The Role of Intergenerational Social Mobility in Subjective Social Status: Comparing Immigrant and Native Families

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Abstract

Understanding how individuals assess their own position in society is crucial to the study of social stratification. Yet, while the consequences of subjective social status have been extensively researched, its determinants are little known – in particular for immigrant populations. This article analyzes the role of intergenerational social mobility in subjective social status. Using diagonal reference models on the recent French *Trajectories and Origins 2* survey (2019-2020), we assess the effects of educational and occupational mobility on subjective social status, and whether they differ between natives' and immigrants' children. Overall, downward mobility proves to have a stronger effect than upward mobility on subjective social status. This effect varies strongly by gender and ethnicity. Downward social mobility exerts a significant negative effect on the subjective social status of sons of natives, but not sons of immigrants. By contrast, downward mobility negatively affects the subjective positioning of immigrants' daughters, especially from North Africa and Middle East, but not that of natives' daughters. We discuss the role of parental expectations and racial discrimination as potential mechanisms underpinning these empirical patterns. By shedding new light on the distinct role of intergenerational mobility for immigrant and native families, this article contributes to a growing literature on the links between social stratification and international migration.

Keywords: Subjective social status; intergenerational mobility; immigration; gender; France; second generation.

Introduction

Individuals' perception of their own position in the social hierarchy is a key dimension in the study of social stratification and a classic issue that has long interested sociologists (Laumann and Senter 1976; Jackman and Jackman 1973; Giddens 1973; Kluegel, Singleton, and Starnes 1977). Inspired by Marx's seminal distinction between objective class position (class in itself, or *Klasse an sich*) and subjective class consciousness (class for itself, or *Klasse für sich*) (Laumann and Senter 1976, 1307), the study of subjective social status (SSS) has developed in empirical sociology. Studies show that, over and above objective socioeconomic status, SSS has consequences on important life outcomes, such as physical and mental health and well-being (Adler et al. 2000; Präg 2020; Demakakos et al. 2008; Cundiff and Matthews 2017; Andersson 2018a; Macleod et al. 2005), individuals' voting behaviors (D'Hooge,

Achterberg, and Reeskens 2018; Richards, Heath, and Carl 2021) or preferences for redistribution (Duman 2019).

While SSS's consequences are increasingly well researched, too little attention has been paid to its determinants. In this study, we analyze how much intergenerational social mobility shapes subjective social status, and whether this relationship differs between native and immigrant families. Intergenerational social mobility has been shown to affect a range of subjective and attitudinal outcomes, such as subjective well-being and life-satisfaction (Hadjar and Samuel 2015; Houle and Martin 2011; Kaiser and Trinh 2021), political behaviors (Weakliem 1992) or attitudes towards poverty (Jaime-Castillo and Marqués-Perales 2014; Gugushvili 2016) and immigration (Paskov, Präg, and Richards 2021). Yet, to our knowledge, no studies have specifically examined the relationship between intergenerational mobility and subjective social status.

Another limitation of the existing literature on the determinants of SSS – shared by most traditional social stratification research – is that empirical studies almost exclusively focus on the general population in Western countries, with no attention paid to the increasing ethnic diversity induced by large-scale immigration. Yet, individuals with a migration background account for a substantial and increasing part of the population in many destination countries. In the United States, one quarter of the population is either an immigrant or a child of immigrants (Pew Research Center 2019). In France, on which our study focuses, this proportion is one fifth (INSEE 2020), and reaches one third if immigrants' grandchildren are included (Lê, Simon, and Coulmont 2022). Within these diversifying populations, the SSS of immigrants and their descendants represents a meaningful dimension of their personal experience in the destination society and a window into the subjective facet of their assimilation (Engzell and Ichou 2020; Hendriks and Burger 2020; Reitzel et al. 2010). As we will hypothesize below, there are reasons

to expect that the role of intergenerational mobility in SSS varies between children of natives and of immigrants.

This study uses recent large-scale and nationally representative French survey data to analyze the role of intergenerational educational and occupational mobility in individuals' subjective social status, and whether it differs according to migration background and geographic origin. Contrasting with most previous studies usually focusing on male lineages due to a lack of appropriate data, we are also able to investigate differences by gender. This paper sheds light on the determinants of SSS, a key indicator of subjective assimilation. In doing so, we hope to contribute to the developing field of analysis positioned at the intersection of migration studies and social stratification research (Safi 2019). The next section builds on existing literature to elaborate theoretical hypotheses on how social mobility may affect SSS differently for children of immigrants and natives. After presenting our data source, the TeO2 survey, and our methodology based on Sobel's diagonal reference models, we test these hypotheses. Our findings confirm that intergenerational mobility has an effect on subjective social status, and that this effect varies by migration background, geographic origin, and gender. Specifically, downward social mobility is associated to lower levels of SSS for daughters – but not sons – of immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, while a similar effect is found for natives' sons but not for their daughters. These results are relatively consistent for both educational and occupational mobility, despite some differences. We find a negative effect of downward educational – but not occupational – mobility among sons of European immigrants. We also show that experiences of discrimination play a significant role in explaining the negative effect of downward educational mobility for racialized minorities, but that this is not the case for occupational mobility.

The determinants of subjective social status

Although most previous studies have focused on the consequences of subjective social status, a few of them reveal patterns in its determinants. A positive association is usually found between SSS and objective socioeconomic position measured in terms of education, income or occupation (Ostrove et al. 2000; Singh-Manoux, Marmot, and Adler 2005). This association is sometimes found to be stronger among men (Demakakos et al. 2008; Shaked et al. 2016). Overall, this relationship proves relatively weak (Evans and Kelly 2004; Hodge and Treiman 1968; Jackman and Jackman 1973) and not linear – objective SES appears more closely related to SSS at the bottom and at the top of the distribution (Andersson 2018b). Other sociodemographic characteristics such as age and gender have also been observed to impact individuals' SSS (Hodge and Treiman 1968; Jackman and Jackman 1973; Yamaguchi and Wang 2002).

Surprisingly, the effects of intergenerational mobility – a comparison between one's SES and one's parents' – has so far remained neglected by studies on the determinants of subjective social status. The role of reference groups and social comparisons to significant others in shaping one's beliefs and attitudes has long been an established research tradition in social psychology (Festinger 1954; Hyman 1960). In the field of social stratification, influential theoretical models using the notion of intergenerational "status maintenance" (Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997; Stocke, 2007) consider that people judge their own success or failure by comparing their social status to that of their parents. Thus, we can expect that individuals' SSS is not only shaped by their current characteristics, but also by comparisons they make with their parents. While empirical studies investigating the influence of intergenerational social mobility on SSS are virtually non-existent, a substantial literature has, however, examined its effect on subjective well-being (SWB). Given the positive relationship between SWB and SSS (Singh-Manoux, Marmot, and Adler 2005; Netuveli and Bartley 2012; Haught et al. 2015), we briefly review this neighboring literature.

Surpassing one's parents' socioeconomic status in terms of education, occupation or income is often regarded as a major goal (Naudet 2012; Luckmann and Berger 1964), resulting in increased life chances, as well as a sense of accomplishment and pride. Although some studies do exhibit a symmetric positive effect of upward mobility and negative effect of downward mobility on SWB (Dolan and Lordan 2021; Kaiser and Trinh 2021; Nikolaev and Burns 2014), the literature overall points to a more complex picture. In line with the "failing from grace hypothesis" (Newman 1999), some research shows that the negative effect of downward mobility on SWB tends to be larger than the positive effect of upward mobility (Wheaton 1990; Nikolaev and Burns 2014). By contrast, other studies find a positive effect for intergenerational upward mobility on SWB or life-satisfaction but none for downward mobility (Zhao et al. 2017; Chan 2018; Bridger and Daly 2020). Others have documented a counter-intuitive detrimental effect of upward mobility (Ellis and Lane 1967; Bourdieu 2016; Hadjar and Samuel 2015) and interpreted it in line with Sorokin (1959)'s "dissociative hypothesis." This hypothesis suggests that a rapid and strong social mobility, either upward or downward, modifies individuals' norms, challenges their identity, creating stress and therefore decreasing their SWB. Yet other authors simply do not find any evidence of a net effect of intergenerational mobility on SWB, after controlling parents' and children's social positions (Houle 2011; Zang and Dirk de Graaf 2016; Daenekindt 2017).

These mixed results make it hard to derive firm expectations about the effect of intergenerational mobility on SSS. Differences between studies are likely due, in part, to the fact that the effect of intergenerational mobility might differ across populations. The next section builds on the immigrant assimilation literature to draw hypotheses on the expected differences in the role of intergenerational mobility in SSS across groups defined by their migration background, geographic origin and gender.

Expected differences in the effect of intergenerational mobility between immigrant and native families

The weight of parental expectations in immigrant families

Upward social mobility is often the goal of immigrants' initial migration decision (Buitelaar 2007). Yet, while they are usually positively selected on education and economic resources within their origin country (Feliciano 2005; Ichou 2014), immigrants tend to occupy positions at the bottom of the social hierarchy when arriving in the country of destination (Gans 2009; Parreñas 2000; Nieswand 2012), thus thwarting their plans for rapid upward mobility. Instead, their expectations for upward social mobility are often transferred to the second generation in the hope that their children's success will compensate for their own status loss. This process has been termed the "immigrant bargain," i.e. immigrant parents' willingness to work undesirable jobs in order to safeguard better mobility prospects for their children (Alba and Foner 2015). Children of immigrants frequently strive to surpass their parents, placing their socioeconomic success in the continuity of the parental migration project (Naudet 2015:115), "in which the children are pushed to make the dreams of their parents come true" (van den Berg 2011:519). Many studies indeed show particularly high educational aspirations among immigrants and their children (Kao and Tienda 1998; Salikutluk 2016; Strand and Winston 2008; Heath, Rothon, and Kilpi 2008). The salience of high parental expectations and the obligation to achieve a higher social status for the second generation may heighten the subjective effects of intergenerational mobility, by increasing the psychological costs of downward mobility and the rewards of upward mobility. Therefore, we posit that *social mobility – respectively downward and upward – exerts a stronger – respectively negative and positive – effect on SSS among children of immigrants than among children of natives (H1)*.

Discrimination and downward mobility among ethnic minorities

The experience of discrimination, which primarily affects ethnic minorities (Flores 2015; Lê et al. 2022), is likely to shape the relationship between intergenerational mobility and SSS among descendants of non-Western immigrants. In France, descendants of immigrants from Africa and Turkey are more likely to face ethnic penalties in the labor market (Meurs, Pailhé, and Simon 2006) and to report experiences of discrimination (Safi and Simon 2013). For the second generation, Schaeffer (2019) shows that downward educational mobility is associated with an increased likelihood to report experiences of discrimination among children of Muslim immigrants in Europe. In turn, reported discrimination has been proven to affect immigrants' life-satisfaction (Safi 2010), and ethnic minorities' subjective social status (Dawson, Carvalho, and Cuevas 2022). Therefore, we expect that *downward mobility has a stronger negative effect on SSS for children of immigrants belonging to racial minorities than for Europeans (H2)*. We also expect that *experiences of discrimination constitutes a key mechanism that contributes to explaining the larger negative effect of downward social mobility on the SSS of children of immigrants belonging to racialized minorities (H3).*

Expected differences by gender: parental expectations and selection into employment

In France, high educational and occupational expectations for their children are observed especially among immigrant parents from North Africa (Brinbaum and Kieffer 2005; Ichou 2018) whose hopes of success specifically target their daughters (Brinbaum and Kieffer 2005, 61). These gendered parental aspirations are likely to affect how intergenerational mobility shapes SSS among daughters of immigrants. Another noteworthy characteristics of female descendants of immigrants from North Africa and Turkey in France is that they are significantly less likely to be employed compared to their male counterparts, natives and children of European immigrants (Meurs and Pailhé 2008; Brinbaum, Primon, and Meurs

2016). Therefore, we can expect the daughters of immigrants in these groups who have a job to be positively selected on unobserved characteristics, including labor-market aspirations.

These two combined features of daughters of immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East (MENA) in France – higher parental expectations and strong selection into the labor market – lead us to put forward the following hypothesis: *intergenerational mobility has a stronger effect on the SSS of daughters of immigrants from MENA, than among sons of immigrants in the same group (H4)*.

Data and method

Trajectories and Origins 2 survey

We use data from the "Trajectories and Origins 2" survey (TeO2), conducted by the French National Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) and the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) in 2019-2020 on a large nationally representative sample of 27,181 individuals aged 18 to 60 (Beauchemin et al. 2022). The data were collected on first- and second-generation immigrants as well as French natives with no migration background (at least up to their grandparents). Immigrants (N=10,250) and children of immigrants (N=8,750) are oversampled, providing large enough samples to produce disaggregated analysis by origin group and sex. The questionnaire covers a wide range of topics including respondents' sociodemographic and socioeconomic trajectories as well as their family histories and subjective experience in France.[1]

Key variables

Our *dependent variable* measures individuals' subjective social status (SSS) using the MacArthur scale, a common measurement strategy in the literature (Adler et al. 2000; Evans

[1] For more information on the survey, see https://teo.site.ined.fr/en/ and Beauchemin et al (2022).

and Kelly 2004; Präg, Mills, and Wittek 2016; Andersson 2018b). Respondents were asked to position themselves on a scale ranging from 0 to 10 and which represents society in the shape of a pyramid. The large base corresponds to the bottom of the social hierarchy (SSS=0), while the narrow top illustrates the highest social positions (SSS=10). The question is worded as follows: *"There are people who tend to be towards the top of our society and people who tend to be towards the bottom. On this card, there is a scale that runs from top to bottom. Where would you place yourself on this scale nowadays?"*. Figure 1 shows the distribution of this indicator by sex and migration background. In line with existing studies (Evans and Kelly 2004), most individuals see themselves in the middle of the social hierarchy with a spike at SSS=5. The average SSS is slightly lower among daughters of natives (5.17) than daughters of immigrants (5.35), while it is virtually identical between sons of natives (5.33) and immigrants (5.32). The overall distributions appear relatively similar across sex and migration background.

[Figure 1 about here]

Our *independent variables* of interest measure intergenerational social mobility. We successively use two indicators: educational attainment mobility and occupational status mobility, each tapping into an essential yet distinct dimension of socioeconomic status. Educational attainment is measured in four categories (primary education or less, less than high school, high school completed, and higher education). Occupational status is measured through the official French *Professions et catégories socioprofessionnelles* (PCS) scheme in five groups (managers and professionals, intermediate occupations, skilled workers, unskilled workers, and self-employed workers). Father's and mother's occupations correspond to their job when the respondent was 15 years old, as reported by the respondent at the time of the survey. To calculate intergenerational mobility and identify upward mobility, downward mobility and immobility, we compared the highest level of education and occupational status of both parents to those of the respondents. The self-employed category of occupational status could not be

unambiguously positioned in the hierarchy, ranging from managers and professionals (at the top), to intermediate occupations, skilled workers, and unskilled workers (at the bottom). Therefore, we grouped individuals who are intergenerationally mobile from or to self-employment into a specific category.

Method

This paper aims to assess the effect of intergenerational social mobility on subjective social status *net* of the effects of respondents' and their parents' social position (measured as educational attainment or occupational status). However, a standard multiple regression cannot simultaneously include parents' position ($ORIG_i$), respondents' position ($DEST_i$) and mobility between the two ($MOBIL_i$) due to the strict linear dependency between these three variables (namely: $MOBIL_i = DEST_i - ORIG_i$). To overcome this issue, we use the diagonal reference model (DRM) introduced by Sobel (1985), extensively used since and still considered the "gold standard" to estimate mobility effects (among others: Präg, Fritsch, and Richards 2022; Kaiser and Trinh 2021; Zang and Dirk de Graaf 2016; Houle and Martin 2011). The DRM can be written as follows:

$$SSS_{iod} = p.\mu_o + (1-p)\mu_d + \beta_k X_{ik} + \varepsilon_i \qquad (1)$$

This model estimates the effects of origin and destination positions among immobile individuals. Weighting parameters p and $(1-p)$ both ranging from 0 to 1 respectively assess the relative effect of origin and destination positions. μ_o and μ_d represent the average levels of subjective social status for each origin and destination positions among immobile individuals. These estimations are calculated while controlling for a vector of covariates X_{ik} which include measures of social mobility, as well as a range of demographic controls.

In this paper, we explore whether the effect of intergenerational social mobility on SSS varies depending on individual's migration background. Therefore, we expand the standard

DRM model and further allow several parameters to vary between children of natives and children of immigrants, as expressed in equation (2).

$$SSS_{iod} = p_{immig}.\ \mu_{o,immig} + (1 - p_{immig})\mu_{d,immig} + \alpha_{immig}.UP_i + \gamma_{immig}.DOWN_i + \beta_k X_{ik} + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

The relative weight of origin (p_{immig}) and destination ($1 - p_{immig}$) positions, the average SSS for immobile individuals of each origin ($\mu_{o,immig}$) and destination position ($\mu_{d,immig}$), the effects of upward (α_{immig}) and downward (γ_{immig}) mobility are all allowed to vary across migration background. As pointed out by Präg, Fritsch, and Richards (2022:2), it is worth keeping in mind that "the term 'effect' here and in the earlier literature is to be understood in a statistical rather than causal sense", for DRM are limited when it comes to identifying proper causal relationships between variables.

We estimate three nested DRM for our two measures of intergenerational mobility (educational and occupational mobility), and for two versions of our measure of migration background (with and without distinction by immigrants' geographic origin). In a first model (M1), we only include our variable of interest, i.e. respectively the indicators of educational and occupational intergenerational mobility, as well as a variable related to the survey collection method (face-to-face or by phone).[2] The second model (M2) additionally includes three control variables: respondent's age group (18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59); his/her relationship status at the time of the survey (single, cohabiting couple, non-cohabiting couple); and whether he/she lived with his/her parents in his/her childhood as this could affect whether the maximum level of occupational or educational attainment of both parents is in fact the relevant reference for individuals. Finally, a third model (M3) adds controls for whether the

[2] The data collection for the TeO2 survey started in July 2019 and was initially planned to be conducted only by means of face-to-face interviews. Yet, due to the COVID crisis, a significant proportion of respondents were contacted by phone from March 2020 onwards. Overall, only 6% of interviews took place by phone, but this proportion rose to 23% for interviews conducted after March 17, 2020 when France's first COVID-related lockdown took effect. Therefore, we control for survey collection method (face-to-face or phone) as a way to neutralize differences strictly related to collection method, but also to survey period (before or during the COVID crisis).

respondent experienced discrimination in the past five years "never", "sometimes" or "often", in order to test whether these experiences can account for observed differences between groups in mobility effects on SSS (Hypothesis H3). Each model is run separately for men and women.

Findings

Patterns of Social Mobility

Before assessing the effects of intergenerational mobility on the SSS of children of natives and immigrants, we first describe patterns of educational and occupational mobility within native and immigrant families. Tables 1 and 2 provide descriptive statistics for each type of intergenerational mobility by sex and migration background. Overall, upward educational mobility (55.7%, see Table 1) is much more frequent than upward occupational mobility (25.8%, see Table 2).

[Tables 1 and 2 about here]

Due to the dramatic expansion of secondary and tertiary education in the 1960s-2000s period in France (Defresne and Krop 2016), the educational structure has upgraded more rapidly than the occupational structure. Overall, children of immigrants experience more intergenerational mobility (both educational and occupational) than children of natives, especially in the form of upward mobility. Upward educational mobility is especially high for immigrants' sons (62.7%) and daughters (68.1%). This is because immigrant parents tend to come from countries where higher education is less developed than in France where their children attend school (Beauchemin, Ichou, and Simon 2022). While daughters are those who experience upward *educational* mobility more frequently in immigrant families, sons more often move up *occupationally*. The same gendered pattern can be observed in native families. In summary, social reproduction appears stronger in native than in immigrant families. Whether or not these differences in mobility patterns manifest themselves in the effect of social mobility on SSS remains uncertain, and will be assessed in the next section.

Effects of Social Mobility on Subjective Social Status

We successively examine the effect of educational (Tables 3 and 4) and occupational (Tables 5 and 6) mobility on subjective social status. To test our hypotheses, we distinguish individuals first by migration background (children of natives vs. children of immigrants) in Tables 3 and 5, then by parental region of birth (France, Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Rest of the world) in Tables 4 and 6. The parameters of most interest for our research questions are the mobility parameters, on which we will focus.

Effects of Educational Mobility on Subjective Social Status

Among children of natives, intergenerational educational mobility seems to have a stronger effect among men than among women (see Table 3). Except for a single statistically significant positive coefficient associated with upward mobility in model 1 (without controls), all other mobility parameters are non-significant for daughters of natives, whereas both downward and upward mobility parameters prove statistically significant across the three model specifications among sons of natives. Specifically, among natives' sons, upward educational mobility is associated with an increased SSS and downward educational mobility with a decreased SSS, net of parents' and respondents' education, and other controls. Both effects appear to be of comparable size, i.e. upward and downward intergenerational educational mobility affects SSS symmetrically in this group.

[Table 3 about here]

This pattern contrasts with the one observed among children of immigrants, for whom mobility effects are null for sons, but often significant for daughters. Downward educational mobility exerts a statistically significant negative effect on immigrants' daughters' SSS that is robust across model specifications. This negative effect appears for sons too, but only before

controls are added to model 1. By contrast, upward social mobility shows no significant association with the SSS of either daughters or sons of immigrants.

To determine whether these effects are large or small in magnitude, we can compare regression coefficients to the standard deviation of the dependent variable (SSS), which is σ_{women}=1.69 among women and σ_{men}=1.72 among men. In other words, the positive effect of upward mobility on natives' sons' SSS, and the negative effect of downward mobility on both natives' sons' SSS and immigrants' daughters' SSS all lie between one fifth and one quarter of a standard deviation of SSS. If we follow classic rules of thumbs to judge effect size inspired by values of Cohen's d (Sawilowsky 2009), these represent small to moderate effects.

So far, intergenerational educational mobility seems to affect subjective social status for both children of natives and children of immigrants. However, a gendered pattern emerges whereby intergenerational mobility appears to have stronger effects on immigrants' daughters than on their sons (H4). To further explore our hypotheses, Table 4 presents models that differentiate immigrant families according to parents' region of birth. For the sake of concision, only mobility parameters are reported.

[Table 4 about here]

Among children of immigrants, a distinct pattern of mobility effects is observed for children of European immigrants. In this group, downward educational mobility negatively affects sons' SSS, but no other mobility effect turns out significant for either sons or daughters. This negative downward mobility effect is one that is also observed for sons of natives. By contrast, in all other groups of immigrants' descendants, sons' SSS is not significantly affected by either upward or downward mobility. However, daughters of immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East (in all three models), Sub-Saharan Africa (only in the third model) and the rest of the world (in all three models) have their SSS decrease when they experience downward educational mobility. All the statistically significant mobility effects that are robust across

models lie between one fifth and one third of a standard deviation of SSS making them small to moderate in size.

Overall, as Table 4 shows, the effect of intergenerational educational mobility varies strongly by ethnicity and gender. While sons of natives' and European immigrants' SSS is more affected by mobility than that of natives' and European immigrants' daughters, the opposite is true among children of non-European immigrants. In these groups, daughters' SSS is more sensitive to (downward) educational mobility than that of sons.

Unsurprisingly, frequent experiences of discrimination tend to lower SSS levels. To evaluate the role of discrimination in explaining observed mobility effects on SSS, we systematically compare mobility parameters between models 2 and 3. In general, controlling for reports of discrimination does not dramatically change the magnitude of mobility parameters in our models. The only instance in which experiences of discrimination appear to play a role is in the negative downward educational mobility effect on the SSS of daughters of immigrants from MENA (Table 4). In this case, the downward mobility parameter goes from -.44 to -.36 from model 2 to model 3. The addition of a discrimination control thus shrinks the parameter by about one fifth. Although the effect is rather small, it is consistent with the hypothesis that perceived discrimination plays a specific role in the negative effect of downward mobility for racialized minorities (H3).

Effects of Occupational Mobility on Subjective Social Status

The results presented in Tables 5 and 6 pertain to occupational mobility effects on SSS. The pattern of mobility effects is similar, yet not identical, to the one observed for educational mobility. The positive effect of upward mobility on natives' sons' SSS is not detected for occupational mobility, but the significant negative effect of downward mobility for sons of natives and daughters of immigrants holds. The size of the downward occupational mobility

effects appears slightly smaller than for educational mobility (one sixth of a standard deviation of SSS for sons of natives, and one tenth for daughters of immigrants).

[Tables 5 and 6 about here]

When we disaggregate the population of immigrant descendants by parental geographic origin (Table 6), we observe that daughters of immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East are those who drive the negative effect of downward occupational mobility. No statistically significant mobility effect appears in other immigrant groups. The negative effect of downward occupational mobility among immigrants' daughters from MENA (-.28 in model 2) lies at around one sixth of a standard deviation, an effect size which is larger than among daughters of immigrants in general but which remains relatively modest. When comparing models 2 and 3, reported discrimination does not seem to play any role in explaining this effect.

Discussion

While the role of intergenerational mobility on SSS proved to be more important for children of immigrants than for children of natives in some cases, this was not always the case. Hypothesis 1, which predicted that intergenerational mobility would have a consistently stronger effect among children of immigrants, is thus not fully supported. Instead, our findings point to distinct patterns of effects along both gender and ethno-racial lines. Hypothesis 4 is generally confirmed: downward intergenerational mobility exerts a negative effect on the SSS of immigrants' daughters (but not their sons) specifically from the MENA region, and on the SSS of natives' sons (but not their daughters). Relatedly, Hypothesis 2, expecting stronger negative effects of downward mobility among racial minorities, holds among women but is not consistently supported among men. By and large, this gendered pattern of mobility effects is found for both educational and occupation mobility. Hypothesis 3, positing experiences of discrimination as a mechanism explaining the negative effect of downward mobility on ethnic minorities' SSS, partly holds among daughters of immigrants from MENA in terms of

educational mobility. Empirical evidence for Hypothesis 3 is more limited for other groups, and the comparison between models 2 and 3 tends to rule out discrimination as a major mechanism accounting for differences in mobility effects.

Taken together, our analyses confirm that intergenerational social mobility has a different effect on subjective social status in immigrant and native families, with pronounced variations by gender and ethnicity. In line with our expectations, downward mobility appears to play an especially important role in shaping the subjective social status of daughters of immigrants from the MENA region in France. Previous literature suggests two features of this population that helps interpret this observation. First, immigrant parents from North Africa in France tend to have very high educational – and more generally social – expectations for their children, especially their daughters (Brinbaum and Kieffer 2005; Beaud 2018). Failure to achieve upward social mobility could thus be especially detrimental to their SSS. Second, daughters of immigrants from North Africa and Turkey in France have significantly lower employment rates than their male counterparts and women from other immigrant groups (Meurs and Pailhé 2008; Brinbaum, Primon, and Meurs 2016). Therefore, those who are employed are more strongly selected on unobserved characteristics, including social mobility aspirations, than in other groups. As hypothesized, this might also result in enhancing the negative effect of downward mobility on their SSS.

Most at odds with our expectations is the significant effect of social mobility that we observed only for sons of natives – and sons of European immigrants for educational mobility –, but not daughters. This gendered pattern could be in line with a paradox often referred to as the "paradox of the contented female worker", i.e. the idea that women tend to be more satisfied with their jobs and wages than men even if they do not match their qualifications, because of lower career expectations (Clark 1997; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2000; Phelan 1994). This paradox has mainly been documented in the general population of Western countries and could

help understand why experiences of downward mobility matter less for female than for male natives. An additional explanation of these results could be that individuals' educational attainment and occupation in general – and here, specifically, how they differ from parental social origin – do not constitute the major criteria for female natives to assess their position within the social hierarchy. This interpretation is consistent with previous research showing that measures of economic position such as income, employment status or occupation are less strongly correlated with SSS and SWB for women than for men (Shaked et al. 2016; Demakakos et al. 2008), whereas the opposite is found for social and family integration (Pinquart and Sörensen 2000). Once again, these studies primarily focus on the general populations in Western societies, suggesting these observations to be mostly relevant among natives.

Conclusion

This article assesses the role of intergenerational mobility in subjective social status, and how it differs between immigrant and native families. We take advantage of the recent and nationally representative "Trajectories and Origins 2" survey, which provides a unique insight into immigrants and their descendants in France. Our findings highlight distinct patterns in the effect of social mobility on subjective social status that vary by migration background, geographic origin and gender. We found a significant negative effect of downward social mobility among daughters of immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East. By contrast, intergenerational mobility exerts a significant effect on SSS only for sons of natives, and not daughters. Overall, these patterns hold for both educational and occupational mobility, in spite of small differences. In particular, we identified a significant and positive effect of upward educational mobility among sons of natives and a negative effect of downward educational

mobility among sons of European immigrants, neither of which are observed for occupational mobility.

This study sheds new light on the differences in the process of social positioning between immigrant and native populations. Specifically, we focused on intergenerational mobility and showed that it is an important – if neglected – determinant of subjective social status. Our results call for further investigations of the mechanisms at play. One avenue for future research is to explore subjective perceptions of intergenerational mobility, and not only subjective social status at the time of the survey. Indeed, "objective" measures of social mobility are not the only factors explaining perceived intergenerational mobility (Gugushvili 2021), and the individuals sometimes under- or overestimate their social trajectories (Duru-Bellat and Kieffer 2008). This subjective perspective would be especially valuable to consider in immigrant populations. Among immigrants, the phenomenon of transnational status inconsistency, i.e., a marked difference between their social status in the origin and destination countries, might complexify the relevant social groups of reference to which immigrants compare themselves to assess their social position. If the socioeconomic characteristics of native families can be considered within a single society, those of immigrants are indeed more ambiguous as they are embedded in both the origin and destination societies (Sayad 1991). To consider their social trajectory, immigrants compare themselves not only to the "mainstream" population at destination, but also – and maybe more importantly – to their non-migrant counterparts at origin (Bidet 2018; Zuccotti, Ganzeboom, and Guveli 2017; FitzGerald 2012). In that context, some authors suggest to focus on subjective measure of social mobility when studying assimilation processes in the first and second generations (Zhou and Lee 2007). We do not argue that self-perceptions of social mobility should replace objective measures of mobility and incorporation. Yet, they could provide a useful complementary perspective in this nascent field of research at the intersection of immigrant assimilation and social stratification.

Data Availability

The data underlying this article cannot be shared publicly to protect respondents' privacy and abide by the EU GDPR's requirements. The data can be access by applying to the PROGEDO data portal (sensitive data not included): https://commande.progedo.fr/en/utilisateur/connexion or through the Confidential Data Access Portal (sensitive data included): https://cdap.casd.eu/comite-secret-statistique. The statistical code used to produce the analyses contained in this article will be shared with the published article as an online appendix.

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Table 1: Educational mobility patterns for natives' and immigrants' daughters and sons (in percent)

		Immobility	Upward mobility	Downward mobility	Total	N
Natives'	**daughters**	34.6	58.0	7.3	100.0	1,477
	sons	38.7	50.0	11.4	100.0	1,417
Immigrants'	**daughters**	25.3	68.1	6.6	100.0	3,493
	sons	26.7	62.7	10.6	100.0	3,286
Total		*35.1*	*55.7*	*9.2*	*100.0*	9,673

Source: TeO2 (INED-INSEE, 2019-2020).

Table 2: Occupational mobility patterns for natives' and immigrants' daughters and sons (in percent)

		Immobility	Upward mobility	Downward mobility	From/to self-employment	Total	N
Natives'	**daughters**	34.3	20.6	32.0	13.1	100.0	1,668
	sons	36.5	27.9	22.7	13.0	100.0	1,596
Immigrants'	**daughters**	30.4	34.3	26.0	9.3	100.0	3,805
	sons	29.7	37.7	20.3	12.3	100.0	3,619
Total		*34.6*	*25.8*	*26.8*	*12.8*	*100.0*	10,688

Source: TeO2 (INED-INSEE, 2019-2020).

Table 3 : Diagonal reference models of the effects of intergenerational educational mobility on subjective social status by parents' migration status

	WOMEN			MEN		
	M1	M2	M3	M1	M2	M3
Immobiles						
Children of natives						
Primary education or less	4.85***	4.92***	4.06***	4.36***	4.48***	4.58***
	(.17)	(.17)	(.17)	(.17)	(.17)	(.17)
Less than high school	4.60***	4.84***	4.89***	4.71***	5.07***	5.11***
	(.11)	(.12)	(.12)	(.10)	(.12)	(.12)
High school	4.82***	5.13***	5.12***	5.10***	5.56***	5.62***
	(.16)	(.17)	(.17)	(.18)	(.19)	(.19)
Higher education	6.01***	6.23***	6.33***	6.16***	6.61***	6.64***
	(.10)	(.12)	(.12)	(.11)	(.13)	(.13)
Children of immigrants						
Primary education or less	5.00***	5.20***	5.27***	4.55***	4.84***	5.02***
	(.11)	(.12)	(.12)	(.14)	(.15)	(.15)
Less than high school	5.07***	5.36***	5.42***	4.98***	5.41***	5.53***
	(.09)	(.11)	(.11)	(.09)	(.11)	(.11)
High school	5.26***	5.64***	5.75***	5.17***	5.79***	5.92***
	(.11)	(.13)	(.13)	(.11)	(.13)	(.13)
Higher education	5.93***	6.24***	6.37***	6.22***	6.73***	6.81***
	(.07)	(.10)	(.10)	(.08)	(.11)	(.11)
Origin weight *p*	.49***	.47***	.49***	.60***	.63***	.64***
	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)	(.11)	(.11)	(.11)
Mobility parameters (ref: immobile)						
Children of natives						
Upward mobility	.25**	.18	.20	.38**	.36**	.36**
	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)	(.15)	(.16)	(.16)
Downward mobility	-.03	.06	.04	-.44**	-.40**	-.35*
	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)
Children of immigrants						
Upward mobility	.09	.06	.06	-.04	-.11	-.10
	(.09)	(.10)	(.10)	(.11)	(.11)	(.11)
Downward mobility	-.42***	-.38***	-.37***	-.25**	-.15	-.11
	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)
Age group (ref: 50-60)						
18-29		-.34***	-.30***		-.65***	-.55***
		(.07)	(.07)		(.08)	(.08)
30-39		-.29***	-.25***		-.44***	-.35***
		(.07)	(.07)		(.07)	(.07)
40-49		-.17***	-.14**		-.31***	-.26***
		(.07)	(.07)		(.07)	(.07)
Relationship status (ref: cohabiting couple)						
Non-cohabiting couple		-.05	-.01		-.17	-.17
		(.10)	(.10)		(.13)	(.13)
Single		-.41***	-.37***		-.42***	-.42***

		(.05)	(.05)		(.06)	(.06)
Both parents during childhood (ref: yes)						
No		.13**	.11**		.14**	.09
		(.05)	(.05)		(.06)	(.06)
Perceived discrimination (ref: never)						
Often			-.79***			-1.30***
			(.11)			(.12)
Sometimes			-.36***			-.54***
			(.06)			(.06)
Interview by phone	.29***	.30***	.30***	.24***	.26***	.28***
	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.09)	(.09)	(.08)
Observations	*4,814*	*4,814*	*4,803*	*4,564*	*4,564*	*4,550*

Source: TeO2 (INED-INSEE, 2019-2020). * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 4: Diagonal reference models of the effects of intergenerational educational mobility on subjective social status by parents' region of origin

	WOMEN			MEN		
	M1	M2	M3	M1	M2	M3
Mobility parameters (ref: immobile)						
Parents born in France						
Upward mobility	.25**	.18	.20*	.38**	.36**	.36**
	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)	(.15)	(.16)	(.16)
Downward mobility	-.03	.05	.03	-.44**	-.41**	-.35*
	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)
Parents born in Europe						
Upward mobility	.01	.00	.01	-.10	-.18	-.12
	(.20)	(.19)	(.19)	(.17)	(.19)	(.18)
Downward mobility	-.04	-.06	-.09	-.53***	-.47**	-.46**
	(.24)	(.23)	(.23)	(.21)	(.22)	(.21)
Parents born in North Africa and the Middle East						
Upward mobility	.04	.05	.05	-.01	-.13	-.14
	(.14)	(.14)	(.14)	(.13)	(.16)	(.16)
Downward mobility	-.45**	-.44**	-.36*	.16	.26	.31
	(.21)	(.21)	(.21)	(.20)	(.20)	(.20)
Parents born in Sub-Saharan Africa						
Upward mobility	-.03	-.01	.04	-.50*	-.47	-.46
	(.21)	(.21)	(.22)	(.30)	(.30)	(.30)
Downward mobility	-.39	-.39	-.44*	-.19	-.16	-.14
	(.26)	(.26)	(.25)	(.30)	(.30)	(.29)
Parents born in the rest of the world						
Upward mobility	-.15	-.17	-.16	.14	.14	.10
	(.36)	(.34)	(.33)	(.34)	(.34)	(.34)
Downward mobility	-.73**	-.61*	-.60*	-.48	-.32	-.21
	(.36)	(.35)	(.35)	(.36)	(.36)	(.36)
Observations	*4,814*	*4,814*	*4,803*	*4,564*	*4,564*	*4,550*

Source: TeO2 (INED-INSEE, 2019-2020). * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 5: Diagonal reference models of the effects of intergenerational occupational mobility on subjective social status by parents' migration status

	WOMEN			MEN		
	M1	M2	M3	M1	M2	M3
Immobiles						
Children of natives						
Managers & professionals	6.72***	6.81***	6.90***	6.72***	6.80***	6.84***
	(.14)	(.15)	(.15)	(.13)	(.14)	(.14)
Intermediate occupations	5.53***	5.61***	5.67***	5.47***	5.54***	5.60***
	(.10)	(.12)	(.12)	(.13)	(.14)	(.14)
Skilled workers	4.99***	5.07***	5.10***	4.77***	4.85***	4.89***
	(.09)	(.11)	(.11)	(.09)	(.11)	(.11)
Unskilled workers	4.71***	4.80***	4.83***	4.57***	4.73***	4.79***
	(.11)	(.12)	(.12)	(.16)	(.18)	(.17)
Self-employed	5.32***	5.45***	5.47***	5.32***	5.34***	5.38***
	(.30)	(.31)	(.32)	(.22)	(.23)	(.23)
Children of immigrants						
Managers & professionals	6.67***	6.82***	6.20***	6.76***	6.85***	6.94***
	(.09)	(.11)	(.11)	(.09)	(.12)	(.11)
Intermediate occupations	5.54***	5.67***	5.75***	5.56***	5.68***	5.78***
	(.09)	(.11)	(.11)	(.09)	(.11)	(.11)
Skilled workers	5.35***	5.50***	5.57***	4.88***	5.00***	5.13***
	(.06)	(.09)	(.09)	(.07)	(.10)	(.10)
Unskilled workers	4.90***	5.01***	5.14***	4.60***	4.78***	4.96***
	(.07)	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)	(.12)	(.12)
Self-employed	5.68***	5.81***	5.88***	5.24***	5.30***	5.41***
	(.33)	(.34)	(.34)	(.17)	(.18)	(.18)
Origin weight *p*	.26***	.26***	.29***	.34***	.35***	.37*
	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)
Mobility parameters (ref: immobile)						
Children of natives						
Upward mobility	-.01	-.01	-.00	.02	.01	.02
	(.13)	(.13)	(.13)	(.13)	(.12)	(.13)
Downward mobility	-.10	-.07	-.08	-.30**	-.27*	-.28**
	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)	(.14)	(.14)	(.14)
From/to self-employ.	-.08	-.16	-.14	.03	.03	.03
	(.16)	(.17)	(.17)	(.16)	(.16)	(.16)
Children of immigrants						
Upward mobility	-.08	-.05	-.03	-.04	-.07	-.04
	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)
Downward mobility	-.20**	-.17**	-.17**	-.04	-.01	-.01
	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.09)	(.10)	(.10)
From/to self-employ.	-.09	-.11	-.11	.13	.13	.13
	(.17)	(.18)	(.18)	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)
Age group (ref: 50-60)						
18-29		-.10	-.06		-.03	.05
		(.07)	(.07)		(.07)	(.07)
30-39		-.15**	-.11*		-.10	-.04
		(.06)	(.06)		(.07)	(.07)

40-49		-.10	-.06		-.09	-.04
		(.06)	(.06)		(.07)	(.07)
Relationship status (ref: cohabiting couple)						
Non-cohabiting couple		-.21**	-.18*		-.21*	-.19
		(.10)	(.09)		(.12)	(.12)
Single		-.41***	-.38***		-.33***	-.34***
		(.05)	(.05)		(.05)	(.05)
Both parents during childhood (ref: yes)						
No		.15***	.13***		.10*	.06
		(.05)	(.05)		(.05)	(.06)
Perceived discrimination (ref: never)						
Often			-.76***			-.17***
			(.10)			(.12)
Sometimes			-.33***			-.46***
			(.05)			(.06)
Interview by phone	.27***	.28***	.28***	.27***	.28***	.30***
	(.07)	(.07)	(.07)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)
Observations	*5,258*	*5,258*	*5,245*	*5,038*	*5,038*	*5,025*

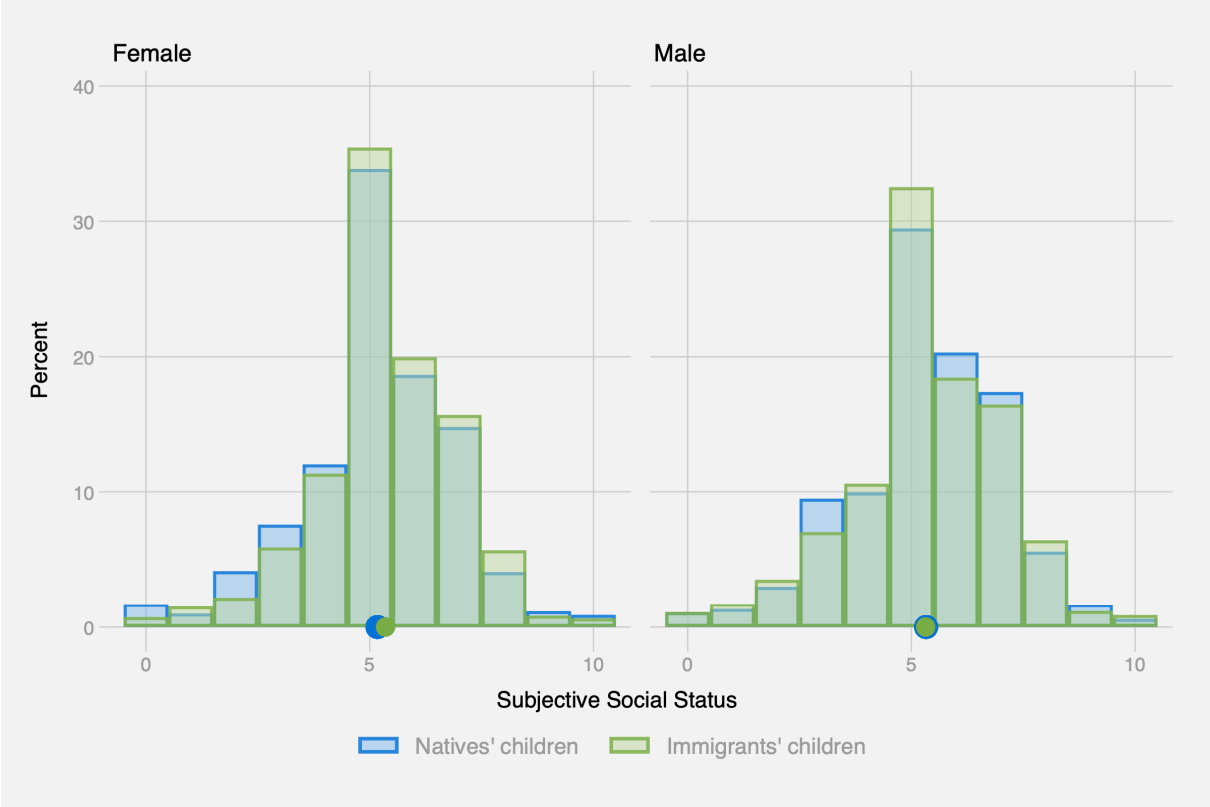
Source: TeO2 (INED-INSEE, 2019-2020). * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 6: Diagonal reference models of the effects of intergenerational occupational mobility on subjective social status by parents' region of origin

	WOMEN			MEN		
	M1	M2	M3	M1	M2	M3
Mobility parameters (ref: immobile)						
Parents born in France						
Upward mobility	-.01	-.01	-.00	.02	.01	.02
	(.13)	(.13)	(.13)	(.13)	(.13)	(.13)
Downward mobility	-.10	-.07	-.08	-.30**	-.27*	-.28**
	(.12)	(.12)	(.12)	(.14)	(.14)	(.14)
From/to self-employ.	-.08	-.15	-.14	.03	.03	.03
	(.17)	(.17)	(.17)	(.16)	(.16)	(.16)
Parents born in Europe						
Upward mobility	-.07	-.10	-.11	.09	.06	.05
	(.14)	(.14)	(.14)	(.16)	(.16)	(.16)
Downward mobility	.00	.03	.05	-.29	-.25	-.26
	(.14)	(.14)	(.14)	(.18)	(.18)	(.17)
From/to self-employ.	-.05	-.05	-.05	.11	.10	.08
	(.26)	(.26)	(.26)	(.19)	(.19)	(.19)
Parents born in North Africa and the Middle East						
Upward mobility	-.20	-.16	-.10	-.14	-.16	-.10
	(.13)	(.12)	(.12)	(.13)	(.13)	(.13)
Downward mobility	-.32**	-.28**	-.29**	.11	.16	.20
	(.13)	(.13)	(.13)	(.16)	(.16)	(.15)
From/to self-employ.	-.32	-.36	-.38	.20	.18	.17
	(.26)	(.27)	(.28)	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)
Parents born in Sub-Saharan Africa						
Upward mobility	.13	.13	.16	.10	.08	.08
	(.19)	(.19)	(.19)	(.23)	(.23)	(.23)
Downward mobility	-.29	-.23	-.20	.15	.17	.16
	(.21)	(.21)	(.20)	(.24)	(.24)	(.24)
From/to self-employ.	1.33	1.21	1.14	-.04	-.07	-.07
	(1.59)	(1.29)	(1.20)	(.58)	(.57)	(.56)
Parents born in the rest of the world						
Upward mobility	.22	.28	.24	-.11	-.11	-.13
	(.25)	(.24)	(.24)	(.29)	(.28)	(.28)
Downward mobility	-.18	-.16	-.14	-.09	-.07	-.09
	(.26)	(.25)	(.25)	(.27)	(.27)	(.26)
From/to self-employ.	.37	.43	.43	-.14	-.06	-.01
	(.60)	(.60)	(.59)	(.39)	(.39)	(.38)
Observations	*5,258*	*5,258*	*5,245*	*5,038*	*5,038*	*5,025*

Source: TeO2 (INED-INSEE, 2019-2020). * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figure 1: Distribution of SSS for children of natives and children of immigrants, by sex



Source: TeO2 (INED-INSEE, 2019-2020).