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LIFE-COURSE MOBILITY AS AN INTERGENERATIONAL PROCESS: INTRAGENERATIONAL MOBILITY IN IRELAND

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Introduction

In recent years the discussion of worklife or intragenerational mobility has involved a comparison of the relative merits of the `life-course´ and standard `father to son´ (or parent to child) approaches. Thus Erikson and Goldthorpe (1991), while accepting the value of `life-course analysis based on individual work histories in allowing one to address a range of issues which go beyond what is possible in the standard and approach, are less than convinced that with the results of such analysis, are such as to render the approach through the standard stable obsolete.

Erikson and Goldthorpe accept that cross-national variation in fluidity patterns is significantly greater in the component transitions from origin to entry, and entry to distination, than in the overall movement from origin to destination. The fact that variation observed in the component transitions is not cumulative, however, leads them to question whether `macro rate and patterns of mobility can fruitfully be understood as no more than the unconstrained aggregation of individual trajectories. The alternative interpretation to which their analysis leads them is that variation in the component transitions over and above that reflected in the standard mobility table derives from the effects of the pursuit of differencing strategies within cross-nationally varying institutional contexts. Thus an emphasis on societal constraints that are relatively similar across industrial societies leads them to conclude that while

> "... `intergenerational mobility as a life-course process' may in regard to certain problems be especially revealing... in treating others ... greater insight may be gained from taking just the reverse perspective: life-course mobility as an intergenerational process"

Our intention in what follows is to pursue an analysis of intergenerational mobility in Ireland from this perspective in the light of its acknowledged distinctiveness in terms of social closure (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1987, Hout, 1989, Breen and Whelan, 1991).

Data Problems and Choice of Comparison

A number of problems arising in measuring `first' employment as Erikson and Goldthorpe (1991) note. The first relates to whether this should relate literally to the first paid work that an individual ever undertook or whether there should be exceptions. The Irish data relate to first employment after the completion of full-time education as does the English data. Other surveys, however, follow rather different procedures. The second problem arises in the case of those men whose first employment took the form of working in a family business or on a family farm. Where the distinction between self employed and relatives assisting can be made the usual practice of treating the latter as employees can be followed. However, the accuracy with which this distinction can be made would seem to vary from one data

set to another. While such a lack of comparability is of no great consequence in the case of the *petit bourgeoisie* since the number involved is small, the effects in the case of agricultural work may not be negligible.

These data considerations have been influential in our decision to concentrate, in our analysis of intragenerational mobility, on comparisons between Ireland and England with agricultural occupations excluded at the entry stage. There is, however, a further reason for choosing England as a comparison point. In their comparison of England/France with Poland/Hungary Erikson and Goldthorpe note how the striking contrast in the career mobility patterns between the pairs of countries can be explained by the `degree of specificity' in their education - employment linkages. We could clearly expect that Ireland, which like England has education-employment linkages of a notably unspecific kind and where, again like England, educational institutions and provision have evolved with considerable autonomy relative to economy, would differ substantially from countries where education training systems were developed as instruments of manpower policy (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1991). From our point of view, however, it is more interesting to ask whether despite such institutional similarity the Irish pattern of career mobility might still differ significantly from that observed in England; and, if so, whether such differences can contribute to an understanding of the overall differences in mobility regimes which have been discussed elsewhere (Breen

and Whelan, 1991).

Cross-National Comparisons of the Three Two-Way Transitions

Our analysis distinguishes between four classes

(i) Professional, Managerial and Administrative or the Service Class; Casmin Classes I and II

(ii) Intermediate Class: Routine non-manual and *petit bourgeoisie*: Casmin Classes IIIa, IVa + b.

(iii) Working Class: Lower routine non-manual, lower grade technicians and supervisors of manual workers, skilled and non-skilled manual workers, agricultural workers, Casmin classes IIIb, V/VI, VIIa + b.

(iv) Farmers

Respondents in agricultural occupations at point of entry are excluded from the analysis giving a three class schema at the point. Tables 1 to 3 display the outflow tables for each of the transitions. Table 1 relating to the overall origin-destination transition shows a pattern which is familiar from analysis employing more detailed schemas (Whelan *et al*, 1991). Thus the outflow patterns from the service class are not terribly dissimilar in the two countries, although in the Irish case immobility is somewhat higher. On the other hand, the upward mobility rates for the intermediate class are significantly superior in Ireland and the risk of downward mobility into the working class is correspondingly lower. In contrast the upward mobility prospects of the working class in Ireland are significantly worse than those in England and levels of immobility are

higher. Not surprisingly the outflow patterns for farmers are quite dissimilar with levels of immobility significantly higher in Ireland and mobility into the service class significantly less likely.

In Table 2 we direct our attention to transition from origin to point of entry. There is little differences in immobility rates in the service class level but downward mobility into the working class is significantly less likely in Ireland. Once again members of the Intermediate class in Ireland are seen to enjoy striking advantages over their English counterparts in that they are twice as likely to be mobile into the service class. The working class in Ireland are again less likely to experience long-range upward-mobility but the differences appear modest in comparison with those evident in the overall mobility table. For those from farming backgrounds the Irish group are only half as likely to enter the service class.

Finally in Table 3 we look directly at career mobility. It is clear that career immobility in the service class in Ireland is substantially higher in Ireland than in England. It is this factor which almost entirely accounts for such higher levels of immobility in the final mobility table. On the other hand the ultimate advantage enjoyed by the intermediate class in Ireland is almost entirely due to differences in the outflow from origin to entry since the patterns for career mobility are almost identical. For the working class on the other hand, comparatively restricted

access to the service class is evident in both component transitions and the final disparity involves an accumulation of these advantages. Finally it is worth noting that it is the pattern of career mobility that differs between the

Table 1: *Class Mobility Chances By Class of Origins: Outflow Percentages (Excluding Respondents Entering Agricultural Classes at First Job)*

Ireland 1987 : Males 35-64
(England 1972 : Percentages in Parentheses)

Class of Origin	Destination Class: *Professional, Managerial and Administrative*	*Intermediate*	*Working Class*	*Farmers*	*Total*	*Origin Percentage*
Professional, Managerial and Administrative	68.1(62.3)	12.5(15.1)	19.3(22.3)	0.0(0.3)	100	9.7(12.1)
Intermediate	45.4(32.4)	23.9(26.6)	30.1(40.6)	0.7(0.5)	100	9.5(15.2)
Working Class	11.5(19.0)	11.8(12.7)	76.2(68.1)	0.6(0.2)	100	59.5(70.6)
Farmers	19.8(32.8)	15.1(14.3)	43.1(47.9)	5.0(22.0)	100	21.3(2.2)
Destination Percentage	22.0(26.5)	13.7(15.1)	59.2(58.0)	5.1(0.4)	100	

Table 2: *Class Mobility Chances at First Job by Class of Origins: Outflow Percentages (Excluding Respondents Entering Agricultural Classes at First Job)*

Ireland 1987 : Males 35-64
(England 1972 : Percentages in Parentheses)

Class at First Job

Class of Origin	*Professional, Managerial and Administrative*	*Intermediate*	*Working Class*	*Total*	*Origin Percentage*
Professional, Managerial and Administrative	30.1(29.3)	31.3(22.9)	38.6(47.8)	100	9.7(12.2)
Intermediate	25.3(12.2)	14.6(18.0)	60.1(69.8)	100	9.5(15.2)
Working Class	3.6(4.9)	7.8(8.2)	88.6(86.8)	100	59.5(70.5)
Farmers	11.5(20.0)	7.2(15.8)	81.3(64.2)	100	21.2(2.2)
First Job Percentage	9.9(9.3)	10.6(11.7)	79.4(79.0)		

Table 3: *Class Mobility Chances By Class at First Job: Outflow Percentages (Excluding Respondents Entering Agricultural Classes at First Job)*

Ireland 1987 : Males 35-64
(England 1972 : Percentages in Parentheses)

Destination Class

Class at First Job	*Professional, Managerial and Administrative*	*Intermediate*	*Working Class*	*Farmers*	*Total*	*Origin Percentage*
Professional, Managerial and Administrative	90.5(81.3)	2.6(7.5)	6.1(10.3)	0.9(0.9)	100	9.9(9.1)
Intermediate	53.5(53.4)	28.7(26.3)	16.9(19.8)	1.0(0.4)	100	10.6(11.7)
Working Class	9.3(15.7)	13.1(14.2)	69.8(71.4)	6.1(0.3)	100	79.2(79.5)
Destination Percentage	22.1(26.0)	13.7(15.0)	59.2(58.6)	5.1(0.4)		

two countries rather than the absolute level of mobility where very little difference exists with 69 per cent of the Irish respondents having been mobile compared to 66 per cent of their English counterparts.

The outflow patterns reported in Tables 1 to 3 are a consequence of differences in overall (or absolute rates) of mobility and associated with structural differences in the class distributions of the two societies and differences in relative rates (or social fluidity). As is by now well known, the appropriate measure of relative mobility chances is the odds ratio. The odds in question are the odds of being in one destination class rather than another, conditional on the sizes of these destination classes and a given class origin. An odds ratio is thus the ratio of two such odds, each of which is taken relative to a different class origin.

In order to assess the relative importance of relative and absolute cross-national difference at each transition, and to assess the extent to which relatives' differences remain significant when we control for absolute difference, for each of the transitions we have fitted the independence and constant social fluidity models. The constant social fluidity model, as the name implies, states that the effects of origins and destination vary while the association between them is constant. We thus have variations in absolute mobility but constant relative mobility. Not surprisingly, as the results in Table 4 show the bulk of the cross-national variation for each transition is accounted for by structural

Table 4: *Results of Fitting the Constant Social Fluidity Model to Tables Representing Different Transitions for Illness 1987 and England 1972*

Origin-Destination	X^2 lr	df	DX^2 lr	lr/dr
Model				
ON DN (Ind.)	1,084.2	18		60.2
ON DN OD	29.3	9	97.3	3.3
Origin Entry				
OE EN	714.3	12		59.5
ON EN OE	28.8	6	95.6	4.8
Entry-Destination				
EN DN	1,939.3	12		161.6
EN DN ED	31.5	6	98.4	5.3

differences. However, in no case does the constant social fluidity provide a satisfactory fit to the data. Thus at each stage cross-national differences in relative rates of mobility are statistically significant. The indicator shown in the final column X^2 lr/df suggests that constant social fluidity model provides the best fit for the standard mobility table and fits least well for the entry to destination table.

It is precisely this finding in their own analysis, i.e. that cross-national variation in relatives rates is less than the overall origin-destination transition than in either of the two component trnaitions, which they point to as underlying the doubts they have expressed regarding the connection between work-life and intragenerational mobility.

> "If underlying the mobility that is observed between origin class and entry-class there are clear cross-national differences in fluidity patterns, and if such differences are yet greater in the case of worklife mobility itself, why are these differences reduced, rather than heightened when an intergenerational view is taken?"

While in the case of the England/France - Hungary/Poland comparison the differences can be explained by fundamentally different institutional contexts, the pattern of differences between Ireland and England will clearly require a somewhat different explanation. In order to explore this we proceed to compare the results arising in the three-way mobility tables

Analysing Three-Way Mobility Tables for Ireland and England

In Table 5 we summarise some of the main features of the worklife mobility in Ireland and England controlling for class of origin. In both countries the overall level of worklife mobility varies by class of origin with rather similar patterns emerging in both cases but with the absolute difference between service class and working class origin being somewhat greater in Ireland. Similarly in both countries worklife immobility in the intermediate or working class is substantially less likely for those from service class backgrounds.

In order to take up the analysis of cross-national variation in relative rates of mobility within our three-way tables we, in fact, proceed by combining these into a single

Table 5: *Worklife Immobility by Class of Origin: Men 35-64*

Class of Entry	*Class of Origin*	*Ireland 1987*	*England 1972*
Professional, Managerial: and Administrative	Professional, Managerial and Administrative	99	91
Intermediate:	Professional, Managerial and Administrative	19	25
	Intermediate	38	28
	Working Class	28	26
	Farmer	-	-
	Overall	29	26
Working Class:	Professional, Managerial and Administrative	47	43
	Intermediate	44	51
	Working Class	83	75
	Farmer	52	65
	Overall	71	70

four-way table in which nation is also a variable. Model A is that proposing (conditional) independence of origin, entry and destination class. Model B contains two three way interaction terms. This model implies that there is cross-national variation in relative rates in the origin-entry transitions and again in the entry-destination transition; but that the association between origin class and destination class and the cross-national variation in this association derive entirely from the association, and from

the variation in the association, between origin class and entry class and between entry class and destination class. Since this model suggests that there is no association between origin class and destination class or variation in this association over and above what is produced within the two components it is not surprising that it does not fit but it does account for about 80 per cent of the deviance associated with the conditional independence model.

Model C removes one of the major restrictions imposed by Model B in that it allows for association between origin class and destination class over and above that created by the component effects and for this association to vary by entry class. However, since the OED term then is one that applies across nations, it remains the case that Model C allows for no cross-national variation in relative rates in the overall origin-destination tables other than deriving from variation in their constituent origin-entry and entry-destination tables. This model provides a satisfactory fit to the data for Ireland and England with a X^2lr of 28.4 with 27 degrees of freedom.

The implication of the fit to data provided by model C is that all-cross national variation in mobility is accounted for by variations in the component transitions. In models D and E the origin-entry term and the entry-destination term respectively are constrained to be cross-nationally invariant. Neither model fits but it is the entry-destination term which proves to be slightly more important.

Table 6: *Results of Fitting Models to Three-Way Mobility Tables for Ireland and England*

	Model	X^2 lr	df	DX^2 lr
A	OE EN DN [Independence]	3,201	78	
B	OEN EDN	634.2	54	80
C	OEN EDN OED	28.4	27	99.1
D	O*N + O*E + E*D*N + O*E*D	80.4	33	98.4
E	O*E*N + D*N + E*D + O*E*D	55.1	33	98.3

The Irish pattern of career mobility is clearly such as to undermine any notion of a series of open-ended life-course movements. Rather it is consistent with the Erikson and Goldthorpe argument for the operation of constraints across nations which react back on the way in which the transition from origin class to entry class and entry class to destination class are related to each other. Thus the Irish pattern of mobility involves the operation of comparatively strong class advantages, which are clearly related to the mobilisation of class resources, for each of the transition components. It also involves the interaction of class origin with the entry-origin association as reflected in the levels of career counter mobility to class of origin. Such counter mobility is hardly surprising when we take into account the relationship between class origin and education level even when we hold class of entry constant. In Table 7 we

illustrate this fact for those entering work in the manual class. Thus only one in ten of those from service class backgrounds who enter work in the manual class have primary education or less while almost one in two have a Leaving Certificate or third level education; in contrast for those from working class or farming class backgrounds two thirds had primary education or less and somewhat less than one in twelve had proceeded to Leaving Certificate or beyond.

However, while counter-mobility is a very significant factor in shaping the Irish pattern of career mobility, in this respect Ireland does not appear to be significantly different to England. The ultimate difference in the pattern of mobility observed in the Irish and English origin to destination tables are a consequence, predominantly, of a straightforward accumulation of the greater inequalities displayed in Ireland for each of the component transitions. In Table 8 this point is illustrated for the service class-working class `competiton´ for each of the two-way transitions. For the origin entry transition the Irish odds ratio comes close to twenty and is almost twice as great as the corresponding figure for England; for the entry to destination transition the Irish figure rises to close to 70 and is once again almost double the odds ratios found found in England. These inequalities together with the processes of counter-mobility combine to produce a situation where the Irish odds ratios for the final origin to destination transition is 23.4 while the corresponding figure for England

is 8.5.

Table 7: *Level of Educational Qualification of Class Origin for Those Entering Work in the Manual Class*

	Class of Origin			
Level of Education	Professional, *Managerial and Administrative*	*Intermediate*	*Working Class*	*Farming*
Primary or Less	10.6	35.7	62.5	65.8
Intermediate or Group Certificate	41.6	44.0	31.4	26.1
Leaving Certificate	27.2	8.7	2.3	5.6
Third Level	20.6	11.6	3.8	2.5

Table 8: *A Comparison of Odds Ratios for the Service Class and Working Class for Each of the Two-Way Transitions*

	Ireland 1987	*England 1982*
Origin-Entry	19.2	10.9
Entry-Destination	68.4	35.8
Origin-Destination	23.4	8.5

Elsewhere we have provided a more detailed treatment of the Irish pattern of social fluidity and comparisons with the experience of other European countries (Breen and Whelan, 1991). Here we concentrate our attention on attempting to provide an explanation of variations in relative mobility in the entry-destination transition between Ireland and England

in the absence of significant differences in countermobility patterns in the two countries. A number of possibilities suggest themselves.

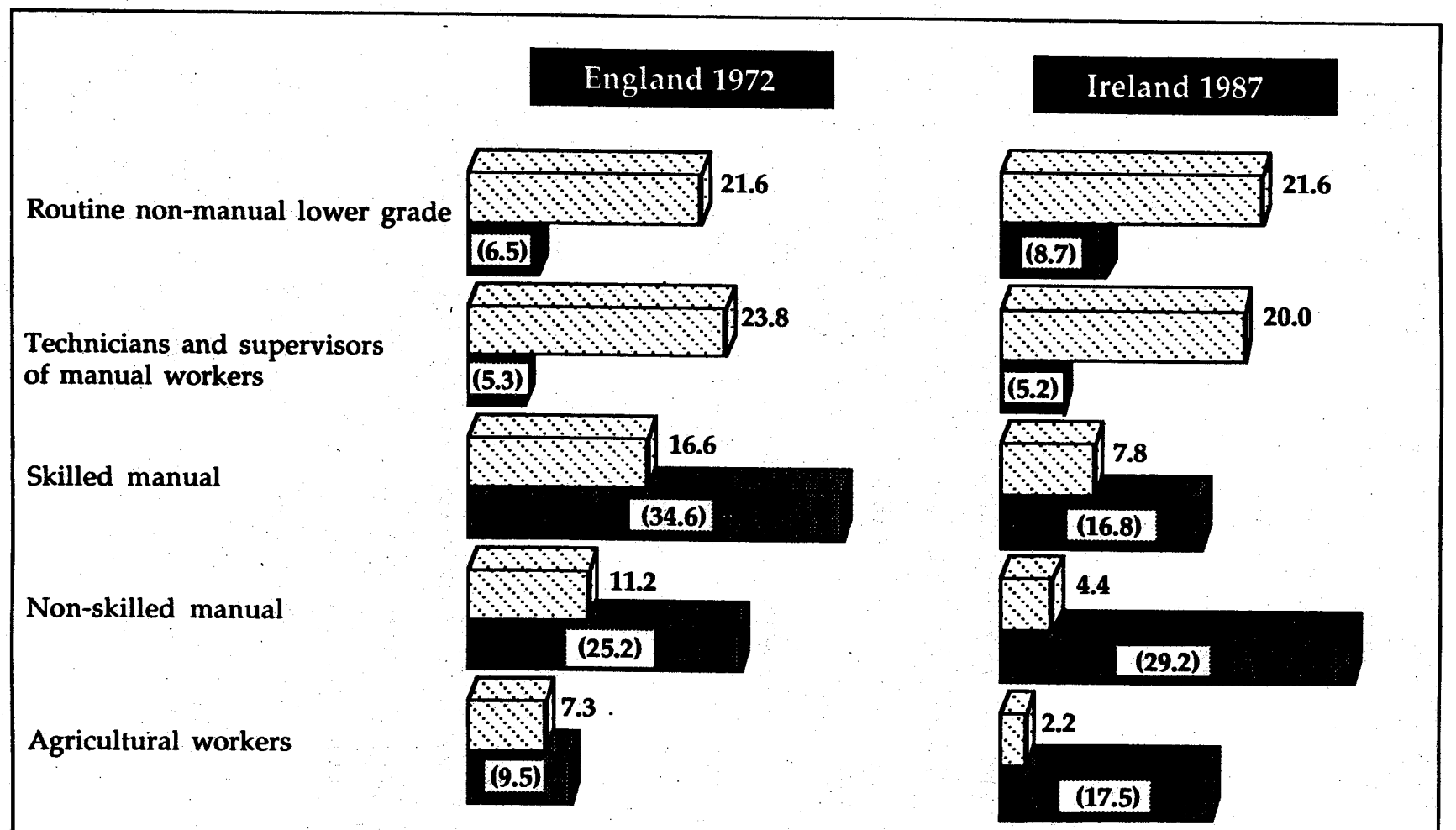
The first points to the possibility of structural differences which are concealed by the class scheme we have employed. The possibility that differences in career mobility patterns may be related to basic differences in the occupational structure has been raised in previous work (Whelan and Whelan, 1984: 51). A follow-up study in England and Wales pointed to the continuing importance of skilled manual occupations as an initial training ground both for higher grade technicians and for professionals in engineering and related areas (Goldthorpe, 1980: 132-134). The evidence for England shows that the distinction between skilled and non-skilled employment appears as an important one as far as work-life mobility is concerned. For men 35-64, in England skilled manual positions clearly exceed non-skilled as entry points whereas in Ireland non-skilled positions are almost twice as frequent.

In Figure 1 we break down the working class into its constituent elements and show the levels of long-range upward mobility for both countries. Both the size of the lower non-manual group and the technicians' groups, and the outflows from them are very similar. The remaining groups vary in size and in outflows. Thus the percentage of skilled manual workers is twice as great in England and career mobility to the service class is over twice as likely. The non-skilled

FIGURE 1

Worklife Mobility from the Working Class to the Professional and Managerial Class - Men 35 - 64

% Mobile into the Professional and Managerial Class



(Figures in parentheses refer to the percentage size of the occupational group at first job)

manual groups are of similar size but upward mobility is two-and-a-half times more probable in England. Finally, the agricultural workers' groups which, in relative size is almost twice as great in Ireland, has a mobility probability which is three-and-a-half times greater in England. Thus, while variations in occupational structure are undoubtedly of great importance, differential outflows from corresponding groups also play a major role.

One further possibility which must be considered relates to structural differences within the groups we have identified. Unlike our finding for Dublin in 1968, we could find no appreciable differences between England in 1972 and Ireland in 1987 in the percentages of skilled workers located in manufacturing. One striking difference which does emerge, however, is in the composition of the non-skilled manual group. While unskilled manual and agricultural workers make up one-fifth of the English non-skilled manual class, the corresponding figure for Ireland is one-half. However, the possibility of long-range upward career mobility was identifical for both categories. Thus we can find no evidence for further structural effects which are hidden by our categorisation.

Other possible explanations of the distinctiveness of the Irish situation include

(i) the fact that the small size of Irish private sector organisations sets strict limits to the potential role of internal training in facilitating career mobility;

while the continued significance of family ownership is likely to inhibit the application of universalistic criteria in determining career advancement.

(ii) The Irish educational system is particularly rigid with little or nothing in the way of second chance opportunities being offered.

The final possibility which we wish to explore takes note of the argument by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1987) that while it is necessary to make a clear conceptual distinction between absolute and relative mobility, this does not require the assumption that relative mobility patterns are independent of the absolute mobility flows. Thus, in Ireland, the possibility exists that the long-term situation of an excess supply of labour influences the outcome of the competitions whose results are reflected in the pattern of odds ratios observed.

Unemployment in Ireland has been characterised by a high overall rate and a high level of long-term unemployment. The degree to which unemployment has been concentrated in the working classes is striking. Unemployment among non-agricultural unskilled workers has hardly fallen below 30 per cent since 1961, while that for the upper middle class has only once exceeded 3 per cent. Thus among those classified as entering work in the manual classes are significant proportions who will have had their opportunities for career mobility impeded by the experience of long-term or recurring levels of unemployment.

The excess of labour supply is also related to the extent of qualification inflation and the use of qualifications as a screening mechanism. Thus Murray and Wickham (1983:100) in their study of Irish electronics firms found that in Ireland entry to technicians' jobs required completion of two or three years of full-time technical education. In Britain, on the other hand, technicians have frequently been recruited via apprenticeship and subsequent variation - providing an important channel of upward mobility. Similar findings have been reported for Italy. There is evidence that such screening can influence career mobility not only directly but also through its impact on the probability of being unemployed. Thus while we do not have detailed life-history data on unemployment experience we have shown elsewhere that in Ireland, unlike England, class of origin does have an independent effect on risk of unemployment even when current class is taken into account (Whelan *et al*, 1992).

Conclusion

The results presented here confirm that intragenerational mobility rather than being viewed as an open-ended process needs to be located in the context of societal constraints. In Ireland the pattern of career mobility and the manner in which it differs from the English one must be understood in terms of the manner in which it contributes to overall level of social closure in the conventional origin-destination table rather than as a

process which is obscured by it. Understanding this pattern requires that it be placed in the overall context of the limited levels of intragenerational mobility and indeed limited opportunities to participate in the labour market.

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