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Social Mobility*

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INTRODUCTION

Neither the position of families nor individuals within the class structure nor that structure itself, remain constant over time. Individuals and families change their class position and the class structure itself evolves, as some occupations decline and others become more numerous. Both these sorts of change have been intensively studied by sociologists and other social scientists. Examining the development of a class structure over time involves adopting a historical perspective, as in the work of Przeworski *et al.* (1980) or Wright and Martin (1987). The extent and the way in which families move through the class structure—between positions in it, in other words—is the subject matter of the study of social mobility. Social mobility has long been a central topic of sociological inquiry, and has been particularly actively pursued over the past 25 years. In this chapter our aim is to explain what the study of social mobility is, to give a brief explanation of the methods used in social mobility analysis, and to summarize the main results of recent research. Before we begin,

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however, we need first to set the scene by saying something about the temporal dimension of social class.

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SOCIAL MOBILITY

When we examine social mobility—that is, how and why people or families change position in the class structure—we are usually interested in two things. First, in the nature of mobility: how much change in class position is there; how far do people move from their original class; is there more upward or downward mobility in society; how does mobility affect people's behaviour and attitudes (for example, when people are mobile out of class X and into class Y, to what extent do they continue to behave (for example to vote) in ways that are typical of class X—from which they have come—and to what extent do they take on the behaviour typical of the class to which they move—class Y?)? Second, we are interested in the consequences of mobility for the class structure. For instance, if we take one class virtually all of whose members have always been in that class and whose families were before them, and contrast it with another class which is chiefly made up of families which have been mobile into that class from outside it, how are the two likely to differ? In particular, will the members of the more 'closed' of the two classes be more likely to view themselves as constituting a class *for* themselves, in Marx's terms, than will the members of the more open class?

These two perspectives on mobility are, as we might have anticipated, not entirely distinct. Classes are, after all, made up of families and the individuals within them: they both comprise a class and are influenced by being members of it, in much the same way that individual actions are shaped by the existence of constraints but also help, to a greater or lesser extent, to change or maintain these constraints.

INTER-GENERATIONAL MOBILITY

The most commonly studied form of class mobility is termed inter-generational mobility. This takes the form of a comparison of a person's current social class with the class that his or her family occupied at the time the person was growing up.

The vast majority of studies of inter-generational mobility have analyzed data for men: typically, then, the comparison is between the class position occupied by a man's family at the time he was growing up (say, at age 16) and the class position he currently occupies. When these studies are carried out on populations or large samples the relationship between the two is shown as a two-dimensional cross-tabulation (see Table 1). This table shows us the number of men who fall into each combination of current class and the class they were part of when they were growing up. Such tables are sometimes called origin by destination tables, since the name 'class origin' is usually given to the class they occupied when they were growing up, and 'class destination' is the name given to their current class. Hence the process of mobility is conceived of rather like a journey or a flow from an origin to a destination. The labelling of the two margins of the table in this way overcomes a problem of interpretation that had caused some problems in mobility analysis; this is that, despite

TABLE 1 THREE-CLASS MOBILITY TABLE: MEN IN ENGLAND AND WALES 1972

		Current (destination) class			
		1	2	3	Total
ORIGIN CLASS	1	731	322	189	1242
	2	857	1140	1109	3106
	3	787	1386	2915	5088
	Total	2375	2848	4213	9436

NOTE: Classes are: 1 = Service; 2 = Intermediate; 3 = Working.
SOURCE: Calculated from Goldthorpe et al. (1980/87), Table 2.2.

the term 'inter-generational' mobility, the distribution of men across the origin classes did not represent the class structure as it was at any particular point in time or for any particular generation. Mobility data is gathered from a survey of men (or people) in the current population (sometimes only the current working population) and thus, if it is representative of that population, it cannot, in its distribution over the origin classes, be representative of any other population (except by chance)—such as a particular generation or age group, or even of the population of fathers or families of men currently in the workforce (Duncan 1966). Therefore, mobility tables do not show us how one generation's class distribution evolves into the next generation's; rather, they show us how the classes men start out in (their origins) relate to the class they are in at the time of the survey (class destinations[1]).

Table 1 refers to a sample of 9436 men in England and Wales interviewed in 1972 for the Oxford Mobility Study (Goldthorpe 1980/87). It is immediately evident, of course, that what the table looks like will depend very much on how many classes we identify: here we have used a three-class categorization, and, as is conventionally the case, the same three classes are identified for origins as for destinations. These three classes are termed the service, intermediate and working class, respectively * * *.[2] The working class comprises men in largely manual occupations, whether these are considered skilled or not. The service class is made up largely of professionals, managers, administrators, supervisors of white-collar workers and owners of capital. In the middle, the intermediate class comprises other white-collar workers—such as clerical workers, salespersons, employees in services—small proprietors, such as farmers and smallholders, the self-employed (who do not employ others),

1 To label them class destinations may also be misleading, as Sorenson (1986) has argued. The men in a mobility sample typically range in age from 18 or 21 to retirement age or more, and their current class cannot be considered a destination (at least in the sense of final destination) for many of the younger men.

2 We could, of course, have used a finer class classification—say into seven classes, as Goldthorpe does for most of his analyses (see also Marshall 1990: Chapter 2).

TABLE 2 PERCENTAGE OUTFLOW MOBILITY TABLE: MEN IN ENGLAND AND WALES 1972

		Destination class			
		1	2	3	Total
ORIGIN CLASS	1	59	26	15	100
	2	28	37	36	101
	3	15	27	57	99

NOTE: Classes as Table 1. Percentages are by row—row totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.
SOURCE: As Table 1.

TABLE 3 PERCENTAGE INFLOW MOBILITY TABLE: MEN IN ENGLAND AND WALES 1972

		Destination class		
		1	2	3
ORIGIN CLASS	1	31	11	5
	2	36	40	26
	3	33	49	69
	Total	100	100	100

NOTE: Percentages are by column—column totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.
SOURCE: As Table 1.

and lower-grade technicians and supervisors of manual workers.[3]

This table tells us that there are 731 men who were born into class 1 and, at the time of the survey, were in class I; there were 322 men also born into class 1 who had moved to class 2; and so forth. Since it is difficult to interpret what these numbers mean when they are presented this way, they are usually given as percentages. If we calculate the percentages along the rows, we get the percentage of all men of a given origin class in each destination class. This is termed an 'outflow' table. Such a table for the England and Wales sample looks like Table 2. This table tells us that, for example, of all men originating in the working class, 15 per cent moved into the service class; 27 per cent moved into the intermediate class; and the remaining 57 per cent stayed in the working class (they were 'immobile'). Another way of interpreting this is to say that the probability of a man, who was born into the working class moving into, say, the intermediate class, was 0.27.

The other way of percentaging the table is to do it by columns: this gives us the percentage of men in a given destination class who come from the various origin classes. This is termed an 'inflow' table. An inflow table looks like Table 3. We interpret this table by, for example, noting that, of the current occupants of the intermediate class, 11 per cent came from service-class origins; 40 per cent came from intermediate-class origins; and 49 per cent came from working-class origins.

These two different ways of percentaging a table yield different insights into mobility. The inflow table tells us about the current composition of the classes, in terms of where members of the class came from. So, they tell us how heterogenous each class is in its composition. In these data an interesting contrast is provided by the service class and the working class. The service class is very heterogenous in its composition, being made up almost equally of men from all three origin classes, while the working class is much more homogenous: over two-thirds of men in this class were also born into this class. It is relevant to bear in mind that the service class expanded over this period—hence one would expect that it would be heterogenous in its composition not least because there are not enough men of service-class origins (1242 in Table 1) to fill the number of service-class destination positions (2375). Conversely, the working class destination is much smaller than the working-class origin, and the reverse argument applies. As the number of positions in this class contracted, we should expect that the remaining positions would have been filled by those with origins in that class, rather than by outsiders moving in.

We should expect, furthermore, that differences of this kind in the composition of classes would have consequences for the formation of 'class consciousness'. The members of a class which is relatively homogenous with respect to the class origins of its members are, all other things being equal, probably rather more likely to be aware of themselves as constituting a distinctive class than are the members of a class who are diverse in respect of their class origins.[4] 'In general, the greater the degree of "closure" of mobility chances—both intergenerationally and within the career of the individual—the more this facilitates the formation of identifiable classes' (Giddens 1973:107). However, shared class origins are only one factor which may contribute to an awareness of class (see * * * Giddens 1973).

The outflow table, on the other hand, tells us the chances of ending up in a particular destination class, given that a man started in a certain origin class. We can then make a comparison of these chances as between different origins. For example, the chances of a man born into the working class getting into the service class are 0.15 or 15 per cent; while the chances of a man of service-class origins staying in that class are 59 per cent. So, men from the service class are much more likely to be found there than are men born into the working class. Hence, the outflow table

3 The three-class categorization used here corresponds to that used by Goldthorpe *et al.* (1980/87) and not to that found in Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992b:38–9). In terms of the original Goldthorpe classes (as shown in Table 3.1) the three classes used here are made up as follows: Service class: I and II; Intermediate class: III, IV and V; Working class: VI and VII.

4 Recall that ease of mobility is one of the factors that Weber uses to distinguish the existence of social classes out of groups of economic classes.

provides us with a ready means of examining class differences in mobility chances, or, to put it in slightly different terms, the strength of the relationship between where you start out in the class structure (your class origin) and where you go to (your class destination).

However, when we make these comparisons of mobility chances as between different origin classes, we do not usually do so in terms of probabilities (or percentages flowing into a particular destination class from a given origin class); rather, we calculate chances in terms of odds. This idea will be familiar to any readers with an interest in gambling. Instead of looking at the *probability* that a man of intermediate class origins ends up in the service class, we look, instead, at the *odds* that such a man ends up in the service class *rather* than another class. So the probability of being in the service-class destination is .28, while the odds of being in that destination class rather than in, say, the intermediate class are 0.75. This figure is equal to the number (or percentage) who end up in the service class divided by the number (or percentage) who end up in the intermediate class.[5] So, when we make the comparison across different origin classes, we do this in respect of the odds of being in one destination class, rather than another. If we then want to compare the mobility chances of men from service-class origins with those of men from intermediate-class origins, say, we do this in terms of the odds of their arriving at one destination class rather than another.

For example, we can compare the odds of entering the service-class destination rather than the intermediate-class destination, as between men of service-class and intermediate-class origins. In these data, then, the odds for men of service-class origins are: 731 (= number of men in service-class destination from service-class origins) divided by 322 (= number of men in intermediate-class destination from service-class origins) = 2.27; while for men of intermediate-class origins they are 857 (= number of men in the service-class destination from intermediate-class origins) divided by 1140 (= number of men in intermediate-class destination from intermediate-class origin) = 0.75. We compare these two odds by simply taking their ratio: this yields a measure called the 'odds ratio' which, in this case, is equal to 3.03.

The odds ratio is the conventional measure of inequality in access to particular class destinations from different class origins. Odds ratios are usually set up so that they measure the odds of getting into a 'higher' or more desirable destination class, relative to getting into a lower, or less desirable, class. Odds ratios can be readily interpreted as a measure of how the odds of getting into a more desirable class relative to getting into a less desirable one differ as between different origin classes. Equality of access to a more desirable, rather than a less desirable, destination class, as between different origin classes, would give rise to an odds ratio of one (since both origins would have the same odds). If the odds ratio is more than one, this reflects greater advantages to the origin class whose odds form the numerator of the ratio, while an odds ratio less than one indicates that the advantages accrue to the destination class whose odds form the denominator.

5 So 28/37 from the outflow table (Table 2) is (allowing for rounding error) equal to 857/1140 from the original table (Table 1).

TABLE 4 ALL POSSIBLE ODDS RATIO IN THE THREE-CLASS ENGLAND AND WALES MOBILITY TABLE

Destination class	Origin class	Odds ratio
1 v 2	1 v 2	3.03
1 v 2	1 v 3	3.98
1 v 2	2 v 3	1.32
1 v 3	1 v 2	5.03
1 v 3	1 v 3	14.33
1 v 3	2 v 3	2.85
2 v 3	1 v 2	1.65
2 v 3	1 v 3	3.54
2 v 3	2 v 3	2.15

It might seem that there is likely to be a plethora of possible odds ratios that we could calculate for any table. In Table 4 we show all the possible odds ratios in the three-class table for England and Wales.[6] So, for example, the odds of being in the intermediate-class destination rather than the working-class destination are 2.15 times greater for men of intermediate class origins than for men of working-class origins. However, it turns out that not all of these odds ratios are independent of one another. In a mobility table using M classes (M = 3 in our example) there are $(M-1)^2$ independent odds ratios. So, in our three-class table, there are four independent odds ratios. If we know these, then we can calculate all the rest. So, for example if we take any pair of destination classes (say classes 1 and 3) we can calculate the odds ratio as between origin classes 2 and 3 (which is 2.85) from a knowledge of the odds ratios involving origin classes 1 v 2 (5.03) and 1 v 3 (14.03). In this case we divide the latter by the former to yield 2.85.[7]

STRUCTURAL AND EXCHANGE MOBILITY

We have spent some time discussing odds ratios because they turn out to play a central role in mobility table analysis. We will now explain why.

Many mobility analysts have argued that the mobility we see in a mobility table can be explained as the result of two processes. These are sometimes called structural and exchange mobility. The idea behind structural mobility is quite simple. If we take a given society, the amount of inter-generational class mobility that we observe will depend, to a very great extent, upon the degree of change in the class or occupational structure of that society. So, a society which was developing rapidly should show a lot of mobility, not least because many occupations would be declining in importance and thus men whose father held one such occupation would have very great difficulty in pursuing the same occupation. They would, in a sense, be forced to be mobile out of that class or occupation by virtue of the fact that the occupational positions were not there for them to fill. Sometimes this kind of mobility is called 'forced mobility'. The difference between the origin class and destination class distributions in a mobility table is sometimes taken as a measure of the extent of this. So, in the three-class table (Table 1), we see

6 We could also invert all these odds ratios to yield a much larger total, but this would be of no interest.

7 We see why this follows if we write the odds ratio for any two origin classes in the form of a ratio, thus 1/2 and 1/3. It therefore follows that the ratio 2/3 is simply 1/3 divided by 1/2.

many more origin than destination positions in the working class, and rather more destination than origin positions in the service class. So, the suggestion is that men must have had to move out of the working class because it is contracting, and, equally, men must have been 'drawn into' the service class as it expanded.

It was usually argued that this process operated independently of other processes of social mobility. In particular, it operated independently of processes of exchange mobility, which was concerned with how different class origins influenced mobility, and the inequalities in mobility chances that derive from different class origins. The reason that different origins confer different chances of mobility is because they provide people with different resources for mobility. So, people born into more advantaged classes generally acquire higher levels of formal qualifications, and, in addition, may have other resources (such as kinship links or friendship networks) which they can use to help them acquire a more desirable class position. In his analysis of the English and Welsh mobility data Goldthorpe (1980/87:99) developed a mobility model in which he argued that patterns of social fluidity (in other words, patterns of inequality of access to particular class destinations as between men of different class origins) were shaped by three factors. These are, he argues, the *relative desirability* of different classes as destinations; the *barriers to entry* to these classes; and the *resources* attached to different class origins which allow these barriers to be overcome and the more desirable destinations to be entered (and the less desirable ones to be avoided).[8] So, people seek to gain entry to more highly desired destination classes: to do this they must overcome a variety of barriers to entry (such as the requirement to possess certain educational or other credentials; or the acquaintance of particular individuals), using the resources that they have acquired as a result of their origin-class position.

From this it follows that if resources were more or less equally distributed (so that the resources one had for mobility did not depend upon one's origin class) there should be a good deal of inter-generational class mobility in society. Hence, an egalitarian society (in the sense of one in which there was equality of condition as between people of different class origins) should be a society displaying high rates of mobility. In particular, of course, the chances of people born into a given class staying in that class would be no better than the chances of people born outside that class entering it. Therefore more equal societies should display more social mobility.

However, we have already seen that the amount of mobility in a society also depends upon the amount and speed of occupational or class change. Hence, a society which was very unequal could, it appeared, display a high rate of mobility provided that the pace of structural change were fast enough. The problem is to disentangle these two effects: how much mobility is due to structural change, and how much reflects the degree of equality—or, as it is sometimes called, openness—in society? The posing

8 * * * Resources are used to overcome barriers (constraints) in order to try to secure the most desired destination (the most preferred alternative).

of this question then led to a number of attempts, by sociologists, to partition the total amount of mobility in a given observed mobility table into a component due to structural mobility (which was, in some fashion, linked to changes in the marginal distributions of the mobility table—that is, to the difference between the origin and destination distributions) and some component due to exchange mobility.[9] None of these attempts, in the 1970s and early 1980s, were particularly successful.

In the 1970s, however, a number of sociologists began to point out that odds ratios might be useful in this context, since they certainly measured inequalities in access to different class destinations arising from different class origins. Furthermore, odds ratios are independent of the marginal distributions of the mobility table. This means that, if two societies have the same level and pattern of class inequality in relative mobility chances, the fact that one of them has experienced rapid changes in the class structure (and, perhaps as a result, the origin and destination distributions are more unalike in one country's table than in another's) will not affect the fact that the pattern and magnitude of their odds ratios will be the same. Drawing on this, Goldthorpe and his co-authors (Goldthorpe 1980/87; Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero 1979, 1982) abandoned the structure/exchange distinction and replaced it with an emphasis on absolute mobility (the actual mobility observed in the mobility table) and social fluidity (measured in terms of odds ratios), sometimes called 'relative mobility'.[10] There is no attempt, in this approach, to partition absolute mobility into some part due to structural change and some to exchange mobility.[11]

Nevertheless it provides a framework in which it is possible to identify societies which display very high rates of absolute mobility, together with low social fluidity or low 'societal openness' as reflected in large odds ratios. A very good example of this is provided by social mobility data for São Paolo, Brazil, collected by Hutchinson (1958) and later presented and used by Sobel, Hout and Duncan (1985:366). This shows massively high rates of absolute mobility, arising from very rapid and large changes in the class structure together with very large odds ratios reflecting a high level of inequality in access to more desired class destinations as between men of different class origins.

9 Some examples include Hazelrigg 1974; Hope 1981, 1982; and McClendon 1977, 1980. For a critique of this approach see Sobel 1983.

10 It was also recognized that odds ratios, which measure social fluidity, are directly captured in the parameters of log-linear models which, since the 1970s, have been used to model mobility tables (see Fienberg 1977; Goodman 1979). The parameters that are estimated in log-linear modelling fall into two kinds: main effect parameters, and interaction, or association, parameters. These latter depend upon the nature and extent of the statistical relationship between origins and destinations. Odds ratios are functions of these parameters, and not of the main effects. So, for example, if all odds ratios are one, the association parameters of the log-linear model will all be zero (in the log form of the model).

11 The structure/exchange distinction was then revived by Sobel, Hout and Duncan (1985). They present an elegant reformulation of the concepts, arguing that exchange mobility refers to equal reciprocal flows between pairs of classes (for example the flow from origin class A to destination class B and from origin B to destination A); and that structural mobility is captured in origin-specific parameters that make such flows unequal (so that the flow from A to B may, for example, exceed that from B to A). The difficulty with this model is that it implies that the observed mobility table should display the property of 'quasi-symmetry' (see Bishop *et al.* 1975 for a definition of this technical term). While a number of mobility tables do indeed display this property, many do not. In such cases, a third type of mobility—a residual category—has to be invoked in order to account for the observed flows.

ABSOLUTE MOBILITY

The study of absolute mobility places the focus on changes in the class structure over time (such as the contraction or expansion of classes). We have already noted the major trends in this respect during this century in most of the industrialized countries of the world: the decline in farming and farm-related jobs, and in unskilled work, with increases in skilled and white-collar jobs. The timing of this transition has, however, varied. We can gain some indications of this by comparing the origin and destination distributions for a number of tables from different countries.[12] Table 5 shows this comparison for four of the European countries taken from the CASMIN data set—Sweden, England and Wales, the Republic of Ireland, and Poland. Here we have moved to a five-class classification, in order to bring out some of the salient differences between these societies. These five classes (with the Erikson and Goldthorpe 11-class schema classes in parentheses) are:

1. White-collar workers (I, II, IIIa and IIIb).
2. Petty bourgeoisie (IVa and IVb).
3. Farmers and farm workers (IVc and VIIb).
4. Skilled workers (V+VI).
5. Non-skilled workers (VIIa).

(See Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992b: 38-9.)

We have chosen these four countries because they represent four different sorts of society—England and Wales having been industrialized for a long period, Sweden being a society which has experienced a long period of social democratic government and which has, accordingly, developed possibly the world's most comprehensive system of social welfare (broadly defined). The Republic of Ireland is a late-industrializing nation that retains a substantial dependence on agriculture, and Poland was, at the time these data were collected, a state socialist country.

Many of these differences are reflected in the comparison of the origin and destination distributions of their respective mobility tables. For example, it is noticeable that in England and Wales, origin classes 1 (white-collar workers) and 4 (skilled manual workers) are much larger (in percentage terms) than in the other three countries, reflecting Britain's earlier industrialization. In Sweden the destination distribution of class 1 is of comparable size to England and Wales, but in Ireland and Poland it remains much smaller. The relative lack of men in class 2 (petty bourgeoisie) in the Polish origin and destination distributions is hardly surprising in a state socialist country. In the other countries the distributions of this class are quite similar. It is in class 3 (farmers and farm workers) that we find major variation, particularly in the destination distributions where the contrast is between the two countries which retain substantial dependence on agriculture (Ireland and Poland) and whose industrialization has been very late and the other two. However, the decline in the importance of farming in Sweden has been both recent and very rapid indeed as we can see by comparing the origin and distributions for class 3 here. Conversely, agriculture declined in significance in England and Wales long before the period covered by these data: here class 3 makes up only a very small part of both the origin and destination distributions. Finally, class 5 (unskilled workers) shows a good deal of cross-national variation, particularly in a comparison of Poland with the other three countries. Here we see that it is relatively under-represented in the origins, but is the only country in which this class is larger (in relative terms) in the destination distribution. Again, it seems likely that the unusual position of Poland is associated with its post-war experience of state socialism.

Table 6 shows the percentage composition of the destination classes in terms of origin class: in other words, the table shows what percentage of men in a given class come from each of the origin classes. We limit ourselves to highlighting two points. First, the class which has shown the greatest growth in these four countries—the white-collar class 1—also shows substantial heterogeneity of composition. This is particularly striking in Ireland. Nevertheless, with the exception of Poland, the origin class which is most over-represented among the incumbents of this destination class is class 1 itself. This is part of a more general feature of these four tables, namely that for all except the relatively small classes, it is the corresponding origin class that supplies the largest share of members of a given destination class. The exception to this is Poland, where this is true only of the farming class.

The second trend is the remarkable degree of self-recruitment and class closure in class 3 (farmers and farm workers). This is particularly pronounced in Poland and Ireland, where this class remains very large. The reasons for this high degree of self-recruitment are easy to find: by and large farms are inherited, either legally or *de facto* and the same is true of jobs as farm workers. Except in England and Wales there is a good deal of mobility from class 3 into all the other classes, reflecting the 'forced' outward mobility of those born into a declining class.

12 It is important to reiterate that this only approximates changes in the class or occupational structures over time. To examine such change formally we should compare sample surveys of the labour force at two points in time.

TABLE 5 PERCENTAGE ORIGIN- AND DESTINATION-CLASS DISTRIBUTIONS: SWEDEN, ENGLAND AND WALES, REPUBLIC OF IRELAND, POLAND

		Classes				
		1	2	3	4	5
Sweden	Origin	14	11	26	24	25
(N = 2103)	Destination	32	8	5	30	24
E & W	Origin	21	10	5	39	26
(N = 9434)	Destination	34	8	2	41	15
Republic of	Origin	11	10	39	14	27
Ireland	Destination	23	8	21	20	27
(N = 1992)						
Poland	Origin	10	3	53	18	16
(N = 32109)	Destination	20	2	25	31	22

SOURCE: CASMIN data set.

TABLE 6 PERCENTAGE INFLOW TABLES FROM SWEDEN, ENGLAND AND WALES, REPUBLIC OR IRELAND, POLAND

		Destination classes				
		1	2	3	4	5
(A) SWEDEN						
	1	28	13	0	9	6
	2	12	23	5	10	8
Origin class	3	17	23	84	21	32
	4	24	19	5	30	21
	5	19	22	7	31	32
(B) ENGLAND AND WALES						
	1	37	18	11	12	15
	2	10	25	5	7	11
Origin class	3	3	4	67	3	9
	4	33	34	3	49	61
	5	17	20	13	29	5
(C) REPUBLIC OR IRELAND						
	1	28	9	1	9	5
	2	15	33	1	8	7
Origin class	3	21	30	92	14	33
	4	15	7	1	33	12
	5	21	21	5	37	43
(D) POLAND						
	1	25	8	1	9	7
	2	5	18	1	3	3
Origin class	3	34	44	92	37	51
	4	21	16	2	30	16
	5	15	13	4	21	23

SOURCE: As Table 5.

On the basis of these figures, there is clearly no class in any of our four countries (class 3 excepted) in which self-recruitment could be said to lead to class closure sufficient to promote the formation of class consciousness. Class heterogeneity is particularly marked in Poland, largely because of the effects of the outflow from farming origins into the other destination classes.

SOCIAL FLUIDITY

Sociologists interested in social mobility devote the majority of their attention to social fluidity. Recall that in studying social fluidity we are using odds ratios to measure the differences between people of different origin classes in their chances of access to more rather than less desirable destination classes. This is, therefore, a useful measure of the degree of societal openness, since if there were no differences in this respect between men of different class origins, all odds ratios would be equal to one. Such differences as exist are usually attributed to inequalities in the possession of mobility resources as between different class origins.[13]

When we come to try to judge whether or not a society displays much or little 'openness' of this kind, we can adopt one (or both) of two yardsticks. First, we could compare the observed set of odds ratios with the yardstick of total equality where all odds ratios would equal one. The latter is sometimes called a situation of perfect mobility, and it arises when there is no relationship between class origins and class destinations—that is to say, between the class a person starts out in and the one he or she is currently in. However, since all societies are some considerable distance from displaying perfect mobility, a possibly more useful perspective is provided by international comparisons which ask: How open is one society compared with another society?

One of the most famous hypotheses in sociology addresses exactly this question. The so-called Featherman-Jones-Hauser (FJH) hypothesis argues that a basic similarity will be found in social fluidity in all industrial societies

'with a market economy and a nuclear family system' (Featherman, Jones and Hauser 1975:340). This innocuous-seeming formulation has, if it is true, some very important ramifications. Many societies have expended a good deal of effort and resources on policies designed to increase societal openness by, for example, providing free education, medical care, and, more generally, the panoply of the welfare state. The FJH hypothesis suggests that whether a state pursues such policies or not has no consequences for the level of social fluidity that it will display.

The bulk of the many papers that have used comparative data to test the FJH hypothesis have arrived at much the same conclusions. These are that, first, the greatest differences between societies in mobility are in the area of absolute mobility. This is not surprising, given the different rates of structural change in societies, as we noted earlier. Second, there are very great similarities in the degree of openness in different societies. There are statistically significant differences in fluidity between them, but these tend to be relatively small for the most part. This finding has largely been born out by the results of the most painstaking and detailed comparative mobility project yet undertaken, the CASMIN project. In discussing the results of this research, Erikson and Goldthorpe find it necessary to modify the FJH hypothesis somewhat. Their conclusion is that:

> A basic similarity will be found in patterns of social fluidity ... across all nations with market

13 Though, clearly, they might also be (and indeed, in reality probably are) due to differences in preferences for different class destinations among men of different class origins (in other words, in a relationship between origin class and subjective assessments of the desirability of different destinations).

> economies and nuclear family systems where no sustained attempts have been made to use the power of the modern state apparatus in order to modify the processes or the outcomes of the processes through which class inequalities are intergenerationally reproduced. (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1987b:162)

What is notable about this modification is that, while retaining the emphasis on the high degree of commonality that apparently exists across industrialized nations in their pattern of social fluidity, it allows for the possible impact of state intervention. Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992b:178) argue that it is the attaining of greater equality of condition that best promotes high rates of social fluidity; that is, if inequalities in the conditions of life enjoyed by people are small, fluidity will be high. Thus, for example, policies of taxation and redistribution that seek to reduce the level of inequality in the distribution of income and in living standards, are likely, all other things being equal, to promote greater social fluidity.

SOCIAL FLUIDITY IN EUROPE

Differences in social fluidity will be most evident in comparisons involving the extremes. In Erikson and Goldthorpe's analysis of the CASMIN data the extremes of societal openness in Europe are represented by Sweden (most open) and Poland and the Republic of Ireland (least open), with England and Wales falling in the middle. In Table 7 we show the outflow tables for our four countries—Sweden, England and Wales, Republic of Ireland and Poland—with a view to comparing their social fluidity.

Recall that an outflow table tells us the percentage of men from each class origin who entered each destination class. So, in Table 7 we see that, in Sweden, of men born into class 1, 64 per cent had class 1 as their destination class. The striking feature of this table is that, for both white-collar (class 1) and skilled worker (class 4) destinations in all countries, the highest probability of being found in that class is enjoyed by men who were born into it. In all countries the strength of the link between origins and destinations in the white-collar class (as measured in this way) exceeds that observed in the farming class, and, in all countries except Ireland, so does the strength of this link among the skilled working class. These figures suggest that in both these classes very effective mechanisms exist through which class position can be transmitted from father to son, despite considerable heterogeneity in the composition of these classes as destinations (particularly in the case of class 1, as revealed by the inflow table).

To undertake a proper comparison of social fluidity between these four countries would require that we model the pattern of odds ratios in each table using log-linear models, as Erikson and Goldthorpe (1987a and b, 1992b) do in their analyses. Here, however, we will compute some illustrative odds ratios.[14] So, for example, take the extreme odds ratios—that

14 As we noted earlier, odds ratios can be computed from either a table of frequency counts (Table 1 for example) or from tables of inflow or outflow percentages.

TABLE 7 PERCENTAGE OUTFLOW TABLES FROM SWEDEN, ENGLAND AND WALES, REPUBLIC OF IRELAND, POLAND

		Destination classes				
		1	2	3	4	5
(A) SWEDEN						
	1	64	7	0	18	11
	2	36	17	2	27	18
	3	21	7	17	24	30
	4	33	7	1	38	22
	5	24	7	2	36	31
(B) ENGLAND AND WALES						
	1	62	7	1	20	11
	2	37	21	1	25	17
	3	21	7	23	20	28
	4	29	7	0	41	23
	5	23	6	1	36	35
(C) REPUBLIC OF IRELAND						
	1	60	7	3	17	13
	2	35	28	3	15	20
	3	12	6	51	7	23
	4	25	4	1	47	24
	5	18	7	4	27	44
(D) POLAND						
	1	53	2	1	29	15
	2	30	11	9	30	21
	3	13	2	42	21	21
	4	24	2	3	51	20
	5	20	2	7	40	32

SOURCE: As Table 5.

is the odds ratio of being found in destination class 1 (white-collar workers) rather than class 5 (unskilled manual) as between men of class 1 and class 5 origins. In Sweden this is 64/11 divided by 24/31 = 7.5. In England and Wales the ratio is larger—8.6. In Ireland it is 11.3 and in Poland 5.7. On this basis, then, there is substantial inequality in competition for class 1 rather than class 5 destinations as between men of these different origins, but this inequality is least in Poland. However, the same is not true of the odds ratios of being found in class 1 rather than class 2 (petty bourgeoisie), given origins in class 1 rather than class 2. Here the figures are

4.3 for Sweden, 5.0 for England and Wales, 6.9 for Ireland and 9.7 for Poland. In other words, the disadvantages associated (in this case) with origins in the petty bourgeoisie are greatest in Poland, least in Sweden.

We could, of course, compute all the odds ratios in this table (all 100 of them) and compare them, but the general picture is as noted above. Odds ratios are, on average, smallest in Sweden, next smallest in England and Wales. Overall, Ireland has the next smallest odds ratios, followed by Poland. A simple index of this involves calculating these 100 odds ratios, taking their logarithm (so that an odds ratio of 1, indicating perfect equality, has a logged value of 0) and finding the average of the absolute values of these logged odds ratios.[15] The average for Sweden is 0.21; for England and Wales 0.24; for Ireland 0.30 and for Poland 0.33. Once again, using this particular yardstick, Sweden emerges as the society displaying the greatest social fluidity.

As we might expect, the explanation for the greater degree of social fluidity found in Sweden (not only by Erikson and Goldthorpe but by most other analysts of Swedish mobility in a comparative perspective: for example, Breen 1987; Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero 1982; Erikson and Pontinen 1984) centres on the effects of a long period of social democratic government.[16] This has had the effect of reducing inequalities of condition (such as income inequality) and increasing equality of opportunity. In addition, the commitment to maintaining full employment seems also likely to have played a significant role in fostering high rates of social fluidity (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992b:165).

By contrast, the low level of social fluidity in the Republic of Ireland is linked to a number of factors. Most important is Ireland's position as a late industrializing, semi-peripheral state in which free post-primary education and very many other welfare state programmes were introduced only around the time that these mobility data were collected or afterwards. As a result, inequalities of condition between families were particularly marked (Breen *et al.* 1990) and thus, following Erikson and Goldthorpe's (1992b) argument cited earlier, a finding of low levels of social fluidity is perhaps not surprising.

What of Poland? Despite its post-war history Poland displays less social fluidity than either Sweden or England and Wales—but, once again, this accords with what we know of the impact of state socialism on social mobility. Broadly speaking, levels of social fluidity in state socialist societies are similar to those found in capitalist societies, albeit with some differences as to which classes are advantaged and which disadvantaged. Furthermore the persistence, in both Ireland and Poland, of a large agricultural sector in which inheritance is of overwhelming importance in acquiring a position as a farmer or farm worker, acts to reduce the overall level of social fluidity in these countries.

Finally, in our discussion of social fluidity we might ask: Where does America fit into this picture? A view of America as the 'land of opportunity' has existed for several centuries. In this view, America is seen as lacking the kind of rigid class structure felt to be characteristic of European societies and as presenting opportunities for personal advance that older countries could not. So, for example, the idea that class relations in America were distinctively different was found in Sombart's (1907/76) thesis of 'American exceptionalism'. While some studies can be seen as supporting this position (Miller 1960, and, particularly, Blau and Duncan 1967), recent research by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1985, 1992b:321) has led to the opposite conclusion: namely that 'no very convincing case for American exceptionalism . . . can be made out', and

> No matter how distinctive the United States . . . may be in (its) economic and social histories . . . or in the ideas, beliefs and values concerning mobility that are prevalent . . . it could not, on our evidence, be said that (it) differ(s) more widely from European nations in . . . mobility than do the European nations among themselves. (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992b:337, parentheses added)

CONCLUSIONS

The study of social mobility is, we believe, a powerful research programme that tells us a great deal about the nature of modern societies and the position of classes within them.[17] However, it is hardly to be wondered at that, having been an area of active research for many years, it has generated many critiques. But what is less obvious perhaps is that the great majority of the criticisms levelled at mobility studies are not criticisms of mobility research *per se* but, rather, of the framework within which it is pursued. That is to say, most critiques of mobility research concern either the issue of the adequacy of the class classification used or the question of the appropriate unit of class composition. In this sense they are criticisms of mobility research *en passant*. * * *

Aside from these very important questions there are two specific criticisms of mobility research itself which we should mention. The first of these concerns the neglect of women in much social mobility analysis. It has been argued (by Hayes and Miller 1993 for example) that the concentration on men distorts the picture we have of mobility in modern societies. While this would be a very damaging criticism if it were true, there is much evidence to suggest that the inclusion of women in mobility studies does not change conclusions about social fluidity based on men-only studies (for example Marshall

15 The technicalities of this measure need not concern us; interested readers should consult Breen 1994 for details.

16 Though Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992b:177–9) are at pains to argue that although state intervention may influence fluidity in particular instances (as in Sweden) this does not allow us to conclude that rule by a particular sort of political party (e.g. Social Democrats) will necessarily give rise to a distinctive pattern of fluidity in all countries where that kind of political party is in power. In other words, there does not exist, for example, a generic 'social democratic' pattern of social fluidity.

17 In this chapter we have concentrated on inter-generational mobility: however, in recent years a great deal of interest has arisen in the study of intra-generational mobility. While at its simplest this involves a tabular comparison of the class an individual occupied on entry to the labour force with the class he or she occupies at some later point in time (and is thus analogous to the origin—destination inter-generational mobility table), more sophisticated approaches are also used which seek to analyze the sequence and timing of transitions between jobs or classes that people experience during their life course (for example Allmendinger 1989).

et al. 1988). While it is very obvious that there is a marked difference in the occupational and class distributions of men and women, patterns of social fluidity among women appear to be very similar to those found among men. In other words, differences in mobility chances between women of different class origins are much the same as those found between men of different class origins.

The second criticism is one which has been made by Poulantzas (1975) who argues that mobility research is fundamentally mistaken in placing its emphasis on the movement of individuals between class positions, when what should be focused on is the structure of, and the functions carried out by, these positions. While such an argument accords well with the views of 'structural Marxists' it is difficult to credit it with any force. In its concern with absolute rates, mobility research does indeed examine the structure of class positions in society. All researchers in the area accept, for example, that the single largest 'cause' of mobility flows during the last 100 years has been the contraction in the number of positions available in agriculture. On the other hand, in any society with a division of labour linked to unequal rewards the question of how people and families are distributed over these positions will be of central significance for an understanding of the way in which life chances are allocated. Furthermore, the study of how much openness of access exists to these various positions, as measured by social fluidity, tells us something very basic about the nature of the modern nation-state. To argue, as Poulantzas seems to, that a concern for such matters is misplaced is, at best, a statement of somewhat eccentric preferences.

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19

Finding Work: Some Basic Results*

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How people find jobs is a prosaic problem—but exactly for this reason, it relates closely to important issues in sociology and economics. Under the rubric "labor mobility" in economics, and "social mobility" in sociology, how people move between jobs and between occupations has received much study; but surprisingly little detailed attention has been given to the question of how individuals become *aware* of the opportunities they take. Most studies are either highly aggregated or highly individualized. At the macro level, excellent monographs detail the statistics of men flowing between categories * * *; at the micro level, other studies offer plausible psychological and economic motives for particular individuals to *want* to change jobs * * *. Important as these concerns are, they are not those of the present study. Rather, I have chosen to concentrate on the issue of how the information that facilitates mobility is secured and disseminated. This question lies somewhere between the micro- and macro-level concerns described above, and is a potentially crucial link in their integration; it is an important part of the study of the *immediate* causes of mobility, and, as in other social science problems, failure

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