compare the strength of inheritability of each social class, the order should be the same for each or the four situations (Father-Daughter; Father-Son; Mother-Daughter; Mother-Son). We also suppose that the gender imitation mechanism modulates the effect of the position in the economic hierarchy. We pose therefore the following hypothesis:

H2.3. : for a given social class, the inheritance effect should be stronger for the parent of the same gender.

Our hypotheses have mostly been formulated in term of inheritance, as we've been interested in how people reproduced the social class of their parent. This partly stems from the social mobility theoretical literature that considers that people try to avoid downward mobility and are generally satisfied by reproducing the position of their parent. Moreover, as we are interested in the question of which parent people do follow, strictly reproducing the social class seems a more direct indicator. We shall thus firstly propose to test those hypotheses by systematically examining inheritance, and we shall afterward examine downward and upward mobility.

3. Data and methods

3.1. Data and classification

We use the French Labor Force survey from 2003 to 2020. We have kept people aged between 30 years old and 75 years old. We have thus a dataset that contains 425,814 respondents for whom the social class of both parents have been measured, 207,061 men and 218,753 women. Originally, the occupation has been coded with a French classification (the PCS classification). We use the French classification to code the social class in a simplified six classes version of the European Socio-economic Classification. We also attributed to each social class a position in the economic hierarchy: we created a three points scale that corresponds to the hierarchy in the ESEC classification. This hierarchy is based on the employment relationship as described below.

The Table 2 displays the six classes, their relation with the ESeC ten class schema, and their position in the economic hierarchy. The class 1 and 2 of professionals have been collapsed into one service class that corresponds to the highest position (the service relationship). The ESeC class 3 "Intermediate occupation" is unchanged and we put it at the middle of the hierarchy at the same level than the two classes of self-employed (small employers and farmer).

All manual classes that have a labor contract relationship (classes 6, 8 and 9) were collapsed into one blue collar class. This is the main change with the original ESeC schema. The disadvantage of such a grouping is that there are some important differences between skilled and non-skilled workers. There are however two reasons for using such a grouping. Firstly, despite their differences, skilled and non-skilled workers have many common characteristics that distinguish them from non-manual classes. Skilled blue-collar worker is a position that non-skilled workers can attain through training and experience: there is therefore an important intragenerational mobility from non-skilled workers to skilled ones (Chapoulie, 2000). Secondly, investigating the variation of the order of dominance between classes requires a limited number of classes so as to make a class-by-class analysis tractable and readable. Having too different manual classes would be quite redundant. Limiting the number of manual classes allows on the contrary to focus on the frontier between manual and non-manual classes and on the strongest hierarchical barriers.

3.2. Immobility and perfect immobility rates

The analysis deals with three dimensional contingency tables that cross the respondent's, the mother's, and the father's social class. We analyze separately the men and women and the different cohorts. The first important set of indicators we shall use are father and mother immobility rates. The father immobility rate is defined as the share of individuals who have the same social class as their father, and the mother immobility rate as the share of individuals who have the same social class as their mother.

Those immobility rates are not indicators of the statistical association between origin and destiny. In case of statistical independence between origin and destiny, there are still individuals who have the same position than their parent and therefore the immobility rate is not equal to zero. The situation of statistical independence is often called the perfect mobility situation. We compute the immobility rates in this situation of perfect mobility and describe them as perfect immobility rates. From a statistical point of view, those rates result from the product of the marginal distributions of each of the variables. From a more sociological point of view, those rates inform us about a structural phenomenon: the share of immobile individuals that can be expected due to the number and size of the different social groups among the respondents and their parents.

The perfect immobility rates will be a way to account for the effect of the gendered labor market segregation on the gendered social immobility. We shall indeed expect some gendered social immobility, which we define as the fact that women more often reproduce their mother's social class and the men their father's social class. This gendered social immobility can be in part a consequence of the gendered segregation of the labor market that implies that individuals are more likely to have the

same occupation as a person of the same gender as herself/himself. This gendered segregation is measured in the margins of the mobility tables, i.e., the distribution of the social class of the mother, the father, and the respondent. The perfect immobility rates correspond therefore to the rate we can expect because of this gendered segregation. Comparing the immobility rates and the perfect immobility rates will allow to assess the deviation from this expectation and therefore the influence of the father or the mother that is net of the labor market segregation.

3.3. Social mobility models

In addition to the immobility and perfect immobility rates, data are analyzed with different types of log-linear models. All models will be estimated separately for women and men and for each birth cohort. Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) called social fluidity the mobility net of the marginal effects that is measured in log-linear models. The statistical association between origin and position is not only produced by the inheritance of the parents' social class: it also comes from the weaker likelihood to have an upward or a downward mobility. We shall use separate models to measure inheritance on the one hand, downward and upward mobility on the other hand.

To measure inheritance or social immobility net of the effect of the marginal distributions, we use the constrained quasi-perfect mobility model (Hout, 1983) that we adapted to a three-dimensional table. We will therefore estimate the following model.

$$M1:$$
$$\ln(\mu_{ijk}) = \lambda + \lambda_i^F + \lambda_j^M + \lambda_k^D + \lambda_{ij}^{FM} + \lambda_{ik}^{FD} + \lambda_{jk}^{MD}$$

$$i \neq k, \lambda_{ik}^{FD} = 0$$

$$i = k, \lambda_{ik}^{FD} = \iota^F$$

$$j \neq k, \lambda_{jk}^{MD} = 0$$

$$j = k, \lambda_{jk}^{MD} = \iota^M$$

i stands for the father's social class, j for the mother's social class and k for the respondent's social class. μ_{ijk} is the expected frequency in the cell ijk. λ_i^F, λ_j^M, and λ_k^D stand for the effects of father's, mother's, and destiny's marginal distributions. λ_{ij}^{FM} measures the effect of homogamy, whereas λ_{ik}^{FD} measures the father inheritance, and λ_{jk}^{MD} measure the mother inheritance. The inheritance coefficients are null when the respondent's social class is different from the father's or the mother's social class, and it is constant when the social class of the father or the mother and the respondent's social class are the same. We call ι the inheritance coefficient: ι^F stands for the father inheritance coefficient, and $\iota^M$for the mother inheritance coefficient.

$$M2:$$
$$\ln(\mu_{ijk}) = \lambda + \lambda_i^F + \lambda_j^M + \lambda_k^D + \lambda_{ij}^{FM} + \lambda_{ik}^{FD} + \lambda_{jk}^{MD}$$

$$i \neq k, \lambda_{ik}^{FD} = 0$$

$$i = k, \lambda_{ik}^{FD} = \iota_i^F$$

$$j \neq k, \lambda_{jk}^{MD} = 0$$

$$j = k, \lambda_{jk}^{MD} = \iota_j^M$$

To measure downward and upward mobility, we shall use a topological model of association (Hout, 1983). Mobility is defined by the fact to move in the economic hierarchy. Our economic hierarchy scale is a 3 points indicator. Individuals can move therefore from zero, one, or two ladders. However, to simplify, we do not distinguish between two points and one point difference between the origin and the destiny. We distinguish the father mobility from the mother mobility and the upward mobility from the downward mobility. The ijk cells of the mobility table can be divided into two overlapping sets of three mutual exclusive levels of association ($S_l^F$and S_l^M, $l = 1, 2, 3$): a set for father immobility, father upward mobility, and father downward mobility; a set for mother immobility, mother upward mobility, and mother downward mobility. We obtain therefore the following model in which we estimated a specific coefficient for each level of association.

$$M3:$$
$$\ln(\mu_{ijk}) = \lambda + \lambda_i^F + \lambda_j^M + \lambda_k^D + \lambda_{ij}^{FM} + \lambda_{ik}^{FD} + \lambda_{jk}^{MD}$$

$$(i,k) \in S_l^F, \lambda_{ik}^{FD} = \alpha_l^F$$

$$(j,k) \in S_l^M, \lambda_{jk}^{FM} = \alpha_l^M$$

α_l^F is a vector of three coefficients that measure the father immobility and the father upward and downward mobility. α_l^M is the corresponding vector of coefficients for the mother immobility and mother upward and downward mobility. The coefficients measuring immobility are set to zero because of identification constraints:

$$\alpha_1^M = \alpha_1^F = 0$$

We shall expect the other coefficients to be negative to reflect the weaker likelihood to have a higher or lower position than one's parent. The more negative the coefficient, the higher the absolute value, and therefore the less chance to move upward or downward.

Finally, to compare the strength of the father and mother inheritance for both genders we will use another version of M1 adapted to the four-dimensional table that crosses the father's social class, the mother's social class, the respondent's social class and the respondent's gender.

$$M4:$$
$$\ln(\mu_{ijkl}) = \lambda + \lambda_i^F + \lambda_j^M + \lambda_k^D + \lambda_l^G + \lambda_{ij}^{FM} + \lambda_{ik}^{FD} + \lambda_{il}^{FG} + \lambda_{jk}^{MD} + \lambda_{jl}^{MG} + \lambda_{kl}^{DG} + \lambda_{ijl}^{FMG} + \lambda_{ikl}^{FDG} + \lambda_{jkl}^{MDG}$$

The first model will allow to easily compare the father's and mother's influence, because we will have one coefficient for the father inheritance and one for the mother inheritance. When we will study the dominance order, we will need to measure the relative strength of inheritance for each social class. To do this, we shall use another model: the unconstrained extended quasi-perfect mobility model. This model is almost identical to the previous one: the only difference is that there is one inheritance coefficient for each social class.

i stands for the father's social class, j for the mother's social class, k for the respondent's social class, l for the respondent's gender. λ_{il}^{FG}, λ_{jl}^{MG}, λ_{kl}^{DG} stand respectively for the relation between father's social class and gender, mother's social class and gender, and respondent's social class and gender. The same constraints that in model 1 hold. It means there are still only one inheritance coefficient for each parent. To interpret these coefficients, it will be however important to take into account the coefficients that describe the interaction between inheritance and

gender (λ_{ikl}^{FDG} and λ_{jkl}^{MDG}).

4. Results

We shall firstly explore immobility rates and perfect immobility rates by gender and cohorts. We shall thus give an overview of how social immobility depends on the gender of the respondent and the gender of her/his parent. We shall thereafter use the log-linear models to test our hypotheses.

4.1. Evolution of immobility rates

Fig. 1a and b display the evolution of absolute and perfect immobility rates (see Data and Methods, Section 3.2) as well as their ratio for each gender and by birth cohorts. The graphic firstly evidences the gendered dimension of social immobility and confirms what we expected: women more often reproduce their mother's social class, whereas men more often reproduce their father's social class. For men, the comparison between immobility rates and perfect mobility rates shows that this result is only partly explained by the segmentation of the gender market. The difference between the mother and the father immobility rates is more important than between the two corresponding perfect mobility rates. Moreover, the graphics also show that the perfect immobility rate represents a larger share of the immobility rate when one uses the mother's social class than the father's social class. It means that for the men, the marginal distributions explain a larger share of the mother immobility rate than the father immobility rate.

Women are more likely to have the same position as their mother than their father, but this would also be the case in the perfect mobility situation. The difference between the two immobility rates appears quite similar to the corresponding difference between the two perfect immobility rates. As for the men, the ratio of perfect mobility rate and immobility rate is higher with the mother rates than with the father rates. The trend of social immobility rates and perfect mobility rates are also very similar: for women the mother absolute immobility rate grows slightly and continuously and it is also the case for the perfect immobility rate. The increase of the mother immobility rate seems therefore to be driven by structural changes in the distribution of the social class of women.

Those results evidence that there is a gendered reproduction of social class: women more often follow their mother, men follow their father. This gendered reproduction did not change much during the period studied here. It has not been reduced as we might have assumed because of the reduction in gender inequality in labor market participation. For men, there is a stronger tendency to follow their father which is not explained by the marginal distributions.

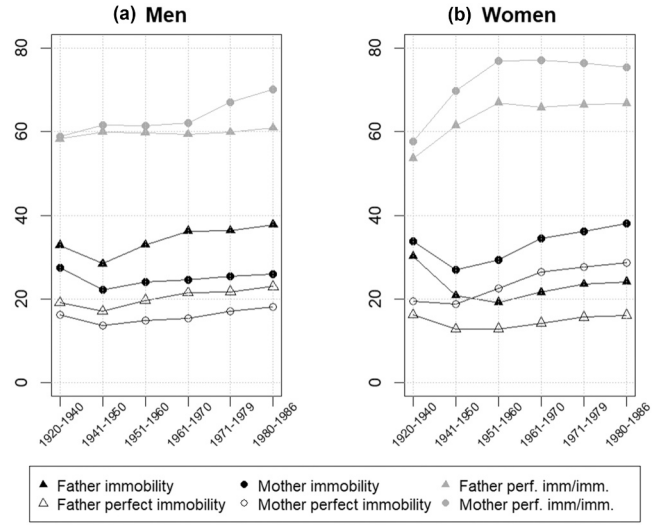

Fig. 1. a and b Immobility rates by gender and birth cohorts.
Note: perf.imm/imm stands for the ratio between the perfect immobility rate and the immobility rate.

4.2. Inheritance

We shall now test our hypotheses with log-linear models so as to assess the association between origin and position free of marginal changes. Fig. 2a and b present the coefficients measuring the inheritance of the father's and the mother's social class in the model 1. Contrary to the previous results, we do not observe a strong gendered pattern: the father inheritance is always stronger than the mother inheritance, even for women. This confirms that the stronger tendency of women to reproduce the social class of their mother can be explained by the gendered segregation of the labor market. Once this marginal effect is accounted for, the social class of the women is more strongly associated to the social class of their father than of their mother.

These results confirm the hypothesis 1.1 that the father's social class is dominant for both genders. For men this father dominance hasn't changed much over the generations. On the graphics, this father dominance seems to be less strong for women, especially for the last generation. To test whether this father dominance is indeed less strong for women, the Table 3 provides coefficients from the log-linear model estimated on the four-dimensional tables (Mother-Father-Respondent-Gender) (see Data and Methods, model 4). The table provides the inheritance coefficients and the interaction effects between inheritance and gender. The main effects corresponds to the women's inheritance and the interaction coefficients to the modification to make to the main effects to measure men's inheritance.

Those results confirm the hypothesis 2.1 according to which father dominance is stronger for men than for women. The interaction effects show that the effect of the father is stronger for men for the generation after the second world war. For the two first generations, there results are not very clear, negative for the first generation and not statistically significant for the second one. Starting from generations post-war, the effect become very robust: almost identical in all four generations. The effect of the mother is much less robust, the sign varies from one generation to another and it is not always statistically significant. There is therefore mainly a stronger father inheritance for the men than for the women. This confirms the hypothesis 2.1 and therefore the hypothesis 2 that the gender role imitation is playing a secondary role that modulate the effect of the economic position.

We have supposed that father inheritance is more important because

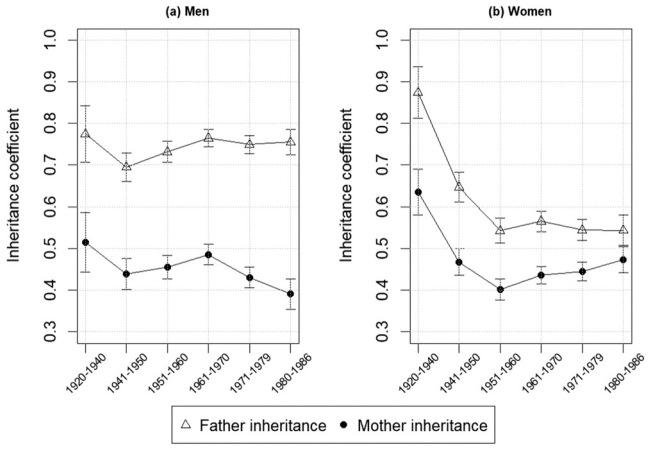

Fig. 2. a and b Father and mother inheritance.
Note: Coefficients measuring the inheritance of the mother's or the father's social class in log-linear models (cf. methods section, model M1). French Labor Force Survey (2003–2020).

Table 3
Father and mother inheritance by gender.

	1920–1940	1941–1950	1951–1960	1961–1970	1971–1979	1980–1986
Father inheritance (Women)	0.87 ***	0.65 ***	0.54 ***	0.56 ***	0.54 ***	0.54 ***
Mother inheritance (Women)	0,63 ***	0.47 ***	0.40 ***	0.44 ***	0.44 ***	0.47 ***
Father inheritance * Men	-0.01 *	0.05	0.19 ***	0.20 ***	0.21 ***	0.21 ***
Mother inheritance * Men	-0.12 **	-0.03	0.05 **	0.05 **	-0.01	-0.08 **

Note: coefficients measuring the inheritance of the mother's and the father's social class in log-linear models estimated on the four-dimensional tables (Mother's social class * Father's social class * Respondent's social class * Gender). The two first lines correspond to the main effect and the two last lines to the interaction of inheritance and gender. Cf. methods section, model M4.
French Labor Force Survey (2003–2020). *p > .05, * *p > .01, * **p > .001,

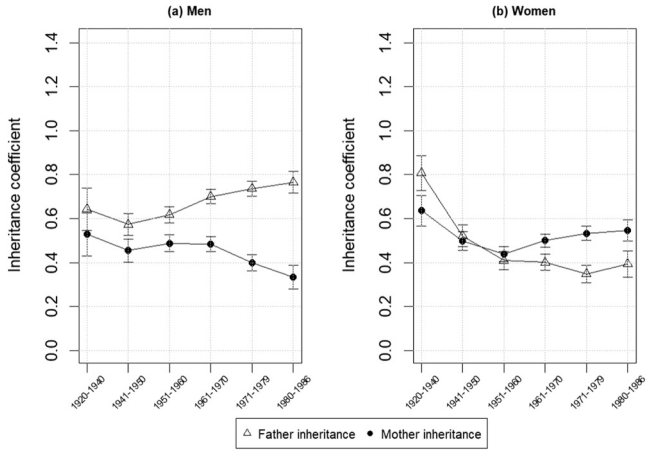

Fig. 3. a and b Father and mother inheritance when the mother has a social position of equal hierarchical level.
Note: coefficients measuring the inheritance of the mother's or the father's social class in log-linear models (cf. methods section, model M1). Models are estimated in a reduced dataset that contains only individuals for which the mother has a position of equal hierarchical level than the father. French Labor Force Survey (2003–2020).

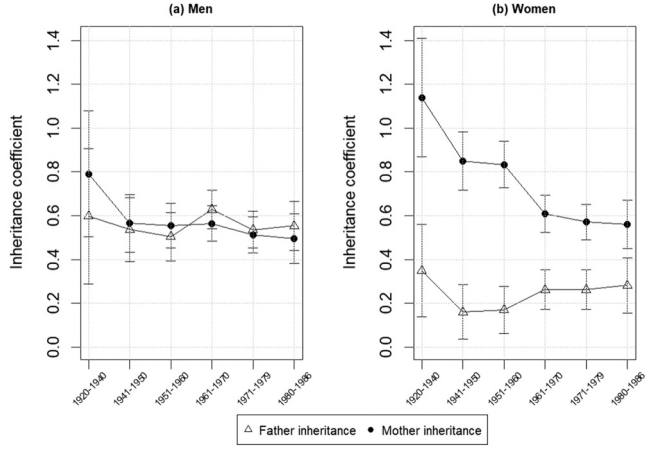

Fig. 4. a and b Father and mother inheritance when the mother has a higher position.
Note: coefficients measuring the inheritance of the mother's or the father's social class in log-linear models (cf. methods section, model M1). Models are estimated in a reduced dataset that contains only individuals for which the mother has a higher position than the father. French Labor Force Survey (2003–2020).

fathers usually enjoy a higher position and a stronger commitment to the labor market than mothers, not because of a gender dominance (the fact than men would be more influent than women).

To corroborate this explanation of father dominance by the higher position of fathers, it remains to examine whether this result is still true for families in which the mother has the same or a higher position than the father. Fig. 3a and b display the inheritance coefficients when the mother has a position of equal hierarchical level than the father, Fig. 4a and b when she has a higher position.

We observe quite different results between men and women. For men, when the mother has the same hierarchical position, the father inheritance coefficient remains stronger. When the mother position is higher however, the two coefficients become similar. Therefore, even when the mother has a higher position, she is not dominant for men, she just manages to have the same influence than the father. This is not the case for women. For them, when the mother has the same hierarchical position than the father, she becomes dominant and this dominance increases when she has a higher position.

Those results disprove hypothesis 1.2 according to which the mother should be dominant for both genders when she has a higher position than the father. This partly questions the general hypothesis 1 according to which the economic hierarchy trumps the gender roles. Economic hierarchy appears as more important for women, as they follow the hierarchically higher position more often, but not for men for whom the gender role appears as more important. Those results show that both factors, economic hierarchy and gender role imitation, are at play and that the first one does not entirely dominate the second one.

4.3. Mobility

The previous results only dealt with inheritance and thus how people reproduce the social class of their parents. We shall now use the mobility

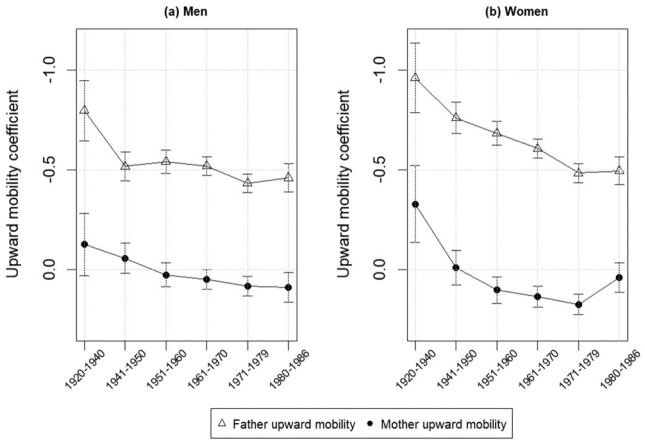

Fig. 5. a and b Father and mother upward mobility effects.
Note: coefficients measuring the lower propensity to have a social class at a higher level than the mother's or the father's social class in log-linear models (cf. methods section, model M3). French Labor Force Survey (2003–2020).

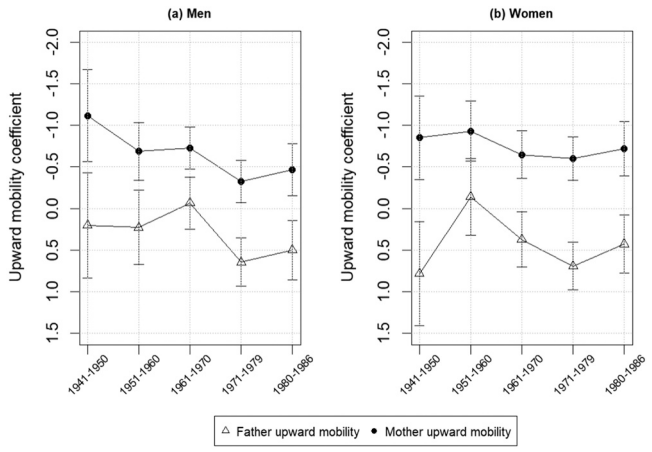

Fig. 6. a and b Upward mobility effect when the mother has a higher position.
Note: coefficients measuring the lower propensity to have a social class at a higher level than the mother's or the father's social class in log-linear models (cf. methods section, model M3). Models are estimated in a reduced dataset that contains only individuals for which the mother has a higher position than the father. French Labor Force Survey (2003–2020).

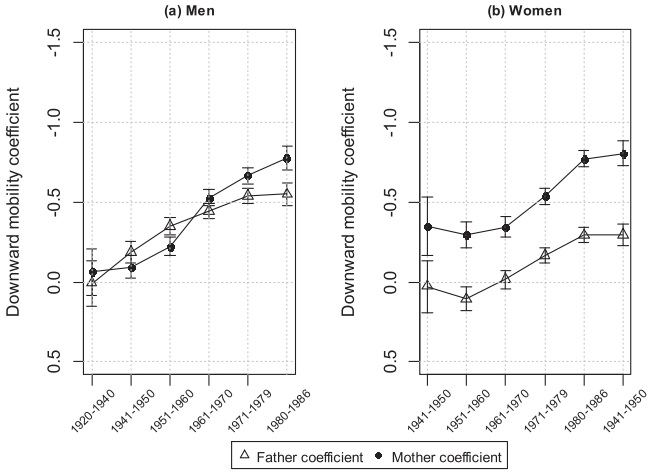

Fig. 7. a and b Downward mobility effects.
Note: coefficients measuring the lower propensity to have a social class at a lower level than the mother's or the father's social class in log-linear models (cf. methods section, model M3). French Labor Force Survey (2003–2020).

models to have a better description of movements in the social mobility table and to examine how father and mother dominances account for mobility and not only immobility.

Fig. 5a and b display the coefficients associated to having a higher hierarchical position than the father or the mother. Because we expected negative values for the coefficients, we have flipped the y-axis of the graphics (negative values are at the top) so as to keep the same presentation as before: the stronger the association with a parent, the higher the corresponding curve is on the graph. The results are firstly similar to those on inheritance: the father's effect is always the strongest in absolute value (more negative). Women and men are therefore much less likely to have a higher position than their father than they are to have a higher position than their mother. There is a slight positive effect of the mother which shows that people are more likely to move upward relative to their mother. This effect is however null for the last generation of women and very close to 0 for men.

When we now consider the families in which the mother's has a higher hierarchical position (Fig. 6a and b), the results are reversed: the mother has the most negative effect for both genders. This is not very surprising as we can suppose that it is always less likely to move upward the highest position than the lowest. More interestingly, for the last generations there is a positive effect of the father, which means that women and men tend to have a higher position than their father. The higher social class of their mother is therefore driving both men and women toward a higher position than their father.

Fig. 7a and b display the results for downward mobility. For both genders (but only for the last cohorts of men), the mother's effect is stronger (in absolute value), which shows that the mothers more often define the floor under which children are less likely to go. For men, there is much less difference between the mother's and the father's effect than for women.

When we consider the families in which the mother has a higher position (Fig. 8a and b), the effect is reversed and the father's social class becomes the floor: the downward mobility effect becomes higher in absolute value, reflecting the lower probability to be in a lower ranked social class than the father.

In accordance to the previous results on inheritance, those results emphasize the importance of the position of the social class in the economic hierarchy to understand social mobility. People are less likely to have a higher position than the parent who has the highest position, and less likely to have a lower position than the parent who have the lowest position. This is partly a tautological result, but that sheds light on how both parents' social class define the range of positions someone can attend: most often, the father's position defines the ceiling that the children are unlikely to exceed, whereas the mother's position defines the floor. This situation is reversed however when mother and father exchange their role in the economic hierarchy, which shows that it is a consequence of the unequal position of men and women in the economic hierarchy and not of a gender dominance.

4.4. *Order of dominance*

We shall now try to understand the order of social class dominance that we defined as the hierarchy of inheritability of social classes. We test the hypothesis 1.3 "the order of social class dominance is the same for both parents and both genders". The objective is to understand which classes are more often inherited and whether the order of inheritance depends on the gender of the parents and the respondent. For this purpose, we use the unconstrained quasi-perfect log-linear models that

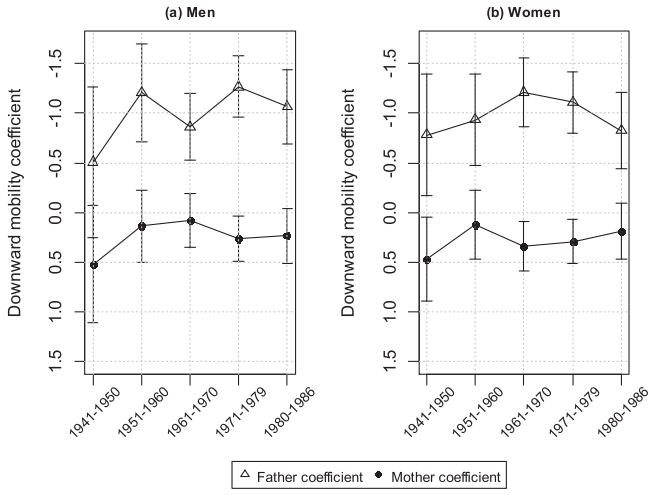

Fig. 8. a and b Downward mobility effects when the mother has a higher position.
Coefficients measuring the lower propensity to have a social class at a lower level than the mother's or the father's social class in log-linear models (cf. methods section, model M3). Models are estimated in a reduced dataset that contains only individuals for which the mother has a higher position than the father. French Labor Force Survey (2003–2020).

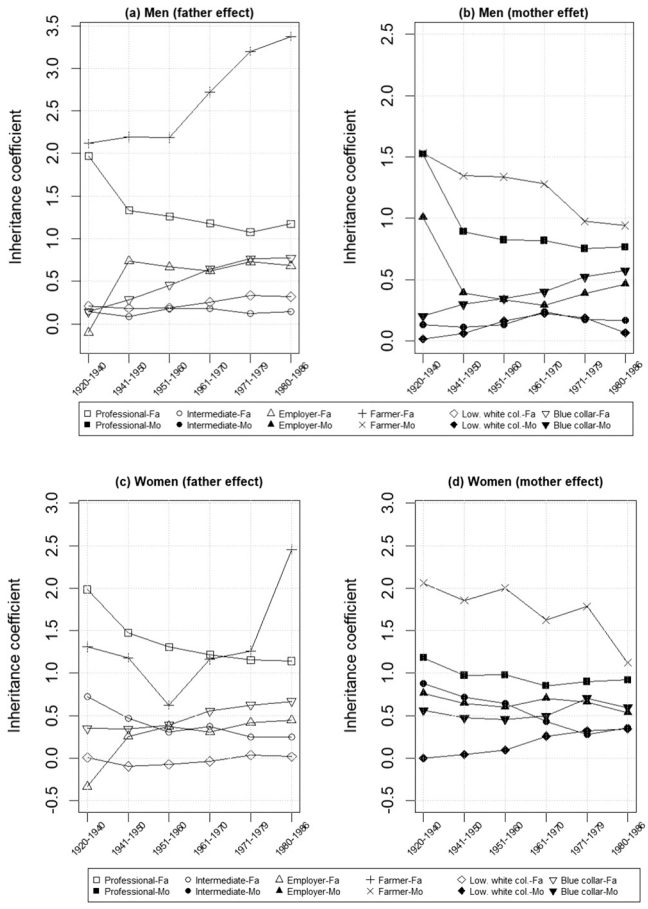

Fig. 9. a, b, c, and d Class specific inheritance.
Note: coefficients measuring the inheritance of the mother's or the father's social class in log-linear models (cf. methods section, model M2). French Labor Force Survey (2003–2020). Note on confidence intervals: to make the graphics more readable, the 95% confidence intervals are not displayed on the figures. They mostly show what is already visible, the lack of difference between blue collars' and small employers' effects on the one hand, and between the intermediates' and lower white collars' effects on the other hand. For women, the difference between the intermediate class's effect and the lower white collar class's effect on the one hand, and the small employers' and blue collars' effect is not always statistically significant. See appendix, Tables 4 and 5 (appendix A) for all the coefficients and their standard errors.

provide one inheritance coefficient for each social class.

Fig. 9a and b present the mother and father class specific inheritance coefficients for men, the Fig. 9c and d for women. The results are not very easy to read, but some important results appear quite clearly. The most important result is that a relatively clear and robust order of dominance emerges which depends very weakly on gender (parent or respondent) and changes very little over time.

The strongest inheritability coefficient is by far the farmers' one. The second most important is the professionals' one. Those two coefficients are followed by the blue collars' coefficients and the small employers' one (whose differences are not statistically significant). Finally, the two less inheritable classes are the intermediate occupation class and the lower white-collar class.

The hierarchy of inheritability is quite the same if we use the mother's or the father's social class and it is almost the same for men and women. One important difference is that the farmers' father inheritance coefficient is not the strongest coefficient for women (it is weaker than the professionals' inheritance coefficient, except for the last cohort). Another difference concerns the inheritance coefficient of the intermediate class: for men, the coefficient is almost always among the weakest, whereas for women the mother and the father coefficients used to be more important and to be as strong as the blue collars' and small employers' coefficients.

The hypothesis 1.3 is therefore rather confirmed: despite some notable exceptions, there is a stable order of dominance that is mostly independent of the gender of the individual and of her/his parent. An interesting additional result about this order of dominance is that it is not at all consistent with Erikson's assumption that "categories of higher qualifications dominate categories of lower" (Erikson, 1984: 504). In terms of inheritability farmers are clearly the dominant class, followed by professionals and by blue collars, and small employers. As we expected, there is therefore more immobility at the top and the bottom and more mobility in the middle (intermediate and lower white-collar classes). Moreover, the fact that famers is the class with the strongest inheritability shows that the strength of inheritability is not a simple function of the position in the economic hierarchy.

4.5. Gender dominance and social class

We shall now study the previous results from another angle which is the interrelation between social class dominance and gender dominance. The objective is to test the hypothesis 2.3 "For a given social class, the inheritance effect of the parent of the same gender is stronger". To examine this, we present in separate figures the superposition of the father's and the mother's coefficient for each social class.

Fig. 10a and b present the professional's and the lower white collar's inheritance coefficients. Contrary to the hypothesis, for both genders the professional's father inheritance effect is stronger than the corresponding mother effect. This can be interpreted in two ways:

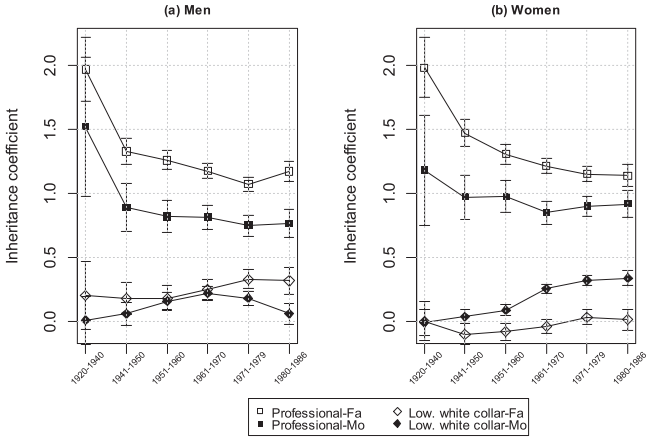

Fig. 10. a and b Professional and lower white-collar inheritances.

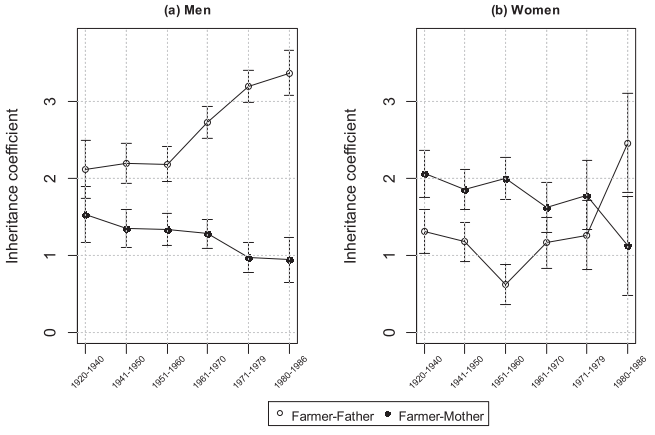

Fig. 11. a and 11b Farmer's inheritance.

professional fathers have on average higher positions in the economic hierarchy than mothers and this is hidden by our unique category for professionals. In that perspective, the stronger effect of fathers is a consequence of their position in the economic hierarchy that is not accurately measured and it does not invalidate the hypothesis. Another explanation would be that there is a general father dominance which stems from the stronger prestige of men and which would imply that the father effect is always stronger. However, as we shall see, for women the father dominance exists only for professionals, which argues in favor of the first explanation.

Fig. 10a and b also displayed the inheritance coefficients of the lower white-collars class. For women, the mother coefficient is stronger than the corresponding father coefficient, whereas the father coefficient is stronger for men for the last cohorts. Contrary to the professionals, for lower white collars, gender imitation seems to be more important to explain the relative strength of the two parent's coefficients, men following more often their father, women their mother.

Figs. 11a, b, 12a, b, 13a and b present the inheritance coefficients for farmers, small employers, and blue collars. In the two first cases, the father effect is stronger than the mother effect, especially for men. For small employers, the difference is not as large as for farmers. For blue collars, there is a stronger father effect, but only for men. For women, there is no difference.

The hypothesis 2.3 according to which the inheritance effect is always stronger for the parent of the same gender is only partly confirmed. For men, the father effect is always stronger. For women, the results are more complex, because depending on the social class, the mother or the father may be dominant, and there may be no difference. Once again, the gender imitation appears to be more important in explaining the results for men than for women. For men, there clearly is a father dominance, whereas for women, the gender dominance of the father depends on the social class of the parents.

5. Conclusion

Comparing the mother's and the father's influence on social destiny raised important theoretical and empirical questions. From a theoretical perspective, it questioned the traditional idea of social class as a family characteristic. The existence of different social class positions among families is important, for those different positions give to children different examples of pathways they can try to take. In particular, in a society in which the market is very much segregated by gender, those different alternatives are not presented in a neutral way to men and women.

Using a joint approach did not lead to abandon the traditional concept of dominance but to use it in a different way. Instead of using it a priori to define the social class of a family, we used it to describe different social phenomena: which social class children reproduce and which parent they try to follow. This has led to distinguish between social class dominance and gender dominance. This distinction sheds light on the fact that the social class that children attain depends on the position of the social class in the economic hierarchy but also on the gender of the parent who holds this social class position.

We have defined social class dominance by inheritance, the rational being that dominance shall describe the social class of a family that children will mostly try to attain. The relation between social class dominance and economic hierarchy appeared as complex and partly curvilinear, as some of the most dominant social classes were at the top and the bottom positions. This can be quite clearly explained by the role of resources in social mobility: in the top, people have the resources to keep their position; at the bottom, they do not have resources to move. At the middle, there is therefore more mobility.

An important explanation for the inheritance of a social class is the fact that people also inherit an educational level from their parent. Education is arguably the most important resource that is transmitted for attaining a social class, as shown by the literature originating from Blau and Duncan (1967) that identified education as a mediating variable in the inheritance of a socioeconomic status. The variability of educational transmission across social classes should also be an important mechanism for explaining the order of social class dominance as well as for understanding gender differences in inheritance. French women get now more education than their mother and than men. This could explain than women reproduce the highest social class of their parent. Our data did not contain the education of the parents. Introducing it would have permitted to distinguish the direct effect of social class from the effect that is mediated by the transmission of education. In future research, disentangling effects of social class and education will be an important step to better understand the order of dominance and the respective roles of mothers and fathers on both genders.

The results also showed that the strength of inheritance does not only depend on the position in the economic hierarchy, because the farmers appeared as the class with the highest inheritability. This cannot be explained by the inheritance of "capital" as we do not observe such a strong inheritance for the other self-employed class. This evidences that the strength of inheritance of a social class may also depend on other characteristics such as a particularly strong identity or a lifestyle very different from most of the other classes. We have not investigated further how to explain the order of dominance, because we were focusing on the gender differences, but better understanding and explaining this robust order of dominance shall be an important issue for

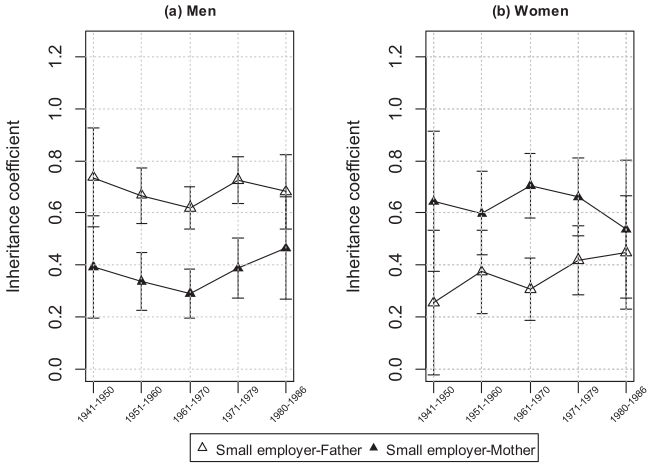

Fig. 12. a and b Small employer's inheritance. Note: the first generation has been removed from the analysis because of the importance of the confidence interval.

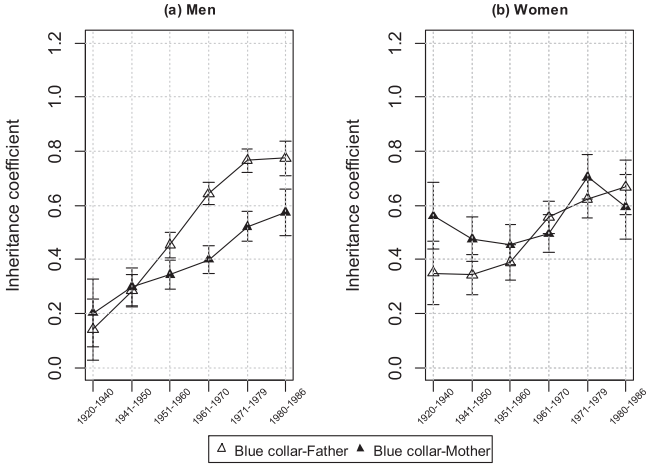

Fig. 13. a et b Blue collar's inheritance.

further researches.

Studying gender and social class dominance allowed to evaluate the respective role of gender role imitation and the position in the economic hierarchy to explain social class inheritance. Following the classical literature, we have formulated hypotheses that give the first role to economic hierarchy, and considered that gender role had a secondary effect. These hypotheses appeared to be largely confirmed, but with important counter-examples. These show that gender roles can be powerful and sometimes counterbalance the strength of economic hierarchy. It was particularly the case with the result that, unlike women, men do not follow more often their mother when she has a higher position in the economic hierarchy than their father.

Economic hierarchy and gender role imitation are therefore both important to understand social class reproduction. Economic hierarchy explains that women more often follow their father than their mother. Gender role imitation explains than men do not follow more often their mother even when the father has a lower hierarchical position. Economic hierarchy appears thus as more important to explain women's social class inheritability, whereas gender roles as more important for men's social class inheritability. The strength of inheritance of a given class from a parent to a child depends therefore on an interplay between the position of the class in the economic hierarchy, the parent gender and the child gender.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

Appendix A

Table 4
Class specific inheritance coefficients and standard errors (Men).

(a) Father						
	Professionals, managerial occupations and large employers	Intermediate occupations	Small employers and self-employed in non-professional occupations	Farmers	Blue collars	Lower White collars
1920–1940	1.97	0.14	-0.10	2.12	0.21	0.14
	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.45)	(0.19)	(0.13)	(0.06)
1941–1950	1.33	0.09	0.74	2.19	0.18	0.28
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.10)	(0.14)	(0.07)	(0.03)
1951–1960	1.26	0.18	0.67	2.19	0.19	0.45
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.11)	(0.05)	(0.02)
1961–1970	1.18	0.18	0.62	2.72	0.25	0.64
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.11)	(0.04)	(0.02)
1971–1979	1.07	0.12	0.73	3.20	0.33	0.77
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.11)	(0.04)	(0.02)
1980–1986	1.17	0.14	0.68	3.37	0.32	0.77
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.15)	(0.05)	(0.03)
(b) Mother						
	Professionals, managerial occupations and large employers	Intermediate occupations	Small employers and self-employed in non-professional occupations	Farmers	Blue collars	Lower White collars
1920–1940	1.52	-0.13	1.01	1.53	0.01	0.20
	(0.28	(0.11)	(0.41)	(0.18)	(0.10)	(0.06)
1941–1950	0.89	0.11	0.39	1.35	0.06	0.30
	(0.10	(0.05)	(0.10)	(0.13)	(0.05)	(0.04)
1951–1960	0.82	0.13	0.34	1.34	0.16	0.34
	(0.07	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.03)	(0.03)
1961–1970	0.82	0.24	0.29	1.28	0.22	0.40
	(0.05	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.10)	(0.03)	(0.03)
1971–1979	0.75	0.17	0.39	0.97	0.18	0.52
	(0.04	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.10)	(0.03)	(0.03)
1980–1986	0.76	0.17	0.46	0.94	0.06	0.57
	(0.06	(0.04)	(0.10)	(0.15)	(0.04)	(0.04)

Coefficients measuring the inheritance of the mother's or the father's social class in log-linear models (cf. methods section, model M2 and Fig. 9a and b) and only for men. Standard-errors are in parenthesis. French Labor Force Survey (2003–2020).

Table 5
Class specific inheritance coefficients and standard errors (Women).

(a) Father						
	Professionals, managerial occupations and large employers	Intermediate occupations	Small employers and self-employed in non-professional occupations	Farmers	Blue collars	Lower White collars
1920–1940	1.98	0.73	-0.34	1.31	0.01	0.35
	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.50)	(0.15)	(0.08)	(0.06)
1941–1950	1.47	0.47	0.25	1.17	-0.10	0.34
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.04)	(0.04)
1951–1960	1.31	0.31	0.37	0.62	-0.08	0.39
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.03)	(0.03)
1961–1970	1.22	0.38	0.31	1.16	-0.04	0.56
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.17)	(0.03)	(0.03)
1971–1979	1.15	0.25	0.42	1.26	0.04	0.62
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.07)	(0.23)	(0.03)	(0.04)

(*continued on next page*)

Table 5 (*continued*)

(a) Father						
	Professionals, managerial occupations and large employers	Intermediate occupations	Small employers and self-employed in non-professional occupations	Farmers	Blue collars	Lower White collars
1980–1986	1.14 (0.04)	0.25 (0.04)	0.45 (0.11)	2.46 (0.33)	0.02 (0.04)	0.67 (0.05)
(b) Mothers						
	Professionals, managerial occupations and large employers	Intermediate occupations	Small employers and self-employed in non-professional occupations	Farmers	Blue collars	Lower White collars
1920–1940	1.18	0.88	0.76	2.06	0.00	0.56
	0.22	0.10	0.44	0.16	0.05	0.06
1941–1950	0.97	0.72	0.64	1.85	0.04	0.48
	0.09	0.05	0.14	0.13	0.03	0.04
1951–1960	0.98	0.64	0.60	2.00	0.09	0.45
	0.06	0.04	0.08	0.14	0.02	0.04
1961–1970	0.85	0.43	0.71	1.62	0.26	0.49
	0.05	0.03	0.06	0.17	0.02	0.04
1971–1979	0.90	0.28	0.66	1.78	0.32	0.70
	0.04	0.03	0.08	0.23	0.02	0.04
1980–1986	0.92	0.36	0.54	1.12	0.34	0.59
	0.05	0.04	0.14	0.33	0.03	0.06

Coefficients measuring the inheritance of the mother's or the father's social class in log-linear models (cf. methods section, model M2 and Fig. 10a and b) and only for women. Standard-errors are in parenthesis. French Labor Force Survey (2003–2020).

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