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SOCIAL MOBILITY IN SCOTLAND SINCE THE MIDDLE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Social Mobility in Scotland since the Middle of the Twentieth Century

Abstract

Extensive mobility between class of origin and class of destination has been a characteristic feature of societies in Europe and North America since the middle of the twentieth century. Most mobility has been upward, and most of that has been explicable by occupational change – by the rise in the proportion of the labour force which works in service-class jobs and the decline in the proportion in manual jobs. This pattern may now be changing, because parents of younger cohorts (people born since the 1960s) have themselves benefited from upward mobility and so there is less scope for further upward movement by their offspring. The paper uses a large new data source for Scotland to investigate these topics, examining how mobility has changed since the mid-twentieth century, whether any changes have been equal for men and women, and whether social inequalities in mobility – the relative chances of being mobile for people from different origin classes – have changed or whether, on the contrary, occupational change remains the best explanation of patterns of mobility.

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Social Mobility in Scotland since the Middle of the 20th Century

Introduction

In this paper we investigate changes over time in the association between social class of origin and class of destination in Scotland. Although Scotland has often been a unit of analysis in mobility studies in the past (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992; Glass, 1954; Hope, 1974; Payne, 1987), the most recent data for such work dates from the early 1970s. Sufficient distinctiveness of mobility patterns was found in these earlier works to make an up-to-date study potentially interesting; but sufficient similarity was also found between Scotland and other societies to make the Scottish case potentially of wider significance. This paper benefits from a new, up-to-date data source available in the Scottish Household Survey of 2001. The sample size (around 15,000 individuals) is larger than in any previous study of mobility in Scotland, and this makes it possible to study mobility in different birth-cohorts and for different sub-groups (such as men and women). The paper addresses the following questions:

(1) Have patterns of social mobility changed over time in Scotland (absolute mobility)? To what extent are changing patterns of social mobility due to changes in the occupational structure?
(2) Do changing patterns of social mobility reflect changing patterns in social inequalities (relative mobility)?
(3) How do trends in social mobility differ between men and women?

After a brief review of mobility studies in Great Britain, the paper focuses on the analysis of patterns of social mobility in Scotland and their changes over time. An attempt is made to establish whether changes in patterns of social mobility are due to changes in the labour market structure or to other factors, such as a reduction in social inequalities.

Social mobility studies in Great Britain

There is considerable disagreement about whether social-class inequalities in modern societies are reducing, remaining constant or deepening over time. Modernisation theories (Kerr, Dunlop, Harbison and Myers, 1960/73; Treiman, 1970; Parsons in Grusky, 1994) have claimed that modern economies lead to the advent of open and meritocratic societies in which individuals are allocated to certain occupations according to their educational credentials and not according to family ties and *via* direct inheritance. Thus, according to these theories, the more meritocratic selection of job applicants would promote a process of equalisation of opportunities and hence would increase social mobility.

In Great Britain, studies of social mobility have shown that absolute mobility has increased and that nowadays – and for at least the last 40 years – upward mobility is more frequent than downward mobility. Some authors claim that this is a clear sign of an equalisation process (Saunders, 1995), while others (e.g. Goldthorpe, 1987; Marshall *et al.,* 1988; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) point out that the results relating

to absolute mobility do not tell us much about changes in social-class inequalities, because relative differences may be preserved even though upward mobility is widespread. The studies of relative mobility, in fact, show that the relative advantage of belonging to a middle class family compared with a working-class family has not substantially changed over time. Similar conclusions have been reached for Northern Ireland by Breen (2003).

In Scotland the most recent social mobility studies date from the 1980s and analyse data from the 1970s, and relate only to men. Results from these years show large amounts of absolute mobility, especially upward mobility, which benefited men in lower non-manual classes as well as those in the manual groups (Payne, 1987). A succinct comparison of the results of Payne's work with the results of the parallel survey of social mobility in England and Wales – led by Goldthorpe (1987) – is provided by McCrone (1992: 105-15). In terms of broad patterns, Scotland showed similar rates of mobility to the rest of Britain [1]. Thus in both places, the expansion of occupations in the service class (such as professional and semi-professional employment) led to large minorities of men in that class being recruited from lower classes, whether lower non-manual or manual. Nevertheless, the higher professions remained very successful at self-recruitment: that is, finding opportunities for the sons of professionals to work as professionals. Because of the overall expansion of service-class employment, they were able to do this while also recruiting into that class large numbers of men of working-class origin. As a result, although many more men than before had been upwardly mobile, the *relative* chances of being upwardly mobile, comparing different classes of origin, had not changed.

Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) later used the same sets of data to compare both Scotland and England and Wales with many other developed societies, and reached similar conclusions. The main patterns of social mobility were similar everywhere in the developed world in the senses that there was a great deal of upward mobility but that most of this was explicable by overall expansion of all kinds of non-manual employment. However, they did detect some national variations (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992: 146-72). For our purposes, the most relevant is the finding (p.63) that, in Scotland, men in routine non-manual jobs and in agricultural jobs were more likely to be socially mobile than similar men in other developed countries. The authors point out that this could alternatively be interpreted as a tendency for Scottish working-class men to be less mobile than average, and they speculate that this may have been because industrial sub-cultures in Scotland (notably around heavy engineering) may have encouraged young men to remain in broadly the same kinds of skilled trades as their fathers.

Such data related to the patterns of opportunity that prevailed between approximately the first and fifth decades of the twentieth century (e.g. Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992: 74). They also related only to men. The question is whether the patterns may have changed if we move forward by about a whole generation, to people born between the 1930s and the 1970s. Since that period saw also a sharp rise in the propensity of women to enter and stay in the labour market, it becomes possible to look at their mobility patterns too. This gender revolution accompanied, and was to some extent a

result of, enormous structural change in the economy, exemplified in the growth of service-class jobs. Defining professional employment in terms of socio-economic group as categories 1 to 5 (managers in large and small establishments, employed and self-employed professionals, and intermediate non-manual workers), we find that the proportion in Scotland rose from 22% in the census of 1981 to 39% in the spring Labour Force Survey of 2000 (Paterson *et al.,* 2004: table 6.1); longer-term trends are shown in Graph 1 below. Again, Scotland shares here in a common experience across developed societies (Gallie, 2000: 285-6; ILO web site: table 2C; Marshall *et al.,* 1997: 42; Müller and Pollak, 2001: table 1; Vallet, 2001: table 1).

[GRAPH 1 AROUND HERE]

Thus, on the face of it, the employment changes that have enabled social mobility since the beginning of the twentieth century have, if anything, been intensified in the last two or three decades: opportunities to enter professional and semi-professional employment have expanded to an unprecedented extent. Have these changes allowed social mobility to continue to expand? Have these changes in labour-market structure implied a reduction in social inequalities and the achievement of a more meritocratic society? Or has 'more room at the top' produced little change in the relative position of the social classes in the competition for jobs? Have women, entering the labour force in unprecedented proportions, been as socially mobile as men? These are the main empirical questions which this paper addresses.

Data, Variables and Methodology

The data are drawn from the 2001 Scottish Household Survey (SHS). This is a large (15,000-case) cross-sectional survey commissioned by the Scottish Executive in 1998 (and running annually to date) to provide reliable and up-to-date information on the composition, characteristics and behaviour of Scottish households, both nationally and at a sub-national level: see SHS web site. A module of questions on parental occupation was included in the Survey of the year 2001. Thus, the 2001 data include, *inter alia*, information on respondent's education, current occupation, income, parents' occupation and partner's occupation. For the purposes of this paper we will analyse three main variables: social class of origin, social class of destination and gender.

The unit of the analysis is the individual. Following the standard practice in the studies of social mobility cited above, social class is determined by the individual's own current occupational status. In the case of inactive people without previous employment, such as housewives or students, their social status is associated with the status of the highest income householder (e.g. spouse or parent) when information on the highest income householder is available; otherwise they were excluded from the sample. In the case of unemployed and retired people the most recent occupation in which they were employed is used. In the SHS data, respondents who had been retired or unemployed for more than 5 years by the date of the survey were not asked for their latest occupation and so we could not refer to their own social class before they became unemployed or retired. We have decided to attribute the occupational status of

the highest income householder to retired people for whom this information was available and to exclude the other cases from the sample. On the other hand, we kept in the sample as a separate category those unemployed people for whom we did not have information on their last occupation. In 5% of the cases in which respondents were employed, information on respondent's social class was missing and in another 12% of cases the social class of the highest income householder was given to (inactive) respondents.

The information on mother's and father's employment and occupational status refers to the time when respondents were 14 years old, again in common with the normal practice in the literature. To construct a synthetic measure of social class of origin we have applied the method of dominance (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). In the cases in which one parent was unemployed or inactive, the social class of origin is determined by the occupational status of the employed parent. If both parents were employed, the parent with the higher occupational status is used. In 11% of the cases, information about parental occupation was missing.

The class schema used in this paper for both parents' and respondents' occupations is the EGP class schema (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992: 38-9). We have for the most part distinguished 5 classes: service class professionals (Classes I and II), routine non-manual workers (Class III), petty bourgeoisie (Class IV), skilled workers (Classes V and VI) and non-skilled workers (Class VII). The small sample sizes for Classes IVc (farmers) and VIIb (agricultural labourers) prevented us from using the 7-class EGP schema. In some of the descriptive statistics we have included a sixth category for unemployed people to whom no class category could be attributed (as explained above).

Four birth-cohorts have been selected to analyse trends in rates and patterns of social mobility during the 20th century: cohort 1, born between 1937 and 1946; cohort 2, born between 1947 and 1956; cohort 3, born between 1957 and 1966; and cohort 4, born between 1967 and 1975.

There is no doubt that a cohort analysis may produce some problems when analysing social mobility patterns. Heath and Payne (1999) point out two of them: differential mortality and migration, and the different stages of respondents' occupational careers. We think that the first problem should lead us to underestimate the extent of change in the rates of upward social mobility. This is for two main reasons: first, working-class people who come from working-class families have higher-than-average mortality rates. This means that we may have an under-estimation of the number of socially immobile people from working-class origin in the oldest cohort and consequently we may estimate higher rates of upward mobility in the oldest cohort than there have been in reality. This would translate into overall lower estimates of changes in mobility rates across cohorts. Second, migration of people from Scotland in the twentieth century was usually a 'meritocratic' migration, which means that the most educated people left to find work in England or abroad (e.g. Australia and Canada) in professional or skilled jobs. It is probably the case that the most geographically mobile came from people who already had connections with the place of destination,

and that in turn was most likely where the family of origin was middle-class or skilled working-class (some evidence on this is summarised by Paterson, 2001). This would mean that, among surviving residents in Scotland, there would be an underestimation for the oldest cohorts of the rate of upward mobility from skilled and lower-middle-class occupations, and correspondingly an overestimation of the relative rate of upward mobility from semi-skilled or unskilled backgrounds. Hence – again – there would be an underestimation of the extent of change in the relative sizes of rates of upward mobility from the lowest origins compared to those from middling origins.

The second problem, that of respondents of different ages being in different working career phases, is a more serious one. However, in our case it may only affect the last cohort, the youngest one, composed of people aged 26-34 in 2001. For the other three cohorts, respondents have already a certain occupational maturity and this problem should be less relevant.

Origin and destination class structures

The majority of people in our sample (52%) grew up in a working-class family (table 1, Class V, VI and VII)). Another 23% of them originated in a service-class family, with at least one parent in professional, managerial and technical occupations (Class I and II), and 15% had a parent in routine non-manual occupations (Class III). The remaining 8% belonged to a petty bourgeoisie family and only a negligible percentage, 1%, had both parents unemployed [2].

[TABLE 1 AROUND HERE]

Comparing the distribution of class of origin and destination, it clearly emerges that both sons and daughters have improved their social class. Thus, a higher percentage of respondents occupy a service-class position while a lower percentage of respondents are employed in manual occupations. Interesting, but not surprising, findings are related to gender differences. At the top of the class schema, women appear to be more likely than men to enter lower-grade professional occupations (30% *versus* 22%) while men are more likely than women to enter higher-grade professional occupations (20% *versus* 12%). However, the most striking difference between men and women is in the proportions entering routine non-manual and skilled manual occupations: indeed, as pointed out in other research (e.g. Gallie, 2000: 294-5; Marshall *et al.,* 1988: 85-7; Westergaard, 1996: 150), larger proportions of women occupy routine non-manual occupations while larger proportions of men are employed in skilled manual occupations. This is reflected in the first dissimilarity index presented in table 2: women appear to be more mobile than men (35 *versus* 21); however, the higher rate of female mobility is cancelled out and even reversed when skilled manual and routine non-manual occupations are combined (18 *versus* 20). This demonstrates that the higher rate of mobility for women is explained by the gender segregation of the labour market [3].

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Shifts over time in the class structure can be analysed by looking at the distribution of respondents' origins and destinations in different birth-cohorts (table 3a). Concentrating first on respondents' origins, we see a clear increase in the percentages of parents occupying professions at the top level of the class schema (from 14% to 33%), that is, professional, managerial and technical occupations (service-class). There is also an increase in the percentages of parents employed in routine non-manual occupations (from 10 to 19%) and a clear contraction in the percentages of employees in manual occupations (especially those related to the unskilled manual occupations, which declined from 39% to 20%). These results are in line with the changes that affected the Scottish (but also the rest of UK) labour market in the last century. Official statistics, drawn from Census and Labour Force Survey data (up to 1981 taken from McCrone (1992: 82 and 139) and thereafter from Paterson *et al.* (2004)), on the distribution of socio-economic groups between the year 1921 and 2000 are presented in graph 1.

[TABLE 3a AROUND HERE]

Shifts of this kind are less clear in the destination class structure of respondents. This is because these trends seem to reach a halt in the last two birth-cohorts (with the exception of the petty bourgeoisie which continues to contract slowly). Thus service-class occupations, which increase in size substantially between the first and second cohort (reaching 44%), decline slightly from the second cohort onwards. The category of routine non-manual occupations continues to increase in size but at a much lower pace. The proportions of respondents employed in skilled manual occupations show a decrease from the first cohort to the second and then a slight increase from the second to the youngest cohort. The proportions of unskilled manual workers show a further drop between the first and the second birth-cohort but then stabilise at around 13-14%.

As suggested by the dissimilarity index the distribution of origins and destinations becomes more similar (or there is less mobility between origin and destinations) from the third cohort onwards. The reason may be found in the time period in which parents were in the labour market when our respondents were 14. Parents of the third and last cohorts were entering the labour market respectively in the 70s and 80s and they were affected by the post-1960s labour-market changes. They experienced some of the effects of a declining manufacturing sector and a growing service sector. This means that they, like the respondents, benefited from these labour-market structural shifts. The stability which characterises the class structure of respondents of the last two birth-cohorts may be due to the slowing down of the structural shifts which were particularly remarkable in the previous decades (see graph 1 again).

These overall trends are quite similar in the male and female distributions of destinations (table 3b). There are, though, some interesting gender differences. Apart from the division between men and women between skilled manual occupations and skilled non-manual occupations (noted above), the main gender differences can be found in the oldest and youngest birth-cohorts. Thus, in the oldest cohort women were more likely than men to be employed in unskilled manual occupations and less likely

to occupy service-class positions. These differences tend to disappear in the second and third cohorts but they re-appear in a reverse way in the youngest cohort: that is, nowadays women are more likely to occupy a service-class position and less likely to be employed in unskilled manual occupations than men. As a consequence of these trends the dissimilarity index of male and female destinations, which declines from the first to the second cohort, increases again from the third to the fourth cohort.

[TABLE 3B AROUND HERE]

Absolute rates of mobility

Tables 4a-4b present the absolute mobility rates of the four birth-cohorts in the total sample and for men and women. The first table measures the mobility rates among the five categories of the occupational classification analysed above; the second table collapses routine non-manual (III) and skilled non-manual (V and VI) occupations into one category reducing the five occupational classes to four classes. One reason for treating these two classes as being of similar status is that they may be male and female versions of the same status position, as noted in the discussion of table 1 above.

[TABLES 4a AND 4b AROUND HERE]

The results show that the majority of our sample (68% in table 4a, 60% in table 4b) had left their class of origin and moved to another social class. However, the total mobility rate has decreased over time. Thus, the percentage of mobile people was 72 in the oldest birth-cohort, 70 in the second birth-cohort, 68 in the third birth-cohort and 62 in the youngest cohort (in table 4b the percentages are respectively 64, 62, 60, 55). When disaggregating the total mobility rate into upward and downward mobility another interesting result emerges: even though upward mobility is always greater than downward mobility, upward mobility has declined between the second and the third and fourth cohorts. This result is confirmed even when using the four-level classification of table 4b and it holds for men and women [4].

This raises the question of why the pattern of mobility has changed. One tentative answer comes from what we observed earlier in the paper. Parents have improved their social position over time and in the last few decades they have become more 'middle-class'. We have observed that the occupational position of the youngest respondents is more similar to their parents than ever before (table 3a). This means that nowadays the margin for improvements for children is more limited.

The mobility rates presented above do not tell us who has moved to which class nor who has remained in the same class of origin. The outflow percentages – that is the percentages of respondents from different social origins who reach various classes of destination – may answer these questions (tables 5a and 5b).

[TABLE 5a AND TABLE 5b AROUND HERE]

The data show that there is high stability among those who originate from the service class. Indeed a large majority of them end up in the same social classes: 66% of men and 63% of women who came from service-class origins ended up in service-class destinations. Lower rates of immobility emerge among those people who come from the other social classes (see the percentages in the diagonal cells). Women in routine manual occupations (36%) and men in skilled manual occupations (29%) show the second highest rates of intergenerational immobility. They are followed by people who originated in unskilled manual occupations (21% for men and 25% for women). Thus, apart from the service class which shows the highest rates of self-recruitment, people from the other social classes of origin moved mainly into other social classes of destination. The largest group of men who moved away from class VII (36%) reached an upper-working-class destination, i.e. a skilled manual occupation. However, another 25% of them moved the longest distance to the service class. Mobile women from class VII managed to achieve routine non-manual occupations (35%) or service-class occupations (26%). Once again gender differences in occupational destinations mainly reflect labour-market segmentation. Similar gender differences in mobility patterns can be found among those who originated in classes V and VI. Both men and women from class III have mostly improved their class of origin, reaching the service class; however, another 36% of men and 17% of women ended up in a manual occupation.

Have these patterns changed over time? Graphs 2, 3 and 4 show the percentages of respondents from each social class of origin who were immobile, upwardly mobile and downwardly mobile across the different cohorts. Overall the percentages of people from service-class origin who entered service-class occupations have remained fairly stable over time (with the exception of the second cohort, those born between 1947-56). The percentages of respondents from working-class origin who were immobile have decreased only slightly. These trends indicate that over time the patterns described above have not changed substantially for the top and the bottom classes.

[GRAPH 2 AROUND HERE]

Most of the changes have occurred in the classes in the middle, that is III, IV and V/VI. In classes III and V/VI stability has increased and downward mobility has declined. In class IV (petty bourgeoisie) stability has decreased but more people from this class of origin have moved upward over time.

[GRAPHS 3 AND 4 AROUND HERE]

The results related to manual social classes seem to confirm that there is a tendency to immobility among people who originated in this class. There is a core group of people in Class VII who seem to have very limited opportunities to move away from their disadvantaged position. On the other hand, people in the other manual classes (classes V and VI) have increased their probability of being immobile in the latest cohorts. These results also confirm what we have suggested above: once expansion of non-manual occupations has reached a plateau there is little space for further

improvement. The immobility of Scottish working-class groups which Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) noted in earlier decades has not diminished, and may have increased, even though the industrial employment which these authors offered as an explanation has dwindled.

Relative rates of mobility

We use odds ratios to analyse changes across cohorts in the chances of people from different backgrounds reaching different social classes of destinations [5]. Odds ratios allow us to analyse whether social class of origin has become less or more determining of destination class: that is, they tell us about changes of fluidity in the social structure. Compared to people from unskilled manual background, people with parents from the service class have always had higher chances of entering these top-level social classes (table 6); the same is true of people from backgrounds in the routine non-manual class, the petty bourgeoisie and the skilled manual class. However, the data show that some changes have occurred at the top levels of social classes. The odds ratio in the first three cohorts shows a decline in inequalities over time between the offspring of service class and the offspring of working class: from 6.4:1 of the first cohort to 5.5:1 in the second cohort and 4:1 in the third cohort. Inequalities between these two classes increase again in the youngest cohort (6.6:1). It is difficult to say whether this increase in inequality is real or a result of the young age of respondents in this cohort. It may be the case that children from the service class enter top-level occupations earlier than children from the working class thanks to the support of their family of origin, while working-class children may need more time and effort to reach the same types of occupations. The odds ratios presented in the rest of table 6 do not show any other clear pattern of changes and this seems to testify that very little has occurred in the patterns of relative social mobility.

[TABLE 6 AROUND HERE]

To test whether these sets of odds ratios have indeed remained constant over time, and whether changing patterns of social mobility are not related to changing patterns of social inequalities, we use log-linear analysis. Table 7 presents the results of three models. The first model includes only the main effects of social origin, destination and cohort. This model implies independence between the three variables in the table: that is, that there is no association between origin and destination, and no changes in the distribution of origins or of destinations over time. We would not expect this model to fit the data, and it clearly does not (chi-square of 1076 with only 88 degrees of freedom). The second model is the ‘conditional independence model’ of class of origin and destination. In this model we assume that there is an association between class of origin and cohort and between class of destination and cohort but that there is no association between origin and destination. This model would fit the data only if there were no influence of origin on destination; not surprisingly, it does not. The third model is the ‘constant social fluidity (CnSF) model’ (Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero, 1983) which includes the association between origin and destination, but postulates that it remains constant across cohorts. The model does not include the

three-way interaction 'origin by destination by cohort' which would lead to the saturated model. The CnSF model fits the data very well.

[TABLE 7 AROUND HERE]

This result shows that there is no statistically reliable evidence that the association between origin and destination varies over time. There is no need to include the three-way interaction 'origin by destination by cohort' to reach a good fit of the data. To test this further, we have also run the 'uniform difference' or UNIDIFF model to investigate whether, beyond the apparent absence of changes in the origin and destination association, there was a change in the strength of this association (see also Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992: 91-2). The idea of UNIDIFF is to model any change in the association of origin and destination in a linear way, because this is more statistically powerful than including the full three-way interaction term and hence is better able to detect quite small changes in the association of origin and destination. The results are in table 7, model 4. The UNIDIFF model did not improve the fit obtained by the CnSF model. So even a sensitive test of change over time in social fluidity does not show any such change; hence we may safely infer that there has been none.

This leads us to conclude that changing patterns of social mobility are due to changes in the occupational structure and not to changing patterns of social inequalities. The parameter estimates from the CnSF model also point out another interesting result (table 8): the chances of being employed at the top levels of occupations (i.e. service-class occupations and routine non-manual occupations) have grown more in the generations of parents than in those of children (see the interaction effects between O*C and D*C). Thus changes in the occupational structure have affected parents' occupational chances as well as children's, in our sample especially parents of the youngest two cohorts. From the methodological point of view this means that odds ratios and log-linear models are preferable measures over absolute mobility: the fact that the parental distribution of occupations is itself changing over time reminds us that mobility is intrinsically relative and not absolute.

[TABLE 8 AROUND HERE]

We also ran the same log-linear models separately for men and women (parameters in table 9). In both cases the CnSF model fits the data very well, showing that the association between origin and destination has not changed across cohort for either men or women. However, the parameter estimates show an interesting gender difference in relation to the association between destinations and cohort. For men the chances of entering the different social classes have not substantially changed over time, whereas for women there was a significant increase between the first and second cohorts in the chance of entering the higher occupational classes compared to the chance of entering class VII, and this higher rate did not decline in later cohorts.

[TABLE 9 AROUND HERE]

Summary and conclusions

Facilitating extensive upward social mobility has been one of the premises on which the welfare state and even modernity itself have been based. It has been the way in which occupational change and widening opportunity have been reconciled with the continuing power of the middle class to secure advantaged social positions for their children, either directly through patronage or indirectly *via* education (Savage, 2000: 91). More space at the top of the class structure has allowed new people to enter while not harming the absolute advantages of those already there. A legacy of this optimistic meliorism still pervades political thinking about social mobility in UK political debate: for example, a discussion paper for the UK Cabinet Office in 2001 claimed that 'lack of social mobility implies inequality of opportunity' (Aldridge, 2001: para.2). Similar beliefs have pervaded Scottish social debate for a very long time, insofar as there has been a strong social belief that opportunity for upward mobility is constitutive of Scottish culture (McCrone, 1992: 88-120).

Our analysis shows that, in Scotland, there remains a great deal of social mobility, and that upward mobility clearly predominates over downward. Thus, among adults of working age in 2001, nearly two thirds had been socially mobile from their childhood, and two thirds of that mobility had been in an upward direction. Nevertheless, social mobility is now coming together with the slowing down of long-term occupational change to give the first evidence that the rise in this kind of mobility might be coming to an end. Because upward mobility has been so common for so long, the parents of people born since the 1960s have themselves benefited from it to such an extent that there is less room for their children to move further up. That is exacerbated by a reduction in the rate of increase in the proportion of jobs that are non-manual, and, within that, the proportion that are professional. There is little evidence that downward mobility is growing, but, for people born since the 1960s, there has been a clear rise in immobility.

We have found also that, despite the political rhetoric that often accompanies debate in this area, the patterns of social mobility continue to be driven by the overall structure of the economy: in technical terms, the association between origin and destination has barely changed for fifty years, and so overall rates of mobility are determined by the relative sizes of the categories in the margins. This was a firm conclusion of earlier mobility studies when upward mobility was probably at its maximum, for example in the definitive studies we cited in the first section. It remains true now. In the forty years from the 1950s until the 1990s, the patterns of social mobility were determined by the shape of the origin distribution (where parents were) and the shape of the destination distribution (the opportunities available to young people). When changes in the former catch up with, or even overtake, changes in the latter, the scope for mobility declines. Moreover, the patterns of social mobility do not appear to be substantially different for men and women. The major differences are related to the segmentation of the labour market in which women are more likely to occupy lower non-manual occupations and men skilled manual-occupations. In the youngest cohorts women have caught up with men and nowadays they are equally or

even more likely to occupy service-class positions (even though at lower levels) than men.

We might draw two contradictory, and rather speculative, conclusions. One could be regarded as pessimistic by those who believe that social mobility is a good thing. It could be argued that a reduction of inequality is less likely to happen now than when opportunities for professional employment were still growing, because a growing middle class will attempt to monopolise for its own children opportunities to enter professional employment, even if that now would be at the expense of the upward mobility of children from lower-class families. The alternative explanation is to note that expanding educational participation by the children of all social classes has meant that the nature of the competition for professional jobs has changed. Social-class inequalities in access to a full secondary education and to higher education have declined in the past 10-15 years (see, for example, Tinklin, 2000). At the same time, as we noted earlier, acquiring educational credentials has become more important than direct inheritance as a means of gaining social status (Savage, 2000; Paterson *et al.*, 2004). Thus it might be that a more meritocratic form of recruitment has been emerging in parallel with the unprecedented growth in the size of the professional classes. If there is, then, a shift towards a greater level of merit-selection in education, and if the previous stability of association between class origin and class destination was due to an absence of full educational meritocracy, then we might be at just the moment when changes in social fluidity could indeed begin to occur.

It is too soon to reach a conclusion about this on the basis of data. Our main conclusion is that societies like Scotland are moving into a new phase of their social mobility history, and that the consequence of this for their social structure, their culture and their political debate remain very uncertain.

Notes

[1] These studies use the categories of social class that have been developed by Goldthorpe and his colleagues; we use this scheme here.

[2] As we would expect, the distribution of class of origin is very similar for men and women.

[3] It is questionable whether skilled non-manual occupations can be considered a higher occupational class than skilled manual occupations. Goldthorpe and Mills (2004), in their transformation of the EGP categories into three levels for measuring total mobility rates, include in the same level routine non-manual workers and skilled manual workers.

[4] We have checked the validity of our finding using the data from the British Household Panel Survey. We used wave 9 (which contains a boosted sample for Scotland) in combination with the information collected in waves 1 and 8, and we recalculated our mobility table using Goldthorpe's class schema available in these data. The results corroborated our findings: from the third cohort considered in our analyses (those born between 1957 and 1966) onwards, upward mobility tends to decline. We also looked at trends in absolute mobility rates for the whole of Great Britain and the results are similar to those found for Scotland.

[5] We used the statistical package LEM for this analysis (Vermunt, 1997).

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Table 1: Distributions of respondents aged 25-64 by class of origin and destination

Social class	*Origin*	*Destination*	
		Men	Women
Class I	9.9	20.4	12.0
Class II	13.6	22.0	29.7
Class III	15.3	9.6	32.2
Class IV	8.5	6.7	3.5
Class V and VI	23.4	24.7	6.3
Class VII	28.2	14.6	15.4
Unemployed	1.1	3.0	1.2
No. of cases (unweighted)	8406	3159	3999

Table 2: Dissimilarity index (calculated from table 1, Class I and II combined)

	Men	Women
Origin/destination	21	35
Origin/destination (when skilled manual and skilled non-manual occupations are combined)	20	18

Table 3a: Distributions of respondents by social class of origin and destination and by birth-cohort (total)

	Birth-cohort 1937-46		Birth-cohort 1947-56		Birth-cohort 1957-66		Birth-cohort 1967-76	
	Origin	Destinations	Origin	Destinations	Origin	Destinations	Origin	Destinations
Class I + II	14.3	34.6	20.1	43.9	25.9	43.3	33.2	41.6
Class III	10.1	20.3	14.7	21.7	16.6	22.2	19.0	23.5
Class IV	9.3	6.2	8.8	5.7	8.6	4.3	7.2	3.8
Class V and VI	26.9	16.6	25.2	13.3	22.8	13.8	19.0	15.2
Class VII	39.0	20.7	30.3	13.7	25.1	14.4	19.7	13.3
Unemployed	0.3	1.7	0.9	1.6	1.0	2.1	2.0	2.5
Dissimilarity Index Origin/destination	32		32		24		14	

Table 3b: Distributions of respondents by social class of destination, by birth-cohort and gender.

	Birth-cohort 1937-46		Birth-cohort 1947-56		Birth-cohort 1957-66		Birth-cohort 1967-76	
	Destinations		Destinations		Destinations		Destinations	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Class I + II	36.8	33.0	44.6	43.2	43.8	42.9	38.7	43.9
Class III	7.5	30.7	9.6	31.5	9.1	32.5	11.5	33.5
Class IV	8.0	4.8	8.8	3.3	6.0	3.0	4.5	3.3
Class V and VI	27.8	7.5	21.9	6.3	24.2	5.6	25.9	6.3
Class VII	16.9	23.6	12.4	14.7	14.2	14.5	15.5	11.5
Unemployed	3.1	0.5	2.6	1.0	2.8	1.5	3.8	1.5
Dissimilarity index Destination men/ destination women	30		24		24		27	

Table 4a: Absolute class mobility rates by cohort and sex

Total sample	Cohort 1937/46	Cohort 1947/56	Cohort 1957/66	Cohort 1967/76	Total
Total mobility rate	71.7	69.8	68.2	62.2	67.8
Total upward	52.8	53.7	47.4	39.7	48.2
Total downward	18.9	16.1	20.8	22.5	19.6
Men					
Total mobility rate	70.1	67.1	67.9	63.9	67.1
Total upward	50.7	49.8	45.2	36.4	45.2
Total downward	19.4	17.3	22.7	27.5	21.9
Women					
Total mobility rate	73.0	72.0	68.4	60.5	68.3
Total upward	54.6	56.9	49.1	42.2	50.5
Total downward	18.4	15.1	19.3	18.3	17.8

Table 4b: Absolute class mobility rates by cohort and sex (4 classes, routine manual and skilled non-manual occupations combined)

Total sample	Cohort 1937/46	Cohort 1947/56	Cohort 1957/66	Cohort 1967/76	Total
Total mobility rate	63.6	62.1	60.4	54.7	60.0
Total upward	46.4	47.9	42.1	34.7	42.6
Total downward	17.2	14.2	18.3	20.0	17.4
Men					
Total mobility rate	63.9	61.5	61.5	57.1	60.8
Total upward	47.6	47.5	43.2	33.6	42.7
Total downward	16.3	14.0	18.3	23.5	18.1
Women					
Total mobility rate	63.3	62.5	59.5	52.6	59.3
Total upward	45.6	48.1	41.2	35.6	42.5
Total downward	17.7	14.4	18.3	17.0	16.8

Table 5a: Outflow percentages - MEN

	Class of destination					
	Class I + II	Class III	Class IV	Class V and VI	Class VII	Unemployed
Class of origin						
Class I + II	65.7	10.1	3.6	11.0	8.3	1.3
Class III	46.3	10.2	5.6	23.5	12.7	1.7
Class IV	40.7	8.8	18.3	21.4	9.5	1.4
Class V and VI	35.1	10.4	6.6	29.4	15.3	3.1
Class VII	24.9	7.7	6.6	36.4	20.7	3.7

Table 5b: Outflow percentages - WOMEN

	Class of destination					
	Class I + II	Class III	Class IV	Class V and VI	Class VII	Unemployed
Class of origin						
Class I + II	63.3	23.1	3.4	3.0	6.3	1.0
Class III	43.1	36.0	3.3.	5.6	11.5	0.5
Class IV	47.9	29.5	6.7	3.5	11.4	1.0
Class V and VI	34.1	36.2	3.4	8.3	17.2	0.8
Class VII	26.3	35.0	3.1	9.4	24.7	1.5

Table 6: Odds ratios of entering different social class of destination by cohort

Class I + II/Class VII	Class I + II	Class III	Class IV	Class V and VI	Class VII	Unemployed
Cohort 1	6.36	0.81	0.63	0.20	0.27	0.22
Cohort 2	5.49	0.57	0.84	0.27	0.21	0.49
Cohort 3	4.01	0.72	1.26	0.24	0.30	0.66
Cohort 4	6.64	0.67	0.49	0.26	0.27	0.32
Class III/Class VII						
Cohort 1	2.33	0.86	0.79	0.63	0.68	1.05
Cohort 2	2.60	0.88	1.39	0.55	0.36	0.49
Cohort 3	1.92	1.10	0.77	0.70	0.46	0.66
Cohort 4	2.67	1.29	0.98	0.42	0.50	0.07
Class IV/Class VII						
Cohort 1	2.79	0.64	2.48	0.62	0.39	0.00
Cohort 2	1.91	0.75	5.00	0.52	0.31	0.90
Cohort 3	2.11	0.95	2.42	0.54	0.40	0.23
Cohort 4	3.07	0.81	2.06	0.37	0.50	0.54
Class V and VI/Class VII						
Cohort 1	1.57	1.32	0.72	0.64	0.77	0.95
Cohort 2	1.68	0.95	1.79	0.74	0.58	0.54
Cohort 3	1.23	1.02	1.29	0.86	0.78	1.20
Cohort 4	1.75	1.12	0.47	0.99	0.56	0.47

Note: Cohort 1: people born between 1937 and 1946; cohort 2: people born between 1947 and 1956; cohort 3: people born between 1957 and 1966; and cohort 4: people born between 1967 and 1976.

Table 7 – Results of log-linear model testing the association between origin and destination

	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Model 1: O + D + C	1075.9	88	0.0000
Model 2: OC + DC	731.0	64	0.0000
Model 3: OC + DC +OD	33.2	48	0.94
Model 4: UNIDIFF	30.4	45	0.95

O = Class of origin; D = Class of destination; C = Cohort

Table 8 – Parameter estimates (standard errors in parentheses) from the log-linear model in table 7

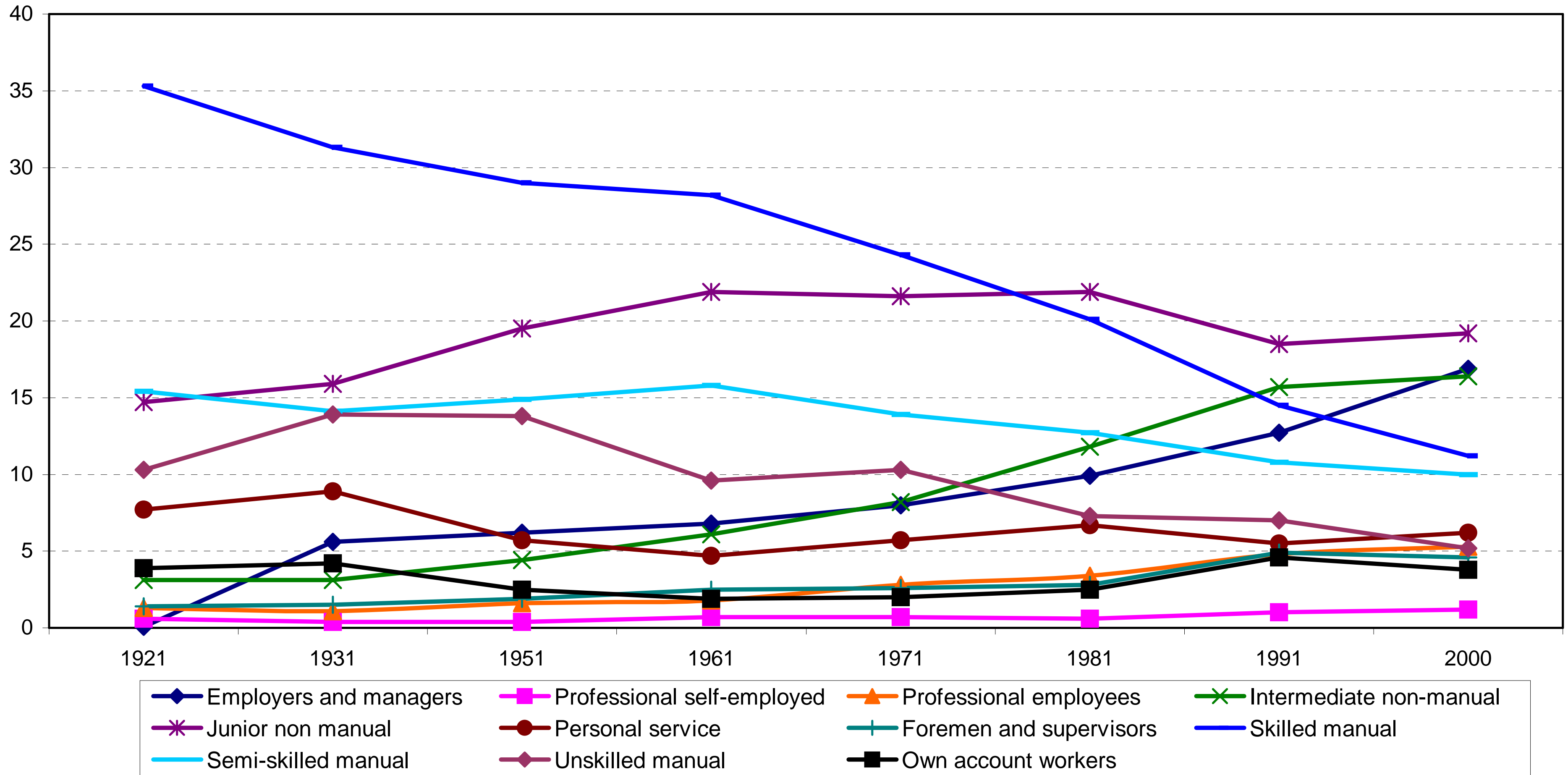
	Origin	Destination
Class I and II*Cohort 2	0.38	0.55
	(0.12)	(0.11)
Class I and II*Cohort 3	0.92	0.38
	(0.11)	(0.11)
Class I and II*Cohort 4	1.39	0.26
	(0.11)	(0.12)
Class III*Cohort 2	0.54	0.23
	(0.13)	(0.12)
Class III*Cohort 3	0.87	0.21
	(0.12)	(0.12)
Class III*Cohort 4	1.25	0.33
	(0.13)	(0.12)
Class IV*Cohort 2	0.12	0.09
	(0.14)	(0.18)
Class IV*Cohort 3	0.38	-0.09
	(0.13)	(0.17)
Class IV*Cohort 4	0.36	-0.45
	(0.14)	(0.20)
Class V and VI*Cohort 2	0.19	0.24
	(0.10)	(0.14)
Class V and VI*Cohort 3	0.32	0.28
	(0.10)	(0.13)
Class V and VI*Cohort 4	0.28	0.36
	(0.11)	(0.14)

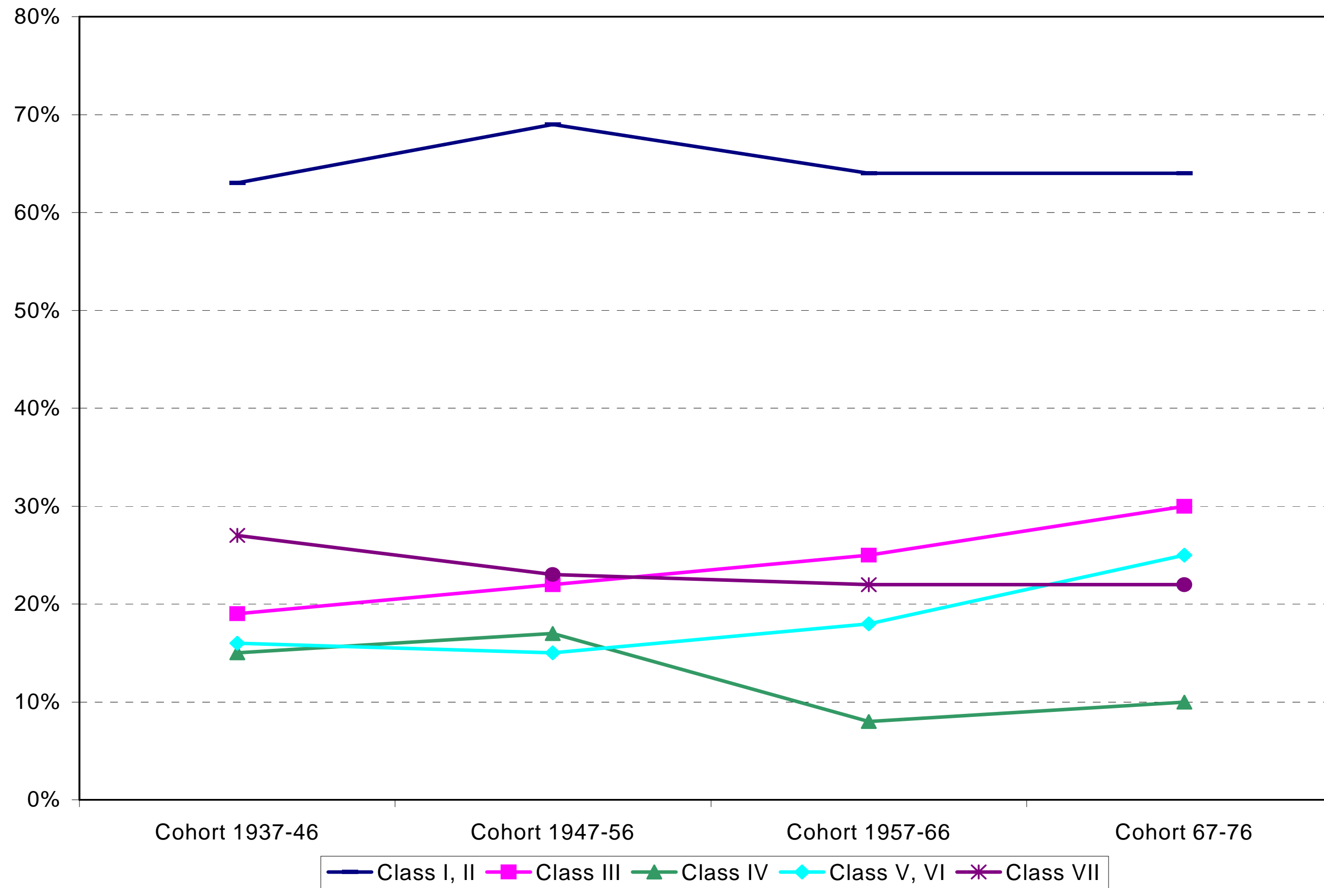
Note: Cohort 1 (reference category): people born between 1937 and 1946; cohort 2: people born between 1947 and 1956; cohort 3: people born between 1957 and 1966; and cohort 4: people born between 1967 and 1976. Reference category for social class is Class VII.

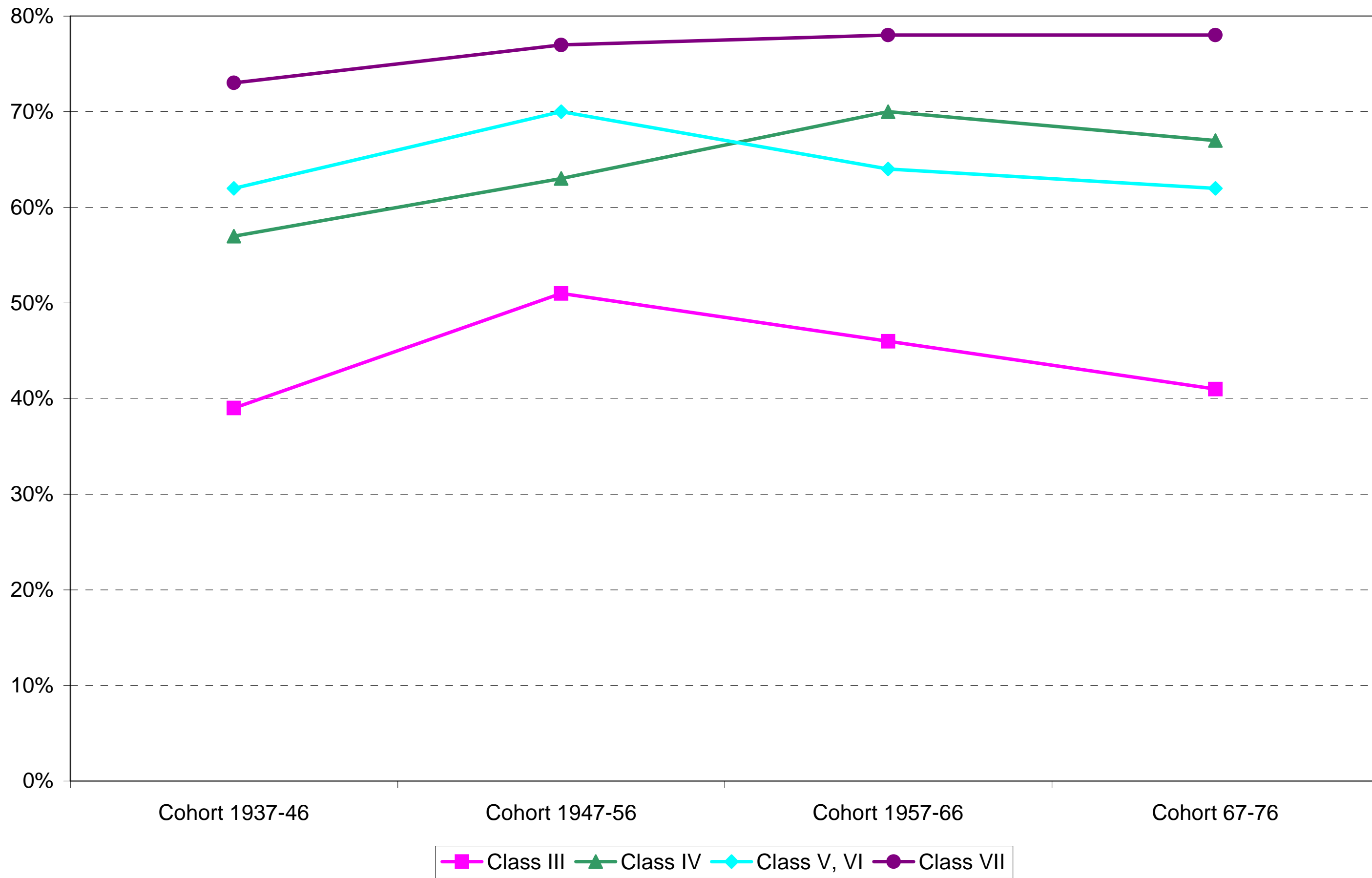
Table 9 – Parameter estimates (standard errors in parentheses) from the log-linear models of men and women

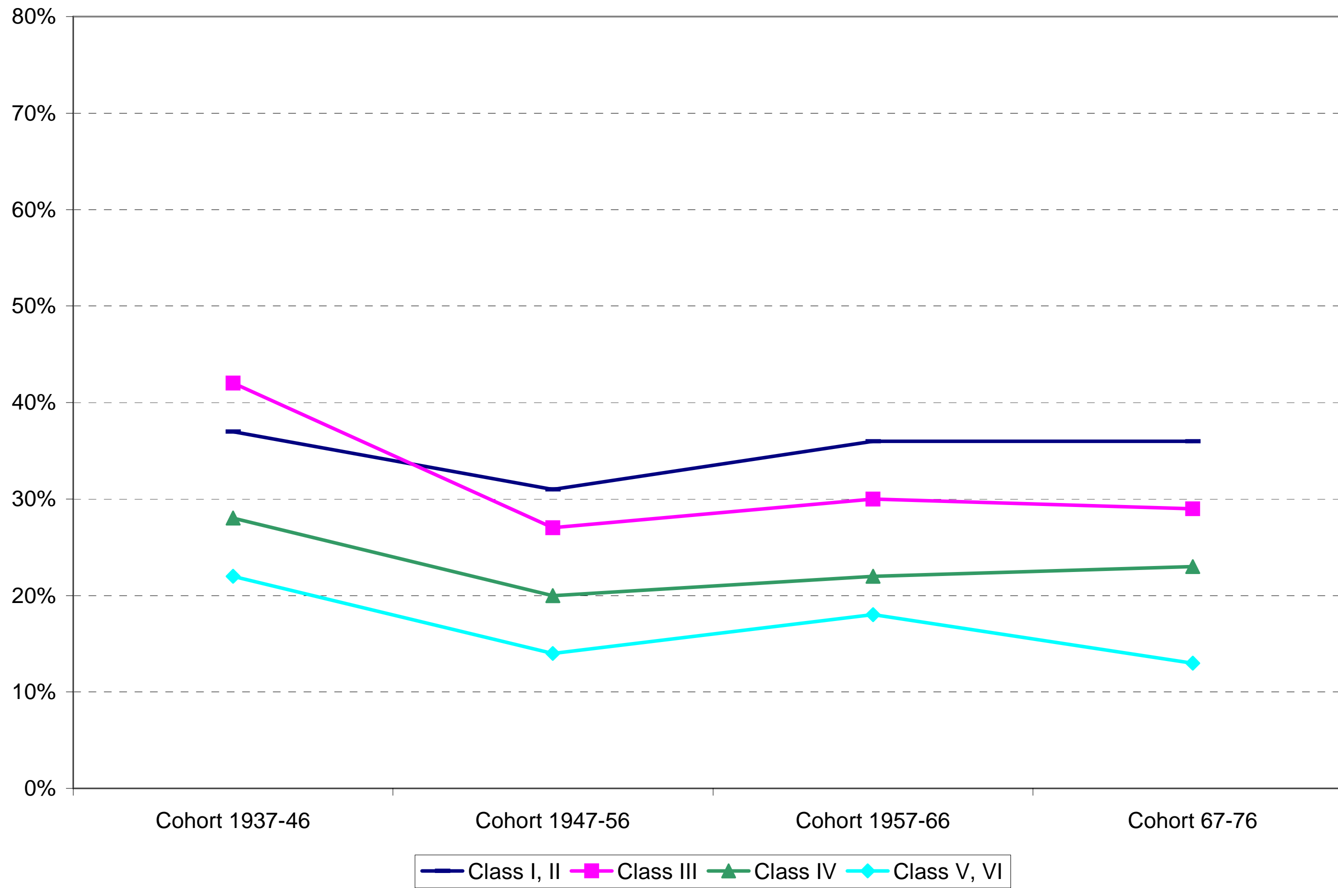
	Men	Women
Class I and II*Cohort 2	0.35	0.67
	(0.18)	(0.15)
Class I and II*Cohort 3	0.08	0.59
	(0.17)	(0.15)
Class I and II*Cohort 4	-0.23	0.66
	(0.18)	(0.16)
Class III*Cohort 2	0.48	0.25
	(0.26)	(0.15)
Class III*Cohort 3	0.11	0.39
	(0.25)	(0.14)
Class III*Cohort 4	0.26	0.58
	(0.26)	(0.15)
Class IV*Cohort 2	0.13	-0.16
	(0.25)	(0.27)
Class IV*Cohort 3	-0.15	-0.28
	(0.24)	(0.27)
Class IV*Cohort 4	-0.76	-0.28
	(0.27)	(0.29)
Class V and VI*Cohort 2	0.07	0.34
	(0.19)	(0.23)
Class V and VI*Cohort 3	0.02	0.31
	(0.18)	(0.23)
Class V and VI*Cohort 4	-0.0009	0.60
	(0.19)	(0.24)

Note: Cohort 1 (reference category): people born between 1937 and 1946; cohort 2: people born between 1947 and 1956; cohort 3: people born between 1957 and 1966; and cohort 4: people born between 1967 and 1976. Reference category for social class of destination is Class VII.


Graph 1: Trends in socio-economic groups in Scotland
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
1921
1931
1951
1961
1971
1981
1991
2000
Employers and managers
Professional self-employed
Professional employees
Intermediate non-manual
Junior non manual
Personal service
Foremen and supervisors
Skilled manual
Semi-skilled manual
Unskilled manual
Own account workers


Graph 2: Immobility rates by cohort
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Cohort 1937-46
Cohort 1947-56
Cohort 1957-66
Cohort 67-76
Class I, II
Class III
Class IV
Class V, VI
Class VII


Graph 3: Upward mobility rates by cohort
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Cohort 1937-46
Cohort 1947-56
Cohort 1957-66
Cohort 67-76
Class III
Class IV
Class V, VI
Class VII


Graph 4: Downward mobility rates
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Cohort 1937-46
Cohort 1947-56
Cohort 1957-66
Cohort 67-76
Class I, II
Class III
Class IV
Class V, VI