Childhood intelligence, locus of control and behaviour disturbance as determinants of intergenerational social mobility: British Cohort Study 1970

Sophie von Stumma a,1, Catharine R. Gale b, G. David Batty a,c, Ian J. Deary a,⁎

a Medical Research Council Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK
b Medical Research Council Epidemiology Resource Centre, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK
c Medical Research Council Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 15 October 2007
Received in revised form 16 April 2009
Accepted 17 April 2009
Available online 9 May 2009

Keywords:
Intelligence
Social class
Social mobility
Childhood behaviour
Locus of control
Education
Occupation

1. Introduction

Social mobility is understood as the transition of an individual or social object from one social position to another (Sorokin, 1959). Early theoretical frameworks, such as status attainment theory (Blau & Duncan, 1967), predicted that intergenerational social mobility would be limited by the predefining effects of parental social class. More recently it has become clear that, although parental social class remains an important influence, social mobility is also strongly linked with mental ability and educational attainment (Bowles & Gintis, 2002; Deary et al., 2005; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Strenze, 2007). For example, Deary et al. (2005) found, in a male Scottish population sample (N = 243), that intelligence in childhood accounted for 23.2% and parental social class for 17.6% of the total variance in social status attainment in mid-life at the age of 50 years (Fig. 1). In this and other studies, parental social class and mental ability significantly affected the level of education which had a mediating function on attained social status, whether defined by occupation or other indicators (Breen & Goldthorpe, 2001; Deary et al., 2005; Nettle, 2003).

However, mental ability, education and parental social class only account for a part of the total variance in social status attainment. Deary et al.'s (2005) path model accounted for 44.1% of the variance in social status attainment; other models account for even less variance (e.g. Bond & Saunders, 1999). Other factors that might influence social status attainment in adult life are behaviours and attitudes in childhood (Bowles & Gintis, 2002; Colom, Escorial, Shih, & Privado, 2007; Jackson, 2006; Jencks, 1979; Osborne Groves, 2005; Sigle-Rushton, 2004; Silles, 2005).

Childhood behaviours predict not only personality structure in adulthood but also employment status and occupational social class attainment (e.g. Caspi, 2000; Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005; McCrae et al., 2000). In addition, childhood behaviours and personality are determinants of school and university achievements (e.g. Feinstein, 2000). For example, in a sample of Spanish school children,
temperament difficulties accounted for a greater amount of variance in academic performance than cognitive ability (32.5% versus 29.2%, respectively; Colom et al., 2007). Investigations of the National Child Development Study 1958 showed that behavioural characteristics like withdrawal, aggression and resentfulness, assessed at ages of 5, 11 and 16 years, significantly affected adult earnings (Silles, 2005), occupational attainment (Jackson, 2006), social exclusion (Sigle-Rushton, 2004), and labour market returns (Osborne Groves, 2005). Thus, childhood behaviours are likely to contribute, in addition to parental social class and mental ability, to educational achievement and social class attainment.

1.1. Locus of control and self-esteem

Locus of control (Rotter, 1966) and self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1979) are plausibly important antecedents of attainment, but have been under-examined in current research (Wang, Kick, Fraser, & Burns, 1999). Rotter (1966) suggested that people either believe in their own ability to control events (internal locus of control), or attribute their personal circumstances to external forces (external locus of control). In the context of education, an external locus of control predicts poor grades, whereas an internal locus of control precedes superior academic performance (Nelson & Mathia, 1995; Osborn & Milbank, 1987). Pearlin and Kohn (1966) identified differences in child-rearing patterns of middle class parents, who encouraged children’s self-direction, and working class parents, who were more likely to emphasise conformity to externally imposed conditions. Working class parents tend to endorse obedience, neatness, and honesty in child-rearing, whereas middle class parents stress curiosity, self-control and happiness (Bowles & Gintis, 1972). Locus of control may therefore partially mediate effects of parental social class on educational and social status attainments.

Self-esteem is defined as the sum of evaluations across salient attributes of one’s self and personality and reflects an evaluation of one’s worth and importance (Rosenberg, 1979). Previously, high self-esteem was associated with superior academic performance, advanced educational qualifications, and higher income levels (Goldsmith, Veum, & Darity, 1997; Schoon, 2001). Moreover, individuals with increased self-esteem are more likely to assign success to internal attributes, whereas people low in self-esteem tend to explain accomplishments in terms of external circumstances (Abdallah, 1989). Indeed, locus of control and self-esteem are significantly related (Wang et al., 1999). It is plausible that both these characteristics are associated with social mobility.

1.2. The present study

The current study aims to evaluate predictors of occupational social class attainment at the age of 30 in a sample from the British Cohort Study 1970 (BCS 1970). The outcome variable, however, can be measured more accurately in men than in women, whose occupational social class is affected by childbearing (Dex, Ward, & Joshi, 2006). Thus, the present study will include an all-male sample.

Previous investigations often relied on few indicators of childhood behaviour and potentially biased observer ratings (e.g. Jackson, 2006; Osborn & Milbank, 1987). In the present study, multiple assessments of childhood behaviour will be analysed, including teacher’s and mother’s ratings, as well as children’s self-reports of locus of control and self-esteem.2 Overall, parental social class and the subject’s intelligence are hypothesised to be substantially correlated and to affect occupational status directly and indirectly through mediated effects by educational attainment. Locus of control and self-esteem are predicted to be positively correlated and to mediate effects of parental social class on educational and occupational attainment. Finally, childhood behaviour disturbance as rated by mothers and teachers is assumed to affect educational attainment and occupation status.

---

2 The BCS 1970 comprises 8 items adapted from the Eysenck Personality Inventory (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975), which were completed by children at the age of 10 under teacher’s supervision. Children indicated how much they could identify with personal characteristics like being ‘nervous’, ‘lively’ or ‘easy-going’. However, the items were found to be psychometrically unsatisfactory and thus, were omitted from the analyses.
دریافت فوری متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات