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Factors influencing social mobility

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Summary

Introduction and background

This document was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and has been compiled by the Policy Research Institute (PRI), Leeds Metropolitan University. The research examined the factors that are facilitating and inhibiting social mobility in the United Kingdom (UK) in the early years of the twenty-first century. This report presents an initial review of the literature on the factors influencing social mobility.

Policy and social context

There is a long history of research into social mobility, but political interest in the subject intensified during the 1980s and 1990s. As inequality increased, social mobility emerged as an alternative and partially compensating measure of social fairness. The concept also appeared to capture something of the social changes which resulted from changes to the industrial structure of the economy, themselves partially driven by pressures of globalisation. In recent years, concern over the subject has risen once again, as studies, research projects and consideration from within government turns to examine the impact of ten years of the present Labour government. In this context, several studies which suggest that social mobility may have declined in the UK have further strengthened strategic and political concern with the issue.

The concept of social mobility

Social mobility can be thought of in absolute and relative terms. The former refers to processes of adjustment in the income or occupational structure of the economy. The latter, sometimes called social fluidity, is associated with an individual's opportunities for progression within the social hierarchy. Social mobility can also be thought of as intra-generational (chances for social progression within an individual's own life time) and inter-generational (a comparison of achieved social position with that of one's parents).

Further, the study of social mobility can be differentiated into two distinct traditions: a sociological tradition and an economic tradition. The sociological tradition is based on an understanding of the structure of society defined by an occupational hierarchy, while the economic tradition tends to focus on income groups. Both of these approaches have significant merits for the study of social mobility. However, in terms of informing the development of policy responses within the remit of the DWP, an alternative social structure is suggested, based upon the quality of participation in the labour market (Section 3.4).

There is some debate about the importance of social mobility and its relationship with inequality and economic growth. On the one hand, high levels of inequality might be thought to constrain the potential for movement within the social hierarchy, leading to a double-bind of high inequality and low mobility. On the other, high levels of inequality and mobility might be thought to be good bedfellows, suggesting that sufficient incentives are built into the social structure to allow the economy to make the best use of its resources, allocating talented labour to high value jobs. To the extent that it is available, the evidence appears to favour the former argument, with those countries with higher levels of mobility also having lower inequality. There is also some evidence of causal linkages between inequality and low levels of mobility.

Trends in social mobility

Sociologists suggest that the social structure of the population did alter between the 1970s and the 1990s in relation to economic and industrial change as what had previously been described as middle-class occupations expanded and working class occupations contracted. However, the majority of work in the sociological tradition suggests that relative social mobility did not increase during that period despite significant expansions in the state education system. On this point, studies in the economic tradition largely concur and even suggest that levels of relative social mobility may have fallen for those in the lowest income groups. Additionally, international comparisons suggest that the UK compares unfavourably with several other European countries and Canada in terms of social mobility, and while the United States (US) has similar levels of social mobility to the UK, the UK's position relative to the US has declined over recent decades.

Caution needs to be exercised when interpreting these trends. There is a significant time lag in the data, due to reliance on data for people who have achieved a final position in the social hierarchy. It is, therefore, inappropriate to draw firm causal conclusions about the impact of policy trends over the last decade on these longer-term social trends.

Factors influencing social mobility

The review suggests that social mobility is a complex and multi-faceted concept. Exploration of the range of factors influencing social mobility reveals some

important themes, but the complex relationship between these means that it is inappropriate to make firm judgements about the relative importance of one or another of them. In reality, they work in overlapping ways and in different combinations for different individuals. The factors involved are:

- **Social capital** – there is some evidence that traditional working class social capital has declined, which may have weakened its assumed negative effects on social mobility, while other 'negative' forms of social capital have emerged such as cultures of worklessness, anti-social behaviour and drug abuse. A lack of positive role models, peer pressure, poverty of ambition and risk aversion may serve as barriers to social mobility. By contrast middle-class families tend to have access to a wider range of social networks that are more advantageous from the point of view of enabling upward mobility and protecting against downward mobility.

- **Cultural capital** – can also help middle-class families to confer social advantages on their children, increasing their potential to move upwards and protecting them from downwards movement in the social hierarchy.

- **Early years influences** – are seen as key to influencing later life chances. Convincing evidence shows that early experiences such as the quality of the home environment, family structure, pre-school care and relationships with caring adults produce a pattern of development in later life that is hard to reverse even through schooling.

- **Education** – appears to be one of the most important factors influencing social mobility. However, there is considerable evidence that the introduction and expansion of universal education systems in the UK and Western Europe have not led to increasing levels of relative social mobility. This is due to a range of factors including the ability of middle-class families to take advantage of educational opportunities.

- **Employment and labour market experiences** – recent decades have seen the emergence of important labour market trends with implications for social mobility. First, substantial levels of worklessness and long-term economic inactivity have emerged in some areas and/or among specific population groups. Second, research has identified the emergence of a prominent 'low-pay – no-pay' cycle for some groups. There is also evidence that specific groups face particular disadvantages in the labour market and that women who take career breaks often have difficulty re-entering the labour market in the same position and therefore, frequently experience downward social mobility after having children.

- **Health and wellbeing** – ill-health results from social and environmental factors identified with lower socio-economic status, and ill-health and caring responsibilities can lead to declining socio-economic status.

- **Area-based influences** – localised environmental problems appear to combine with socio-economic disadvantage to produce negative area-based influences on potential for social mobility. For example, inequalities in access to private transport combined with poorer quality provision in some important public services in deprived areas may mean that lower socio-economic classes are unable to exercise effective choices over access to these services.

Implications for the Department for Work and Pensions

Trends in social mobility are remarkably resistant to policy interventions. Those in higher social classes appear to have been able to take greater advantage of the opportunities created by policy interventions and more able to use a variety of additional social advantages to maintain their relative position. This may undermine the potential equalising benefits of universal public provision. In combination these factors would seem to suggest that social mobility is influenced by factors beyond the scope of the boundaries usually associated with public policy generally and particularly for the DWP. However, an emphasis on a social hierarchy based on the quality, security and sustainability of employment (see Section 3.4) shows that social mobility can be brought within the scope of DWP's policy remit. People who have experience of unemployment are more likely to find themselves trapped in low quality 'entry' level employment, with limited opportunities to progress. The DWP can have an important role to play in tackling both intra-generational and inter-generational barriers to social mobility through supporting people to progress within the labour market.

1 Introduction

This document has been compiled by the Policy Research Institute (PRI), Leeds Metropolitan University, as part of an exploratory research project – commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – designed to examine the factors that are facilitating and inhibiting social mobility in the United Kingdom (UK) in the early years of the twenty-first century. Recent quantitative studies (notably Blanden *et al.*, 2007) appear to indicate that social mobility may have stalled and that the UK compares unfavourably with many other countries.

This report presents the results of a review of the literature – primarily UK-focused but incorporating key international studies – concentrating on a range of factors that have been identified by researchers, policy-makers, interest groups and others as facilitating or inhibiting social mobility. The aim has been to cover a wide range of issues, some of which have been intensively investigated, others much less so. A series of thorough searches have been undertaken; however, the review should be regarded as extensive but not necessarily comprehensive or systematic. The full search strategy is included in the Appendix.

2   Policy and social context

2.1   Summary

Box 1: Social and policy context – key points

- Global processes of political, social and economic change have impacted on the structure of the United Kingdom (UK) labour market including:

  - the decline in large scale manufacturing employment;

  - increasing demands for skilled labour among some employers;

  - a polarisation in job quality and wages.

- The 1980s saw rapidly increasing social and economic inequalities. While these increases have not continued, on many indicators the prevalence of poverty and inequality remain high in the UK compared both with periods before the 1980s and with other European countries.

- Social and welfare policies under the present Government have focused on combating social exclusion and work as the most effective route out of poverty.

- However, persistent poverty and inequality have led to some suggesting that more needs to be done to combat in-work poverty, including through sustaining and progressing in work.

- In this context there is a renewed political interest in social mobility and concern about research which suggests that social mobility has fallen, though this does not necessarily suggest that this has been the result of recent Government policy (see Section 3.4).

2.2   Introduction

Research concerning the factors promoting, and inhibiting, social mobility in the UK needs to be set within the context of broader debates concerning national and international labour market trends and the social positions experienced by the UK population. This section aims to provide an overview of the social and economic

landscape within which social mobility does, or does not, take place and recent Government policies which might have impacted upon it.

2.3 The social and economic context

2.3.1 Global processes of economic change

It is commonly held that since the mid-1970s, influential global processes have shaped the ways in which national economic and social policy is made in important ways. Over this period, nations have faced increasing pressures of competitiveness which have resulted in processes of increased adjustment to, and engagement with, the global economy. More recently still, the challenge of increasing global competition from emerging economies such as China or India has been cited as providing further impetus for increased social reform and change in the emphasis of public policy toward facilitating increased competitiveness (Blair, 2006; Brown, 2006).

Many authors identify the rise in international competition as qualitatively changing the nature of government and politics from the model of the Welfare State to the Competition State (Cerny, 2000; Cerny and Evans, 2004). The argument runs that where the Welfare State saw the role of the state as being to mediate the effects of the market on individuals and social groups, the competition state is concerned principally to enable enhanced competitiveness through providing its citizens with the tools and resources to cope with the risks of failure. The implications of these changes for global social change have been profound. Consideration of the impact on class structures is introduced in Section 3.4.3.

2.3.2 Structural change and the labour market in the UK

From the mid-1970s onwards the UK has witnessed significant changes in the sectoral structure of the economy. A number of core themes are prominent in these changes, including a shift away from unskilled and semi-skilled and manual employment and a shift from primary and manufacturing industries to service sector employment (Green, 2003). This has led to important shifts in the overall wage structure of the economy, with the differentials between low paid and higher paid work increasing significantly. Goos and Manning (2003) demonstrate, for the British case, that there has been a simultaneous increase in demand for labour in well paid and professional – or 'lovely' – jobs and a less marked increase in demand for low paid and service sector – or 'lousy' – jobs (resulting in lower unemployment), while demand for employment through 'middling' occupations (in skilled manufacturing for instance) has declined.

The re-emergence of very high levels of unemployment during and after the recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s proved particularly problematic as it resulted largely from structural factors which meant that large sections of the population were no longer matched to the types of employment opportunities that were emerging. The rise in economic inactivity, particularly among men, is one indicator of this (DWP, 2006; Beatty and Fothergill, 2004).

Since the early to mid-1990s, however, patterns of demand in the labour market have been substantially affected by a sustained period of economic growth. During this period, the employment rate has risen markedly while unemployment (but not economic inactivity), has fallen correspondingly. For instance, the employment rate now stands in excess of 74 per cent, one of the highest levels among comparable advanced economies and the government has set an ambitious aspiration of an employment rate of 80 per cent by 2010. In this context, the challenge for public policy has shifted noticeably from helping the short-term unemployed back into work to dealing with long-term economic inactivity (Freud, 2007), ensuring that in-work poverty does not hold back social inclusion (Harker, 2006) and that a predominance of low-skilled and low quality employment does not hold back economic competitiveness (Leitch, 2006).

2.3.3 Trends in poverty and inequality

Most research on poverty and inequality suggests that the period from the mid- to late-1970s and through the 1980s witnessed a large increase in inequalities on a variety of measures, particularly in terms of income (Palmer *et al.*, 2006:31-2). Compared internationally, the picture of rising income inequality is not unusual among comparable countries in Europe and North America (Sibieta, 2007).

The last decade has not seen a continuation of the rising inequality seen in the previous decade but neither have there been dramatic falls (e.g. Brewer *et al.* 2006). The UK continues to have a higher proportion of its population in relatively low income categories than most other countries in the European Union. The picture on income inequalities is somewhat more complicated. Over the last decade, the incomes of the poorest tenth of the population have risen the least while the incomes of the richest tenth have risen the most, leading to a widening of inequality between the very richest and very poorest. However, the incomes of the second, third and fourth poorest tenths of the population have risen more quickly than for all other groups other than the richest (Palmer *et al.* 2006: 31-35).

This indicates that at the same time as a growing divide between the very rich and very poor, there has been a period of modest catch up in the rest of the income distribution, which suggests that the policies of in-work redistribution through tax credits work for some individuals and households but may not work so well for others. Two further implications arise from this data: First, inequality and poverty are still high in the UK compared to the period up to the 1980s and relative to many other comparable countries. Second, the growing divide between the very richest and very poorest may indicate a need for greater policy attention to be focused on the very poorest.

2.4 The policy context: public policy since 1997

2.4.1 Background

The policy context is of key importance in understanding the issues that affect social mobility. This section briefly summarises the development of public policy of

relevance to social mobility since 1997, addressing, in particular, Welfare to Work, area based regeneration, public service reform and the current agenda.

Policies to address poverty and to foster equality of opportunity, rather than of outcomes, have been at the heart of the New Labour programme in government (e.g. Blair, 1994; Giddens, 2000). For the most part, the term 'social exclusion' has been preferred as a concept to frame government policy as a reaction to the potential narrowness of conceptions of poverty and inequality (as associated with income alone) and the need to reflect the broader and multiple components of social disadvantage (e.g. see Giddens, 1998:104; 2000:105):

> *'Social exclusion is about more than income poverty. It is a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas face a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown. These problems are linked and mutually reinforcing so that they can create a vicious cycle in people's lives. Social exclusion is thus a consequence of what happens when people do not get a fair deal throughout their lives, and this is often linked to the disadvantage that they face at birth.'*

(Social Exclusion Unit, 2004:7)

While policy initiatives to tackle the multiple components of social exclusion have been numerous, four main themes can be identified: Firstly, Welfare to Work policies have focused on three key issues: promoting work as the most effective route out of poverty (Her Majesty's (HM) Treasury, 2002) and 'making work pay' for those in otherwise low paid work; ensuring that 'poverty traps' do not act as a disincentive to employment; and, more recently, additional emphasis has been given to tackling inactivity and long-term exclusion from the labour market (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), 2006). Area-based regeneration initiatives form a second strand of policy intervention. A third element has been to address child poverty and disadvantage in the early years, through initiatives such as SureStart (HM Treasury, 1998; 1998a; 1998b). Finally, recognising the need to respond to global competition, reform of the compulsory, adult and higher education (HE) system has been promoted to upskill the population (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2001; DfES, 2003). Cutting across all these policy areas has been a drive to reform public services, including introducing and strengthening choice in public services as both a mechanism for people to take responsibility for their own success but also as a means of levering up the quality of public service provision (Blair, 2002; OPSR, 2002; Cabinet Office, 2006; 2007).

2.4.2   Recent policy interest in social mobility

In December 2006 the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions announced a major review of welfare provision. The resulting Freud (2007) report has now been published. The report argues that major changes are needed to attain the government's aspiration of an 80 per cent employment rate. The report emphasises the need to both expand the active labour force by doing more to tackle the

complex and multiple barriers to employment faced by the long-term economically inactive and to upskill the rest of the workforce to cope with global competition.

However, the emphasis in Welfare to Work policy on work as the best route out of poverty has been questioned as a result of persistent levels of income inequality and poverty even among those that are in work (Palmer, *et al.*: 2006: 10-11; Brewer *et al.* 2006) and particularly as a result of missing an interim target in relation to the commitment to end child poverty (DWP, 2006a). For instance, the Harker Review of progress toward achieving the child poverty target noted that while many households were making the transition to having at least one member in work, the prevalence of low pay means that entering work may not be sufficient – in and of itself – as a route out of poverty. As such, Harker recommended the adoption of a 'work first plus' approach where increased emphasis would be given to skills acquisition (Harker, 2006: 36-52).

The Leitch Review of Skills (Leitch, 2006) similarly argued that action to improve the basic skills of job seekers needs, in many cases, to be augmented by a greater emphasis on skills development in work, with the suggestion of a specific objective for employment and skills services of ensuring sustainable employment and progression.

The issue of social mobility has also been raised recently by several politicians. For instance, announcing the review of Welfare policy that would result in the Freud report, Secretary of State John Hutton argued that:

> *'We not only have to help people back into jobs – we have to try and help people progress up the career ladder as well…Helping individuals to acquire the skills, confidence and ambition to progress through the workplace has to be a core ambition for a dynamic welfare system.'*

> (Hutton, 2006)

Secretary of State for Education and Skills Alan Johnson (2006) also raised social mobility as an important issue, arguing:

> *'It is actually getting harder for people to escape poverty and leave the income group, professional banding or social circle of their parents. In fact, it's currently harder to escape the shackles of a poor upbringing in Britain than anywhere else in Europe…inequality and brakes on social mobility are real problems of great concern to all modern social progressives.'*

A strong influence on these statements appears to be a paper by a small group of academics at the London School of Economics (Blanden *et al.*: 2006, see 3.4.2) which compares the social origins and destinations of birth cohorts in 1958 and 1970 and argues that the latter were less mobile than the former (see Chapter 3 for more details).

3 The concept of social mobility

3.1 Summary

Box 2: Conceptual issues – key points

- There are several aspects to the definition of social mobility as a concept.

- Economists tend to measure social mobility in terms of income and sociologists focus primarily on social mobility in terms of occupational status.

- Findings from the sociological tradition of research suggest that:

  - absolute mobility increased for a period as a result of changes in the structure of British society. There is some evidence that this period of change may now be coming to an end;

  - relative social mobility has not increased despite increased educational opportunities;

  - there is some evidence of downward inter-generational mobility of individuals whose parents had been in semi-skilled or skilled manual work;

  - where upward social mobility is present, this tends to be short-range rather than long-range.

- Findings from the economic tradition of research suggest that:

  - social mobility in Britain fell between cohorts born in 1958 and 1970;

  - one explanation for declining social mobility is that children from better off households have been better able to take advantage of improvements in the education system;

- other explanations for declining social mobility include the impact of early unemployment and the development of personality traits such as self-esteem and 'application';

- international comparisons suggest that the United Kingdom (UK) compares unfavourably with several other European countries and Canada in terms of social mobility and while the United States (US) has similar levels of social mobility to the UK, the UK's position, relative to the US, has declined over recent decades.

- Findings from both economic and the sociological research suggest that there has been no increase in relative social mobility in post-war Britain.

- Methodological concerns mean that it is difficult to arrive at firm conclusions as to the direct impact of more recent Government policies on these longer-running trends.

- Research in the sociological tradition relies on occupation-based hierarchies and work in the economic tradition relies on income groups. Both of these have limitations and it may be more appropriate in relation to Department of Work and Pensions' (DWP's) remit to focus instead on a social hierarchy based on the quality, security and sustainability of employment.

- Using this type of social hierarchy there is some evidence that there is limited scope for people in low quality and low paid work to progress in the labour market into better quality sustainable work. There is also evidence in the literature that people who have experience of unemployment are more likely to find themselves trapped in low quality 'entry' level employment, with limited opportunities to progress.

3.2 Introduction

Before addressing the factors that impact on social mobility it is necessary to understand what is meant by the term and to gain insight into the ways in which analysis of social mobility has developed over a period of time.

3.3 A general definition

Social mobility is usually defined as:

> '...the movement or opportunities for movement between different social classes or occupational groups.'

> (Aldridge, 2003: 189)

An 'open' or 'fluid' society is one where individuals are able to move freely, as a result of factors such as aptitude, intelligence, ability and effort, up the social scale, regardless of their social position in childhood (Heath and Payne, 1999). As such, the extent to which social mobility is possible is often used as one proxy measure of societal fairness. As Blanden *et al.* (2005:4) put it:

'The level of intergenerational mobility in society is seen by many as a measure of the extent of equality of economic opportunity or life chances. It captures the extent to which a person's circumstances during childhood are reflected in their success in later life, or, on the flip-side, the extent to which individuals can make it by virtue of their own talents, motivation and luck.'

The importance of the concept of social mobility as a measure of social fairness has increased, being seen as a measure of equality of opportunity in a world where outcomes are not equal. Social mobility, therefore, is closely associated with related concepts such as inequality, social exclusion and inclusion, class and social stratification where mobility refers to movement between different and unequal social groups, or classes and between exclusion and inclusion. As Miller (2005) argues, chances for social mobility are one aspect of the concept of equality of opportunity, which itself is, in turn, one of the four foundational principles of social justice, alongside equal citizenship rights, a guaranteed set of minimum social rights and fair distribution of additional social rights that are outside of citizenship and the absolute social minimum.

Box 3: Definitions of social mobility

Social mobility

Extract from *A Dictionary of Sociology*:

'The movement – usually of individuals but sometimes of whole groups – between different positions within the system of social stratification in any society. It is conventional to distinguish upward and downward mobility (that is, movement up or down a hierarchy of privilege), and intergenerational from intragenerational or career mobility (the former referring to mobility between a family of origin and one's own class or status position, the latter to the mobility experienced during an individual career, such as respondent's first job compared to his or her present job). Other distinctions – most notably that between structural and non-structural mobility – are more contentious.'

'absolute mobility', *A Dictionary of Sociology*. John Scott and Gordon Marshall. Oxford University Press 2005. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Leeds Metropolitan University. 4 May 2007, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t88.e1453>

Intra-generational	**Inter-generational**
The movement of individuals between different social classes during their own lifetime.	The achieved social position of an adult compared with that of their parents.
Absolute	**Relative**
Changes in the structure of society so that the distribution of the population between different social classes changes.	The movement of an individual between different social classes, regardless of changes in the distribution of the population between them.

Mobility between social groups and classes can also be thought of in generational terms. It is, therefore, useful to distinguish at the outset between intra-generational mobility and inter-generational mobility. Intra-generational mobility refers to the movement of individuals between different social classes during their lifetime and, in principle, can be measured between any two points during their life. However, studies of social mobility tend to show that there are strong relationships between the social positions of parents and those that their children subsequently occupy. As such inter-generational social mobility is also an important concern and refers to the difference between the social position of individuals at a particular point in their adult life (destination) with that of their parents (for example, Heath, 1981; Breen and Rottman, 1995).

Finally, it is useful to differentiate between 'absolute' and 'relative' social mobility (Payne and Roberts, 2002:3). Absolute social mobility usually refers to the proportions of individuals from one social group moving to another. Absolute mobility is, thus, a useful means of capturing large-scale social changes such as shifts in the industrial and occupational structure which resulted in the large-scale movement of large parts of the population (especially men) from manual occupations in heavy industry to administrative occupations in the service sectors.

Relative mobility refers to the likelihood of movement between different social classes. Relative mobility is present with or without changes in absolute mobility and might be juxtaposed with it to offer an analysis of the potential for individual mobility between social groups relative to broader social and economic changes affecting those groups. This is the approach taken in several high profile studies of social mobility in the UK (for example, Goldthorpe, 1987).

3.4 Trends in, and debates on, social mobility in the UK

The study of trends in social mobility can be differentiated into two distinct traditions. The first – broadly sociological – tradition tends to compare movement over time between classes defined in terms of occupational groups or categories

(Erikson and Goldthorpe, 2002). The second – broadly economic – tradition tends to measure changes in income over time and between generations (Bowles and Gintis, 2002:5). Both of these approaches have advantages and disadvantages. For instance, changes in the occupational structure of society can help to illuminate patterns of social mobility but may also ignore the changing social and economic status awarded to occupations over time. On the other hand, while income mobility may avoid some problems associated with the changing status of particular occupations, a core advance in public policy over the last decade has been to recognise that income alone is not a sufficient determinant of social inclusion/exclusion. Additionally, data and discussion of trends in social mobility rely on data for cohorts born a long time ago, the most recent being in the 1970s. As such, influences on the social mobility of these groups will have extended across three decades. It is arguable, therefore, that the impact of policy initiatives under the New Labour governments of the last decade will have had relatively little impact on the findings on social mobility published even in the most recent reports. As such, caution needs to be exercised when considering 'evidence' of social mobility and in particular when ascribing causal influence to either prevailing economic and social conditions or changing public policy interventions.

3.4.1   The sociological tradition

Within the sociological tradition there is a long history of research into social mobility in Britain, stretching back to the beginning of the last century, though the first general – nation-wide – study was the 1949 mobility survey (Heath and Payne, 1999:3). The study revealed a picture of rigid class structures and inequality in life chances:

> '…the general picture so far is of a rather stable social structure, and one in which social status has tended to operate within, so to speak, a closed circuit. Social origins have conditioned educational level, and both have conditioned achieved social status. Marriage has also to a considerable extent taken place within the same closed circuit.'

> (Glass, 1954:21, quoted in Heath and Payne, 1999:3)

Despite these findings, the expectation was that reforms to improve equality of opportunity, such as the 1944 Education Act and the establishment of the post-war Welfare State, would make British society more open to social mobility (Heath and Payne, 1999:3).

The issue received renewed interest in the form of the 1972 Nuffield Social Mobility Inquiry (Halsey *et al.*, 1980). Two basic theses emerged from the 1972 study: First, the study identified substantial absolute upward mobility, resulting from industrial change away from manual occupations to administrative, managerial and professional occupations. Second, Goldthorpe (1987) noted continuing correlations between class origins and destinations. This led him to conclude that there was relatively little evidence of enhanced opportunities for relative social mobility despite the introduction of comprehensive secondary education. In other

words, working-class children were much less likely to end up in middle class occupations than were middle-class children (Goldthorpe, 1987).

As a counter to this, Peter Saunders (1995; 2002) concludes that the limited evidence of upward social mobility among working-class children is exactly what should be expected in a meritocratic society where social position is achieved by ability and effort. This is because:

> '...able parents (who in a meritocracy will be recruited into top positions) will be more likely to produce relatively able children (because of the genetic and environmental advantages that they can pass on), and these children will often, therefore, emulate the achievements of their parents.'

> (Saunders, 2002:560-561)

Saunders points out one limitation to his meritocracy model, conceding that middle class parents may be able to protect their children from downward social mobility (1995:36-7; 2002:563-4).

Despite the apparent debate between Saunders on the one hand and Goldthorpe and colleagues on the other, the latter (e.g. Breen and Goldthorpe, 2002) acknowledge that a range of factors, including ability and effort but also environmental and societal factors explain the relationship between social origin in childhood and social destination in adulthood. They, therefore, accept that merit is an important factor determining social mobility but that the patterns in the data suggest that this alone is not sufficient and that other class-based social factors are also important. As such, it is not possible to conclude that Britain is a properly functioning meritocratic society but instead there are a range of social factors which mediate the effects of merit-based factors in determining opportunities for social mobility (Breen and Goldthorpe, 1999:22).

Other recent research in the sociological tradition suggests that the evidence in relation to relative social mobility is complex. For instance, Heath and Payne (1999) note the changing social position of specific occupations within the six class categories they use. Nonetheless, they identify the highest patterns of stability (or lack of mobility) being for higher grade professionals (Class I) at the top and among the working classes at the bottom of their schema. By contrast, men originating from the classes in the middle of the schema, particularly routine white collar occupations, were much less likely to stay in the same class as their fathers. Their findings also show that *'short-range mobility is more common than long-range movement'*.

The picture for women is somewhat different, being marked by much weaker correlations between women's destinations and their father's occupational class origin, tending to reflect gender differences in employment (Heath and Payne 1999:19). It needs to be noted here that the most recent cohort tracked by Heath and Payne entered the labour market in the mid-1960s, so social changes affecting opportunities for women's entry and progression in the labour market since then are not fully captured by their findings. Overall, Heath and Payne's work suggests

that there might have been a marginal increase in the openness of society to social mobility subsequent to the undertaking of the 1972 study.

Research in the sociological tradition using more up to date data from the General Household Survey suggests that the trends in absolute mobility demonstrated by previous studies have levelled off in more recent years. Indeed, Goldthorpe (2004:205) comments that:

> 'If late twentieth century Britain was in fact becoming a more mobile society, as some commentators have claimed then this was only in the sense of downward rather than upward movement within the class structure becoming more frequent.'

The downward absolute mobility referred to here stems largely from the declining prominence of skilled manual workers in the class schema. In terms of relative mobility, Goldthorpe's most recent work suggests that there is very little evidence of sustained changes in social fluidity or societal openness despite increasing investment in education to bring about increased equality of opportunity (2004:222-3).

3.4.2 The economic tradition

Research on social mobility, as opposed to income inequality, has a shorter history in the economic tradition than similar research by sociologists and usually compares the differences in income between parents and their children when they become adults (Corak, 2006:3).

One key strand in the economic tradition of inquiry in relation to social mobility focuses on the way in which families consciously act to ensure that the position of their children is maximised in the future. Such strategies include decision-making in relation to education and upbringing which are then mediated through natural endowments (talent, aptitudes), wider opportunities available in society and luck (Becker and Tomes, 1979:1181-4; Becker and Tomes, 1986:S1-3). Becker and Tomes assume a declining marginal rate of return on investments in education (human capital formation) and inheritability of natural endowments from one's parents. One implication of this is that Government programmes to redistribute resources to poor families may be misguided. This is because they discourage parents' own investment in their children's human capital formation:

> '...progressive taxes and subsidies may well widen inequality in the long-run equilibrium distribution of income essentially because parents are discouraged from investing in their children by the reduction in after-tax rates of return.'

> (Becker and Tomes, 1979:1182)

These conclusions drew much criticism, and subsequent work (e.g. Goldberg, 1989) has tended to question the Becker and Tomes thesis and suggest that there are indeed continuing strong correlations in income inequality between generations, or that social mobility is relatively limited (e.g. Solon, 1992; Zimmerman, 1992).

Research on income mobility in the UK has tended to address the issue within the context of rising inequality in the income distribution from the 1970s onwards (e.g. Dearden *et al.*, 1997:47; Blanden *et al.*, 2002:1; 2004:122-5) and thus, poses the question of mobility as one of fairness. In other words, if inequality between the rich and poor as social groups is widening, is there at least the opportunity for individuals to move from a relatively disadvantaged income status to a position of affluence? Evidence that this is possible might be seen to support a switch in policy emphasis from equality of outcomes to equality of opportunity and individualism, but evidence that it is not the case provides support to the thesis that the UK simply became a more unfair society as a result.

Dearden *et al.* (1997) use longitudinal data from the Natural Child Development Survey (NCDS) to highlight strong links between parental income and the income of their offspring as adults for a cohort of children born in 1958. To the extent that their study allows inter-generational comparison, it concludes that what mobility could be detected was accounted for by upwards movement from the bottom rather than downwards movement.

Blanden *et al.* (2002; 2004) consider inter-generational income mobility in more depth. They focus on children born in 1958 and 1970 and show that disparities in income mobility between children of parents in the top fifth and bottom fifth of the income distribution increased over the period, even though the cohorts were only twelve years apart and reached maturity in the context of a rapidly expanding higher education (HE) system.

In attempting to account for this, they identify the effects of the expansion of higher education and the ability of children, particularly women, from better off households to take advantages of the opportunities that this afforded:

> *'We have found evidence that this fall in mobility can partly be accounted for by the fact that a greater share of the rapid educational upgrading of the British population has been focussed on people with richer parents …This seems to be an unintended consequence of the expansion of the university system that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s and an issue that needs to be borne in mind when considering future educational reforms.'*

(Blanden *et al.* 2002:16)

Blanden, Gregg and MacMillan (2006) also test and demonstrate other powerful influences on the decline in social mobility between the 1958 and 1970 cohorts. These include a strengthening relationship between family income and educational attainment and also the impact of early post-educational experiences such as early experiences of unemployment on later earnings (following Gregg and Tominey, 2005). They also stress the evidence that personality traits (or non-cognitive skills) such as self-esteem and 'application' are important determinants of future mobility.

3.4.3   Definitions of class and social stratification

Research on social mobility in the sociological tradition tends to rely on an underpinning definition of class as shaped by employment relations. Measurement of generational differences in origins and destinations is undertaken via a class schema which is stratified by occupational groups and roles. For instance, the Goldthorpe model, developed for the 1971 Nuffield Study and the later Comparative Analysis of Social Mobility in Industrial Nations (CASMIN) study, propose a seven class model which can be collapsed into familiar distinctions between professional, intermediate and working classes. These models (see Table 3.1) have much to commend them and have become widely accepted. Indeed, the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification is, in part, based upon it (Rose and O'Reilly, 1998).

Table 3.1   Standard Class Schema Models

Goldthorpe/CASMIN schema		National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification		Common descriptive term
I	Professional, administrative and managerial employees, higher grade	1	Higher managerial and professional occupations [ab]	Salariat (or service class)
II	Professional, administrative and managerial employees, lower grade; [b] technicians, higher grade	2	Lower managerial and professional occupations [b]	
IIIa	Routine non-manual employees, higher grade	3	Intermediate occupations	Intermediate white collar
IV	Small employers and self-employed workers	4	Employers in small organisations, own account workers	Independents (or petty bourgeoisie)
V	Supervisors of manual workers; technicians, lower grade	5	Lower supervisory and lower technical occupations	Intermediate blue-collar
VI	Skilled manual workers	6	Semi-routine occupations	Working class
IIIb	Routine non-manual workers, lower grade	7	Routine occupations	
VII	Semi- and unskilled manual workers			

Goldthorpe and McKnight (2004).

However, for the study of social mobility or the type of social mobility which is interesting from the point of view of emerging policy themes in Welfare to Work, there are some limitations to their use. Care needs to be given to avoiding simplistic interpretations of them and in particular, to note the changing status some occupations have over time. It is not always clear that normally associated indicators of occupational status (such as income) are hierarchically distributed through the schema. It also has a clear disadvantage when thinking about social mobility in terms of Welfare to Work in that it largely ignores people who do not necessarily identify with any of the classes, for example, are not in employment or are long-term inactive.

Class distinctions of this kind also fall victim to a variety of critiques which highlight contemporary patterns of globalisation, economic, social and political change to imply that traditional definitions of class are no longer useful in either social science enquiry or policy-related research. Perhaps the most influential of such critiques comes from Anthony Giddens, whose work underpinned much of the thinking behind the present Government's Welfare to Work agenda. He argues that class is declining in importance as an analytical category for a variety of reasons, including the break-up of traditional conceptions of class culture and community homogeneity, especially in relation to manufacturing industries. As a result, he argues that fewer people follow the same life or career path as their parents, creating opportunities for greater choice and potential mobility. He also argues that class has declined as a structuring variable for political representation in the wake of the declining association with a class-based definition of self and group identity, which has been replaced by other aspects of identity (Giddens, 1994:14-15; 90-92; 143; 1998:20-23).

In response to such notions, Goldthorpe (2002) has argued that class remains a strong and useful analytical tool and structural feature of society. He finds continuing explanations in the continuity of origin-destination relationships for class to be thought of as an important explanatory variable. He also draws extensively on evidence from the work of Gallie. Gallie (1998; 2002) demonstrates that experiences of economic and workplace insecurity, poor job satisfaction, unemployment and negative life satisfaction are all closely related and are more pronounced among lower skilled and people in lower occupational class categories.

In addition, and tellingly, Gallie also considers work transitions within the life-cycle. The basic premise here is that employment insecurity and resulting problems may be thought of as tolerable if there are opportunities for upward job-mobility and are thus a 'short-term inconvenience' experienced while passing through 'entry' level work. However, he cites evidence that only very few people in Britain move out of low paid employment and those that do so, do so quickly. As duration in low paid work increases, the chances of leaving it for better paid employment fall. Moreover, he argues that the extent of travel in income terms is often short, so that, for most, earnings increases are of a small scale. Finally, a large proportion of those that leave low paid employment do so to enter unemployment or inactivity. Gallie (2002:116-119) also shows that those with an experience of unemployment, even where they enter work, are likely to enter poor quality, temporary work with fewer opportunities for self control, where they have higher levels of perceived insecurity and where there are fewest chances for self-development and progression. Support for this position comes from studies of the polarisation of work (Goos and Manning 2003).

Robert Cox (1997:58) argues that this has led to the emergence of a three-part social hierarchy at the pinnacle of which are those that are heavily integrated into the world economy. The second level incorporates *'those who serve the global economy in more precarious employment'* and a third category of people living in

countries at the margins of the global economy and who are seriously excluded from the opportunities presented by it. Cammack (2002) uses a similar model but differentiates within the third level to identify a global labour force with greater segmentation, including workers who might compete for work even while outside employment. Based on the evidence of continued relative security for large parts of the UK workforce and of the large numbers of people who experience relatively long-term unemployment or inactivity, it may be argued that Cox's model is too simplistic. However, if modified to take account of this, perhaps drawing on Cammack's additional levels, a useful class schema emerges for thinking about social mobility in the UK from the point of view of Welfare to Work.

This is demonstrated in the five part schema of social stratification illustrated in Figure 3.1. This shows a global managerial class engaged in the senior management of international firms and in senior positions in Government and international organisations. Below this, Tier 2 incorporates people in more secure employment and operating largely in national, regional and local labour markets. Tier 3 incorporates individuals who are in work but are in a less secure position. In comparison with Tier 2 these employees will have less control over their working lives and have fewer opportunities for self-development and progression. Tier 4 includes people who are not in paid employment but are actively seeking and available for work. Within Tier 5 are those who face substantial, and often multiple, barriers to employment.

This model is intended to be useful in shaping thinking around social mobility in relation to the core policy areas for which the DWP has responsibility. From the perspective of Welfare to Work policy, several important aspects of upward social mobility emerge. Over recent years the labour market has worked to ensure that many in the fourth tier have opportunities to move into the third tier. However, the changing policy agenda as set out in the Freud Report, the Welfare Reform Bill and continuing concerns about absolute and in-work poverty, suggest two new major areas of concern: The first is associated with creating opportunities for upward mobility from the bottom tier, particularly for people currently on Incapacity Benefit (IB) or Income Support (IS) on the grounds of ill-health. It may also include people who are currently on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or lone parents but who are unable to effectively seek work as a result of significant barriers to work. The second concern is associated with ensuring that there are opportunities to move from the fourth tier, through the third tier and into relatively secure employment. The Harker Review suggests that this is necessary from a social justice point of view, while the Leitch Report suggests that this may also be necessary from an economic competitiveness perspective.

Figure 3.1   **An alternative class Schema for understanding social mobility in relation to Welfare to Work**

Tier 1

Global managerial class

Tier 2

Relatively secure employees and successful entrepeneurs

Tier 3

Relatively insecure employees and new business entrepeneurs

Tier 4

Short-term unemployed who are actively seeking work

Tier 5

Long-term unemployed and inactive who are not actively seeking work or face significant barriers
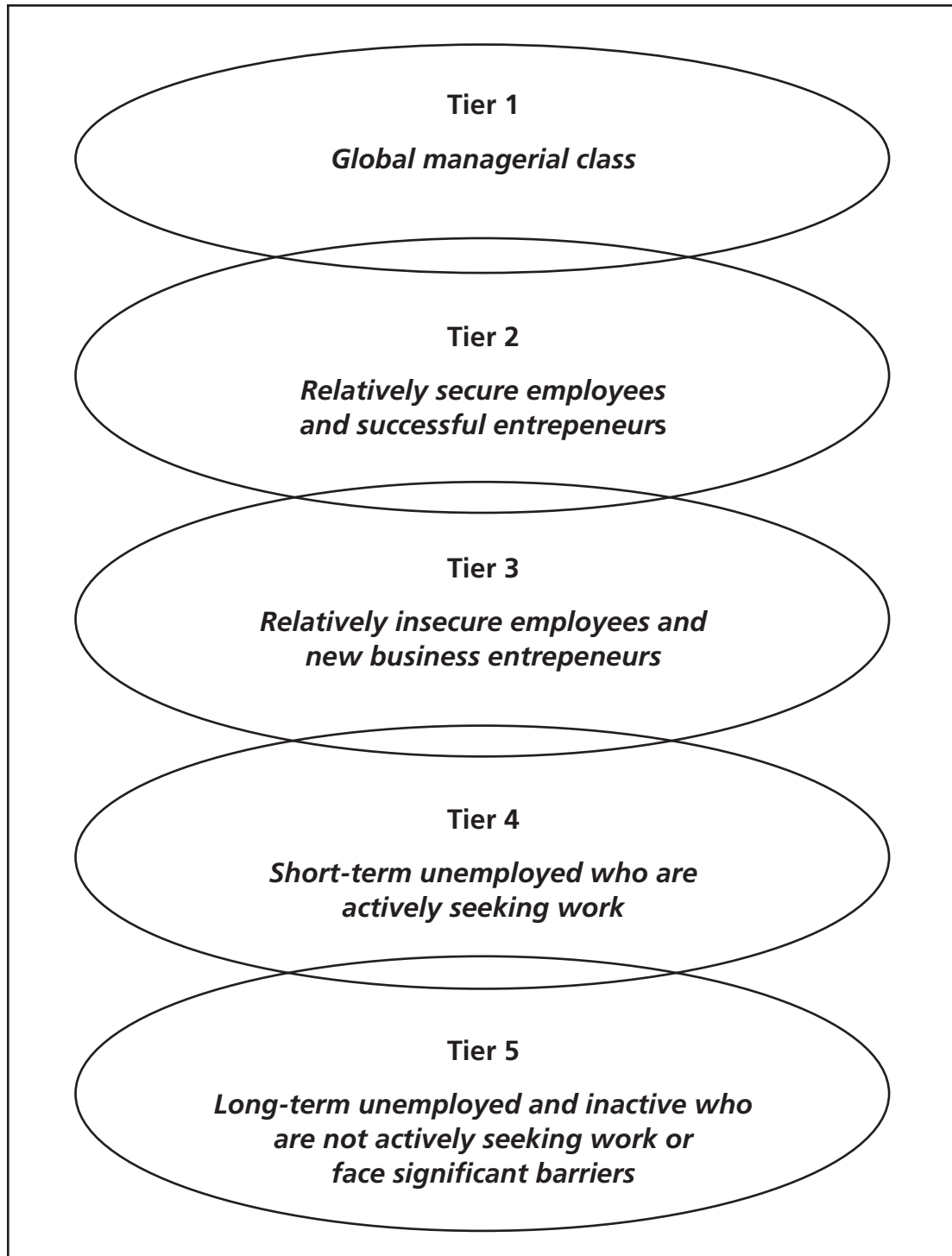
3.5 International comparisons: contextualising the British experience

Both the economic and the sociological literature suggest that social mobility in the UK is limited and that it may have become more limited over time. However, in order to fully understand the significance of this it is necessary to compare these conclusions with findings from other countries.

Noting the difficulties of methodological and data comparison between different countries, Blanden *et al.* (2005) combine their own analysis of intergenerational mobility in Britain, the US, West Germany and Canada with that of others (Bjorklund *et al.*, 2005) for Britain, the US, Sweden, Norway and Finland. Blanden *et al.'s* (2005:7-8) findings suggest that the UK compares unfavourably with several other European countries and Canada in terms of social mobility and while the US has similar levels of social mobility to the UK, the UK's position relative to the US has declined over recent decades.

Corak (2006) concludes that income mobility varies widely between rich countries. His data suggests that among the countries included in the study (Denmark, Norway, Finland, Canada, Sweden, Germany, France, the US and the UK), the UK ranks as having the least social mobility with somewhere between 43 per cent and 55 per cent of fathers' earnings advantage being passed on to their sons. The US ranks only slightly behind the UK. The same data indicates that northern European countries such as Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden as well as Canada all have much higher levels of apparent social mobility.

The CASMIN project considered patterns of social mobility in 12 European countries, the US, Japan and Australia. This produced findings which appeared to support the FJH thesis (Featherman, Jones and Hauser, 1975:340) that all countries *'with a market economy and a nuclear family system demonstrated similar levels of relative social mobility'* (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992).

A recent book substantially repeats and updates the CASMIN analysis (Breen, 2004). The findings suggest that patterns of absolute social mobility have converged across Europe, with all countries facing a shift from manual and particularly unskilled manual labour toward more service sector and administrative occupations. While this pattern is demonstrable in all countries in the survey, it is relatively more complete in Britain and the Netherlands than elsewhere and relatively incomplete in countries such as Ireland, Poland and Hungary where the transition from agriculture has not yet fully played out (Breen, 2004a:7-8; Breen and Luijkx, 2004:42-9).

By contrast, relatively little convergence in the rate of fluidity is identified (Breen, 2004a:9), though across most countries there is a trend toward greater openness. For Britain there is no evidence of significant changes in social mobility and social mobility is relatively low.

3.6   Social mobility, economic growth and competitiveness

There is some debate about the relationship between inequality, economic growth and social mobility. On the one hand, high levels of mobility might suggest that an economy is making the best use of its resources, allocating talented labour to high value jobs. On the other, high levels of inequality might constrain the potential for movement within the social hierarchy:

> *'While it is widely assumed that high levels of social mobility are necessary to secure economic growth…it is also assumed that high levels of inequality will tend to restrict rates of social mobility. Yet inequality in occupational rewards is thought to provide a necessary incentive structure which promotes growth. Thus there is a paradox: both inequality and mobility are good for growth, yet one militates against the other.'*

(Breen, 1997:429)

Underpinning the first assertion is a perception that inequality is necessary to provide the incentives for people to perform specific social roles and to apply their energy and ability to achieving mobility through the social hierarchy, as Davis and Moore (1945:242) argue:

> *'As a functioning mechanism a society must somehow distribute its members in social positions and induce them to perform the duties of these positions. It must thus concern itself with motivation at two different levels: to instil in the proper individuals the desire to fill certain positions, the desire to perform the duties attached to them.'*

However, evidence on the linkages between social inequality and social mobility are more complex. For instance, in both the US and Britain income inequality rose during the 1980s but mobility remained constant in the US while it appears to have fallen in Britain. In addition, Breen (1997:432) finds three categories of criticism of Davis and Moore's position: First, the treatment of inequality in such formulations ignores the role of power and interest which underpins it and which might prevent inequality from providing effective incentives and motivations. Second, the role of power and privilege seems to work particularly between generations so that privileged positions are handed down to some individuals in ways that are unrelated to merit or allocation of talent to appropriate positions. Third, there is often no evidence of proportionality between the social rewards which are associated with inequality and the necessary incentives to induce individuals to either fill positions or perform in them. Breen then goes on to suggest that there has been very little evidence in European countries over time to support the notion that social mobility is linked to economic growth. Indeed, he concludes that in fact high levels of growth can coexist with either high or low social mobility. In addition, he also demonstrates that high levels of inequality might also hamper growth prospects (1997:434-444).

In addition, other commentators note the link between lower levels of inequality and high levels of relative social mobility. For instance, Esping-Anderson (2005) notes that enhanced relative social mobility in Scandinavian countries might be explained, in part, by their narrower wage distributions. While the *'precise mechanisms at play remain pretty murky, the reigning hypothesis is that it must be welfare state induced'* (Esping-Andersen, 2004:117). Delorenzi and Reed (2006) speculate that the 'black box' linkages might include the less protective attitude that middle-class parents adopt as a result of knowing that their offspring do not have as far to fall. It might also be explained by the perceived gap between social classes being comparatively smaller, thereby increasing aspirations, hope and motivation, and the product of greater social mixing resulting in fewer class-cultural divides between social classes, meaning that movement between them is easier to accomplish.

4   Social capital, cultural and social mobility

4.1   Summary

Box 4: Social and cultural capital – key points

- Social capital describes the quality and quantity of social networks and relationships within groups of individuals and families sharing similar identities and between those with different identities.

- From the point of view of social mobility, social capital can be advantageous or disadvantageous.

- Working class communities have traditionally tended to possess social capital that might operate against social mobility such as strong geographically and occupationally-based social networks.

- There is some evidence that traditional working class social capital has declined. While this may weaken the damaging effects on social mobility, other negative forms of social capital have emerged such as cultures of worklessness, anti-social behaviour and criminality and drug abuse.

- A lack of positive social capital, in the form of absence of positive role-models, can also limit capacity for upward social mobility.

- Middle-class families tend to possess different types of social capital which offer linkages to a wider range of more advantageous networks from the point of view of enabling upward mobility and protecting against downward mobility.

- Cultural capital describes the way in which ownership of cultural goods and possession of cultural knowledge and experiences can itself confer social position and can also facilitate or limit access to social groups.

- There is some evidence that middle-class families tend to have beneficial access to cultural capital that working-class families do not and this may impact on the potential for social mobility.

4.2   Introduction

One possible explanation for the opportunities and life chances that are available to some but not to others, is the quality of relationships and social networks that they are engaged in and the cultural experiences that they are open to. Social and cultural capital are concepts that have been used in recent years to describe these relationships and experiences. This chapter aims to explain the potential linkages between social and cultural capital and social mobility.

4.3   Social capital

Social capital is usually used to refer to the network of relationships (in terms of both quantity and quality) that derive from a particular social position or group membership (see Portes, 1998:1-3; Putnam, 2000). Underpinning much of Putnam's work is a distinction between two forms of social capital: bonding and bridging, where the former refers to social networks and links **within** social groups who share similar characteristics and the latter refers to links **between** different social groups.

In relation to social mobility Aldridge (2001, unpaginated) identifies social capital strongly with the *'values and networks of contacts which parents pass onto their children'*. Social capital affects the opportunities for personal and social development experienced by children and young people as well as structuring their expectations. Social norms within the peer group at school affect learning, and the wider community may also lack the type of social capital that supports learning. Pupil expectations and aspirations are also key to whether social mobility is experienced and these are influenced by the people around them (Murphy 2006).

It is important to note that from the point of view of social mobility the impact of strong levels of either bonding or bridging social capital may be complex. For instance, high levels of bonding social capital within traditional working class communities, for instance as situated around a particular industry (such as a large car manufacturer or coal mine) might be seen as constraining social mobility. Equally, the decline of these communities might be argued to open up opportunities for more diverse identities to come to the fore, leading to a decline in pre-destined class-based 'life-time experience' in the way argued by Giddens (1994, see Section 3.4.3).

Evidence of how the 'wrong kinds' of social capital can limit the upward mobility of children and young people is present in the literature. For instance, a dearth of positive role models, poverty of ambition and risk aversion may serve as barriers to social mobility. For instance, Murphy identifies a lack of contact with people who have experienced higher education as a powerful factor affecting educational decision-making:

'Many people from low socio-economic groups do not think higher education is for them and are less confident about their ability to succeed; many do not know anyone who has been through higher education.'

(Murphy 2006: 29)

Peer pressure can negatively affect mobility, for example research shows that academically able children at a comprehensive were worried about other pupils thinking they were too clever (Power *et al.* 1998). Also, a child brought up in a neighbourhood and community with a high proportion of Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants *'is more likely to be influenced by a culture of welfare dependency and is more likely to become an IB claimant'* (Murphy 2006:44). It is this culture of worklessness that has been noted as a barrier to the success of many Welfare to Work initiatives (Dewson *et al.*, 2007:39).

Webster *et al.* (2004) found that few of the socially excluded young people studied had established social networks beyond their immediate circle, which restricted the wider support and opportunities available to them. In the same way, research into successful techniques used by providers of Welfare to Work services to jobless young people also stresses breaking with cultures of worklessness, including separating individuals from negative peer group influences (Policy Research Institute, 2006:55). Similarly, research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) (2004) found that substantial positive change was reported by young people in desisting from offending and heroin use and that the support of family members and partners was key to leaving behind earlier social networks that encouraged these behaviours.

On the other hand, high levels of bonding social capital among middle class communities, and within the 'middle class' as a whole, might underpin and help to explain the apparent ability of middle class parents to protect their less able children from downward social mobility, as identified by Saunders (1995:36-7; 2002:563-4), Lucas (2001) and others (see Section 6). For example, one study found that 56 per cent of children whose parents have a professional career wish to have a professional career, compared to 13 per cent of those whose parents are partly skilled (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit 2003). There is a further theme of importance concerning social mobility and social capital. Discussions in the literature support the current political emphasis upon a link between inadequate parenting and social problems, and the *'determined aim to tackle the social problems of disadvantage by inculcating middle-class values at the level of the family'* (Gillies 2005: 838).

Perri 6 (1997) found that middle class people had much more diverse social networks than working class people, with extensive weak ties with, for instance, former colleagues and acquaintances, which can be helpful to middle-class children. Margo *et al.* (2006) indicate growing inequalities in the distribution of social capital: a rise in income among richer parents has enabled them to help their children's personal and social development (the average parent spends over £15,000 on this by the time their child is 21). Better-off children are considerably

more likely to attend organised or educational activities, which research shows are associated with increased personal and social development, while poorer children are more likely to 'hang out' with friends or watch TV – activities which are linked with poorer personal and social development (Margo *et al.* 2006).

Social capital also supports and inhibits social mobility amongst adults. There is a long history of research into 'assortative mating' (the pairing of individuals with similar social and/or educational characteristics in reproductive relationships) which suggests that this might be one mechanism by which inter-generational mobility is constrained and social stratification maintained (Mare, 2000). The links between assortative mating and intergenerational inequality are both genetic and social, with genetic inheritance and material and social factors being more likely to pass from one generation to the next (Ermisch and Francesconi, 2002). Empirical investigations of this, mainly in the US, have found some evidence of correlation not just between the income and social status of parents and sons but between sons and fathers-in law and parents-in law (Lam and Schoeni, 1994; Blanden, 2005; Ermisch, Francesconi and Sidler, 2006).

Ermisch and Francesconi (2002) review the research which indicates that assortative mating, based on spouse's traits, plays an important role in social mobility. Around 40 per cent of men and women marry a partner of the same educational status – this has the effect of magnifying disparities. Marriage has been one of the major means by which both social mobility and stratification takes place, historically and cross-culturally.

Ermisch and Francesconi (2002) develop a model of behaviour based on utility-maximising behaviour by both parents and children.

> *'The evidence supports the idea that richer parents are likely to have a larger and more valuable stock of both social capital and intellectual capital to pass on to their children.'*

> (Ermish and Francesconi 2002:i)

An aspect of social capital which acts as a barrier to mobility is the way in which certain groups 'hoard opportunities' for example, by constructing barriers to job entry, establishing excluding factors to membership of organisations, or using strategies to give children access to a good education (see Tilly 1998).

Social capital is also important at a community level, and the voluntary and community sector can play an important role in mobilising people and also in developing capacity and social capital, which may impact on individual mobility – see, for example, Mayer (2003). Community involvement in local governance can build capacity and lead to improved levels of crime reduction, local social capital and general liveability (Murphy 2006:46).

4.4 Cultural capital

Pierre Bourdieu pioneered the concept of cultural capital, which consists of familiarity with particular types of culture or activities, which can act as a powerful barrier to – or facilitator of – social mobility. Cultural capital is used to describe cultural goods, knowledge and experience which confer power or status in the social hierarchy. Here the relationship to social mobility is that cultural knowledge, goods and experiences can help to bridge access to social groups and ownership of it can bring power and social advantage. Cultural knowledge and familiarity may, thus, act as a 'hidden' barrier to social progress for those that do not possess it or for those that are associated with the 'wrong' forms of cultural capital.

Key aspects include the ways in which cultural and economic capital are traded, and the tensions between different groups of the elite – those whose power is mostly based on economic capital and those whose power mostly rests on cultural capital (see Brantlinger 2001). Vermeulan (2000) suggests that cultural explanations of social mobility are contentious – if the locus of social mobility is seen as culture, non-mobile groups can be blamed. Culture is defined here as a social heritage handed down over generations, so is difficult to separate from notions of social capital.

The literature discusses religious faith as one form of cultural capital. Findings from a study using data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Longitudinal Study (JRF 2005, full version by Platt 2005a) found that religious differences were linked with class status; Jews and Hindus were the most likely to be upwardly socially mobile, followed by Christians, then Muslims and Sikhs. This was not just due to ethnicity, as differences were found within the Indian population across the faiths. Other publications by Platt (2005b, 2006) discuss literature relating to 'ethnic group effects' and the 'ethnic penalty', which can include discrimination and networks or possession of particular skills, and is not necessarily linked with the practices, characteristics and behaviours associated with particular ethnic groups.

5 Families, aspirations and the early years

5.1 Summary

Box 5: Family-based influences – key points

- Early years influences are seen as key to influencing later life chances, with convincing evidence that early experiences set in train a pattern of development that is hard to reverse even through schooling.

- Various studies have identified a range of possible causal explanations for this, including:
  - innate/inherited characteristics;
  - home environment, including loving/caring and supporting care givers, access to educational toys and stimuli, parental time and stress levels, nutrition and family structure;
  - pre-school interventions such as childcare and education.

- However, it is difficult to attribute greater causal significance to one rather than another as they act in different combinations for different people and in different circumstances.

- There is evidence that the success of Scandinavian models of pre-school care is related to wider social trends such as greater socio-economic equality and the relative similarity of experiences between children of different socio-economic backgrounds.

5.2 Introduction

There is a great deal of consensus in the literature that early years experiences are of fundamental importance in shaping later opportunities. Much of the literature focuses on how early life chances set in train a process of cumulative experiences

and factors which potentially explain social mobility and immobility. This chapter reviews the early years influences on social mobility, with a particular emphasis on the role of families in shaping aspirations.

5.3   The importance of the early years

The early years are seen in the academic and policy-related literature as being key to later social mobility (Reed and Robinson, 2005:285-6). The literature reveals a general consensus regarding the importance of family and education to the capacity of people to be upwardly socially mobile. For example, findings from a study for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF 2005) found that class origins were key to children's occupational outcome but also that education, having economic assets in the home, and having a highly qualified mother were also very important. Considerable inequality is already apparent by the time children reach school. This clearly relates to factors such as social capital (see Chapter 4).

Studies such as Waldfogel (2004) suggest that early years developmental factors can be broken down into the following three categories: child endowment, parents/home environment and pre-school care/education, though it is difficult to attribute specific causal influence to each of these. Factors affecting child development include parental leave, income, social inheritance (see Delorenzi 2005), maternal depression (see Murphy 2006) breastfeeding and the duration of this (Paine *et al.* 1999) as well as the transmission of values between parents and their children which shape aspirations in later life (Miller, 2005:15).

Parental education is an important factor. Lochrie (2004) discusses the connections between child poverty, low educational attainment, family dysfunction and social exclusion in the United Kingdom (UK), and how educational opportunities for the whole family can transmit the motivation to succeed to children. Gutman and Feinstein (2007) show that parenting behaviour and socio-economic class are related but in complex ways. This study did show, though, that good levels of maternal education had positive benefits on child development and that where maternal education was lacking, parental behaviour became progressively more important as a determinant of child development. A range of immediate negative effects are associated with poverty, including infant mortality (HMT 2002, ONS 2001).

Cultural and social factors appear to be key factors affecting childhood development and social mobility. In a cross-country comparison, Esping-Andersen concludes that the post-war Welfare State assumption that comprehensive education could mediate the social origin-destination relationship was flawed because *'the race is already half-way run even before children begin school'* (Esping-Andersen, 2004:133). It is the social and cultural capital that parents are able to pass onto their children that might explain a lack of change in social mobility in many European and North American countries during the post-war period, despite a comprehensive schooling system. The study concludes:

> *'The key lies, most probably, buried in the far greater cognitive equalisation that affects Scandinavian children precisely because virtually all mothers work. In the Nordic countries this implies that practically all children participate in high-quality day care and pre-school institutions.'*

(Esping-Andersen, 2004:131)

The UK Government has attempted to address early years disadvantage through the SureStart programme which provides universally accessible services to pregnant women and children under school age in targeted areas, selected for their deprivation. The evaluation of the initiative shows that the programme has thus far had only marginal impacts on families and children. The programme appears to be taken up most effectively by families living in the SureStart areas but who are not the most deprived in those areas, though it has to be acknowledged that the programme is only in the very early stages of delivery (National Evaluation of SureStart, 2005). However, neither of these findings necessarily contradict Esping-Andersen's hypothesis. The early stage of development of SureStart and the very different social and economic factors which surround its implementation as well as the use of near-universal childcare in the Scandinavian examples that he cites could be thought of as factors which might limit the comparative success of SureStart.

5.4   Family structures

Families are seen by some authors as being the most powerful factor in determining a child's life chances (see Murphy 2006), especially during the early years – before the age of six:

> *'A child's cognitive and behavioural development benefits significantly from parents who create a stable and happy environment and who are very responsive and attentive.'*

(Murphy 2006: 25)

Family structures have changed over the last 30-40 years, with increases in step- and lone parent families which have compounded the gap between household incomes. There has also been an increase in two-earner households and because partners are likely to come from the same income bracket, wealthier couples see disproportionate rises in household income (see above) (Murphy, 2006).

Changes in family structure (including more parents working and rising rates of divorce) have negatively affected the ability of families to socialise young people. Research indicates that children from 'intact (sic), two-parent families' tend to do better on a range of outcomes (Margo *et al.*, 2006). Data from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2006:49) shows that nearly 70 per cent of pupils living with both their parents achieve five good GCSEs (A-C grade), whereas this falls to around 55 per cent for pupils from homes with one parent and another guardian and around 45 per cent for children living with just one parent.

However, care needs to be taken when interpreting the impact of family structures on educational outcomes. For instance, family structure is cross-cut by class; women from working class backgrounds are more likely to become lone mothers than women from middle class backgrounds, and the experience of lone motherhood is very different for women from working class backgrounds compared with other women (Rowlingson and McKay, 2005). Poorer educational performance on the part of the offspring of lone parents can be explained to a large extent by socio-economic disadvantage, especially a lack of economic resources (Weitoft *et al.*, 2004). Margo *et al.* (2006) note that trends towards non-traditional family structures are unlikely to reverse and there is a danger of moral prescriptiveness associated with attempts to promote marriage. Children growing up in non-traditional family forms can succeed if they experience warmth, stability, and consistent parenting.

5.5   Innate characteristics and pre-school care

The issue of whether intelligence is innate or related to upbringing remains contentious. It is clearly one of pertinence to discussions regarding social mobility, as there is an association between social mobility and ability. The literature varies widely concerning the extent to which intelligence is seen as inherited (either through genetics or socialisation or both), with estimates ranging from zero per cent to 80 per cent (Aldridge 2001).

There is evidence to suggest that the relationship between innate ability and social mobility is complex and can be interpreted in a number of ways. For instance, Savage and Egerton (1997) discuss the results of studies which demonstrate that children who score higher in ability tests are more socially upwardly mobile. This can be interpreted in different ways – either as an indication that meritocracy is working or that there is more space in white and middle class employment, so that there are insufficient middle-class children to fill jobs, so that there is not necessarily a correlation between ability and mobility. The research also suggests that the high ability sons of unskilled workers are more likely to stay in working class positions. Furthermore, the sons of managerial and professional fathers have a low chance of moving into the working class even if they score low on ability tests. Also, around 30 per cent of 'low ability' sons of working class fathers move into the service class, further indicating that the link between ability and mobility is not clear cut.

Feinstein (2003) compared the progress in IQ tests of four cohorts of children from differing class backgrounds. As the cohorts progress, the high social class cohorts converged to a relatively high IQ score at 120 months, while the two low social class cohorts fell below the high class ones.

Regardless of the extent to which intelligence is innate or constructed, research suggests that most cognitive and behavioural patterns are established by the time children reach school and are difficult to change by that point. The socio-economic gap widens once children enter school (Murphy 2006).

There is an association between socio-economic position and early parenting. Sensitivity and responsiveness to children is shown by the research evidence to be crucial to development (Waldfogel, 2004). The good self-esteem and confidence that are promoted by positive interactions – and that are associated with better labour market outcomes in later life – are much more likely amongst better off parents because poverty leads to stress, which may affect parenting. Mental health problems are more prevalent amongst lower socio-economic groupings and maternal depression is very damaging to children's development. Also, parents from higher social classes are more likely to provide a stimulating environment for their children (see above) (Murphy 2006). This evidence then tends to support Esping-Andersen's conclusion that more equalised early years' experiences may then shape the success of equalising interventions later in the life cycle, such as comprehensive education. Parenting classes could in theory help equalise early years' experiences.

High quality preschool programmes could, according to one study, reduce the socio-economic gap by up to 52 per cent (see Murphy 2006). Research by Sylva *et al.* (2004) shows that some of the gains made by improvements in pre-school care are still visible at the end of Key Stage 1 (age seven).

5.6 Asset accumulation and transfer

There is a small but rapidly increasing literature on the effects of assets accumulated within families and then transferred between generations. The straightforward thesis is that home ownership and the transfer of housing assets between generations can become an important source of inter-generational inequality. A more sophisicated argument suggests that asset ownership is itself a source of other positive benefits such as self-esteem, confidence and positive savings and labour market behaviour and can even result in beneficial health outcomes (Brynner and Paxton, 2001). Indeed, the combination of these arguments is what lies behind new interest in asset-based welfare, such as through the new Child Trust Fund (White, 2003). However, these assertions have been questioned by more recent research. For instance, Lyndhurst (2006), questions the evidence on housing ownership and social mobility as a direct result of the 'asset effect'. Moreover, research for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (McKay and Kempson, 2003) has suggested that the link between the 'asset effect' and desirable health and behavioural outcomes was not as pronounced as had previously been suspected.

6 Education and social mobility

6.1 Summary

Box 6: Education and training – key points

- There continues to be substantial evidence that education is one of the most important variables influencing relative social mobility.

- However, evidence on trends in social mobility (see Section 3.4) suggests that the introduction and expansion of universal education systems in the United Kingdom (UK) and in Western Europe have not led to increasing levels of relative social mobility.

- There are a number of factors which might help to explain why this has not occurred, including:

  – middle-class families have been better able to take advantage of increasing educational opportunities;

  – working-class children and families' decision making in relation to participation in post-compulsory education are affected by a range of factors such as risk aversion, which make them more conservative in the choices that they make;

  – even where working-class young people participate in post-compulsory and especially higher education (HE), there is evidence that they choose less prestigious institutions and subjects;

  – parental involvement in schooling is thought to be key and there is evidence to suggest that this is more pronounced in middle-class rather than working-class families.

Continued

- Despite these limiting factors, educational attainment continues to be a strong predictor of social mobility. As such, recent trends in educational attainment can be seen as a proxy measure for the impact of more recent public policy interventions. These measures are complex and demonstrate mixed trends but overall they do not indicate that there has been any major positive shift in relative social mobility over the last decade.

6.2   Introduction

There is a great deal of consensus in the literature that education is an important mediating factor in the relationship between social origins and destinations. However, there are also important factors which limit the scope of education alone to address inequalities and a lack of chances for upward social mobility from the working class. This chapter aims to summarise the linkages between education and social mobility as well as those factors which might limit its impact, covering crucial issues of educational choice and decision making.

6.3   The 'mediating' role of education in social mobility

The establishment of the Welfare State across Western Europe and North America was based, at least to some extent, on an assumption that education would mediate the origin-destination link, leading to greater social mobility. This thesis continues to garner support in policy making circles (e.g. Miliband, 2003).

There continues to be substantial evidence that education is one of the most important variables influencing relative social mobility. For instance, Blanden *et al.* (2005; 2006; 2007) show that there are close correlations between educational attainment and income mobility. Delorenzi *et al.* (2005) point out that the link between class and educational attainment in the UK is one of the strongest in Europe. Recent research by Price Waterhouse Coopers on the financial rewards of higher education estimates a lifetime earnings' premium of around £160,000 for a degree holder over an individual with two or more A-Levels (Universities UK, 2007).

In view of widespread assumptions about the potential mediating role of education and assertions about the links between educational attainment, income and life chances, how then can we account for the equally persuasive evidence that the expansion of education in the UK and across Western Europe appears not to have had the expected impact of radically altering inter-generational social mobility? The discussion, therefore, now turns to the factors which might limit the mediating role played by education.

6.4   Factors limiting the impact of education on social mobility

6.4.1   Social class, educational participation and attainment

While educational attainment may be strongly linked to income levels and social class of destination, research demonstrates that educational attainment itself is strongly linked to social class origins. Blanden *et al.* (2005) show that the link between parental income and attainment strengthened between people born in 1958 and those born in 1970. Machin (2004) argues that while education can act as a 'transmission mechanism' to help individuals to achieve some degree of social mobility, increased access to education has not necessarily increased the overall level of social mobility in the UK.

While increasing educational participation and attainment has accompanied the increasing levels of absolute social mobility observed in the UK post-World War II, a Scottish study concluded that while *'education has facilitated upward mobility (it) has not increased social fluidity'* (Iannelli and Paterson, 2005b: 3).

The question, therefore, arises as to why the expansion of state education to all appears not to have resulted in a narrowing of educational attainment. Blanden *et al.* (2005) and Machin (2004) agree that at least part of the explanation is provided by the role of post-compulsory education. They show comprehensively that it is middle-class families that have been most able to benefit from the expansion in opportunities for post-compulsory education.

Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) show that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are rationally more conservative over educational decision-making such as participation in higher education, as a result of lower aspirations and enhanced perceptions of risk associated with failure, an issue addressed by the AimHigher campaign, for example. Esping-Andersen (2004:134,fn3) shows that participation might also be lower as a result of an equally rational decision on the part of poorer parents out of a desire to encourage financial independence among their offspring at an earlier point than higher education participation might allow.

A review article by Geoff Whitty (2001) looked at the issue of 'working-class failure' within the education system, again suggesting that different social groups pursue different strategies in relation to education that have the impact of restricting the educational and occupational progression of children from working-class backgrounds, including those of high academic ability.

A number of studies have considered in detail the role of social class and disadvantage in the decision of lower social class groups to enter HE. In a UK context, a comprehensive study by the Institute for Employment Studies (Connor *et al.*, 2001) identified a number of key factors, including the finding that the main motivating factor encouraging potential students from lower social class

backgrounds to enter HE is a belief that a higher qualification will bring improved job and career prospects and also improved earnings and job security. Factors discouraging people from lower class backgrounds from entering HE tend to revolve around employment and financial issues, including the cost of studying and the desire to earn money at an early stage.

Similar issues are highlighted by Forsyth and Furlong (2003) in their study of young people from four areas in Scotland. The study found a positive association between social class and enrolment in higher levels of education and qualitative work with young people suggests that *'… the barriers to be surmounted were greatest for the most talented, most disadvantaged young people'* (2003: 219).

This theme is taken up in a United States (US) context by Haveman and Smeeding (2006). Reviewing a number of studies, the authors identify strong social class factors impacting on both the decision to attend college and the type of college attended, leading them to conclude that:

> *'The US system of higher education reinforces generational patterns of income inequality and is far less oriented toward social mobility than it should be.'*

(2006: 143)

Egerton (2001) focuses on the position of mature students in the UK, suggesting that increases in the rate of take-up of HE as mature students among people from working-class origins has been faster than that among people of middle-class origin, although there are some indications that working-class mature students are more likely to have studied at less 'prestigious' institutions than middle-class mature graduates.

6.4.2   Social class and choice of educational institution

There is evidence that it is not just the decision to stay on in post-compulsory education, but also the choice of which institution to attend is influenced by an individual's social class background. Recent policy developments in the UK have highlighted the idea that giving parents an element of choice in terms of compulsory schooling may help to enable bright young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to obtain the quality of education that tends to be more common for people from middle class backgrounds (Murphy, 2006; Kelly, 2005, quoted in Reay, 2006) or that the result of choice may lead to increasing competition between schools and other education institutions, thereby increasing the quality of provision for all.

Reay (2004, 2006) explored, in some detail, the idea that social class of origin influences educational participation and attainment through the conscious choices of different groups of parents. Her studies tracked the experiences of schools, parents and students in different areas of London and document the range of strategies pursued by middle class parents in order to ensure that their offspring get what they see as the best possible educational opportunities. These

strategies include 'choice by mortgage' and manipulating residence requirements. Reay also points to an apparent polarisation of UK universities, with middle-class children being more likely than those from working class backgrounds to enter 'elite' institutions.

These processes have been labelled Effectively Maintained Inequality (EMI) by Lucas (2001) in his analysis of the High School and Beyond (HS&B) study in the United States. The core of the argument is that:

> *'Once (a) level of schooling becomes nearly universal…the socio-economically advantaged seek out whatever qualitative differences there are **at that level** and use their advantages to secure quantitatively similar but qualitatively better education.'*

(2001: 1652, emphasis in original)

The issue of choice of educational institution links to the wider advantages that middle-class families are able to pass on to their children in terms of social and cultural capital (see Chapter 5). There is evidence that schooling in the UK may reinforce this as schools continue to be highly segregated by locality, class and wealth levels, despite evidence which suggest that the majority of pupils do exercise some choice over their secondary school (Burgess *et al.* 2004). Research suggests that the middle classes currently 'monopolise' the best schools and poorer children are more likely to attend less successful schools, with the major explanation for this being school location (Burgess and Briggs, 2006). Moreover, schools in deprived areas score lower on league tables as they are likely to have more deprived children and to have high turnovers of staff and pupils. Work by Gibbons and Silva (2006) explores the apparently better results of faith schools and suggest that this is almost totally the result of their intake rather than the quality of their educational provision.

6.4.3   Social class and subject choice

There is some evidence (Hansen, 2001; van der Werfhorst, 2002) that social class of origin influences individuals' choice of subject in a way which may have an impact on their employment prospects and thus, their social mobility. In particular, there is some evidence that children of 'service class' parents are more likely than those of working-class parents to study 'higher status' subjects such as medicine and law, even when 'ability' factors are taken into account.

Using data from the 1958 British Birth Cohort, van der Werfhorst, Sullivan and Cheung (2003) tested a number of propositions about the relationship between class background and subject choice. In brief, the argument is that children of the 'economic elite' are likely to choose subjects related to commercial and financial skills. Those from backgrounds with high levels of cultural resources are likely to focus on 'cultural' fields of study whereas children of working-class origin *'…are likely to select technical subjects because of the proximity to the parents' manual job experiences and because these fields lead to secure labour market prospects'* (2003: 45).

6.4.4 Parental involvement in schooling

There is significant evidence that parental involvement in schooling is the most important single factor affecting educational outcomes. In one study, parental involvement was found to be more than four times as important in influencing performance of young people aged 16 than socio-economic class (Feinstein and Symons 2002; Murphy, 2006).

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) summarise a variety of (mainly US) studies which not only demonstrate the link between parental involvement and pupil attainment but also that parental involvement is strongly correlated with socio-economic class. The authors characterise these types of involvement as including the provision of a secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, contact with schools to share information, participation in school events, participation in the work of the school and participation in school governance. The authors conclude that:

> '…the achievements of working class pupils could be significantly enhanced if we systematically apply all that is known about parental involvement.'

(Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003: 6)

6.4.5 Wider societal influences on education and social mobility

There is also some evidence that this social segregation effect may be less present in more mobile and egalitarian societies, such as in Scandinavia. As noted in Chapter 5, research suggests that class-mixing in educational institutions may help to open up working-class children to wider social and cultural capital influences. The benefits of these sorts of social and cultural capital linkages, even where the immediate familial context is less advantageous, have been demonstrated in the US through research on neighbourhood effects (Brooks-Gunn *et al.*, 1993).

Gillborn and Mirza (2000) provide a synthesis of research evidence concerning race, class, gender and educational inequality. Findings support the notion of a 'gender gap' in GCSE results – a smaller gap than that associated with class or ethnic differences, though this has narrowed marginally in recent years. Research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF 2005) indicates that education has played a key role in the upward mobility experienced by some minority ethnic children/younger people, but that Pakistanis were less likely to have high class outcomes even when taking backgrounds and educational level into account (see also Platt, 2006). Another study found that Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils tend to do less well at school than their White counterparts, whilst Indian and Chinese pupils are likely to do better than those of other ethnicities. There are concerns about an increase in disparity of achievement – there is greater inequality in attainment between ethnic groups after the completion of school than on entry (Battacharyya *et al.* 2003). Recent Government policy, including SureStart, has addressed the coordination of early intervention services (see also Ofsted 2006).

6.5 Relationship between social mobility and education

An international review of research on educational attainment and social mobility by Breen and Jonsson (2005) supports many of the findings reported in this section. The authors identify a mixed pattern, with some countries (e.g. Sweden and Germany) exhibiting a declining relationship between class and education attainment and others (including England) showing little change over time. It is also clear that social class is more strongly associated with educational attainment at younger ages, but that class effects persist into higher education. In most countries, education does play a 'mediating' role between class of origin and class of destination but many studies continue to find 'origin effects' that, to some extent, counteract the influence of education on social mobility. The study highlights the continued potential role of higher education in promoting absolute and relative social mobility, in the context of issues raised in this section regarding the impact of social class background on school choice, school level attainment, the decision to enter higher education, choice of institution attended and subjects studied.

7 Employment and labour market experiences

7.1 Summary

Box 7: Labour market factors – key points

- Recent decades have seen the emergence of substantial levels of worklessness, often concentrated in specific geographical communities or subsections of the population facing structural barriers to employment.

- At the same time, the polarisation of work has led to the emergence of a prominent 'low-pay/no-pay' cycle for some groups in the labour market.

- Despite evidence of the polarisation of the quality of employment, there is also evidence of the spread of job insecurity to wider sections of the employed labour force.

- Women who take career breaks to have and/or care for children often have difficulty re-entering the labour market in the same position and, therefore, frequently experience downward social mobility after having children.

7.2 Introduction

Success in the labour market is a key determinant and measure of social mobility. Recent decades have seen the emergence of some key trends such as the emergence of worklessness and long-term exclusion from the labour market, limiting the chances for upwards mobility. At the same time, there is evidence of an increasingly polarised labour market and an increasing proportion of the labour force experiencing higher levels of insecurity.

7.3   The labour market and social mobility

It has already been noted that social mobility in the UK has stalled and may even have declined over recent decades. There is also evidence of the persistence of low pay, and growing evidence of a damaging 'low-pay/no-pay' cycle for many low-paid employees (McKnight, 2000; Dornan *et al.*, 2004). Research shows that while there has been success in recent years in raising the employment rate, there is an increasing concentration of unemployment within groups who repeatedly cycle between unemployment and low paid temporary work as a result of a combination of the type of work that they are able to access and the barriers that they face in progression to more stable employment (Carpenter, 2006). Indeed, lower-skilled workers concentrated in jobs with temporary contracts and short job tenures often face constant uncertainty in relation to job characteristics, rewards and duration. Whereas the rising job insecurity that penetrated into many professional occupations during the 1990s appears to have declined to some extent more recently, for many lower-skilled workers job insecurity remains a fact of working life and continues to have deleterious impacts on both individuals and households (Green, 2003).

However, it has been argued that a tangible 'democratisation' of job insecurity has occurred that now sees an increasing number of 'knowledge workers' feeling concerned for their own future and also that of their children. There are now few guarantees that children from the middle and professional classes will maintain, let alone surpass, the social position of their parents (Brown, 2003).

Moreover, as family income differences between the rich and poor in the UK have an important impact on children's educational outcomes, so educational outcomes continue to play a crucial role in an individual's ability to enter and progress in the labour market (see the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)/Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2006; Dickens *et al.*, 2000; Greenbank, 2006). However, there are also social groups in the UK who suffer tangible and persistent 'employment penalties' that cannot be accounted for by observed characteristics such as age composition, education level, family composition and local employment rates. These employment penalties include unmeasured characteristics such as discrimination, aspiration and constraints.

In addition, the last several decades have witnessed a substantial increase in the numbers of people who are long-term and indeed permanently, excluded from the active workforce and even from active search for work. Between 1979 and 1995 the numbers of claimants of sickness-related inactive benefits more than trebled. As Beatty and Fothergill (2004:6) have shown, the main increases arose during the 1980s and early 1990s among men. Since, *'it is highly unlikely that there has been a fourfold increase in the level of long-term incapacitating illness in the United Kingdom (UK) workforce over the last 20 years'*, the consequence has been an increase in 'hidden' unemployment.

The correlation between inactivity and ill-health, especially in men, may be linked to the way in which the benefit system has operated. For instance, the National Audit Office (NAO) (1989) noted that the pressure to reduce the number of people on the unemployment register and the relative difficulties faced by the low skilled in finding work might explain the gradual increase in those described as having long-term illness and thus, being placed on Incapacity Benefit (IB) and its predecessors. Others have suggested that defining such workers as 'sick' rather than 'unemployed' may have represented the efforts of some professional groups to protect their dignity (Catalyst, 2002). What we know about the relationship between ill-health and unemployment (Warr *et al.* 2004; Ritchie, *et al.*, 2005:26-32) might also suggest that this process has operated in a circular and self-reinforcing fashion as those who have been unemployed for long-periods witnessed both a genuine decline in their health as a result of not working and a corresponding pressure to move into ill-health-related benefits (Faggio and Nickell, 2003). The Cabinet Office (2000) note, the effects of long-term unemployment and inactivity in discouraging workers from looking for work so that these factors which led to inactivity for 'health'-related reasons in the first place become mutually reinforcing, further limiting the prospects for upward mobility and potentially leading to downward mobility.

The mutually reinforcing nature of ill-health and worklessness, as well as continuing structural imbalances in skills needs and geographical location of employment demand and supply, might also provide some of the explanation for the fact that while the major rise in inactivity occurred between the 1980s and early 1990s, the rapidly growing economy since the mid-1990s has not had any serious impact on the numbers of inactive benefit claimants. While the steep rise has certainly slowed, it has by no means abated over the last decade or so, despite the growing economy and substantial Government interventions in the labour market (DWP, 2006). Part of the explanation for this rests in the significant barriers to employment and lack of employability faced by some groups.

Whilst those who are out of the labour market increasingly face issues and consequences concerning their 'employability', the positions of those in work are far from guaranteed. This is true for all categories of workers, who are required to stay 'fit' in their present job, if they have one, and to remain fit to compete in the wider job market. For example, much recent employment growth has been in the service sector and, contrary to expectations, university graduates are increasingly entering these occupations. The reason for this, however, appears to have less to do with their knowledge of a particular field and more to do with their assumed communication skills in dealing with customers (Wolf, 2002). Yet, the wages and rewards associated with many of these jobs are not commensurate with what university graduates often expect. Indeed, there are increasing incidences of graduates becoming trapped in unsuitable temporary work or despite moving several times remaining less than satisfied with their career choices, opportunities and progress (Pollard, *et al.*, 2004). Moreover, the number of graduates declining their first permanent job offer, after graduating, has dropped from 33 per cent

in 2000, to 26 per cent of those who graduated in 2005. This suggests that the level of competition for vacancies among graduates in general is increasing (see CIPD, 2006), and recent evidence from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) suggests that, despite their achievements, graduates from the most disadvantaged backgrounds face the greatest difficulties in the labour market compared to their peers (Furlong and Cartmel, 2005). In general, there is considerable evidence to suggest that securing and maintaining a suitable or desired position within the labour market is of greater concern to many workers, irrespective of qualifications or background, than upward social mobility.

7.4 Barriers to employment

There is now a great deal of evidence and research on the barriers to work faced by both those who cycle between unemployment and low paid work and those who remain inactive. There is a widespread consensus that the barriers to employment are often multiple and include a lack of basic skills, a lack of appropriate technical skills demanded by new and emerging sectors and a lack of employability often defined as a lack of social and communication skills, low self-esteem, as well as poor motivation and personal organisational skills. Other important barriers include drug and alcohol dependency, caring responsibilities, especially for children, homelessness, mental health problems and a criminal record (Ritchie *et al.*, 2005; Berthoud, 2003; Dean *et al.*, 2003). Personal networks and poor or mismatched social networks and social capital can also constitute a barrier to employment, especially where area-based effects combine to produce a geographically and socially-focused culture of worklessness (Page, 2000, DWP, 2003; Social Exclusion Unit, 2004; Sanderson, 2006; Dewson *et al.* 2007). Particularly important here can be transport barriers and geographical dynamics which prevent demand for labour being taken up by particular communities where there is a surplus of potentially employable workers.

Research on the barriers to employment identify specific social groups as being particularly affected, including lone parents, minority ethnic groups, disabled people, carers, older workers, workers in the informal economy, offenders and ex-offenders (Ritchie *et al.*, 2005).

7.4.1 Gender

Recent research has again revealed that mothers, ethnic minorities and disabled people suffer particularly large employment penalties (Berthoud & Blekesaune, 2007; Paterson & Iannelli, 2005; Biggart, 2002; Women & Work Commission, 2006). Although the situation for mothers has improved over the last 30 years, it has become clear that the contemporary UK labour market severely punishes any break in employment. Women returning to work, in particular, experience significant difficulty in taking up previous employment positions and earnings levels, often resulting in them taking part-time work in lower status jobs (Manning & Petrongolo, 2004). Moreover, many young women seeking entry into the labour

market still routinely face the realities of 'gendered' employment, problems with childcare, and occupational segregation – thus tangibly restricting their ability to progress in their careers and achieve parity with men in terms of occupational mobility (Walby, 2006).

7.4.2 Ethnicity

Another aspect of the UK's contemporary labour market that works against individual efforts to achieve occupational mobility is that all non-white minorities experience a tangible 'ethnic penalty' (Botcherby & Hurrell, 2004; Simpson *et al.*, 2006). Ethnic minority occupational achievements are lower and their risks of unemployment are higher (except among Indians), than those of whites with equal qualifications.

However, good qualifications among ethnic minorities does not currently equate with improved occupational outcomes. Whilst there are wide variations in the labour market achievements of different ethnic minority groups, ethnic minorities in general, including Indians and especially Pakistanis, still do not get the jobs that their qualification levels justify (Strategy Unit, 2003; Platt, 2005). Moreover, for Caribbean young adults, even coming from advantaged backgrounds can still offer no real benefit. Thus, for them, relatively privileged origins do not seem to provide the resources with which to protect the next generation against downward mobility (Platt, 2006).

In general, many ethnic minority communities are still disproportionately concentrated in areas of deprivation, which are often characterised by factors that correlate with unemployment. Internally, ethnic minority groups are increasingly heterogeneous but the difference in the role of social class background across ethnic groups suggests that members are not competing on a level playing field with members of the white majority. Ethnic minorities continue to suffer both indirect and direct discrimination in their attempts to both find work and progress in their careers.

7.4.3 Disability

In much contemporary policy discussion and academic discourse, understandings of 'disability' are inextricably linked to paid work. Indeed, to be defined as 'disabled' means to be either unemployed or underemployed (Barnes, 1999). In most cases, the economic position of disabled people is often summarised by comparing their overall employment rate with that of non-disabled people. However, average figures drawn from the statistics mask a wide variation in the prospects faced by individual disabled people (Berthoud, 2003). The severity of their impairments is a crucial influence and interacts with other disadvantaging factors such as housing, age and poor qualifications (Goss *et al.*, 2000; RNID, 2003; JRF).

In 2005, there were over 2.6 million working age disabled people in employment and evidence suggests that of the three million not in employment, nearly one million would like to work. In general, the employment rate for disabled people

has risen over recent years. However, significant further improvements are needed to ensure that all disabled people who are able and willing to work can do so – including those with learning difficulties and with mental health conditions who have the lowest employment rates (Office for Disability Issues, 2006; Mencap, 2004). For many disabled people, their inability to work or to overcome the barriers to finding suitable employment can often lead to financial difficulties or even social isolation; notions of upward social mobility are often irrelevant in the lives of many (Grewal, *et al.*, 2005).

7.5   The impact of Welfare to Work policies

Elsewhere, the Government has been able to claim genuine success with its ambitious and ongoing Welfare to Work programme, designed to tackle worklessness in general and the 'roots' of worklessness at the neighbourhood level in particular. 'Worklessness' in the context of Welfare to Work describes all those who are out of work but who would like a job (Renewal, 2007).

The close relationship between work, income and wealth and wellbeing is increasingly seen as self-apparent. Work is central to economic and social issues at the neighbourhood level in particular – not least because the Government has placed work at the centre of its strategies for neighbourhood renewal. Moreover, a key determinant of social mobility is, by definition, labour market success and career progression (see Marshall, *et al.*, 1989).

The biggest improvements in reducing long-term unemployment benefit dependency have been for areas and groups that were previously furthest behind. Nearly every disadvantaged group the Government has targeted (e.g., lone parents, older workers, ethnic minorities and disabled people) have seen the employment gap reduced – apart from the lowest skilled. Since 1997, long-term unemployment has halved on the international definition and fallen even further in terms of the claimant count (Freud, 2007). This may suggest that in increasing labour market participation, the Government has also enhanced the opportunities for individuals from some deprived groups to be upwardly mobile, though this is clearly constrained by the impact of in-work poverty and insecurity.

Nevertheless, despite these successes, the UK's skills base remains some way behind by international standards (Leitch, 2006), and the extent to which disadvantages combine and reinforce each other is also striking. A common feature of the literature on 'multiple disadvantage' is to demonstrate the risks associated with one particular disadvantage are more or less strong, depending on whether it is combined with another potentially disadvantaging characteristic of the individual concerned – such as impairment and age, ethnicity and sex or location and other indicators (Berthoud, 2003).

However, some commentators have argued that multiple disadvantage has not received the level of policy attention it deserves in recent years. For example, according to Alcohol Concern (2006), Singh (2005), CIPD (2007) and www.drugs.

gov.uk the impact of 'harder to measure' disadvantages – such as addiction, criminal records, and homelessness – have not been prominent in recent debates on worklessness, employment rates and career advancement, to the extent that evidence suggests that they should be. In general, there are increasing calls for the Government to focus the Welfare to Work agenda away from a traditional approach based on client groups and specific symptoms to one based on individual needs.

Whilst employment rates have been on an upward trend in recent years, they have not been evenly distributed among the population. There remain individuals who are long-term unemployed, despite living in a period of relatively high employment, and a rising number of people who are economically inactive (Ritchie *et al.*, 2005). Individuals failing to break out of the cycle of worklessness experienced by their parents can lead to spatial concentrations of worklessness, where multiple disadvantage can result in social immobility becoming social exclusion (Sanderson, 2006).

7.6   Progression in the labour market

Progression in the labour market, and its relationship to social mobility, is most often considered in terms of **occupational mobility**. As well as being important for understanding social mobility, it is also important for understanding individual career development and occupational attainment. Occupational mobility is also crucial for understanding inequalities and social exclusion for gender, ethnicity, age or income groups. Whether or not certain groups make advantageous movements between jobs at the same rate as others, will affect their relative labour market or social class positions and status (see Dex *et al.*, 2007).

There now appears to be a widespread consensus that progression in the labour market is as important in terms of economic competitiveness and social justice as is ending worklessness (Leitch, 2006; Harker 2006; Hutton, 2006; Freud, 2007). Research as part of the Employment Retention and Advancement Demonstration (Hoggart *et al.*, 2006) has demonstrated that some of the barriers preventing employment retention mirror those that act as barriers to work in the first place, such as a lack of accessible or suitable employment opportunities (including a prevalence of temporary or low paid work), personal characteristics (such as skills, confidence, health and experience), negative cultural values about work, employer discrimination and poor quality local support services (such as transport and childcare). In terms of advancement, the study acknowledged a relative dearth of evidence in the wider literature, but its own findings suggested that confidence, ability and aspirations for advancement were significant factors, as were in work-income traps resulting from the loss of in-work benefits (for instance, for lone parents) being positively correlated with increasing income. Other barriers included continuing caring responsibilities which militated against further progression in employment and negative self-perceptions of age and progression prospects.

There may also be evidence to suggest that progression in employment is becoming harder as a result of structural changes in the economy. For instance, Goos and Manning's (2003; 2003a) thesis on the polarisation of employment and the skills barriers faced by some in moving from lower level work to higher quality, internationally competitive, employment. With the reduction in 'middling' jobs identified by Goos and Manning, there is increased difficulty in moving between these types of work. In addition, as the period of increased absolute mobility driven by the changing occupational structure comes to an end, opportunities for mobility may be further constrained, relative to previous decades.

There is considerable evidence that social class origins continue to make a difference to immediate job prospects, and many of the 'softer' skills required by employers may be correlated with social class background rather than formal educational attainment (Cabinet Office, 2001). Certainly, research is still discovering that discrimination in employment outcomes can be mediated by the socio-economic environment (see Fieldhouse, 1999), and that, for example, 'postcode discrimination' against job applicants from poor neighbourhoods still exists (see Whitely & Prince, 2005; Dean & Hastings, 2000).

There is also evidence showing that certain disadvantaged social groups find it difficult to progress in their jobs or careers. In a recent paper, the Centre for Economic Policy at the London School of Economics found that of the four generations of women born between 1945 and 1975, the generation born in the period 1965-1974 had much higher levels of labour market attachment than previous generations. However, those born in the period 1975-1984 do not have any stronger attachment to the labour market than the previous generation. From their analysis the authors found that as well as the occupational segregation that can often occur upon labour market entry, women often still face a widening occupational segregation in their jobs – and crucial differences in the receipt of training – up until they are at least 35 years of age (Swaffield & Manning, 2005). The main cause of this appears to be that many women continue to take breaks from paid employment when they have children. Furthermore, women often work part-time when they return to the labour market, and the UK labour market severely punishes those who, at any point in their lives, sacrifice career for family.

Thus, women returning to work often take part-time work in lower status jobs than they held previously. Very few higher-level jobs are currently performed on a part-time basis or display flexibility in terms of working hours (see Walby, 2006; Glover, 2001; Whittock *et al.*, 2002). In 2003/04, 25 per cent of women part-time workers in Britain were shop assistants, care assistants or cleaners, whilst only four per cent were managers or senior officials (Manning and Petrongolo, 2004). The problems that many women face when attempting to secure adequate childcare for when they are at work, and the indirect and direct way this impacts upon their occupational mobility, have been widely reported and discussed (see DfES, 2006; Day Care Trust, 2006; The Treasury, 2004).

8   Health, wellbeing and social mobility

8.1   Summary

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Box 8: Health and wellbeing – key points

- There are two hypotheses on the relationship between health and social mobility:

  – the social causation thesis suggests that health is related to socially determined structural factors such as work environment or behavioural factors such as diet;

  – the health selection thesis proposes that social mobility is affected by health, and that the healthy move up the class hierarchy, while the less healthy move down it.

- Worklessness is associated with negative health outcomes and ill-health limits the capacity for work, meaning that there is a combined effect on the capacity for social mobility.

- Caring responsibilities in general can impinge on the potential for social mobility, especially where labour market participation is affected.

- While work can have very positive benefits for health and wellbeing, poor quality work can impact negatively on health, especially mental health.

- There is also evidence that health and wellbeing is related to social position and control in the workplace, implying that hierarchies of social status, including in the labour market, are a significant cause of ill-health.

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8.2   Introduction

The relationship between social mobility and health is complex and multifaceted, but the consistent and robust links between socio-economic status and health

have resulted in research, analysis and comment around the explanatory power of two hypotheses: social causation and health selection. This chapter reviews these two theses before considering issues of employment and wellbeing, disability and social mobility.

8.3   Two theses on the links between social mobility and health

There are two relevant hypotheses on the relationship between health and social mobility. The first hypothesis maintains that health is related to socially determined structural factors such as work environment or behavioural factors such as diet. The latter proposes that social mobility is affected by health and that the healthy move up the class hierarchy, while the less healthy move down (Dahl, 1996).

8.3.1   Social causation

The question of why socio-economic status (represented by grouping individuals by income, occupation or education) has a major effect on the relative health of groups was the subject of the Black Report (Townsend and Davidson, 1992). While controversial at the time of its publication, it had a profound impact on the agenda for research on health inequalities (West, 1998). The report concluded that, in the main, health inequalities were not attributable to failings in the National Health Service (NHS) but rather, to many other social inequalities influencing health: income, education, housing, diet, employment and conditions of work. These factors, found to have the most significant influence on health, are now widely recognised as the 'determinants of health' and while healthcare and social services make a contribution to health, most of the key determinants lie outside of its direct influence. Figure 8.1 presents the determinants of health in terms of layers of influence, starting with the individual and moving out to wider society.

The linkages between inequality and health outcomes have since been widely acknowledged in policy making and academic circles (e.g. Marmot, 2005). For instance, on coming to power the present government commissioned the Acheson report into health inequalities. This explicitly established strong causal links between economic inequality and inequalities in health as well as access to, and experiences of, health and social care provision (Acheson, 1998). Later Government reports have also acknowledged that, like education, the health inequalities cannot be dealt with by focusing on treating illness alone (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and Department of Health, 2002). There is much evidence that points to the close association between deprivation, poor health and early death. Poor people not only die earlier, they have poorer health throughout their lives (Blane, 1997; Adams, 2001). Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows differences in life expectancy of nearly seven and half years for men and nearly six years for women between those of the highest and lowest social class categories (ONS, 2003).

Life contains a series of critical transitions: emotional and material changes in early childhood, the move from primary to secondary education, starting work, leaving home and starting a family, changing jobs and facing possible redundancy, and eventually retirement. Each of these changes can affect health by pushing people onto a more or less advantaged path (Wilkinson and Marmot, 2003). People who have been disadvantaged in the past are at greatest risk in each subsequent transition and people further down the social ladder are more at risk of serious illness and premature death than those near the top (Donkin *et al.* 2002, Benzeval 2000).

Figure 8.1   Policies and strategies to promote social equity in health
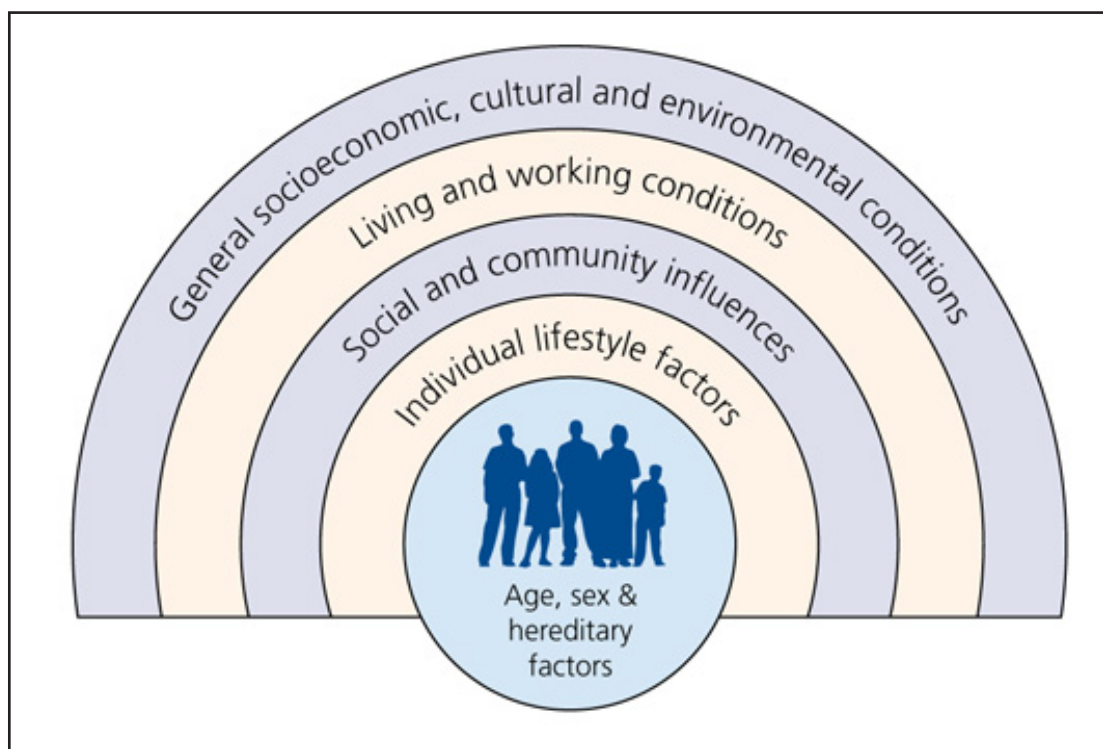
8.3.2   Health selection

The health selection hypothesis maintains that social mobility is health-related; persons in poor health drift down (or fail to move up) the occupational hierarchy and individuals in good health climb up the occupational ladder (e.g. Dahl *et al.* 1993, Dahl 1996 and Fox *et al.* 1985). Therefore, poor health can be an important limitation on social mobility.

However, the term 'selection' is ambiguous and multidimensional. Some proponents will accept the role of social effects (exemplified by Dahl and Kjærsgaard, 1993), others will not (Stern, 1983). It can refer to mobility between and within generations, between social classes, and into and out of the labour market. Numerous studies have been conducted (e.g. Bartley and Plewis 2002, Cooper *et al.* 1998, Power *et al.*

1996, van de Mheen 1999, Rahkonen 2006, Fox *et al.* 1985) looking at both inter- and intra-generational mobility and longitudinal data on health and social class. Several have looked in particular at the effects of children's health and childhood living conditions on social mobility (e.g. Lundberg 1991, Power *et al.* 1996). For defenders of the selection hypothesis (West, 1991), health-related selection is most likely to occur between childhood and early adulthood, i.e. as people move from their parents' class to their own achieved class. However, the effects of the social gradient in health are not just a concern for the most disadvantaged, there are inequalities in health experiences even within class groups so that even among middle-class office workers, lower ranking staff suffer more disease and earlier death than higher ranking staff (Donkin *et al.* 2002).

8.4   Work and wellbeing

According to Waddell and Burton (2006), who have carried out a recent systematic review of the available scientific evidence regarding the health benefits of work, worklessness is harmful to physical and mental health (Dalhgren and Whitehead 1991). Indeed a study of depression in the United States found little evidence of links between many aspects of socio-economic attainment and depression, except in the case of individuals receiving state benefits, where the receipt of benefits marginally preceded the onset of depression, inferring some causal influence of financial dependency and mental health (Eaton *et al.*, 2001). Additionally, there is considerable evidence that employment appears to correlate with better health outcomes. Waddell and Burton consider over 400 pieces of 'scientific evidence' and find that the transition from unemployment to work is associated with improving health outcomes. The evidence in the review generally supports the notion that the long-term sick may benefit from re-engaging in paid work but it does also include important caveats. For instance, the positive health outcomes associated with employment are average effects and therefore, do not apply universally to all individuals. The report also stresses that these *'beneficial health effects depend on the nature and quality of work'*. This is again supported by Eaton *et al.* who conclude that the second major exception to their findings shows a potential relationship between low quality experiences of work and poor mental health:

> *'Although status attainment may not be closely related to depression all across the status continuum, the situation of working very hard for little reward – extreme poverty combined with high job demand – is related to depression.'*

> (2001:290)

This theme has been substantially taken up by Michael Marmot in his empirical work on the links between health and social inequality. Marmot argues that low levels of social control at work are associated with negative health outcomes, particularly in coronary heart disease (Marmot, 2006; 2004; Marmot *et al.*, 1978). However, the implications of Marmot's work are immense as they suggest that the relationship between control, social participation and health outcomes is

progressive, meaning that it is differentiation in the social hierarchy and inequality that is linked to negative health outcomes.

Although employment might be said to improve the quality of life and social inclusion, only 15 per cent of people with serious mental health problems are employed (Evans and Repper, 2000). People with mental health problems have far fewer opportunities to work than the general population because of the many misconceptions and prejudices about their abilities and needs. They are also often not expected to work and not considered fit for work (Evans and Repper, 2000). The most common reason for claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB) falls into the category of mental and behavioural disorders, representing 34 per cent of all claims (Fone *et al.* 2007). People with mental health problems are also under-claiming their full benefit entitlement, risk losing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) when moving towards or into work, experience pressure to continuously prove incapacity to work and fear the consequences of being found fit for work (Witton 2002).

As a means of encouraging people to try work, the Government now proposes that the new Employment and Support Allowance will allow people to earn £86 per week for a year. The scheme has already been piloted, with the evaluation (Dewson *et al.*, 2004) finding that it helps people increase hours over time and move off IB completely and into work, with potentially positive implications for their social mobility but only if they move into good quality employment which can be sustained and with opportunities for progression in the labour market.

8.5   Disability and social mobility

Health and fitness do of course underpin an individual's capacity for work and people's health may impact on their ability to seek work, their performance at work and their decisions to withdraw temporarily or permanently from the labour market. According to Burchardt (2002), of those who become disabled while in work, one in six lose their employment during the first year after becoming disabled. Getting work is also more difficult for disabled than non-disabled jobseekers, and one-third of disabled people who do find work are out of a job again by the following year. In addition, a high proportion of disabled people lack a connection with the labour market, come from a lower social class background and have fewer educational qualifications. Jenkins and Rigg (2004), using British Household Panel Survey data covering 1991-98 also found that disability onset was associated with marked declines in the likelihood of being in paid work and in average income. Employment rates also fell continuously with disability duration. Research with people with a disability or a learning difficulty has also found that many may be reliant on state welfare benefits such as IB or DLA if they are in employment (Burchardt, 2002, Morris, 1999). Research indicates that people who are disabled are less likely to get the qualifications they need to access employment and disabled people may feel discriminated against because of interrupted schooling or difficulties gaining academic qualifications.

8.6   Social mobility and caring responsibilities

Health can not only affect the ability of the individual to work but also of anyone with caring responsibilities for somebody who is ill, disabled or elderly. One in six households contain an informal carer and 49 per cent of carers work either full- or part-time or are self-employed (Office of National Statistics (ONS), 1998). However, many carers find combining work and care difficult, with some 'choosing' to give up paid work completely. Arksey (2002), with a sample of 51 carers, found that interviewees identified several key issues related to balancing work and care: concern over their own health; opportunities for time off; relationships with management and the importance of supportive colleagues. Strategies to balance work and care included: reducing travel to work time; reducing work hours; rearranging work schedules and, as a very last resort, leaving work completely.

Pickard (2004), in a review of literature on caring for older people and employment, explains that most people caring for an older person will be of working age, with nearly half of all carers aged between 45-64 years. The relationship between caring and employment is affected by a number of factors, including the intensity of caring, the nature of employment, the characteristics of the carer and the nature of the relationship with the cared-for person. (Pickard, 2004). Caring is compatible with paid work when caring is not particularly intense.

Caring can have a negative effect on carers' earnings (Parker and Lawton 1994, Evandrou 1995) and an adverse effect on a carer's own health, including: lethargy; tiredness and stress (Arksey 2002). Alternatively, there is also evidence to support the view that paid work can have a positive effect on carers, in that it maintains contact with social networks and improves self-esteem (Arksey 2002). As such, caring responsibilities may have negative implications for the potential for social mobility, especially where these impinge on labour market participation.

9 Spatial and locational factors

9.1 Summary

Box 9: Area-based and spatial factors – key points

- Research suggests that geographical mobility can be an important means for people to achieve social mobility.

- Area-based concentrations of social deprivation have important implications for social mobility.

- There is evidence that over the last quarter century communities have become more polarised, as a result of the increasing spatial concentration of individuals and social groups facing particular disadvantage.

- This may have impacted to generate localised environmental problems which combine with and reinforce socio-economic disadvantage.

- Access to transport, especially private transport, may also reinforce disadvantage, making it harder for lower socio-economic groups to access work or make effective choices over access to public services.

- There is some emerging evidence that access to new communication technologies is also differentiated by socio-economic status, further reinforcing inequalities in life chances.

9.2 Introduction

Over recent years there has been considerable emphasis on the area-based and spatial dynamics of social exclusion and deprivation. This chapter reviews some of the prominent themes raised in this literature from the perspective of social mobility.

9.3 Area-based influences on social mobility

There is a substantial body of literature on the links between geographical location and social mobility. For instance, Delorenzi (2006) argues that:

> *'Geographical mobility* [both international and internal] *has always been an important means for people to achieve social mobility: many move to improve their conditions and to obtain better life chances, both for themselves and their children.'*

> (2006: 1)

Delorenzi also discusses the ways in which geographical mobility is mediated by people's social position, depending on a range of characteristics. Those from deprived areas face significant barriers to moving to places with better opportunities and immigrants face a number of additional barriers. Gibbons *et al.* (2005:305) show that geographical mobility in the UK is higher than in other European countries but is predominantly shaped by taking advantage of previously secured labour market opportunities, rather than either speculative moves or moves associated with escaping deprivation and low levels of employment. In addition, those who are better educated are much more able to be geographically mobile to take advantage of these opportunities as a result of a number of factors including lower risk-aversion and the way that information in the labour market works, meaning that low skilled jobs tend only to be advertised on a local or regional basis.

There are wide socio-economic divergences between different locations – from regional level right down to individual ward – and the impact of place is significant in some localities – although they are explainable to some degree by differences in individual characteristics. Murphy (2006) discusses a number of barriers to social mobility identified by the literature as being associated with living in deprived localities, including transport constraints and fewer primary health care workers, as well as relatively high concentrations of sick, disabled and unemployed people.

Atkinson (2005) and colleagues undertook a review of the research literature on social mix and any impacts of this at neighbourhood level. They note that there is less literature focusing on affluent or diverse areas, despite the long-term policy trend towards viewing a social mix as beneficial (2005:5). One important point they raise is that locality-based segregation is not necessarily linked to a lack of wider integration or social participation (2005: 8). Experience of being a crime victim can negatively affect social mobility, as it impacts on mental and physical health and ability to work (see Paxton and Dixon 2004) and research suggests that experience of crime tends to be higher in the most disadvantaged communities (Atkinson, 2005; BCS, 2002/03; Home Office, 2003c).

Murphy locates one of the major causes of the decrease in social mobility as being social change regarding neighbourhoods:

'Communities become more atomised and deprivation more concentrated in 'sink neighbourhoods' with high levels of unemployment and benefit claimants. Concentrations of poverty have been further exacerbated by the 'sorting effect' of the residential housing market [see below]*. Poorer households are clustered together in more affordable and often poorer quality locations.'*

(2006:19)

9.4 Housing

There is a considerable amount of literature regarding the relationship between housing and social mobility. A report by the Department of Communities and Local Government (2007) describes a body of literature suggesting that home ownership affects the causes of social mobility (including educational attainment, childhood poverty and attitudes and aspirations) (e.g. Sigle-Rushton, 2004). Much of the evidence shows positive associations between home ownership and marital stability, health, employment status and stability and educational attainment. The report states, however, that it cannot be certain of a direct relationship between social mobility and home ownership. An American study by Conley (2001) highlights the importance of housing as a factor in the intergenerational transmission of socio-economic and racial advantage. House ownership is predicted by income and race and is significant in affecting educational attainment of children. Poor housing and overcrowding also negatively affects children's health and educational attainment.

The Survey of English Housing 2003/04 (Humphrey *et al.* 2006) suggests that owner-occupation is under-represented in the most deprived areas in England, while specific groups such as lone parents, ethnic minorities and single people are over-represented in these areas. Private renters were far more likely to move house than social renters.

Hills (2007) looks in detail at the changing socio-economic characteristics of those living in different housing tenures, particularly those living in social housing, over the last quarter century. He argues that the post-war vision for social housing recognised the need to provide for mixed neighbourhoods. Indeed, he quotes Aneurin Bevan:

'It is entirely undesirable that in modern housing estates only one type of citizen should live. If we are to enable citizens to lead a full life, if they are to be aware of the problems of their neighbours, then they should be drawn from different sections of the community. We should aim to introduce what has always been the lovely feature of the English and Welsh Village, where the Doctor, the grocer, the butcher and the farm labourer all lived in the same street…the living tapestry of a mixed community.'

(Anuerin Bevan, 1949, quoted in Hills (2007:86))

The picture today is massively different to that envisaged by Bevan. Those in social housing are now disproportionately represented in the lowest income groups, have much higher levels of unemployment and long-term economic inactivity and face multiple and severe barriers or difficulties in the labour market, such as ill-health. There are also high rates of people in disadvantaged groups including ethnic minorities and lone parents. Despite the positive advantages that social housing might confer (for instance, removing responsibility for providing a secure home in times of financial difficulty), Hills notes considerable evidence that in fact social tenants are less likely than other groups to move into work after unemployment (Hills, 2007:86-111).

Generally, what Hills' comprehensive study shows is that social housing estates have become a location for those sections of the population that have been most disadvantaged by economic and social change over the last 25 years, including those that may have been downwardly mobile. Moreover, because social housing was traditionally located in large mono-tenure estates this has led to polarisation of communities. One potential implication of this, which Hills' work supports, is that this may have been mutually reinforcing, by creating neighbourhood effects that combine with socio-economic characteristics and experiences to militate against future upward social mobility.

Rising house prices effectively exclude people from the housing market (Paxton and Dixon 2004). Buck (2000: 159) highlights disadvantages associated with renting and in particular with social housing, and the ways in which these are associated with its concentration in the more disadvantaged areas. People who do not own property are less likely to have other financial assets (IFS, 2002), potentially increasing existing inequalities *'with some who have substantial housing assets receiving windfall gains as the value of their property increases and those who are unable to afford a mortgage faced with increasing rents and decreasing chances of ever owning a property or accumulating other assets'* (Paxton and Dixon 2004: 26).

However, there is research available concerning policies which tackle segregation. For example, Allen *et al.* (2005) suggest that mature communities in mixed income and mixed tenure areas seem to have avoided the problems associated with neighbourhoods with large concentrations of social housing and that this model also supported extended family and social networks (2005: 17). This suggests that, while housing policy may have affected social mobility in a broadly negative way, there may be the potential for it to be used to positively influence social mobility.

9.5   Transport

The literature indicates that access to transport is a factor affecting opportunities for social mobility. A survey by the FIA Foundation (Lucas, undated) indicated that lack of access to a car forms the main transport factor affecting the social

exclusion of low-income households. The exclusion faced by non-car owning households has increased due to dispersed land uses and changes to work and lifestyle patterns. A report by the Centre for Transport Studies, Imperial College, and MacDonald (undated) highlight the ways in which problems with transport provision may act as barriers to participation in the normal range of activities (and thus, social mobility) as well as the ways in which the cost of transport may be disproportionately borne by certain people. A Social Exclusion Unit review (2003) highlighted problems with access to work, learning, healthcare, food shops and activities, as well as the problem of the impact of traffic on deprived communities. Nearly one in three households do not have access to a car. Finally, Kenyon *et al.* (2003) demonstrate the ways in which transport and social exclusion are linked – some people are excluded from use of certain types of transport and this is then associated with exclusion from activities such as training, social events, family trips, and employment. Levels of exclusion are associated with economic status, location and age and negatively affect both urban and rural dwellers, due to factors such as inadequate routing and timings of public transport, lack of money or physical mobility (2003: 326). Unequal access to transport might also have implications for social mobility through structuring choices over access to public services, including education and schooling.

9.6   Communication via the new technologies

Access to the internet is recognised in the literature as facilitating social mobility. Warschauer (2003) brings together literature and empirical research across a range of countries concerning access to new technology and the importance of this for social inclusion. Kenyon *et al.* (2003:317) report on findings from research showing that virtual (internet) mobility is fulfilling an accessibility role – substituting for and complementing physical mobility, thus alleviating problems associated with access to physical transport for excluded people. The internet increases ability to communicate, seek advice, access employment and other opportunities. Livingstone *et al.* (2005) find that the vast majority of children and young people have access to the internet – so that notions of a 'digital divide' are less relevant than with the adult population. They found that middle-class children and young people are more likely to have access to the internet at home, to have higher quality access, to use the internet more and to be more skilled in its use and the take-up of online opportunities. They found few differences along ethnic and gender lines. The implication, therefore, appears to be that access to, and use of, technology may be yet another dimension in the unequal access to resources which might facilitate social mobility. This may operate through building new forms of social capital, soft-skill development which might transfer into labour market advantage, as well as access to new forms of information and information production that might facilitate better social outcomes in the future.

10 Commentary: understanding social mobility

10.1   Summary

Box 10: Explanatory commentary – key points

- Social mobility is one aspect of broader notions of fairness and social justice, alongside other important indicators such as inequality, political and democratic rights and poverty.

- Relative social mobility appears to be positively associated with other aspects of social justice such as lower levels of socio-economic inequality, although there is debate on this issue.

- The drivers of social mobility are multiple and complex. Attempting to isolate one over the others in a causal hierarchy may be unrewarding because they work together in combinations and work differently for different people.

- The factors driving social mobility include social and cultural capital (especially as available to family units), inherited wealth and financial resources, early years development (including aspirations and expectations), educational attainment, labour market participation and progression, health and ability to participate in the labour market and geographical location.

- Trends in social mobility over the last quarter century have also been driven by industrial and social change, resulting in localised concentrations of deprivation and social and occupational polarisation.

Continued

- Despite the attempts of successive governments, social mobility appears to be remarkably resistant to policy initiatives designed to affect it. Where Government policy does impact on social mobility this is often in complex and sometimes unpredictable ways, such as in relation to housing and education.

- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) can have an important role to play in tackling both intra-generational and inter-generational barriers to social mobility through supporting people to progress within the labour market.

- The complexity of factors influencing social mobility suggests that a 'joined-up' approach across Government departments, agencies, regional and local government and non-Government organisations is required in order to tackle this issue, with a particular emphasis on the links between Welfare to Work support and training provision.

10.2   Understanding the concept and drivers of social mobility

Social mobility, especially in relative terms, is an important measure of societal fairness. However, it is clearly only one such measure and needs to be placed in the context of other indicators of social justice such as the level and extent of inequality in wealth and income, inequalities of political power and access to justice, equity in access to public services, the presence and severity of absolute and relative poverty (Miller, 2005), and even other aspects of social wellbeing such as happiness (Burchardt, 2005; Layard, 2005).

Social mobility appears to become relatively more important where other indicators are moving in a negative direction. For instance, high levels of inequality and/ or poverty may be more acceptable if there are evenly distributed opportunities for individuals to achieve social mobility on the basis of merit. Indeed, some commentators suggest that a well functioning society requires a positive association between inequality and social mobility. In this type of model (sometimes labelled 'social Darwinist'), inequality provides incentives to work hard and make the best of one's individual resources, while social mobility ensures that talents are able to be most effectively put to work.

However, the extent to which social mobility can compensate for high levels of inequality and/or poverty is limited. The moral case for allowing individuals to experience relative deprivation or absolute poverty on the grounds of a lack of inherited ability in one form or another is constrained (Rawls, 1973). Moreover, this review has presented evidence that levels of inequality and absolute poverty and deprivation themselves constrain social mobility. The more equal societies of Scandinavia have higher levels of social mobility and deprivation (in relative and absolute form) is associated with many of the factors constraining upwards social

mobility. For instance, poverty is often concentrated in geographical pockets of deprivation, where a combination of area-based factors, socio-economic factors and physical illness combine in mutually reinforcing ways to constrain opportunities for social mobility throughout the lifecycle and in ways that persist between generations.

The research and literature summarised above suggest that social mobility is affected by a range of factors including the extent and type of social and cultural capital available to family units, inherited wealth and financial resources, early years development (including aspirations and expectations), educational attainment, labour market participation and progression, health and ability to participate in the labour market, and geographical location. It may be tempting to attempt to rank these in a causal hierarchy and indeed some statistical research has done this (Bowles and Gintis, 2002). However, these factors are important for explaining social mobility precisely because they act in combination with one another in mutually reinforcing ways. For instance, ill-health is important because it constrains labour market participation and can lead to downward mobility but it is also a result of labour market exclusion. Similarly, area-based factors can also contribute to ill-health and may be caused by the selection of people for social housing who have become excluded from labour market success as a result of structural mismatches in relation to skills and educational attainment. It is then in these areas that limiting forms of social capital arise such as cultures of worklessness, prevalence of negative stereotypes, drug abuse, crime and the absence of positive role-models. Disentangling one or another of these factors is, therefore, difficult and potentially unrewarding because they are so intertwined.

10.3   Understanding trends in social mobility

10.3.1   Socio-economic trends

There is certainly evidence that over the course of the 1980s and early 1990s, inequality increased in the United Kingdom (UK). This was driven by a combination of global economic and industrial processes of change, social trends and domestic policy influences. The changing industrial structure of the UK economy led to shifts away from large-scale manufacturing and primary industries, resulting in job losses and long-term mismatches between the skills held by the workforce and the new skills' demands of employers in many working class communities. In particular, it appears that there may have been a polarisation of employment opportunities, meaning that skilled manual work in the middle of the occupational hierarchy has declined relative to high-skilled professional employment and low-skilled service sector employment.

The implication of these socio-economic trends for social mobility is that some sections of the population have seen their position in the labour market become less secure and stable, with the emergence of worklessness and long-term exclusion from the labour market, the loss of opportunities for 'jobs for life' in local industries

and also a lack of opportunities for progression in the labour market from low-level employment through the occupational structure in the way that might have been present in traditional manufacturing industries.

10.3.2   Area-based factors

The effects of these changes have taken on important geographical dynamics for a number of reasons: First, traditional manufacturing and primary industries were closely associated with geographically concentrated local communities who relied heavily on a small number of these employers. As such, the impact of their decline was also spatially concentrated. Second, post-war social housing tended to be geographically concentrated. Policy and social trends from the 1970s onwards meant that the profile of social tenants was increasingly dominated by those who faced the most severe and combined barriers to social inclusion and labour market participation. As such, those that were already disadvantaged and those that were specifically disadvantaged by economic and industrial restructuring were increasingly focused in social housing estates.

Further, in combination these trends toward spatially concentrated disadvantage and deprivation have generated additional area-based factors which might reduce opportunities for upward mobility. Negative environmental factors combine with these socio-economic trends to mean that people in deprived communities often suffer negative health outcomes, for instance. The decline of the association between traditional industries and their local communities has resulted in a decrease in forms of working-class social capital that might have constrained social mobility. However, area-based deprivation has generated new forms of social capital that are also negative for social mobility such as cultures of worklessness, anti-social behaviour, drug use or criminality.

Finally, the scope for geographical mobility to escape these area-based influences is also unequally distributed with the research evidence suggesting that this is a much greater possibility for those operating in higher skilled labour markets where employers advertise opportunities in the national media. By contrast, lower-skilled vacancies tend only to be advertised locally and lower socio-economic groups tend to face disincentives in terms of geographical mobility.

10.3.3   Early years and education

This review suggests that while educational attainment remains a strong predictor of future social position, there are strong influences on educational attainment which are outside the scope of formal educational provision. For instance, patterns of development are often set prior to starting formal education, suggesting that early experiences are central to understanding both educational attainment and social mobility. However, many of these early years influences are outside what is normally thought to be the scope of public policy and are heavily associated with family dynamics, parenting and home environment. The SureStart initiative intervenes to tackle problems and negative drivers of future mobility even before formal education begins at age five. However, again, it seems that social mobility

may be resistant to policy initiatives of this type, because of the multi-faceted dynamics underpinning it. Here the comparison with Scandinavia is crucial. Research suggests, for example, that the impact of pre-school care in Sweden may be so beneficial in terms of equalising life chances because it is nearly universally experienced, with the result that influences associated with the middle class or working-class family are minimised and mixed social networks and experiences emerge from an early age.

There is also evidence that the middle-classes are better able than others to take advantage of the opportunities created by public policy. In particular, it seems that they have been able to better take advantage of comprehensive schooling, for example, by being more able to 'choose' good schools. In addition, the expansion of higher education (HE) appears to have disproportionately benefited people from middle-class backgrounds. This appears to result from two different but related causal factors:

• on the one hand, the educational decision-making strategies of lower socio-economic groups are constrained by factors such as a lack of resources and disincentives to pursue further and higher education such as the need to earn income immediately, negative experiences of and attitudes to debt and the absence of experience or familiarity with role-models;

• on the other hand, a number of studies suggest that middle-class parents seek out opportunities to maintain the social advantages of education for their children, including using resources to ensure that they are able to make effective choices over schooling. In so doing they may limit the opportunities available to working-class children through, for instance, shaping admissions' requirements. In addition, evidence suggests that both the extent and nature of social networks held by middle-class families offers further opportunities for strategies to ensure that their children do not experience downward mobility. This again may have the impact of blocking the chances open to lower socio-economic groups for upward mobility.

10.3.4   Overview

In combination this evidence suggests that powerful trends of social, occupational and geographical polarisation have worked against opportunities for social mobility over the last quarter century. At the same time, there are equally powerful reasons why public policy initiatives have been relatively impotent in their attempts to foster increased relative mobility.

10.4   Policy implications for the Department for Work and Pensions

Many of the factors driving levels of social mobility are beyond the scope of the policy remit of the DWP. They occur or exert their influence at points in the life-course before the Department's policy remit for the labour market becomes

relevant. However, there are clear implications from this review which are within the DWP's remit. These are largely associated with the existing Welfare to Work strategy and the 'work first plus' recommendations of the Harker review of child poverty.
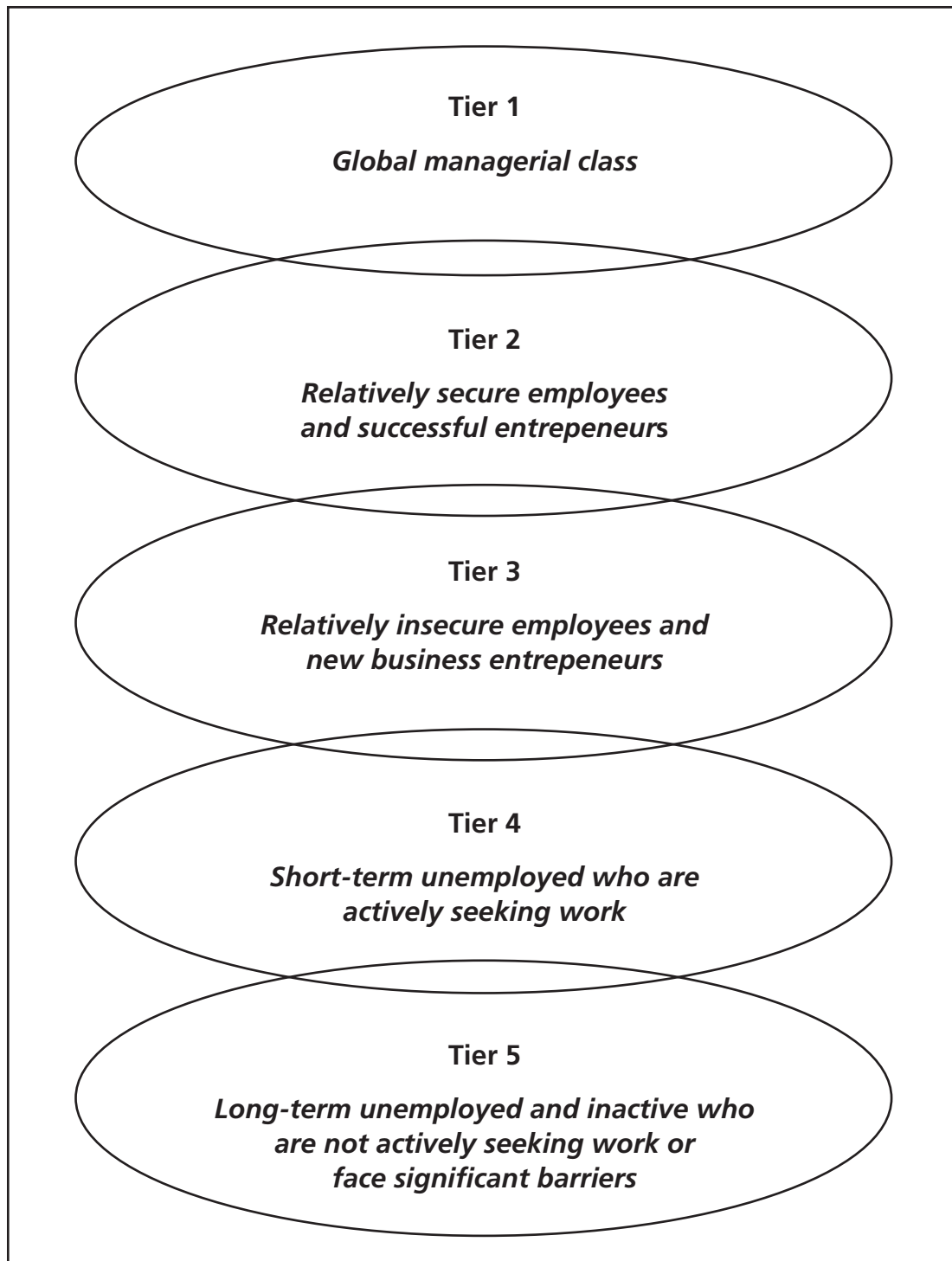
The current approach to tackling child poverty, which is clearly relevant to social mobility, lies in promoting work as a route out of poverty. Harker (2006) shows that this alone is not enough and that in-work poverty remains a barrier to ending child poverty. As such she recommends that more needs to be done to ensure that the transition into work is sustainable and that there are opportunities to progress while in work. These conclusions are strongly supported by the evidence reviewed here. **Combating worklessness *and* helping people to progress within work would be key elements of a strategy to promote both inter-generational and intra-generational social mobility.** It would also respond to the Leitch (2006) agenda for a better skilled and therefore, more competitive and productive workforce. This could, potentially, lead to an expansion of better quality, globally competitive employment opportunities. In order to address these challenges, there is a need for central Government departments and their agencies to work together, especially with regard to linking Welfare to Work support and access to affordable training provision. However, other important linkages are also noticeable, including spatial considerations with regard to planning and housing policy, economic development and regeneration.

The evidence presented here about the complex and often unintended relationships between policy interventions and social outcomes may suggest that more attention needs to be given in the development of policy to understand the many potential impacts that it might have. There are many different aspects that such a prior impact assessment might consider. While social mobility is one of these, an over-emphasis on this as opposed to other important considerations, such as inequality, may result in confused or perverse policy implications. However, this literature review suggests that social mobility is the product of a number of other important social dynamics which are the subject of policy impacts which might usefully form the basis of prior-impact assessment. This literature review suggests that inequality, social capital, health and educational attainment should be among these.

This review suggests an alternative to either the occupational-based social hierarchies used by sociologists or the income-distribution-based hierarchies used by economists, which may help to illuminate the relationship between social mobility and the policy remit of the DWP. It suggests that a five tier social hierarchy based upon both labour market participation and the quality and security of that participation, might help to structure policy interventions to support the transition from inactivity (Tier 5), to active job search (Tier 4), to entry level work (Tier 3) and finally into sustained and secure employment (Tier 2). Evidence about the success of Welfare to Work policies suggests that much has already been done to establish public policy initiatives to support the transition between Tiers 4 and 3 but that more now needs to be done to support the transition from Tier 5

to Tier 4, and from Tier 3 to Tier 2 to combat worklessness on the one hand and the 'low-pay/no-pay' cycle on the other. The refocusing of inactive benefits as a result of the Welfare Reform Bill and the roll-out of Pathways to Work is already structured around this first challenge. In addition, initiatives such as the Employment Retention and Advancement demonstration provide some limited evidence of an attempt to tackle the second challenge. Further thought may be needed on how the Welfare to Work system of support might offer a seamless routeway between these different tiers, including in-work support for training and progression as well as lifelong access to training and education to accommodate changing skill demands in the labour market.

Figure 10.1   An alternative class schema for understanding social mobility in relation to Welfare to Work

Tier 1

Global managerial class

Tier 2

Relatively secure employees and successful entrepeneurs

Tier 3

Relatively insecure employees and new business entrepeneurs

Tier 4

Short-term unemployed who are actively seeking work

Tier 5

Long-term unemployed and inactive who are not actively seeking work or face significant barriers

Appendix
Literature search strategy

Social mobility search strategy

The literature search strategy consisted of combining one of three search strings with other strings related to a series of issues. The first two strings referred either to synonyms of 'social mobility' or to related terms. The third string was used to look for literature relating to the impact of policies and was combined with either of the first two strings depending on the database being used. Strings 1-3 were also combined with a series of other concepts and policy initiatives that were not included in the other search strings.

String 1: 'social'/'income'/'geographical' and ('mobility' or 'movement' or 'progression' or 'climbing' or 'ladder' or 'meritocracy' or 'change' or 'class' or 'stratification' or 'promotion' or 'divide' or 'destinations').

String 2: ('barriers' or 'access' or 'exclusion' or 'inclusion' or 'disadvantage' or 'deprivation' or 'inequality' or 'participation' or 'attainment' or 'aspirations' or 'opportunity' or 'expectations' or 'choice' or 'attitudes' or ' culture' or 'ambition' or 'goals' or 'life chances' or background' or 'peer group' or 'community'.

String 3: 'policy' and ('evaluation' or 'impact' or 'effect' or 'monitoring').

These strings were also combined with each of the following strings:

Poverty – (poverty or unemployment or deprivation).

Education – (education or skills or training or learning or Higher Education (HE) or Further Education (FE)).

Employment/Welfare – (labour or employment or occupations or careers or wages or income or pay or welfare-to-work or tax or benefits).

Groups/Issues – (ethnicity or race or Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) or gender or women or disability or health or family or children or crime).

Access – (technology or digital or transport or geography or local or demography).

Strings 1-3 were also combined with a series of other concepts/initiatives that did not fit well into the other search strings. These included: 'social' and 'cultural capital', 'equality of opportunity'/'outcome', 'widening participation', 'Aim Higher', 'Sure Start', 'Employment Action Zones' and 'City Academies'.

The searches used Boolean logic and truncation to allow for plurals and different words of the same root.

The databases searched included the Idox Information Service, Social Science Citation Index, International Bibliography of Social Sciences, Applied Social Science Indexes and Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, British Library Inside and COPAC. The searches were divided into two periods – before 1997 and 1997-2007. The searches were modified according to the numbers of relevant results or type of search engine in each database.

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