



Education in Scotland: An avenue or a powerless instrument for social mobility?

**Cristina Iannelli
School of Education
University of Edinburgh**



Outline

- Research context
- Social mobility patterns in Scotland
- The role of education in the process of social mobility
- Scotland in comparison
- Conclusions and policy implications



Research Context

- New round of social mobility studies internationally in 1990s (*Social Mobility in Europe*, ed. by Richard Breen, 2004).
- Most recent in Scotland with adequate sample size was 1974.



Two projects on social mobility

- ESRC research project *Education and Social Mobility in Scotland in the 20th Century*.
- ESRC Research Fellowship *The Role of Educational Structure and Content in the Process of Social Mobility*.



The ESRC research project

“Education and Social Mobility in Scotland in the 20th Century” (together with Professor Lindsay Paterson)

Aims

- To provide an up-to-date study of social mobility in Scotland (new data from Scottish Household Survey of 2001).
- To investigate the role played by education in the process of intergenerational social mobility.



The ESRC Research Fellowship

The role of educational structure and content in the process of social mobility

Aims:

- To study the mechanisms that underlie class mobility between generations, paying particular attention to the role of educational institutions and curricula.
- To improve upon the existing social mobility studies (mainly based on cross-sectional data) through the use of longitudinal data.



Social mobility patterns in Scotland

- In line with studies in other countries:
 - High absolute rates of mobility.
 - Relative mobility rates have not changed (social fluidity).
 - Main influence on social mobility is overall shape of occupational distribution.



Absolute mobility rates by cohort

	1937/46	1947/56	1957/66	1967/76	Total
Total mobility	71.7	69.8	68.2	62.2	67.8
Total upward	52.8	53.7	47.4	39.7	48.2
Total downward	18.9	16.1	20.8	22.5	19.6



Relative mobility

Log-linear model testing association between origin and destination

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

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



Changes in social fluidity

- No statistically reliable evidence that the association between origin and destination varied over time.
- Changing patterns of social mobility do not reflect changing patterns of social inequalities in the chances of being mobile.



Education and social mobility

- Educational expansion.
- Higher participation rates and more comprehensive system in Scotland than in England.
- Have these trends had an equalising effect on social mobility patterns?



Educational expansion

<i>Birth-cohorts</i>	Education level 0	Education level 1	Education level 2	Education level 3	Education level 4
1937-1946	39.6	28.3	13.0	3.8	15.2
1947-1956	24.2	25.4	18.9	7.1	24.4
1957-1966	19.0	23.8	23.5	9.2	24.4
1967-1976	11.9	26.9	23.0	12.1	26.2
<i>No. of cases (unweighted)</i>	2257	2418	1890	761	2129

Source: 2001 Scottish Household Survey

Educational attainment by class of origin (people aged 25-64)

	Class of origin				
	Profes/ Manag	Rout non-man	Petty Bourg	Skil. Man	Unskil. Man
No qualify	6.0	13.5	19.5	25.8	37.1
Lower-sec	16.0	25.8	25.9	28.9	31.8
Upper-sec	20.2	25.1	21.4	21.3	17.0
Sub-degree	10.6	9.2	8.6	8.1	5.7
Degree	47.2	26.3	24.7	15.9	8.4
<i>No. of cases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1285</i>	<i>784</i>	<i>1904</i>	<i>2346</i>

Source: 2001 Scottish Household Survey.

Note: The class schema used in this study is a reduced form of the EGP 7-class schema (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992: 38-9).



The intermediary role of education

- Education variable does not explain most of the association of origin and destination.
- Extent to which education explains OD association has not increased in the youngest cohorts.
- OD association is weaker at higher levels of education.



Trends in social class inequalities in education

- Expansion has benefited all social classes.
- Class differences in educational attainment have not significantly changed over time.
- Recent analyses of school leavers' data show that inequalities in HE entry may have started to decline.

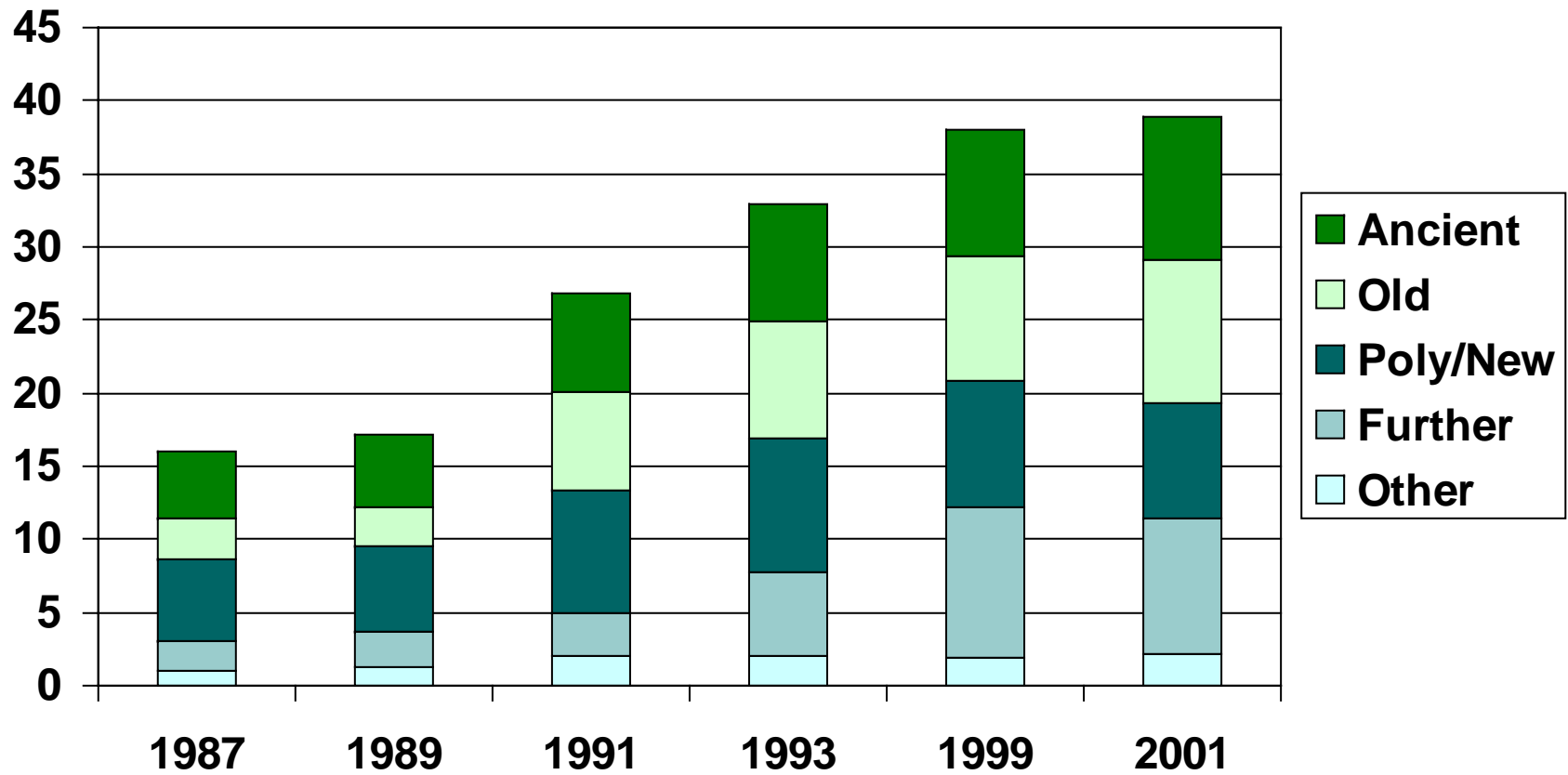


Trends in social class inequalities in higher education (Iannelli, Gamoran and Paterson, 2009)

- Higher education in Scotland diversified as it expanded.
- Expansion brought new enrollment opportunities to persons from working class backgrounds.
- However, the new opportunities emerged primarily in the lower-status institutions.

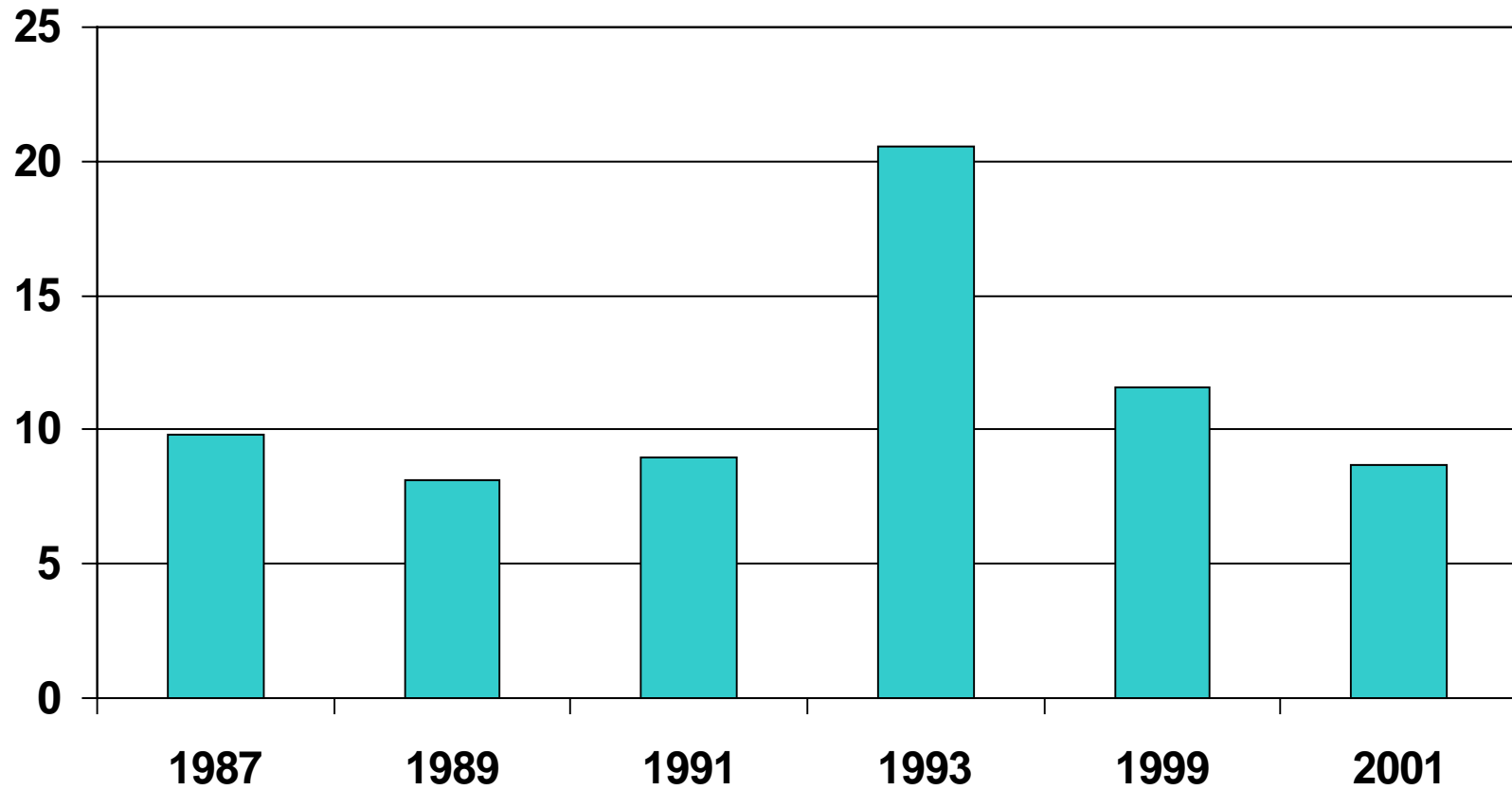
Expansion of Higher Education in Scotland

(SSLS data)



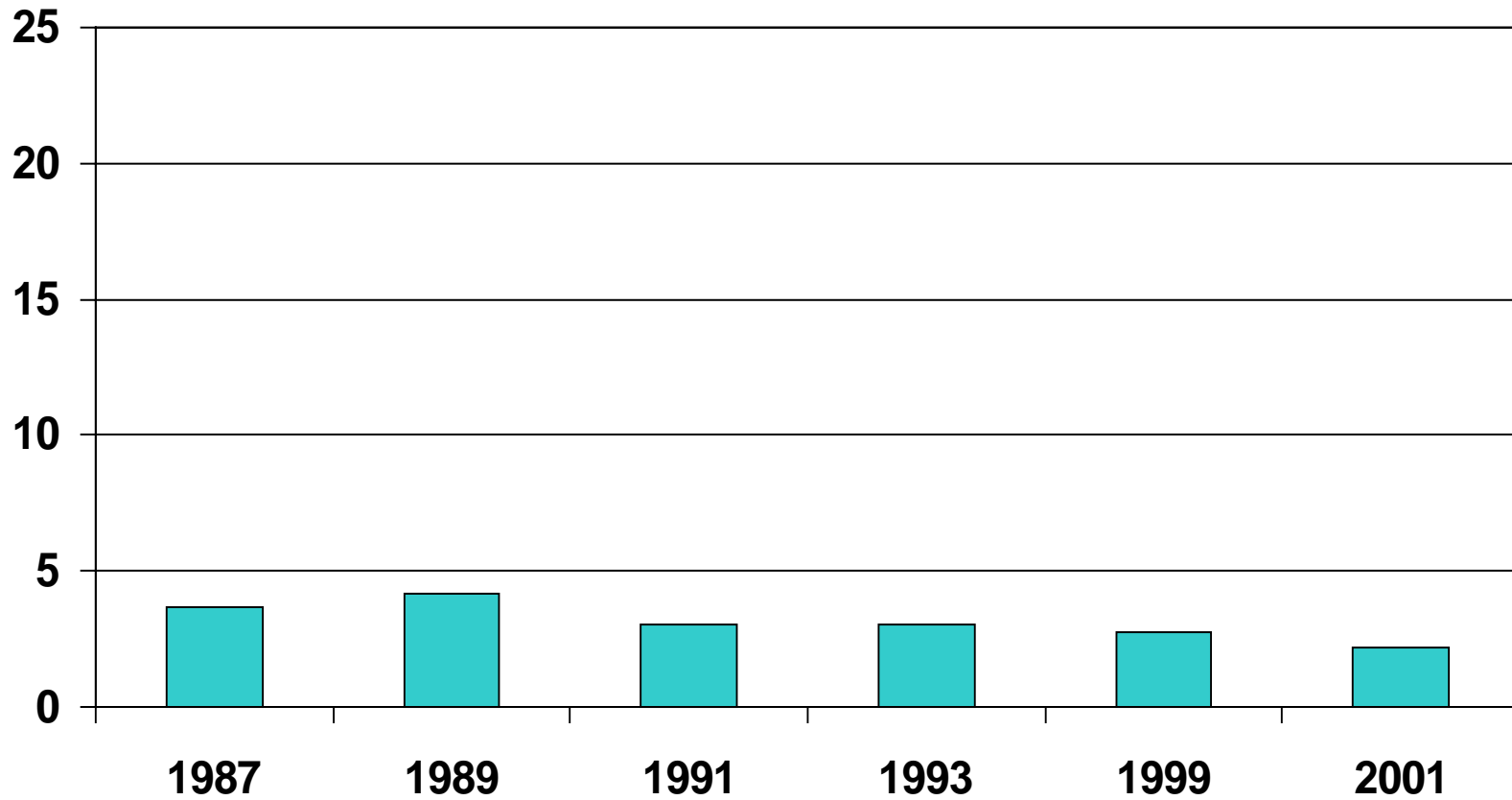


Ratio of Professional to Working Class Enrollments: Ancient Universities (SSLS data)



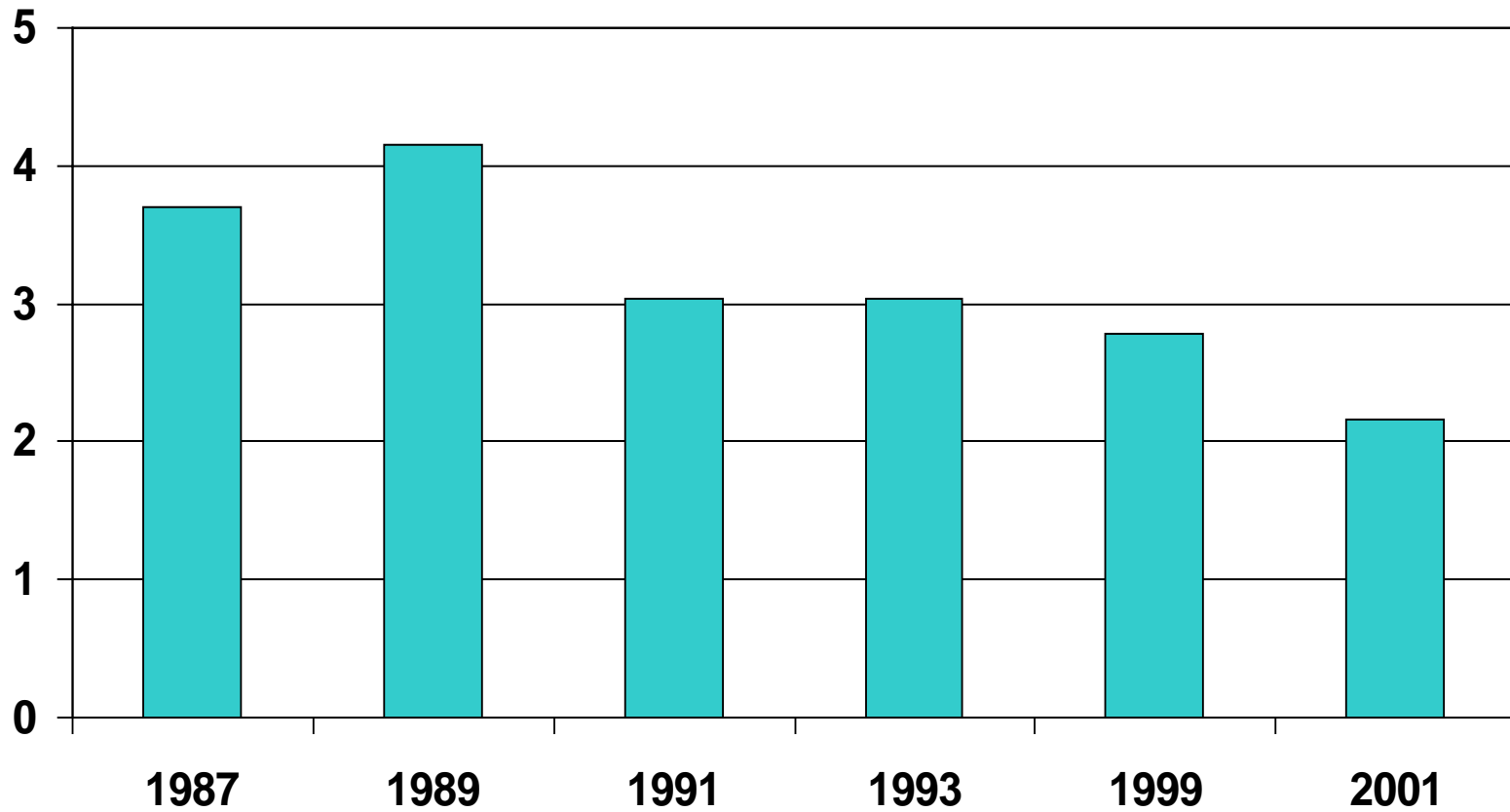


Ratio of Professional to Working Class Enrollments: Polytechnics/New Universities (SSLS data)





Ratio of Professional to Working Class Enrollments: Polytechnics/New Universities (SSLS data)





Social mobility: Scotland in comparison

- The results for Scotland resemble Goldthorpe and Mills' (2004) results for the whole of Great Britain.
- Different education systems and rates of educational participation may yield similar results in terms of the association between education and social mobility patterns.
- This is likely due to the fact that an important role in social mobility processes is played by the labour market.



Conclusions

- Scotland is similar to many developed countries.
- Rise in upward mobility was mainly driven by shape of occupational distribution, not by changes in inequalities.
- Education does not account for most of the association between class of origin and class of destination.
- Educational reforms have facilitated expansion but have not brought about a decline in inequalities.



Policy implications

In relation to social mobility:

Promoting greater equality of opportunities in the future is likely to mean increasing downward mobility for the offspring of more privileged social strata (Goldthorpe and Jackson, 2007).



Policy implications

In relation to education

- Education, on its own, cannot eradicate social inequalities, large-scale social reforms are needed (as in Scandinavian countries).
- Continuing to raise the overall level of educational attainment may lead to a significant reduction of inequalities. However, unwanted consequences may be:
 - At start inequalities may widen;
 - Differentiation within the higher education system would continue reproducing social inequalities.