



Intergenerational class mobility and the convergence thesis: England, France and Sweden¹

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Introduction

In two papers previously published, we have compared rates of intergenerational class mobility among the adult male populations of England, France and Sweden (Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero 1979, 1982). The empirical results reported in these papers have been taken as a basis for evaluating current arguments concerning mobility patterns within western industrial societies and, in particular, for testing two different versions of the thesis which claims that these patterns display an essential similarity.

The earliest and simplest version of this thesis is that due to Lipset and Zetterberg, which holds that the actually observed – or, as we would wish to say, the absolute – rates of mobility between broadly defined classes tend to be ‘much the same’ from one western industrial society to another (Lipset and Zetterberg 1959). The data presented in the first of our two papers stood in some opposition to this claim. While our results could lend support to the idea of there being a ‘family resemblance’ among the class mobility patterns of England, France and Sweden, each of these countries was at the same time found to have a fairly distinctive ‘mobility profile’ when intergenerational movements in class position were examined on the basis of a ninefold class schema. Inflow rates, or patterns of class recruitment, showed especially marked cross-national variation. A major factor creating such variation was evidently that of historically-determined differences in the class structures of the three societies, most notably ones associated with the relative sizes of their agricultural sectors and with differing rates of contraction of employment in agriculture in the course of economic development.

It is, however, awareness of precisely this possibility of structurally induced variations in absolute mobility rates which distinguishes the subsequent reformulation of the Lipset-Zetterberg thesis undertaken by Featherman,

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Lancaster Jones and Hauser (Featherman, Lancaster Jones and Hauser 1975: 339–41). What these latter authors propose is that an essential similarity in mobility patterns across western industrial societies should be sought not at the ‘phenotypical’ level of absolute rates, where the effects of structural differences will be apparent, but rather at the ‘genotypical’ level of the relative rates which underlie the absolute ones: or, in other words, at the level of mobility rates as assessed *net of* structural effects. In the second of our two papers we have been able to show that evidence for England, France and Sweden is certainly more favourable to this revised version of the thesis of cross-national similarity than it is to the original version. A detailed model was developed of the common pattern of relative mobility rates – or of what we would term social fluidity – in England, France and Sweden, and this proved to have a reasonable degree of fit to our empirical data. It was at all events confirmed that the cross-national differences that were found in absolute rates were overwhelmingly attributable to structural effects rather than to differences existing at the level of relative rates also. At the same time, though, the model did not achieve a perfect fit and, more importantly, one systematic, if small, national deviation from it was detected. In the Swedish case, generally lower tendencies towards class immobility could be observed than the model would predict: a finding which, as we noted, is of obvious interest in the context of the current debate over how far social-democratic rule within capitalist societies can be effective in reducing class-based inequalities in social power and advantage, and thus in producing greater equality of life-chances and a more ‘open’ form of society.

The present paper follows in direct continuation of our two earlier ones, and aims to overcome one major limitation of the analyses which they presented: namely, that these entirely took the form of static comparisons. While a basis was thus provided for assessing how closely at one particular point in time – specifically, the early 1970s – the mobility patterns of the three societies studied resembled each other, no evidence could be adduced bearing directly on the question of whether *over time* these patterns were tending to increase or decrease in their degree of similarity.

It would seem clear that for Lipset and Zetterberg the similarity in mobility patterns that they claim among the industrial societies of the western world represents the outcome of an increasing similarity in their occupational and class structures. Thus, the possibility arises, and calls for investigation, that the Lipset-Zetterberg thesis is not so much mistaken as premature: that the cross-national differences in absolute mobility rates which can be displayed on the basis of data for the early 1970s may also be shown to be ones that are steadily diminishing. In their reformulation of the Lipset-Zetterberg thesis in terms of relative rates, Featherman, Lancaster Jones and Hauser do not themselves contend that essentially similar patterns of relative rates will likewise result from wider trends of change that western industrial societies increasingly show

in common. However, an argument to this effect might be thought to be implicit in their position and has, in any event, been made out clearly enough by other authors. Thus, for example, Blau and Duncan and subsequently Treiman have argued that the functioning of a modern industrial society entails a secular movement away from 'ascription' and towards 'achievement' as the leading principle of selection for different positions within the social division of labour; and consequently, it is held, the degree of association that exists between the positions held by parents and by their offspring will tend to decline – independently of any effects in this same direction that may result from structural changes (Blau and Duncan 1967; Treiman 1970). Thus, it may be expected that patterns of relative mobility chances within industrial societies will become more alike in becoming more equal – in responding, it might be said, to a common functional need for increased social fluidity or openness.

If, then, we are to be in a position to examine arguments such as the foregoing – which are obviously ones of central relevance to larger issues of the extent to which the overall development of industrial societies is set on 'convergent' lines – it is clear that analyses are required that are both comparative *and* diachronic: that is, which are concerned with similarities and differences in cross-national mobility *trends*. It is a major aim of the present paper to provide such analyses in the case of intergenerational class mobility in England, France and Sweden. We shall first consider trends in observed or absolute mobility, and try to establish how far, over recent decades, these trends have been of a convergent kind. Then, second, we shall seek to assess how far trends in absolute rates, whatever their nature, have been accompanied, and in part determined, by shifts in relative mobility rates: that is, by changes in mobility chances which cannot be (directly) attributed to structural influences.

We shall for the most part proceed, as previously, through the secondary analysis of data on the mobility experience of the adult male populations of England, France and Sweden which are available from national sample surveys undertaken in these three countries in the early 1970s. Details of these inquiries are given in our earlier publications.

In thus working from single surveys we shall not have the possibility of observing trends directly: rather, we shall be forced to infer them from the examination of the mobility experience of survey respondents of differing birth dates. However, for each of the three countries we shall be able to make some check on the results of such analyses, at least in regard to relative rates, by setting them against those obtained from other studies of mobility trends which draw on data from inquiries undertaken at two different points in time – although, unfortunately, data so categorised that they cannot be rendered strictly comparable with those on which the present work rests.

Methodological issues

Our previous comparative analyses of intergenerational mobility rates were made on the basis of a ninefold class schema, the rubric of which is given in the first column of Table I or on the basis of the sevenfold collapse of this schema which is shown in the second column of the table. However, in attempts to infer mobility trends by comparing the mobility experience of successive birth cohorts defined within our national samples, the continued use of such rather elaborate categorisations tends to create difficulties in that cell values become in some instances unduly low from the standpoint of reliability. We have, therefore, in the present paper resorted to further collapses of our class schema – in fact, to the fivefold and threefold versions shown in the third and fourth columns of Table I.

Our method of inferring trends also gives rise to a more fundamental methodological problem, namely, that the mobility experience of men in a particular birth cohort will reflect not only ‘period’ effects – which are what concern us – but also ‘age’ effects and effects associated with that cohort’s relationship to others within the total population. This problem is not one that can ever be fully resolved on the basis of the data available to us; and, because of this, our assessment of mobility trends cannot be simply a matter of ‘reading off’ statistical results but must embody an important element of interpretation. However, as regards age effects at least, we can in this respect follow certain useful guidelines that are empirically informed.

We may, to begin with, regard the older men in our samples, say, those aged 35 and over, as having reached a stage of ‘occupational maturity’, at which further major changes in their class position are relatively unlikely: that is to say, we may take results for our older cohorts as giving a reasonably reliable indication of the ‘completed’ pattern of the collective mobility experience of their members. On the other hand, then, we may suppose that results for the younger men in our samples *will* reflect important ‘age’ effects, in that many of these men who are still in the early stages of their worklives may be expected to experience significant mobility in the future. Further, though, we can reckon that such worklife mobility will show certain rather well-defined tendencies: specifically, that it will result, through a predominance of upward ‘career’ mobility, in there being a net increase in the proportion of these men eventually found in Classes I and II of our schema, and also in the self-employed categories comprised by Classes IVa, IVb and IVc; and, conversely, that it will produce a net decrease in the proportion found in the routine nonmanual positions of Class III and the manual wage-earning ones of Classes V/VI, and VIIa and VIIb. We may, thus, interpret the data actually recorded for our younger respondents with these tendencies in mind.²

Finally in this respect it is also relevant to note that the problems generally associated with birth cohort analysis are in fact greatly reduced in so far as we

TABLE I: *Versions of the class schema*

	Original ninefold ^(a)	Sevenfold	Fivefold	Threefold
I	Higher-grade professionals, administrators and officials; managers in large industrial establishments; large proprietors	I + II 'service class'	I + II + III 'white-collar'	I + II + III + IVa + b 'nonmanual'
II	Lower-grade professionals, administrators and officials; higher-grade technicians; managers in small business and industrial establishments; supervisors of non-manual employees			
III	Routine non-manual employees in administration and commerce; sales personnel; other rank-and-file service workers	III		
IVa	Small proprietors; artisans, etc., with employees	IVa + b 'petty bourgeoisie'	IVa + b 'petty bourgeoisie'	IVc + VIIb 'farm'
IVb	Small proprietors, artisans, etc., without employees			
IVc	Farmers and smallholders; self-employed fishermen	IVc	IVc + VIIb 'farm'	
V/VI	Lower-grade technicians; supervisors of manual workers; skilled manual workers	V/VI	V/VI	V/VI + VIIa 'manual'
VIIa	Semi- and unskilled manual workers (not in agriculture)	VIIa	VIIa	
VIIb	Agricultural workers	VIIb		

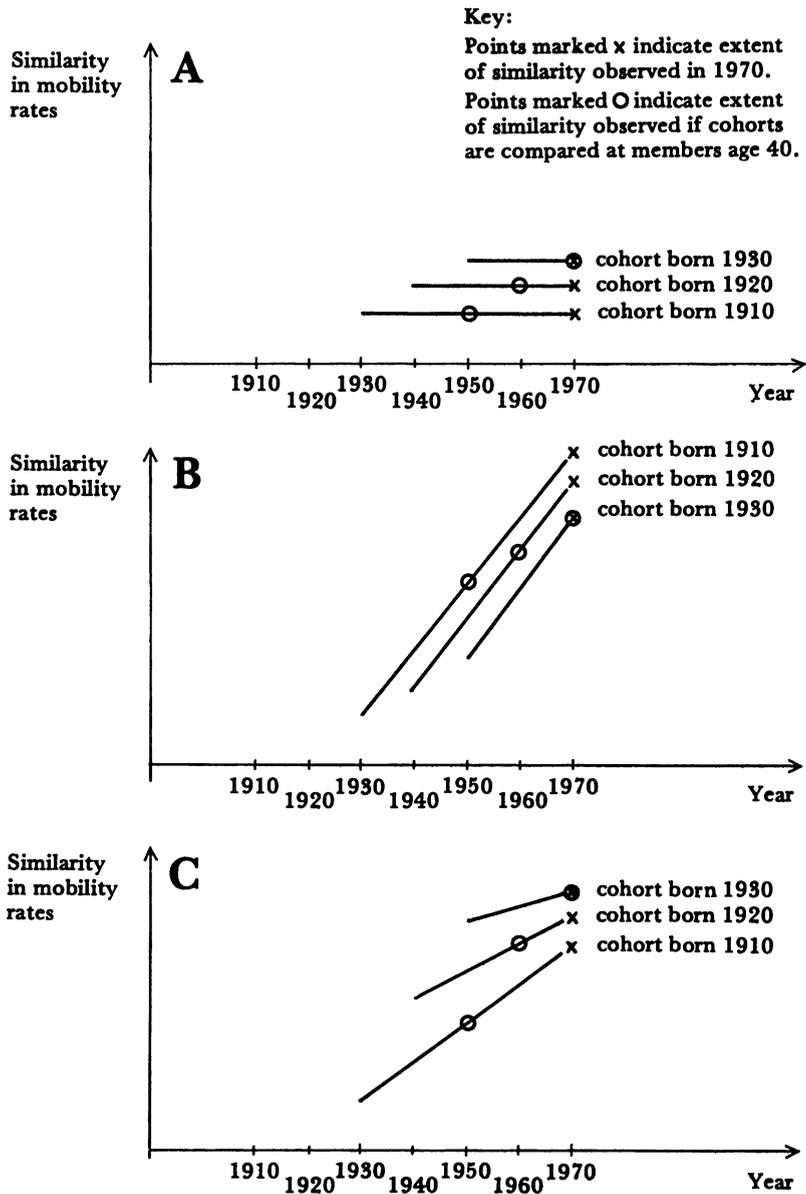
Note: (a) For further details, see Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero (1979).

are here concerned specifically with investigating the degree of cross-national convergence in mobility trends. This is so since if mobility rates and their determinants *are* becoming standardized within western industrial societies, there is no obvious reason why this tendency should not show up in more similar patterns of mobility over working life as well as in more similar mobility rates overall.

In order to amplify this point, let us suppose that we are comparing just two countries on the basis of mobility data which, in each case, relate to three cohorts of men, born in 1910, 1920 and 1930 respectively. Consider now the three sets of results displayed in the three panels of Figure I, which have been constructed specifically to illustrate the main possibilities of interest to us. As can be seen, the horizontal axes of the graphs refer to years, and the vertical axes to some measure of the degree of similarity in mobility rates. The lines then plot the similarity that exists between the mobility rates of each of the three corresponding pairs of cohorts from the year in which their members became 20 up to 1970. Points on the lines marked 'x' indicate the extent of the similarity that would be observed in 1970, while the points marked 'o' indicate the extent of the similarity that would be observed if the cohorts were in each case compared when their members were aged 40.

Panel A illustrates a rather simple case of convergence: the similarity in mobility rates increases as one moves from the 1910 to the 1930 cohorts. But – what might be thought empirically rather implausible – the course of worklife mobility that men typically follow is already cross-nationally identical from the earliest cohort, so that the degree of similarity shown up in the mobility rates of the pairs of cohorts does not alter over the lifetimes of their members – i.e. all three lines on the graph are horizontal. Thus, a comparison made at one point in time (for example, 1970) of the mobility of cohorts of differing age would not, under these conditions, be misleading: it would give quite accurate information about the change (increase) in similarity that has occurred. In Panel B we have, in contrast, a case in which the typical course of worklife mobility differs greatly between the two countries, with the result that the similarity in the mobility experience of corresponding cohorts becomes much greater towards the end of their working lives than it was earlier – i.e. all the lines slope upwards. In such a case, then, it could be that, as is shown, a comparison made at one point in time (1970) would lead to a judgment of divergent trends – the mobility of the 1910 cohorts appears more similar than that of the 1930 cohorts – whereas if men at the same age (40) are compared, a convergent trend is apparent. It is therefore in such circumstances as these that a comparison made at one point in time might be regarded as misleading in that it would fail to detect a convergent movement. However, it would still have to be recognized that the convergence that is involved here is of a very peculiar kind: some increased similarity in overall mobility goes together with persistingly dissimilar – that is, non-converging – patterns of mobility over

FIGURE I: *Graphs representing three possible relationships between convergence in intergenerational mobility rates, across three birth cohorts in two countries, and differences in patterns of worklife mobility*



working life. And it could scarcely be held that this state of affairs is envisaged in, or indeed evidently consistent with, any version of the arguments that were reviewed in the previous section. It is in fact in Panel C that we have illustrated the case which these arguments may best be taken as proposing: that is, one in

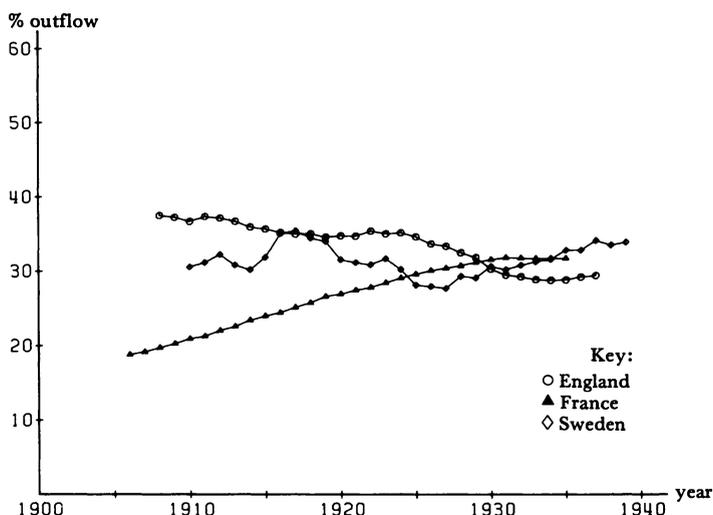
which cross-national mobility experience becomes more similar across successive cohorts *and* over the course of working life – i.e. all three lines slope upwards, but that for the youngest cohort is the closest to the horizontal. And what is then important to note is that while the differences in the degree of similarity in mobility that are shown up in the comparison made in 1970 are less than those revealed when men are compared at age 40, there is still, as in the case of Panel A, no danger of the former comparison failing to reveal the convergent trend that exists.

Trends in absolute rates: moving averages

Perhaps the most direct way in which to test a thesis of convergent mobility trends, at least in regard to absolute rates, would be to compare percentage outflow rates across successive birth-year cohorts. While we cannot do this directly, because of the small numbers of cases that would be observed for each cohort, we may attempt to circumvent this obstacle by using moving averages of these rates. If, for each of our three countries, one were to plot such averages for the mobility of men of a given class of origin to a given class of destination, then an underlying pattern of convergence should be displayed as three convergent lines on the graph. A practical difficulty with this method is that it tends to generate a large amount of information: a graph is required for every cell of any mobility table that one may construct. Also, we found that where cell numbers became small, even moving averages calculated for each birth year of our respondents could show large fluctuations, although the span of years covered by each average was quite wide. For these reasons, then, we decided to apply the method in question only to data at a high level of aggregation: that is, to our basic intergenerational mobility data as organized on the basis of the threefold collapse of our class schema shown in Table I. It may however be noted that this collapse into nonmanual, manual and farm classes has the advantage of being, nominally at least, the same as that utilized by Lipset and Zetterberg (although in fact they excluded the farm class from most of their analyses).

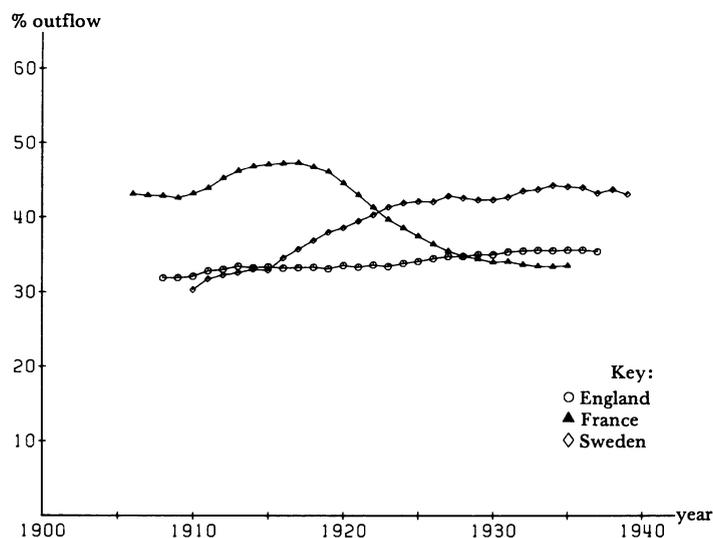
Taking this version of the class schema, it is thus possible to derive from our data birth-year averages of percentage outflow rates for men in each of our three countries and for each of nine possible origin-to-destination transitions. However, even with this degree of aggregation, the numbers involved in two transitions – those from nonmanual to farm and from manual to farm – are too small to permit any very reliable conclusions to be drawn and these transitions are therefore left out of consideration. Graphs for five of the remaining seven transitions for men age 35 to 64 are shown in Figures II–VI, the two omitted graphs being essentially the obverses of ones presented.³ In these graphs the moving average for a particular year is based on the percentage outflow value

FIGURE II: *Moving averages of outflow rates: nonmanual origins to manual destinations.*^(a)



Note (a): As explained in n.3, the graph of outflow rates from nonmanual origins to nonmanual destinations will be essentially the obverse of the present one.

FIGURE III: *Moving averages of outflow rates: manual origins to nonmanual occupations.*^(a)



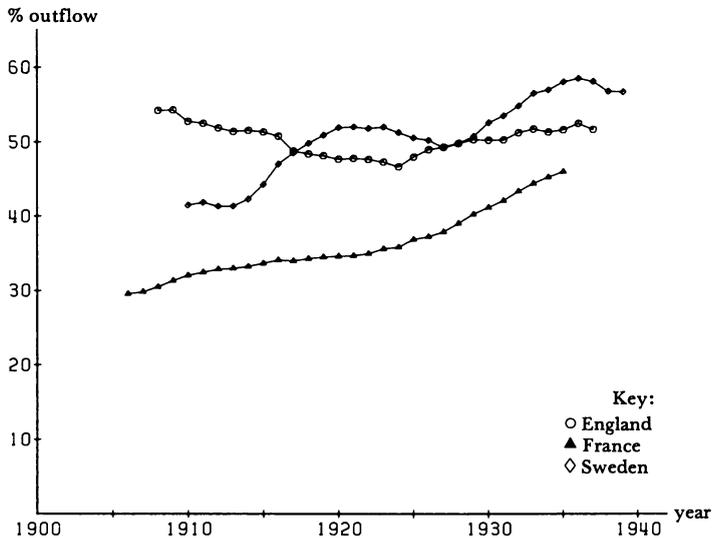
Note (a): As explained in n.3, the graph of outflow rates from manual origins to manual destinations will be essentially the obverse of the present one.

for men born in that year and the corresponding values for the seven previous years and the seven following years – i.e. fifteen values are used in all. However, weighting formulae are applied in order to give greater weight to values closer to the mid-point one.⁴

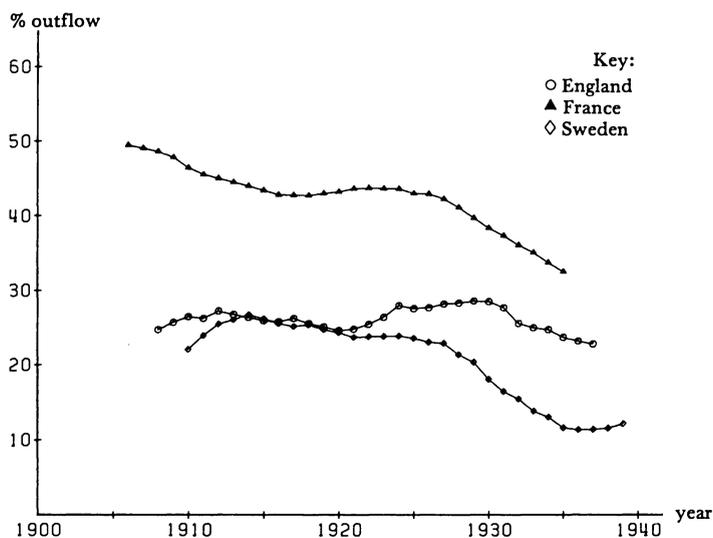
FIGURE IV: *Moving averages of outflow rates: farm origins to non-manual destinations*



FIGURE V: *Moving averages of outflow rates: farm origins to manual destinations*



From Figure II a clear idea can be gained of how, using our method, convergent trends in mobility rates may be shown up. It is at once evident from the graph that mobility rates indicative of intergenerational mobility from non-manual origins to manual positions have tended to become more similar within our three countries.⁵ As the outflow from nonmanual origins to agricultural occupations has been negligible in all countries and for all cohorts, it

FIGURE VI: *Moving averages of outflow rates: farm origins to farm destinations*

follows that a similar convergence has taken place in the extent of intergenerational stability within the nonmanual classes. It can moreover be seen that it is England and France which have, so to speak, converged on the Swedish rate: that is, through an increase in nonmanual to manual movement in the French case – implying a corresponding decline in nonmanual immobility – and through the converse trends in the English. However, so far as the other four graphs of Figures III to VI are concerned, no similarly clear-cut instances of convergence spring to the eye. A general tendency might still be claimed for the English and French rates to come closer together; but the important point is that in these cases this movement does *not* at the same time bring them closer to the Swedish rates. On the contrary, the latter tend to diverge from the growing similarity evident between those for the other two countries, and in a rather systematic way: that is, in showing less intergenerational stability within both the manual and the farm classes and, correspondingly, greater outflow from both manual and farm origins to nonmanual positions and also from farm origins to manual positions. In other words, it could be said that in these respects Sweden would seem to become more distinctive in displaying a generally higher level of mobility.

In sum, then, the data presented in Figures III–VI, when considered overall, cannot be regarded as providing the thesis of convergence in (absolute) mobility rates with any very large measure of empirical support. Instances of convergence can clearly be seen, but so too can instances of divergence which theoretical arguments of the kind earlier reviewed could not readily provide for.

Trends in absolute rates: dissimilarity indices

An alternative way of examining trends in absolute mobility rates is through the use of dissimilarity indices (DIs). In an earlier paper (Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero 1979) we used DIs to assess the extent of cross-national differences in percentage outflow distributions for men originating in each of the nine classes distinguished in our schema. Here, in Table II, we make the same kind of comparison, but on the basis of the sevenfold version of the schema and with each national sample being divided into three broad – 15 year – birth cohorts. In this case, then, the focus of interest will be not so much on the actual size of the DI for any class of origin and pair of countries, but rather on whether over the three cohorts DIs are tending to fall, thus suggesting that some convergence in rates is in train. In Tables III, IV and V we also present the actual outflow distributions from which the DIs of Table II are derived, so that it can be seen how any shift in DIs has actually come about. It will however be apparent from these tables that we are here sometimes working with disturbingly small numbers, and that it may well thus be dangerous to attach too much significance to any one figure. Our attention should rather be concentrated on the overall pattern of results that emerges, and on the question of whether this pattern, while based on a different and more detailed version of our class schema, is consistent with that produced by our previous analysis.

As regards, to begin with, outflow from Classes I and II, the data of Table II would indicate that in this case the question of convergence scarcely arises. For

TABLE II: *Dissimilarity indices derived from pairwise cross-national comparisons of class mobility chances (outflow percentages) over three birth cohorts*

Comparison	Birth (b) cohort	I and II	III	IVa and b	IVc	V/VI	VIIa	VIIb
England/France	1	10	18	21	18	19	17	17
	2	2	13	12	23	3	6	12
	3	5	5	6	26	4	6	13
England/Sweden	1	5		15	14	10	7	7
	2	8	(c)	6	14	9	16	23
	3	11		12	31	9	5	30
France/Sweden	1	9		20	25	17	13	19
	2	6	(c)	15	26	11	15	23
	3	8		16	22	7	10	31

Notes: (a) Figures in italics are ones derived in part from percentages with a base of less than 50.
(b) The cohorts are defined as follows:

England	1	1908–22	France	1	1906–20	Sweden	1	1910–24
	2	1923–37		2	1921–35		2	1925–39
	3	1938–52		3	1936–50		3	1940–54

These divisions make the cohorts in each country equal in age at the time of the interviews.
(c) The numbers for Sweden are too small to permit reliable index calculation, see Table IV.

TABLE III: Comparisons of class mobility chances of men of Class I and II origins, by birth cohort, outflow percentage distributions

Class of ^(a) origin	Class at time of inquiry										
	Country	Birth cohort	I and II	III	IVa and b	IVc	V/VI	VIIa	VIIb	% of total	N
Class I and II	England	1	58	11	9	0	14	8	0	11	314
		2	64	7	7	2	13	7	0	12	378
		3	55	15	5	1	16	8	0	16	550
France	France	1	60	8	13	2	8	7	2	10	110
		2	65	8	7	0	13	7	0	11	214
		3	57	12	4	0	17	9	0	15	253
Sweden	Sweden	1	56	11	11	0	13	7	2	8	53
		2	66	11	5	0	14	4	0	10	65
		3	49	13	4	0	21	12	1	13	106
% of total ^(b)	England	1	23	10	8	2	31	25	1	25	2945
		2	27	8	9	2	33	20	2	2	3139
		3	26	10	7	1	34	21	2	2	3350
France	France	1	21	9	15	16	16	18	5	11	1111
		2	22	8	10	12	24	20	3	3	1922
		3	23	12	6	6	27	24	3	3	1737
Sweden	Sweden	1	20	7	10	9	28	24	2	2	637
		2	29	7	9	6	28	21	1	1	648
		3	25	9	5	2	34	23	3	3	811

Notes: (a) As indexed by father's class.

(b) These figures also apply to Tables IV and V from which they are omitted for reasons of space.

TABLE IV: Comparisons of class mobility chances of men of Class III, IVa and b, and IVc origins by birth cohort; outflow percentage distributions

Class of origin	Country	Birth cohort	Class at time of inquiry								N
			I and II	III	IVa and b	IVc	V/VI	VIIa	VIIIb	% of total	
Class III	England	1	35	10	6	1	24	23	1	6	190
		2	36	11	13	0	31	10	0	7	216
		3	33	16	4	0	29	17	1	9	288
	France	1	38	12	17	1	21	9	2	6	69
		2	32	14	8	2	26	17	1	8	159
		3	30	21	4	0	28	17	1	9	163
Sweden	1	50	9	9	0	14	17	0	3	35	
	2										
	3	30	17	9	0	31	11	3	5	38	
Class IVa and b	England	1	24	12	19	2	23	19	1	11	332
		2	30	7	23	1	26	13	1	10	321
		3	30	8	20	0	25	16	1	7	249
	France	1	24	8	37	3	13	12	2	17	190
		2	27	10	30	1	18	13	1	14	283
		3	27	13	18	1	24	16	1	13	221
Sweden	1	29	3	24	3	27	14	0	10	66	
	2	31	5	21	2	24	18	0	11	70	
	3	31	6	9	2	30	21	1	12	98	
Class IVc	England	1	16	8	7	27	16	21	5	5	146
		2	14	5	6	23	25	19	8	5	169
		3	18	4	9	19	18	16	17	3	112
	France	1	8	7	7	43	9	19	6	31	349
		2	8	5	7	41	13	22	5	27	527
		3	9	8	5	27	16	29	7	21	357
Sweden	1	9	10	8	21	21	27	4	35	225	
	2	18	6	8	18	22	26	2	29	188	
	3	13	8	4	8	33	27	7	16	131	

TABLE V: Comparison of class mobility chances of men of Class V/VI, VIIa and VIIb origins by birth cohort; percentage outflow distributions

Class of origin	Class at time of inquiry										
	Country	Birth cohort	I and II	III	IVa and b	IVc	V/VI	VIIa	VIIb	% of total	N
Class V/VI	England	1	18	10	7	0	39	26	0	40	1180
		2	24	7	7	0	41	20	1	38	1186
		3	19	9	6	0	42	23	1	39	1310
	France	1	22	16	13	2	28	18	2	16	172
		2	20	8	8	0	42	21	1	18	341
		3	19	11	4	0	41	25	1	21	357
	Sweden	1	24	6	6	3	42	20	0	20	125
		2	28	8	11	0	37	16	0	21	133
		3	23	9	3	1	37	25	2	29	238
Class VIIa	England	1	15	10	5	1	36	32	1	22	633
		2	14	9	7	0	37	32	0	24	753
		3	17	8	4	0	39	31	1	23	764
	France	1	18	13	12	4	27	26	1	12	129
		2	17	9	6	1	35	29	2	14	270
		3	14	12	4	0	36	33	1	17	294
	Sweden	1	18	8	8	2	35	30	0	18	112
		2	26	7	7	2	40	19	0	20	129
		3	16	6	7	1	39	29	3	22	175
Class VIIb	England	1	9	4	7	3	25	39	13	5	150
		2	7	3	6	4	33	28	18	4	116
		3	10	7	8	0	27	29	20	2	77
	France	1	6	6	11	10	15	35	17	8	93
		2	6	10	7	6	25	32	14	7	127
		3	9	9	5	2	24	37	14	5	933
	Sweden	1	12	0	8	5	23	40	12	6	39
		2	11	5	2	2	29	46	5	7	45
		3	20	4	4	0	44	24	4	3	25

the DIs reported for *all* cohorts, in each of the three pairwise comparisons made, have remarkably low values. In general, we would think it reasonable to interpret DIs of around 10 or less as indicating that in fact only very slight, if not indeed negligible, differences exist between the distributions to which they relate. We have earlier noted that if Classes I and II are taken together, their outflow pattern does display, in line with Lipset and Zetterberg's original thesis, a rather striking cross-national similarity – the salient feature of which is that in each country just over 60 per cent of the sons of Class I and II fathers are themselves found in Class I and II positions. From Table III it can then be seen that this close similarity is already evident in the oldest of our three cohorts – that of men born entirely in the first quarter of the twentieth century – and is maintained in the next cohort as, in each country alike, the proportion of Class I and II sons who appear as intergenerationally stable increases somewhat. Furthermore, recalling the guidelines earlier mentioned for interpreting results for our youngest cohort, we may reasonably suppose that in this cohort there is, at all events, little likelihood in any of the three countries of a decline in the proportion of stable Class I and II sons – as, in the course of their future working lives, some number of those found at the time of inquiry in Class III, V/VI and VIIa positions especially will gain access to Classes I and II. The expansion of what we have termed the 'service class' of professional, higher technical, administrative and managerial employees can be regarded as a fairly general feature of the recent history of the advanced societies of the west, and as one which in itself makes for a high level of intergenerational 'succession' within this class (cf. Goldthorpe 1982).

In so far, then, as there is any possibility of convergence in outflow patterns from Classes I and II, this must lie in the distribution of men of Class I and II origins who apparently have *not* succeeded in maintaining their fathers' positions. In fact, the only instance that is perhaps worthy of note here occurs in the French case in the decline over the two older cohorts in the proportion of such men who are found in Class IVa and b positions – or, that is, within the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie – and the corresponding increase in the proportion found in Class V/VI positions. It is primarily on account of this shift that the French outflow pattern overall becomes in the second cohort yet closer to the Swedish and English patterns than it was in the first.

We may now move on to consider outflow patterns from what we may think of as the 'intermediate' classes of our schema – that is, Classes III, IVa and b and IVc. In the case of Class III, that of routine nonmanual employees, the small numbers of men originating in this class in the Swedish sample means that the only comparison that we can usefully make is that between England and France. The relevant DIs in Table II do in fact fall across the three cohorts distinguished, indicating thus that a convergence in outflow patterns has occurred. From examination of the actual distributions, as shown in Table IV, it can be seen that this increased similarity has not come about in any

straightforward manner, but its main source can perhaps best be revealed if we consider outflow from Class III origins to Classes V/VI and VIIa taken together, as representing industrial working-class occupations. It could then be said that while in the first, or oldest, French cohort the proportion of sons of Class III fathers who were found in such working-class positions is less than a third but then rises markedly to over two-fifths in the second, in the English case the proportion *falls* to around two-fifths in the second cohort from being nearer to a half in the first. In other words, we find here the same pattern as was revealed for nonmanual to manual outflows generally by our analyses based on moving averages.

Turning next to mobility from Class IVa and b – that is, petty-bourgeois – origins, we may note, first of all, that here again the England/France comparison in Table II shows clear evidence of convergence. Further, as Table IV reveals, this is again the result, to an important extent, of a growing similarity in outflows to working-class (Class V/VI and VIIa) positions. Over the three cohorts, the sons of the French petty bourgeoisie appear increasingly likely to be found within the industrial working class, but among their English counterparts no such trend is evident. Thus, while in the oldest cohort only around a quarter of the former as against some two-fifths of the latter have apparently been ‘proletarianized’, in the youngest cohort one might expect the eventual proportion who could be so regarded to lie somewhat between a third and two-fifths in each country alike. In addition, one may also recognize as, so to speak, the complementary aspect of this process of convergence, the decline in the extent of intergenerational stability within Classes IVa and b in France, which is again a trend not matched in the English case. Here too, then, a rather large dissimilarity in the first cohort would seem to be more or less eliminated by the third. We have previously remarked that the French petty bourgeoisie would appear to be distinctive in the degree to which its sons ‘succeeded’ their fathers and avoided entry into the working class (Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero 1979: 435–6). Our cohort analyses now enable us to qualify this observation by recognizing further that, in the comparison with England, the differences evident in these respects are very largely ones which arise from the experience of men who were born in, say, the first third of the century.

We may thus regard the foregoing as a fairly well defined example of convergence in mobility patterns. However, when we move on to the two further comparisons that we can make in regard to Classes IVa and b – that is, between England and Sweden and between France and Sweden – convergent trends are less readily discerned. It is true that in both instances the DIs shown in Table II fall over the first two of our cohorts, but this fall is not maintained into the third. Examination of the relevant data in Table IV would then suggest that this is chiefly because in the Swedish case a decline in the intergenerational stability of the petty bourgeoisie has occurred as in the French, but of a still more sudden and rapid kind. This conclusion would seem justified by the

finding for the third Swedish cohort that less than 10 per cent of men of Class IVa and b origins occupied positions similar to their fathers – even if one were to accept the possibility of ‘delayed’ counter-mobility which might lead some number of these men back from working-class or other employee positions into self-employment. Although, then, one could say that in no cohort are cross-national differences in outflow from Classes IVa and b exceptionally large, the important point for present purposes is that in two out of the three comparisons that we can display, there is no particular reason for supposing that, over time, these differences are tending to narrow rather than to widen.

Finally, as regards the intermediate classes of our schema, we must consider mobility patterns associated with Class IVc, that of self-employed workers, mainly farmers, within the primary production sector. Here it is evident from Table II that no claim of convergent trends of change could be upheld. The DIs for each of the three cross-national comparisons are at much the same – relatively high – level over the first two cohorts, and then in two instances rise in the third. It is true that in the outflow distribution presented in Table IV a tendency can be seen in all three countries alike for intergenerational stability within Class IVc to fall, as might of course be expected with the general contraction of employment in agriculture. But it can also be seen that from one country to another this decline has occurred from quite widely differing levels and at different rates – with, it may be added, that in Sweden appearing the most drastic, just as in the case of the decline in stability of Classes IVa and b. Furthermore, from the data of Table IV, it would also seem possible that certain trends in mobility from farm origins are, if anything, divergent. For example, outflow to industrial working-class occupations is clearly on the increase in France and probably also in Sweden, but this is scarcely so in England. And again, while men of farm origins in Sweden appear to be improving their chances of access to Class I and II positions, so that these approximate those of their English counterparts, it is far less clear that such a trend is also operative in the French case. A partial explanation of this finding, at least, may be that in Sweden the decline of *small* farmers has been especially rapid; thus, those operating on a larger scale have been an increasing proportion of all farmers, and in turn the socioeconomic level associated with ‘farm origins’ has undergone a relative improvement.⁶

It remains, then, to examine the extent to which convergence is evident in mobility trends from what could be regarded as working-class origins: that is, from origins in Classes V/VI, VIIa and VIIb of our schema.

To begin with outflow from Class V/VI, that of skilled manual workers taken together with lower-level technical and manual supervisory grades, it can be seen from Table II that for each of the three cross-national comparisons the DIs fall across our three birth cohorts. In the England/Sweden comparison this effect is rather slight, but in this case the similarity between outflow distributions is already quite close in the oldest cohort. In the other two comparisons

the degree of convergence is far more marked, and from examination of the relevant data of Table V it may be observed that this is primarily the result of the French pattern 'coming into line' with the English and Swedish ones. In particular, a substantial shift occurs in the French case in the degree of intergenerational stability within Class V/VI. Of the sons of Class V/VI fathers born in the first two decades of the century, as many would appear to have moved into intermediate-class positions, whether employee or self-employed ones, as became themselves skilled manual workers. But in the following cohorts the proportion of such men who 'succeed' their fathers rises to around the same level – two-fifths or so – as in England and Sweden and, again as in these countries, becomes clearly in excess of the proportion found in the intermediate classes.

Turning next to the semi- and unskilled industrial workers of Class VIIa, we may once more recognize an increasing similarity in outflow distributions as between England and France; and again it is largely changes in the pattern for the latter country that bring about the convergence. But while with the sons of skilled workers the major trend evident in the French case is that of an increase in intergenerational stability, with the sons of non-skilled men such a trend is less important than an increased outflow on their part *to* skilled manual positions. Table V shows that in the oldest French cohort men of Class VIIa origins are, if anything, less likely to be found in skilled manual than in intermediate-class positions, but that in the second cohort they are twice as likely to be found in the former than in the latter – much the same as in the English case. And again then in the third cohort this same pattern seems likely to be maintained.

However, against this further instance of convergence in the England/France comparison, one must set the far less clear-cut results for Class VIIa that arise in the two comparisons involving Sweden. As the DIs reported in Table II indicate, the Swedish outflow pattern for men of nonskilled manual origins shows greater dissimilarity from those for England and France in the second than in the first of our birth cohorts; and the relevant data of Table V reveal that this is chiefly the result of declining intergenerational stability among nonskilled Swedish workers and an increased outflow – which may be characterised as fairly decisive upward mobility – to Classes I and II. Whether this shift will be maintained in the third Swedish cohort, as its members come closer to occupational maturity, is hard to judge on the basis of the data available. But, at all events, one could certainly say that there is here no stronger evidence for convergent trends than for divergent ones. It will be recalled that our analyses based on moving averages of outflow rates suggested that Sweden was, if anything, becoming increasingly differentiated from England and France in its higher level of outflow from manual to nonmanual positions in general.

Finally, then, we must comment on the mobility patterns associated with Class VIIb of our schema, that of manual wage-workers within the agricultural

sector. Our findings in this respect prove in fact to be broadly the same as those we have just reported on mobility patterns from Class VIIa origins. There is yet again evidence of some convergence in the England/France comparison, resulting mainly – just as was found with outflow from Class VIIa and also from Class V/VI origins – from increased movement in the French case to Class V/VI positions. But, on the other hand, there is little indication of any greater similarity in the other two comparisons that we can make, although it must be said that any conclusions reached in these instances are necessarily tentative, and must remain unelaborated, because of the small numbers in the Swedish sample.

Trends in absolute rates: general conclusions

We have now reviewed the whole of our evidence on trends in absolute mobility rates, and are therefore in a position to draw some general conclusions. The two most obvious are the following. First, we may say that while with both types of analysis that we have undertaken certain convergent trends in these rates can be discerned, in neither case do they appear with any strong regularity. Second, it also emerges from both analyses alike that evidence of convergence is much clearer and more consistent in one of the three cross-national comparisons that we can make, namely, that between England and France, than it is in the other two – that is, those involving Sweden.

As regards the convergence between the English and French rates, it may then further be noted from the more detailed results of the DI analyses, that this is of a rather one-sided kind. Predominantly, it results from fairly marked changes in French mobility patterns which have brought these into a closer similarity with less rapidly changing English ones. In particular, we may point in the French case, on the one hand, to a tendency for increasing outflow from all class origins to the industrial, essentially wage-earning occupations of Classes V/VI and VIIa (and to those comprised by the former especially); and, on the other hand, to a tendency for a general decrease in outflow to the self-employed positions of Class IVa and b, as well as to the two agricultural classes, IVc and VIIB.

That it is such changes which appear from our analyses as those basic to the example of convergence that we have to recognise is in fact rather reassuring. For they are, of course, changes to which the evolution of the French occupational and class structures, over the period to which our data refer, would be highly conducive. As is evident from the standard historical and statistical accounts, the decades in question saw a steady, if ‘belated’, growth of the French industrial working class, offset by a decline in numbers in what were, initially, a relatively large petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and agricultural proletariat (see, e.g. Zeldin 1973: vol. 1, part 1; Parodi 1981). These developments can

indeed be found clearly reflected in the marginal values of the French mobility matrices that are incorporated into Tables III–V; that is, in the changing distributions of the class origins and destinations of members of the French sample. And thus, to put the matter another way, one could say that for such shifts *not* to be accompanied by trends in the mobility observed among these men in the directions that we have emphasized would have required changes in the pattern of their *relative* mobility chances of a quite substantial kind.

The convergence in mobility rates that is displayed in the England/France comparison could then be seen as conforming rather closely with the general process that Lipset and Zetterberg had in mind. Mobility rates become cross-nationally similar as the forms of the division of labour and in turn the class structures of different societies themselves converge on a single basic pattern: one which follows from the mode of functioning of the capitalist industrial economy. However, as we have earlier argued, what may be questioned is whether such convergent tendencies are as general and overriding as Lipset and Zetterberg imply, or whether there may not also be countervailing shifts evident in mobility patterns, and ones which may derive, in part at least, from structural changes that are cross-nationally variable – for example, in their rhythm and rate even if not necessarily in their direction. Given the empirical analyses reported above, what we can now further argue is that these analyses, as well as providing an instance of convergence, do also serve to illustrate the alternative possibility: that is, to indicate that cross-national differences in mobility rates can indeed persist, and may even widen, as industrial development proceeds. In this respect, it is obviously the case of Sweden that is most instructive. For not only do Swedish mobility rates show no particular tendency to become more like English or French rates – if anything, the reverse – but further in the Swedish case, no less than in the French, the changes in mobility that are of chief interest are ones that can be regarded as being structurally favoured.

For example, the fact that the mobility of men of farm origins in the Swedish sample does not come closer to the pattern of that of their counterparts in England and France is in important part due to the more rapid decline in the Swedish case in intergenerational stability within the agricultural sector. And this is then a trend which, other things being equal, would be expected to result from the more rapid contraction of this sector within the Swedish economy than within the English or French (cf. Priebe 1976; Jörberg and Krantz 1976). Again, a further source of differentiation in the Swedish outflow pattern from Class IVc, at least in regard to the French pattern, is the proportion of farmers' sons who attain Class I and II positions; and similarly, one may note, the extent of the outflow of Swedish men to Classes I and II from working-class – especially Class VIIa – origins is persistently greater than in the other two countries. As we have already suggested, a factor favouring the former tendency may well be the particular way in which the contraction of agriculture

occurred in Sweden; but further, in regard to both tendencies alike, it is relevant to note that, to judge at least from the marginal distributions of Tables III to V, it is in Sweden that the expansion of Classes I and II has been most marked over the period to which our data relate. Or, one could say, it is in this country that the objective opportunities for access to service-class positions – that is, opportunities considered independently of relative class mobility chances – have been most expanded.

In sum, then, the results that we have reported in the two preceding sections of this paper would suggest that, over the middle decades of the twentieth century, trends in absolute mobility rates in the three countries that concern us have not been of the regularly convergent kind that would be expected if the Lipset-Zetterberg thesis were indeed ‘not so much mistaken as premature’. Taken overall, these results could in fact be almost as well adduced in support of the counter-thesis, proposed among others by Sorokin, that in historical perspective such gross rates will be seen to exhibit no more than a ‘trendless change’ (Sorokin 1964: 142–60). Furthermore, it is apparent that while the course of structural change *can*, in the way that Lipset and Zetterberg envisaged, exert a clearly standardising influence on mobility rates, this is by no means a necessary outcome enforced by some compelling ‘logic’ of industrialism.⁷ Rather, we are able to confirm the argument we advanced in an earlier paper that the course of change in national occupational and class structures may make for divergence as well as convergence in mobility patterns (Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero 1979: 439). Finally, though, we should stress that in all of the foregoing we have been discussing structural effects on the basis of ‘other things being equal’ – and speaking, thus, simply in terms of whether or not the direction of structural changes was ‘conducive’ or ‘favourable’ to observed mobility trends. What we have not examined is the question of whether these trends have in fact been influenced *only* by structural changes, or whether shifts in the underlying pattern of relative mobility chances might also have played a part in either increasing or decreasing similarities. And, over and above this, we have of course still to consider the alternative version of the thesis of convergence in mobility trends to which we earlier referred: namely, that which claims that convergence is to be sought not at the level of absolute, but rather of relative rates – in consequence, for example, of the growing prevalence of new, more ‘equalising’ processes of social selection of the kind emphasised by Blau and Duncan and by Treiman. It is then to the matter of trends in relative mobility rates that we specifically turn in the sections which follow.

Trends in relative rates: the overall picture

The method of assessing relative mobility rates which has become standard over recent years, and which we shall here adopt, is one based on the

application of multiplicative or loglinear models.⁸ In this way, it is possible to test a range of propositions concerning relative rates, where these are understood as forming the pattern of association between class of origin and class of destination within a mobility table as this exists net of all structural effects which will be mediated through the marginal distributions of the table. Thus, for example, one may apply to comparative mobility data, as we have done in a previous paper, a model which embodies the hypothesis that the pattern of association – or pattern of social fluidity, as we would term it – will be the same from nation to nation: ‘the common social fluidity’ model (Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero 1982: 11–13). Or again, in the case of mobility data for successive birth cohorts or for successive inquiries within a single society, one may apply a model which states that the pattern will be the same over time – that is, from cohort to cohort or inquiry to inquiry: the ‘constant social fluidity’ model.⁹ A further advantage of such models is then that their implications for relative mobility rates or chances can be directly expressed in terms of odds ratios: that is, in terms of the chances of individuals of a given class of origin being found in one rather than in another class of destination relative to the chances of individuals of a different class of origin. Thus, the common social fluidity model implies that all corresponding odds ratios are identical across nations; and the constant social fluidity model implies that all such odds ratios are identical across cohorts or inquiries.

For our present purposes, what we are interested in is of course *both* the extent of cross-national differences in relative mobility rates *and* trends in these rates over time. More specifically, we wish to know whether any trends apparent in such rates over the three cohorts that we have distinguished are ones through which cross-national differences are being reduced; and, if so, whether such trends are ones, as Blau and Duncan and Treiman would suppose, in the direction of greater equality in mobility chances or, one could say, towards greater fluidity. If convergence in relative rates is occurring in the way these authors have envisaged, then we should find not only that these rates are more similar for younger than for older cohorts across our three national samples, but further that for the former, relative chances are generally less unequal – or, in other words, that odds ratios are generally lower. In fact, in our earlier work we have already produced evidence to suggest that in so far as differences in relative rates exist among our three countries, it is Sweden that emerges as having the greatest fluidity (Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero 1982: 23). Thus, a further question that may be posed is whether there are grounds for regarding Sweden as being, so to speak, in the van of a long-term evolutionary process, which is, however, also being followed by the other two countries even if in a somewhat laggardly fashion.

In preparing our data for the analyses we had in mind, we struck a compromise between the *desiderata* of detail and of sizable cell values by using the

fivefold version of our class schema, as shown in Table I. As can be seen, Class III is combined with Classes I and II to form a broad 'white-collar' class; and Class VIIb is combined with Class IVc into a broad 'farm' class.¹⁰ The three birth cohorts into which men in the three national samples are divided remain the same as indicated in note (b) to Table II.

In Table VI we give the results of applying a series of loglinear models to our data. The models in Panel A of the table were all applied to our complete data set split up into nine separate mobility matrices, one for each nation-cohort combination. Model A1 proposes that 'perfect mobility' prevails across all nations and cohorts alike – i.e. that there is no association between father's class and son's class when structural effects are controlled for. This model is introduced not because it has any substantive merit – as can be seen, it has a very poor fit to the data – but simply so that it can be used as a 'baseline' against which the improvement of fit produced by other models can be assessed, as is done in the penultimate column of the table. The real interest begins with model A2 which states that for all nine nation- and cohort-specific tables, the pattern of association between father's class and son's class will be the same – in other words, we have here in effect a combined version of the common and the constant social fluidity models earlier referred to. This model fits our data rather badly, ($p = 0.09$), even though it is clear that the extent of the discrepancy is not large – less than 3 per cent of all cases are misclassified. However, what is then revealed by the results for models A3 and A4 is how this lack of fit comes about: it is evident that it derives essentially from differences in fluidity that exist *across nations* rather than across cohorts. Model A3, allowing for differences across cohorts but not across nations – i.e. a common fluidity model – can scarcely be reckoned an improvement on A2; but model A4, allowing for differences across nations but not across cohorts – i.e. a constant fluidity model – could in fact be accepted on all counts as reproducing our data very satisfactorily. And hence, when with model A5 we allow for both kinds of difference, the room that is left for further improvement is obviously limited.

We are then rediscovering here our finding previously reported that significant, if small, differences in the pattern of social fluidity do exist among our three countries. But we are now adding to this the claim that *no* such differences can be detected among the three cohorts into which we have divided each national sample. This claim is, moreover, in various ways corroborated by other results that are given in Table VI. First of all, it is shown at the bottom of Panel A that when we test specifically for a 'cohort' effect, by setting model A2 against A3, or A4 against A5, we do not obtain significant χ^2 values, whereas in analogous tests made for a 'nation' effect, by setting A2 against A4, and A3 against A5, significant values are returned. Again, moving to Panels B and C of the table, we find that if we collapse our data over nations – that is, look simply at three mobility tables, one for each cohort – and apply the constant social fluidity model B2, we achieve an excellent fit; but that if we collapse over

TABLE VI: Results of testing common and constant social fluidity models against English, French and Swedish mobility data for three cohorts

Model	Highest-order terms included ^(a)	Type	χ^2_{CR}	df	p	% of cases misclassified	$\chi^2/\chi^2_{(b)}$ percent	$\chi^2 \times 1000$ N	
A	All data (N = 16,300), nine nation- and cohort-specific matrices								
	A1	(NCO) (NCD)	Perfect mobility	4121.5	144	0.00	18.6	100.0	252.9
	A2	(NCO) (NCD) (OD)	Common and constant fluidity	149.5	128	0.09	2.8	3.6	9.2
	A3	(NCO) (NCD) (COD)	Common fluidity	120.1	96	0.05	2.4	2.9	7.4
	A4	(NCO) (NCD) (NOD)	Constant fluidity	97.1	96	0.45	2.4	2.4	6.0
	A5	(NCO) (NCD) (COD) (NOD) ^(c)	Variable fluidity over nations and cohorts	65.7	64	0.42	1.8	1.6	4.0
	A2 vs. A3		Constant fluidity	29.4	32	>0.5			
	A4 vs. A5		Constant fluidity	31.4	32	>0.5			
	A2 vs. A4		Common fluidity	52.5	32	0.01			
A3 vs. A5		Common fluidity	54.5	32	0.01				
B	All data collapsed over nations, three cohorts								
	B1	(CO) (CD)	Perfect mobility	4521.2	48	0.00	19.6	100.0	277.4
	B2	(CO) (CD) (OD)	Constant fluidity	27.0	32	>0.5	1.3	0.6	1.6
C	All data collapsed over cohorts, three nations								
	C1	(NO) (ND)	Perfect mobility	4111.3	48	0.00	18.6	100.0	252.2
	C2	(NO) (ND) (OD)	Common fluidity	52.5	32	0.01	1.6	1.3	3.2
D	England only (N = 9,434) three cohorts								
	D1	(CO) (CD)	Perfect mobility	1901.1	48	0.00	16.2	100.0	201.5
	D2	(CO) (CD) (OD)	Constant fluidity	35.9	32	0.29	1.9	1.9	3.8
E	France only (N = 4,770), three cohorts								
	E1	(CO) (CD)	Perfect mobility	1814.8	48	0.00	24.5	100.0	380.5
	E2	(CO) (CD) (OD)	Constant fluidity	21.2	32	>0.5	2.1	1.2	4.5
F	Sweden only (N = 2,096), three cohorts								
	F1	(CO) (CD)	Perfect mobility	405.6	48	0.00	16.0	100.0	193.5
	F2	(CO) (CD) (OD)	Constant fluidity	39.9	32	0.16	5.0	9.8	19.0
G	Cohort 1 (oldest) only (N = 4,693), three nations								
	G1	(NO) (ND)	Perfect mobility	1128.3	48	0.00	18.2	100.0	240.4
	G2	(NO) (ND) (OD)	Common fluidity	15.2	32	>0.5	1.6	1.3	3.2
H	Cohort 2 (middle) only (N = 5,709), three nations								
	H1	(NO) (ND)	Perfect mobility	1672.4	48	0.00	19.7	100.0	292.9
	H2	(NO) (ND) (OD)	Common fluidity	45.0	32	0.06	2.8	2.7	7.9
I	Cohort 3 (youngest) only (N = 5,898), three nations								
	I1	(NO) (ND)	Perfect mobility	1320.8	48	0.00	17.9	100.0	223.9
	I2	(NO) (ND) (OD)	Common fluidity	60.0	32	0.00	2.7	4.5	10.2

Note: (a) N = nation, C = cohort, O = class of origin (father's class), D = class of destination (class at time of inquiry). Thus, e.g. (NCO) indicates that a three-way association between nation, cohort and class of origin is allowed for, and also all two-way associations existing among these three variables.
 (b) The percentages reported in this column show the proportion of the χ^2 for the relevant perfect mobility model that is not accounted for by the model in question. Together with the reported percentage of cases misclassified, they give information on how much variation remains unaccounted for by the model.
 (c) I.e. the only model more complex than this is the 'saturated' model that includes the four-way association term (NCOD) and necessarily fits the data exactly. If such a model were needed – which is clearly not the case – it would imply that the degree of variation in fluidity over cohorts varies across nations or, equivalently, that the degree of variation in fluidity across nations varies over cohorts.

cohorts and apply the common social fluidity model C2 to our three national tables, then – as was earlier found using the sevenfold version of our class schema – a significant lack of fit occurs.

Finally, when in Panels D, E and F we look at our data for each nation separately, and in Panels G, H and I for each cohort separately, it is evident that the constant social fluidity models D2, E2 and F2 on the whole perform better than do the common social fluidity models G2, H2 and I2. Only in the Swedish case could the fit of the former type of model be regarded as less than totally satisfactory, while the latter type is clearly acceptable only in its application to the data for the *oldest* of our three cohorts – that is, scarcely what would be expected if convergence were in train. These deviations from the general pattern of our results are indeed ones which will merit more detailed attention, as will later be seen. But first we should relate the major conclusion deriving from Table VI – that shifts in relative mobility rates across our three cohorts are barely discernible – to those produced by studies of such rates which have been based on consecutive national inquiries.

In the English case, the 1972 inquiry, which is the source of our present data, was preceded by that of Glass and his associates, carried out in 1949 (see Glass 1954). It is not in fact possible to bring the extant 1949 data into a form that would be at all closely comparable with those of 1972. However, an attempt made by Hope to ‘splice’ the findings of the two inquiries, specifically in order to test for the constancy of relative rates, produces a result consonant with our own: namely, that no significant indication of any trend is to be found.¹¹

The French case is a less straightforward one. The 1970 inquiry on which we here draw was designed in part to replicate one undertaken in 1953 (cf. Thélot 1976), and the mobility data that the two studies provide can be compared with a relatively high degree of confidence. Using the occupational classification of the original research, Goldthorpe and Portocarero have shown that these data are not in fact satisfactorily reproduced by the constant social fluidity model, but rather that a significant increase in fluidity must be recognised over the period covered by the two studies (Goldthorpe and Portocarero 1981. Cf. the analysis in Thélot 1982). This apparent discrepancy with the result reported above – specifically, for model E2 in Table VI – either could be attributable to methodological differences, that is, to differing classifications or of course to the comparison of data from separate inquiries rather than of data for cohorts distinguished within a single sample; or it could reflect the factual difference that the time-span over which mobility is being assessed is considerably extended when the data from the two inquiries are utilised. For example, around a third of the men in the 1953 sample were born before those forming the oldest of our cohorts within the 1970 sample. There are in fact grounds for regarding this latter alternative as being the more likely. First, if we apply a constant social fluidity model to the mobility data for the three cohorts into which we have divided the 1970 respondents, but with these data organised on

the basis of the original classification rather than of our own class schema, we still achieve an entirely acceptable fit ($p = > 0.5$). Second, while we cannot altogether rule out the possibility that a cohort analysis will fail to reveal a shift towards greater fluidity within these data, because the mobility experience of the men in the youngest cohort is still 'incomplete', there is at all events clear evidence, which we present in the following section, that no greater fluidity occurs in the middle than in the oldest cohort. Overall, then, the supposition that is favoured is that an increase in fluidity took place within French society at some time in the earlier part of the present century but was not sufficiently sustained in order to be revealed in the mobility experience of the men who are represented in the 1970 inquiry.

Finally, in the Swedish case it is again possible to effect a reasonably reliable comparison between the mobility data used in our work and those of an earlier study, namely, that of Carlsson (Carlsson 1958). On the basis of such a comparison, Erikson has shown that significant changes in relative rates do occur over the period covered by the two data-sets, and ones which again go largely, though not entirely, in the direction of increased fluidity, with the greatest shift of this kind here resulting from the mobility experience of the youngest cohorts involved (Erikson 1983). A discrepancy might then once more appear to arise between this outcome and that of our cohort analysis of the 1974 data, specifically the fit produced for model F2 in Table VI. However, as was noted, this is the case where a constant fluidity model fits least well with a national data set, and in view especially of the much smaller number of observations involved here than in Erikson's 1950–1974 comparison, no inconsistency need in fact be supposed.

It is then evident that comparisons made between mobility inquiries conducted at different points in time will be more capable than cohort analysis of detecting shifts in relative rates, if only because of the larger view that they afford. None the less, there would seem to be nothing resulting from such comparisons that is in necessary contradiction with the main finding of the particular cohort analyses that we have carried out: i.e. that for men entering employment from the 1920s through to the 1960s, relative rates of class mobility in England, France and Sweden alike have remained substantially the same.

Such a finding must carry obviously negative implications for any thesis claiming a process of convergence in cross-national patterns of fluidity, whether one focused on a situation of greater openness or not. The best construction that might be put upon our results from the standpoint of such a thesis would be to suggest that, since the cross-national differences shown up are quite small, even though highly significant, it might be reckoned that the convergence had, broadly speaking, already occurred. However, it would then have to be pointed out that the results reported in Panels G, H and I of Table VI would make it necessary for this occurrence to be located rather

implausibly far back in the past. For as already remarked, it is only for the oldest men in our samples that a common social fluidity model produces an entirely acceptable fit (G2): for the middle cohort, the fit is doubtful (H2), and for the youngest, a significant lack of fit is demonstrated (I2). In other words, there is no indication in our data of differences in relative rates being eliminated in the course of the middle decades of the century: this period would seem rather to have witnessed a tendency in the reverse direction.

Trends in relative rates: a deviant tendency

If any sociologically significant exception *is* to be discerned to the general finding of no change in relative rates, then it is clear from what has already been said that it may best be looked for in the mobility experience of the younger men within the Swedish sample. In order to test more explicitly and sensitively for the existence of a deviant tendency in the case of this group, we follow a procedure that has been suggested by Hauser (1981).

We revert to the organization of our data into nine separate nation- and cohort-specific mobility tables and apply to these, as we did previously, the combined version of the common and constant social fluidity models (model A2 of Table VI). However, this time we engage in a series of applications of the model, with one of the nine matrices after another being in effect omitted from the analysis by being allowed to have its observed values fitted exactly. The χ^2 produced in each case is then of course indicative of whether or not we may regard the pattern of relative rates in the other eight matrices as being the same. But furthermore, the difference between the χ^2 value obtained when all nine matrices are considered (i.e. that given for model A2 in Table VI) and that obtained for any eight-matrix application will indicate whether or not the pattern of relative rates in the 'omitted' matrix differs significantly from that prevailing in the others. In Table VII we report these χ^2 differences for each of the nine matrices; and in Table VIII we supplement this information by showing how far the extent of actually observed *immobility* in each matrix differs from that which would be found under the model which requires that the underlying pattern of relative rates should be in each case identical (A2).

The evidence of these two tables taken together rather clearly confirms that the mobility experience of the youngest cohort in our Swedish sample does exhibit a greater degree of fluidity than does that of the other national cohorts. The χ^2 difference for this Swedish cohort is one of only two in Table VII which reach significance at the 5 per cent level, the other being that for the middle cohort in the English sample.¹² However, while the results reported in Table VIII then show that this latter deviation has no large implications for the

TABLE VII: Differences for each nation- and cohort-specific mobility matrix given by subtracting from the χ^2_{LR} of 149.5 returned by the common and constant social fluidity model, A2, the χ^2_{LR} , returned when this model is applied with the observed values of the matrix fitted exactly

Nation	Cohort		
	1	2	3
England	9.8	28.7 ^(a)	17.8
France	12.1	15.2	12.3
Sweden	7.2	18.5	45.8 ^(a)

Note: (a) Significant differences at the 5 per cent level. Under the hypothesis that the matrix whose observed values are fitted exactly shows the same pattern of fluidity as the other matrices, the differences reported can be assessed against an χ^2 distribution with 16 degrees of freedom. The separate χ^2 statistics are not independent of each other.

TABLE VIII: Observed values in cells indicating immobility (i.e. cells on main diagonal) minus expected values under the common and constant social mobility model (A2) as percentage of all observations in each nation- and cohort-specific matrix

Nation	Cohort		
	1	2	3
England	-0.7	0.8	0.9
France	-1.5	1.4	0.4
Sweden	-0.5	-0.6	-5.4

extent of mobility as against immobility, that of the Swedish cohort can be associated with an appreciably lower level of immobility than would be expected if the relative rates inherent in all nine nation-by-cohort tables were the same. The fact that in Table VIII negative values appear for all three Swedish cohorts is consistent with our finding previously reported that when a detailed model of the common pattern of fluidity in England, France and Sweden is fitted to our comparative data, the major national variation that is revealed is one implying greater fluidity in the Swedish case. What is now made apparent is that this variation derives to a major extent from the mobility experience of the younger men in the Swedish sample – that is, those who first entered employment from the mid-1950s onwards.

At the same time, we may also draw on the results presented in Tables VII and VIII to bear out what we earlier claimed as regards relative mobility rates in France: that is, that in this case no movement towards greater fluidity is in evidence over the period covered by the data we have used. As can be seen, no significant χ^2 difference is returned for any of the French cohorts, and as between the oldest and the middle cohort the non-significant shift is actually in

the direction of reduced fluidity. These findings for France, and likewise those for England, must then be uncongenial to any suggestion that the upturn of fluidity in Sweden might be seen as part of some more general, emergent process which is characteristic, say, of 'postindustrial' society.¹³ The possibility cannot of course be precluded that studies that would cover mobility in England and France in the later 1970s and 1980s might also reveal such an upturn. But speculation that convergence in relative rates might thus eventually come about, with other countries following in the Swedish lead, is less to the point here than the observation that the increased Swedish fluidity must in fact go along with structural changes in promoting certain of the *divergent* tendencies in Swedish *absolute* rates which have earlier been noted: that is, those associated with the declining intergenerational stability of the petty-bourgeois, farming and industrial working classes.

Conclusions

In this section, we aim both to resume our main findings on trends in absolute and relative rates of class mobility and also to consider the general significance of these findings when taken together.

To begin with, we may reiterate that our analyses of trends in absolute rates do not produce results favourable to the thesis that, among the societies of the industrialized world, such trends will be steadily forced onto convergent lines. Comparisons made among the three societies we have studied can indeed provide clear instances of convergence in mobility rates, associated, as the thesis in question would require, with growing similarities in the 'shape' of their occupational and class structures. But at the same time instances of non-convergent or of divergent trends can also be demonstrated, likewise associated with structural changes but with ones which, rather than being of a 'standardizing' kind, may be seen as reflecting cross-national differences in styles or models of industrialization. What is now obviously required is for the range of comparisons to be extended so that it can be seen whether class mobility patterns in the three countries we have considered are unusual in the extent to which persisting variations are displayed or whether, on the other hand, the number of such variations that can be shown will simply increase with the number of societies studied.

Next we may return to the issue of the sources of trends in absolute rates. While it was clear that cross-nationally divergent as well as convergent trends could be favoured by structural developments, the further question had to be faced of the actual importance of structural effects in creating such trends as against that of effects deriving from changes in the pattern of relative rates or, as we have also termed it, the pattern of social fluidity. We have been able to show that, at least for the countries and the period to which our comparative

data refer, this pattern is a remarkably stable one, and hence that its dynamic effects must be very limited. In an earlier paper we concluded that variations in absolute mobility rates in the cases of England, France and Sweden as these could be observed at a single point in time – the early 1970s – were predominantly attributable to differences in the occupational and class structures of these societies rather than to differences in relative rates (Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero 1982: 11–13). To this we can now add that trends in absolute rates over recent decades – whether divergent or convergent – are in turn predominantly attributable to structural developments rather than to any shifts in relative rates. Indeed, as we have shown, models proposing constant social fluidity across cohorts tend to fit still better with our data than do models proposing common social fluidity across nations.

This finding of a high degree of stability in patterns of fluidity also then means that, as we have stated, we can give little support to the alternative version of the thesis of convergence in mobility trends which would see this as occurring at the level of relative rates, and specifically through changes in the direction of a greater equality of class mobility chances. Shifts in relative rates can indeed be detected, and sometimes they are ones of a kind that are of evident sociological as well as statistical significance. We certainly do not wish to suggest that such rates should be regarded as some kind of ‘natural’ constant in class stratification. None the less, the data that we have analysed can provide no indication of any *continuous* movement in relative rates in any direction, and the observed shifts that do in fact imply increases in fluidity or openness would seem better interpreted as sporadic and short-term phenomena rather than as forming part of some comprehensive developmental tendency. And, it may be added, such shifts can – as in our Swedish case – serve to reinforce structural changes that are making for wider cross-national variation in mobility at the level of absolute rates.

Taken overall, therefore, our results must lead to the view that approaches to the understanding of rates and patterns of class mobility in industrial society which are of an essentially functionalist and evolutionary inspiration are unlikely to prove very helpful. The degree of developmental uniformity and regularity which such approaches presuppose is not empirically to be found. If convergence in absolute mobility rates were in fact in train, then Lipset and Zetterberg would surely be right in seeing this as resulting from a growing cross-national similarity in occupational and class structures; or, alternatively, one could say that if structural similarity were increasing, then convergent trends in mobility rates could rather confidently be expected. However, the available comparative statistics would suggest that what we have found with the three countries we have studied is generally true: namely, that the process of industrialization is associated with very variable patterns of the development of the social division of labour, and even at the level of sectors as well as of occupations and classes (see for example OECD 1970, 1971; Singelman

1978). Moreover, more detailed inquiries have then indicated one major reason why this should be so. This development is, quite typically, determined not only by the working out of a technical and economic logic which may be presumed to have some general applicability, but further by political considerations and by purposive political action which, from one society to another, can be oriented to very different ends (see for example Garnsey 1975; Berger and Piore 1980).

To some extent, then, those sociologists who have envisaged convergence in mobility trends as occurring not at the 'phenotypical' level of absolute rates but rather at the deeper, 'genotypical' level of relative rates have been guided by a sound instinct. That is, they have in effect accepted that considerable diversity may prevail in the structural influences which overwhelmingly shape the movement of absolute rates, and have instead looked for the expression of the functional imperatives of industrial development in the processes of social selection which are crucial to the pattern of fluidity. But here again it must be questioned whether the idea of such imperatives has found any adequate empirical justification or, at all events, what exactly would count as such justification. Thus, even if it may be shown that the achieved rather than the ascribed attributes of individuals have become of steadily greater importance as criteria of selection, our analyses still provide no clear indication, as we have seen, of this trend being reflected in any similarly long-term movement in relative mobility chances. And, we may add, the findings in this respect reported from other inquiries create a picture much the same as that emerging from our own.¹⁴

What is in fact suggested by our results, as presented here and in earlier work, is that a pattern of relative rates may be identifiable which is of a rather stable kind and which one could take as being generic at least for the western capitalist version of modern industrial society. The features of this pattern, and likewise the degree of its stability, one could then seek to understand in terms of the distribution of class advantage and power and the structure of class relations that is characteristic of this form of society. In this case, there would be little reason to envisage any secular tendency in relative rates, and least of all one going in the direction of greater equality. For systems of class stratification, as ones essentially of differential advantage and power, must be regarded as possessing important self-maintaining properties. The general expectation would therefore be for continuing stability in relative rates, and the explanation of any significant shifts which did occur away from the established pattern – thus creating perhaps a distinctive national variation on it – would be looked for at the level of specific historical conjunctures rather than of long-term evolutionary pressures. We have already suggested that our findings on absolute mobility rates might well be taken as supporting Sorokin's thesis of trendless fluctuation. It is also relevant here to recall one of the processes which Sorokin saw as underlying such movement: namely, the

struggle which 'in any society and at any time' goes on 'between the forces of stratification and those of equalisation'. It is the former, Sorokin argues, which operate in a steady and continuous way, while the latter tend rather to be expressed more convulsively and only 'from time to time' (Sorokin 1964: 63).¹⁵

Notes

1. We wish to acknowledge helpful criticism and comments from Robert M. Hauser, Jan M. Hoem, Walter Korpi, Kenneth Macdonald and Joseph E. Schwartz.

2. For further discussion and evidence relating to 'occupational maturity', 'counter-mobility' and patterns of worklife mobility generally, see Goldthorpe, Llewellyn and Payne (1980: chs. 2, 3 and 5 esp.).

3. Because the sum of outflow values from any one origin is 100 for each cohort and outflow from non-manual and manual origins to the farm category is, as mentioned, close to zero for all cohorts, the graph for men intergenerationally stable in the non-manual classes is essentially the obverse of that for mobility from the nonmanual to the manual classes (Figure II). And for the same reason, the graph for those stable in the manual classes is the obverse of that for those mobile from this origin to the non-manual classes (Figure III).

4. The main formula applied is as follows, where y_i is the moving average for year i and p_i is the appropriate outflow value for that year:

$$y_i = 0.03p_{i-7} + 0.04p_{i-6} + 0.05p_{i-5} + 0.06p_{i-4} + 0.07p_{i-3} + 0.09p_{i-2} + 0.10p_{i-1} + 0.12p_i + 0.10p_{i+1} + 0.09p_{i+2} + 0.07p_{i+3} + 0.06p_{i+4} + 0.05p_{i+5} + 0.04p_{i+6} + 0.03p_{i+7}$$

In calculating the averages for the seven youngest yearly cohorts in each sample i.e. for men aged 35–41 – this same formula is used, drawing on the relevant outflow values for men less than 35. However, in the case of the seven oldest cohorts, the formulae applied are slightly changed. They are available from the authors on request.

The formula used is chosen to smooth out random fluctuations due to the small

numbers in the percentage bases, and thereby to catch any major trends. Formulae designed to show up fluctuations are given by Linnemann (1980). To check that our results are not artefacts of the method used, third degree polynomials were also fitted to the same data. The resulting curves essentially coincide with those presented here.

5. As earlier remarked, in such graphs where the vertical axis simply measures outflow rates, convergent lines for nations imply convergence in such rates over time. No confusion should occur with the graphs of Figure I where the vertical axis measures *similarity* in rates between nations and convergence in such rates is thus indicated by ascending lines for successive cohorts.

6. Between 1927 and 1966, the number of agricultural units in Sweden was halved, those with the very smallest acreage being reduced from the most numerous, 120,000 to 16,000, i.e. falling from 28 to 8 per cent of the total. Meanwhile, the medium and large units (50 acres or more) grew in number, thus increasing their share from 8 to 20 per cent of the total number of agricultural units over the period (Sveriges Officiella Statistik 1968: pp. 37, *et seq.*).

7. The idea of such a 'logic' of industrialism is classically stated in Kerr, Dunlop, Harbison and Myers (1960).

8. This approach has been chiefly pioneered by Robert M. Hauser, drawing on the basic statistical work of L.A. Goodman. See, for example, Hauser (1980, 1981).

9. Cf. Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*, ch. 3. Formally, the common and the constant social fluidity models are identical. Specifications are provided in the works cited in this and Hauser (1980, 1981).

10. It is relevant here to note that under the detailed model of the pattern of common fluidity proposed in 'Social Fluidity in Industrial Nations', clear affinities emerge between the relative mobility rates associated with Class III and with Classes I + II, and between those associated with Class IVc and Class VIIb. Thus in collapsing as we do 40 cells of the 7×7 table into 16 of the 5×5 table, we find that 25 of the forty were placed at the same level of 'density' of mobility or immobility as those they were collapsed with, and that only two were more than one level apart.

11. Hope (1981). The 1972 data have also been analysed by Goldthorpe and Clive Payne on a cohort basis but using different cohorts and a different version of the class schema to those of the present paper. Again a constant social fluidity model fits the data well.

12. It should further be observed that when the matrix for the youngest Swedish cohort is omitted, the model in which the other eight matrices are assumed to have the same pattern of interaction fits excellently ($p > 0.50$). The corresponding model with the intermediate English cohort omitted fits fairly well ($p = 0.27$), but the fit is rather bad with any of the other matrices omitted ($p = 0.11$ or less). The χ^2 s produced with the values in different matrices fitted perfectly are not fully independent of each other. This qualification should be remembered, but seems to be of minor importance to the present analysis.

13. In the analysis of the English data by Goldthorpe and Payne referred to in Glass (1954), in which a constant social fluidity model was found to fit well, tests of models representing more specific hypotheses suggested that in certain respects relative mobility chances might be becoming more unequal – for example, the chances of men of working-class origins being found in service-class rather than working-class positions relative to the corresponding chances of men of service-class origins.

14. Thus, for example, in an analysis of mobility data for a series of Norwegian cohorts collected in 1971, Rogoff-Ramsøy found no indication of change in relative rates; and in their US study, using data from inquiries conducted in 1962 and 1973, Featherman and Hauser found evidence of a very slight shift when the mobility data were organized on the basis of five broad social strata but not when they were organised on the basis of a 17-category occupational classification. See Rogoff-Ramsøy (1977: ch. 6) and Featherman and Hauser (1978: ch. 3).

15. It is in this connection of particular interest to note the indication in a recent study of mobility in an Eastern European country that 'transformations of social institutions of a fairly revolutionary form' have been associated with changes in relative rates, largely in the direction of greater fluidity, of a clearly more substantial kind than those that have been generally reported for western societies. See Simkus (1981).

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