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**Women's Occupational Career Mobility and Family Formation:
The Case of Hungary**

Submitted by Hungarian Central Statistical Office¹

Introduction

1. The increase in female labour force participation has been one of the most important socioeconomic trends in Hungary during the second half of the 20th century. This increase has been accompanied by simultaneous changes in other aspects of women's life-course, such as declines and delays of first marriage and first birth. In fact, the marriage rate has been decreasing since the beginning of the 1970s (Csernák, 1992). The age at entry into first marriage is traditionally lower in Hungary compared to Western countries, but in last decades there has been a tendency to postpone marriages until higher age, partly due to the increase of women's educational attainment and, consequently, the longer time females spend in education. The same holds for the age at entry into motherhood which is also relatively low in Hungary and the timing of marriage and childbirth is close to each other (Róbert and Blossfeld, 1995).

2. Not only the rate but also the pattern of women's participation in labour force has changed. It is observed that females now participate in market work in more consistent pattern and they tend to return to work after interruptions (due to the childbearing) in a higher rate than before. It is supported by the fact that now more than 60 per cent of Hungarian wives return into work either before their last childbirth or after it. The "conventional" type of employment pattern (when woman leaves the labour force at the time of her first childbirth and does not reentry into market work after that) constitutes only 12 per cent of married women (Róbert, Bukodi, Luijkx, forthcoming). It means that females are becoming more career-oriented and tend to invest more time in building their own work career. Increasing educational attainment, changing industrial structure, expansion of job opportunities could be considered as the facilitating factors for the increased participation of women in labour market. Rising educational attainment in younger cohorts of women may increase the "economic costs" of not participating in market work, in addition, historical changes in the institution of the family (increases of marital disruptions, growing proportion of mother-headed families) might also have led young female cohorts to become aware of the importance of their own work career as an alternative to the traditional family roles (Oppenheimer, 1988).

3. In the light of females' increasing labour force participation it is obvious that women's occupational mobility should be investigated in the similar way as men's work career. The aim of this paper is to examine females' lifetime occupational mobility as a way of giving a better understanding of

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women's place in the labour force as well as in the class structure. To explore the way individuals are allocated to certain occupational groups and move between and within them is necessary to understand the underlying class structure and is the subject of the labour market analysis as well.

4. This report focuses on career transitions of married women in upward and downward directions during their work histories. The dynamics of women's work transition is closely linked to the dynamics of their family formation processes. Marriage and childbearing are the most salient life-course events that have impact on women's decisions on their labour force behaviour. These family formation events divide the life-course into different stages and constitute the context in which females' labour market transitions are made. This context determines the set of options from which women can choose. Considering this strong influencing property of family formation events, I investigate women's lifetime career mobility embedded in family context. It means that besides showing the main features of women's occupational pattern (how it varies over the life-cycle), I concentrate on two family effects. First, I intend to examine whether or not there is any difference in mobility patterns between females with children and without them. Second, I focus on the spouse or homogamy effect. Namely, I try to explore to what direction the husband "divert" his wife's occupational trajectory from its course, whether he promotes his partner's upward moves or he rather keeps his wife back.

Data and variables

5. In the paper I use data from the 1992 Social Mobility and Life History Survey which was conducted by Hungarian Statistical Office. This large-scale data-set records women's (as well as men's) occupational history over their career up to the interview. For this analysis I selected couples who 1; live together in the same household and 2; live in their first marriage and 3; wife is younger than 55 years old (the age of retirement for women in Hungary). Both legal marriages and cohabiting partnership were considered (N=5472 couples).

6. This data-base contains a detailed job history starting with entry into labour force and including all changes in employment status as well as changes in occupational positions during the life-course. All dates were registered for all job changes making it possible to investigate the timing of all occupational changes and duration of all jobs held during the activity history. In addition, it was possible to merge the occupational record with the life and family events of the women (marriage, entry into motherhood, characteristics of husband). Because the aim of this paper is to follow women's career transitions, the analysis should be performed on a special file where the unit of observation is not the individual any more but the event, i.e. the job spell. For this purpose the original individual data file was transformed into a so-called person-period file. To prepare this event-oriented file I used the method of episode splitting (Blossfeld, Hamarle, Mayer, 1989): each event in the occupational history was considered as a separate episode and the job spells were divided into years which is the smallest time unit in the data-set.

7. For determining the occupational position of women I chose a collapsed version of the so-called EGP classification (Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero class scheme, 1992) distinguishing 5 occupational classes:

- (1) Upper service class (high professionals, managers, higher-grade administrators and officials)
- (2) Lower service class (low professionals, higher-grade technicians, lower-grade administrators and officials)
- (3) Intermediate non-manual (routine nonmanuals in administration and commerce, employees in services, lower-grade technicians, clericals)
- (4) Skilled worker (skilled manual wage workers in all branches of industry)
- (5) Unskilled and agricultural worker (semi- and unskilled workers in industry and in agriculture).

Upward occupational mobility means any move up this scheme, downward mobility, of course, reverse case.

Women's educational and occupational distribution

8. My analysis begins with a description of variations in educational attainment of married women by birth cohorts. Most of the sociological theory regard educational level as a determining factor of occupational mobility chances.

9. First of all, it should be emphasised that women increasingly acquire skill levels. Table 1 shows that **relative proportion of females without any qualification has been declining over time**. On the other hand, proportion of graduates from lower secondary school with vocational training has been increasing, and it is particularly high in the youngest cohort (27%). The number of secondary school graduates increased from 15% (in the 1938-42 cohort) to 30% (in the 1953-62 and 1963-74 cohort). The percentage of women with tertiary diploma increased slightly during this period, and this improvement is attributable entirely to a sharp increase between the oldest two cohorts (note, that in the most recent cohort there are some women who have not finished their day-course education up to the interview). These trends are in line with previous findings (Róbert, 1991). Thus, the changes in educational structure reflects an improvement of educational opportunities over time and results in changes in occupational opportunities as well.

Table 1.
Women's educational attainment by birth cohort (per cent)

Educational level	Birth cohorts			
	1938-42	1943-52	1953-62	1963-74
Less than primary	15	5	3	3
Primary school	61	50	43	35
Vocational school	5	11	16	27
Secondary school	16	27	30	30
Tertiary diploma	3	7	7	5
Total	100	100	100	100

10. As far first occupation as table 2 shows, women seem to be located in a considerably narrow range of occupations, especially in unskilled and agricultural jobs. However, **there is a uniform turn away from the unskilled jobs in productive branches into the jobs require higher qualification in service and administrative sectors**. A comparison of the oldest cohort and the youngest one shows a growth of 8 percentage points in women's representation in professional and managerial occupations (classes I and II), while the proportion of females in unskilled jobs have declined from 65% to 30% during this period. Thus, the changes in first occupational position display an obvious pattern: agricultural and manual (at most unskilled) jobs in productive sphere diminish with the spread of technology and industrialization.

Table 2.
Women's first occupational class by birth cohort (per cent)

Occupational class	Birth cohorts			
	1938-42	1943-52	1953-62	1963-74
Upper service class	1	2	3	2
Lower service class	6	9	13	13
Intermed. nonmanual	16	25	30	35
Skilled worker	11	14	21	20
Unskilled worker	65	48	34	30
Total	100	100	100	100

Vertical occupational mobility

11. The proportion of women who have ever experienced upward as well as downward occupational mobility increases as they get older. It is obvious, the more labour market experience one has, the more

chance there is for mobility of any kind. However, the amount of upward and downward moves are not equal. For each age groups it appears to be approximately twice as large upward career transitions as downward moves. In the age group over 50, 35 per cent of women had at least one upward move, whereas 16 per cent of them experienced downward transition.

12. To investigate females' career mobility in more details, I employ life-table method which is particularly useful for comparison of behaviour of different subgroups. The so-called survivor function² enables us to describe the age-specific profile of behaviours by showing the effect of different social characteristics on the timing of shifts.

13. The survival functions in Figure 1-2 demonstrate the upward and downward moves for **four different birth cohorts**. They show the probability of not having upward or downward transition up to the certain point of time after entering into labour market. The curves appear to be somewhat different for the four cohorts. **Women who belong to recent cohorts have more probability to move on occupational hierarchy in any directions**. It means that continuous industrialization has positive effect on any kind of mobility because it leads to increasing opportunities for women to enter into labour force and to move up and down in the labour market. Modernization causes more mobility overall.

14. In the next step I examine the differences in career profiles according to the **women's occupational classes** at the time of labour market entry. As Figure 3 shows **the higher the social class of origin job, the less upward shifts are to be expected**. It means that women's occupation has "negative effect" on upward transitions which is obvious in certain sense, because opportunities for a better job decline as the level of attainment already achieved increases. Namely, occupational position constitutes a "ceiling" for further upward mobility. For downward shifts the trend is reverse (Figure 4). This kind of moves are more likely if women origin job is on the top of occupational hierarchy. In this case employees probably are over-rewarded (there is mismatch between lower educational attainment and higher occupational position) and it results in higher chance to move down on job ladder.

15. The examination of lifetime occupational mobility of **childless women and females at least one child** reveals that the former have had more experiences of upward transitions than the latter (Figure 5 6). By the end of their working lives 39 per cent of childless women had had at least one upward move, whereas for women with children this proportion is only 30 per cent. It may be surprising that the gap is not too wide. As the figure illustrates there is a postponing effect between childless women and women with children as regards the amount of upward shifts. Namely, **women belonging to the former group tend to move up more frequently at their early career stages, while females with children are "obliged to their career improvement after the childbearing period**. As far the downward mobility the difference between two subgroups of women is smaller than it was for the reverse direction. Both childless women and women with children experience marked increases in frequency of downward transitions at earlier career stages. To sum up, these trends show that **having children decreases women's chance for upward occupational mobility - at least at earlier stages of career -, and decreases the downward transition rate as well**. However, there are a quite large proportion of childless women experiencing downward mobility and women with children experiencing upward moves.

16. Eventually, I focus on women's lifetime mobility in the light of their **position**, namely, I investigate the impact of marriage homogamy on upward and downward moves. According to the economic approach of the family men and women bring different resources into the marriage (for men it means rather financial for women cultural capital), and the aim of the members of the family is to utilize these resources for the most efficient functioning of the family (Becker, 1981). Segregation of jobs into „male occupation" and „female occupation" is also in line with this theory. Women

² Survival function shows the probability of not having the investigated event up to a specific duration (more details on this method one can find in Blossfeld and Rohwer, 1995 and Yamaguchi, 1991)

choose female-dominated jobs because these positions better reward them considering their family commitment, do not require a great deal of efforts, skills, continuous job training. By this point of view, - although husband and wife have functionally different roles in the family - both partners use all of their resources for the interest of the whole family. The high occupational position of woman improves the economic status of the family, consequently, it is also the husband's interest to promote wife's upward occupational mobility (Oppenheimer, 1977). However, if the wife's occupational position become higher than her husband's one, it can endanger the marriage because it may create competition between partners and husband may feel his dominant role in the family to be deteriorated. Thus, husband's occupational status can work as a ceiling for wife's occupational attainment (for instance Parsons, 1949).

17. Figures 7-8 illustrate the above outlined hypotheses. For women, the amount of upward transition is the largest when their original occupational status is lower than husband's job position. At the same time, if women's status is better than husband's occupational standing the odds of women's downward move is much higher than in other cases. Consequently, **the spouse's occupational position means some kind of barrier for females' mobility opportunities.** Husband follows the economic interest of the family as long as wife's job position does not exceed his own occupational standing (he „enables his partner” to move up); however, if wife's status improves above husband's position he probably „pull his partner down”.

Figure 1
Survival function for upward move by birth cohorts

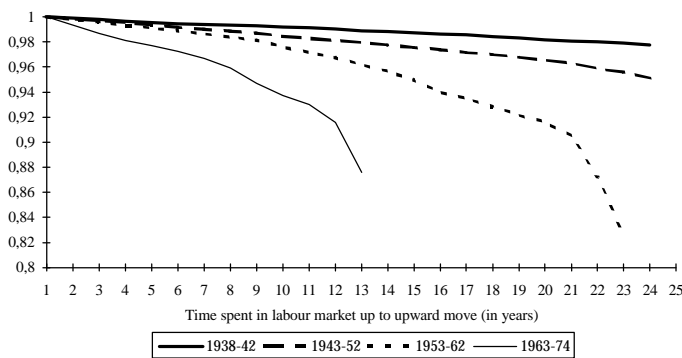


Figure 2
Survival function for downward move by birth cohorts



Figure 3
Survival function for upward move by women's occupational class

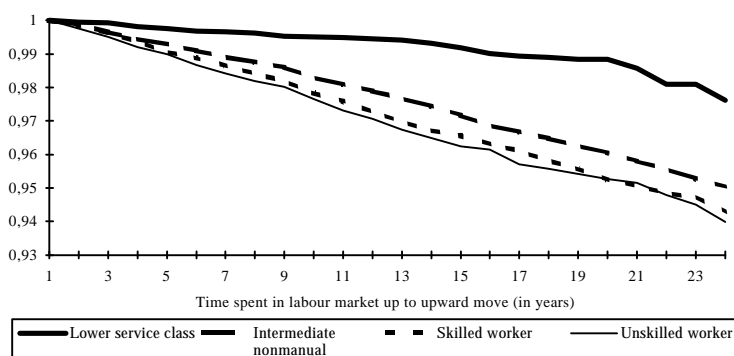


Figure 4
Survival function for downward move by women's occupational class

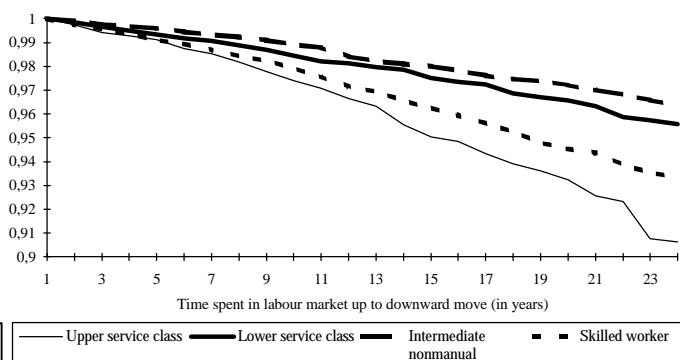


Figure 5
Survival function for upward move by number of children

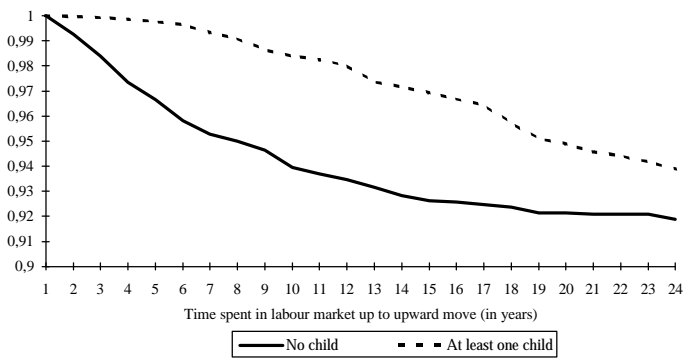


Figure 6
Survival function for downward move by number of children

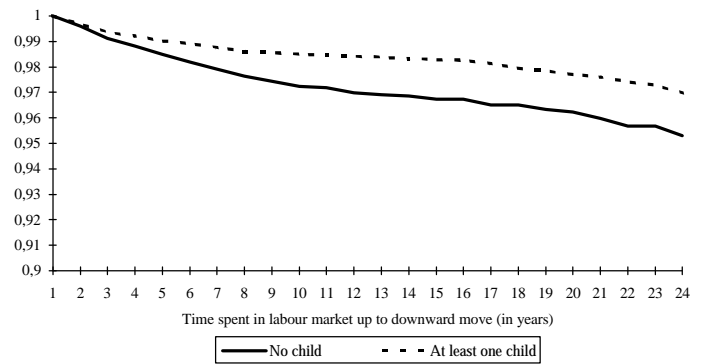


Figure 7
Survival function for upward move by spouses' status homogeneity

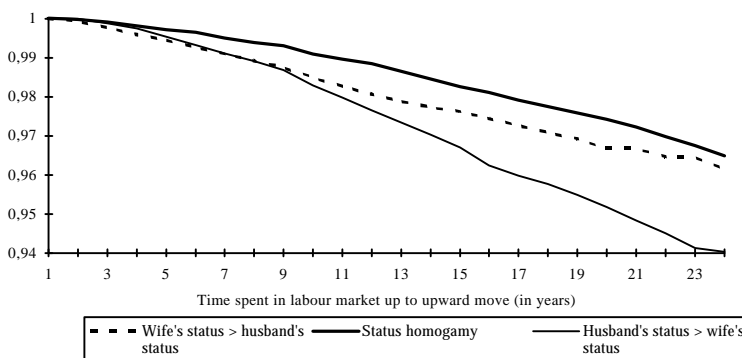
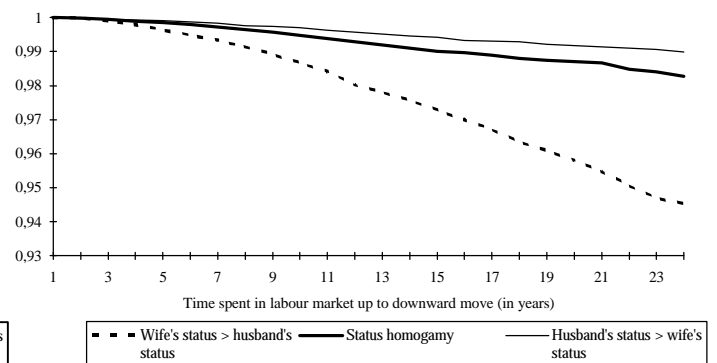


Figure 8
Survival function for downward move by spouses' status homogeneity



Occupational mobility over childbirth

18. In this section I intend to examine the precise timing of occupational shifts in the light of childbirth. Women's life-course experiences are split into four stages following Shirley Dex's method (Dex, 1990): up to their first childbirth, from their first birth up to the first reentry into labour force, from the second birth up to the last birth (last reentry into labour market) and since the return after last childbirth.

Table 3.
Timing of occupational mobility for women with children (per cent)

Work life periods	Birth cohorts				Total
	1938-42	1943-52	1953-62	1963-74	
Upward mobility					
Up to first birth	22	25	30	55	28
From first birth up to first reentry into labour force	12	14	16	24	14
From second birth up to last birth (last reentry)	16	17	21	11	17
Since last birth	50	44	34	11	43
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Downward mobility					
Up to first birth	13	17	21	47	21
From first birth up to first reentry into labour force	20	21	25	27	25
From second birth up to last birth (last reentry)	15	16	20	15	17
Since last birth	52	46	33	10	40
Total	100	100	100	100	100

19. **Upward occupational mobility occurs in most frequency during the early career stages or during the final work phase for women with children.** 70 per cent of upward shifts take place in these

periods, with higher proportion in the last work stage. The younger the female, the higher the proportion of upward moves occur during their initial work phase and the lower the proportion occur during the final career phase. The reason for it, on the one hand, is straightforward: the youngest women have had „less time” for making upward transitions than their older counterparts. As the upper panel of Table 3 shows, the upward shifts occur in least frequencies over the first break for childbirth, only 13 per cent of the all cases. On the other hand, this increasing is due to the fact that the time span between the labour market entry and the first birth is larger for the younger cohorts than for older ones.

20. The downward mobility pattern is quite different from the timing of upward movements (lower panel of Table 3). 21 per cent of this kind of transition occurred during the initial career phase, before childbirth period, and another 40 per cent have taken place since the last birth. The crucial difference between the upward and downward mobility pattern is that in the latter case approximately one quarter of the shifts occurred over the first break for childbirth. In sum, the proportion of downward occupational movements taking place during the childbirth period is greater - 42 per cent of all downward transitions occurred at this time - than the amount of upward mobility occurring over the childrearing phase (30 per cent). However, it must be noted that childrearing phase is far from being the only crucial period for women’s downward mobility experiences because more than half of these experiences take place outside of this phase. All in all, these findings are in line with the results of the western scholars, namely, **much of the downward occupational transition occur over the first childbirth break** (Dex, 1986, McRea, 1991). In addition, from these two sets of occupational mobility pattern one can outline a consistent picture: **a small proportion of upward mobility occurs over childbirth phase and a larger amount of downward moves take place at this time.**

21. In the next step I take a closer look at the occupational transitions. I investigate the shifts, on the one hand, between the last job before childbirth and the first occupational group after childbirth for all women who returned into labour force after having their first child (Table 4). On the other hand, I show the crosstabulation of women’ job at the time of the last birth and at the time of the interview (Table 5).

Table 4.
Occupational transitions between last job before childbirth and first job after it (per cent)

Occupation before first birth	Occupation at first reentry into labour force					Total
	Upper service class	Lower service class	Intermediat e occupations	Skilled worker	Unskilled worker	
Upper service class	54	29	17	-	-	100
Lower service class	3	80	10	4	3	100
Intermediate occupations	1	5	74	11	9	100
Skilled worker	-	1	7	58	34	100
Unskilled worker	-	1	6	7	86	100
Total	2	14	26	16	42	100

Table 5.
Occupational transitions between job at last birth and at the time of interview (per cent)

Occupation At the time of last birth	Occupation at the time of interview					Total
	Upper service class	Lower service class	Intermediate occupations	Skilled worker	Unskilled worker	
Upper service class	76	11	9	3	1	100
Lower service class	6	82	8	3	1	100
Intermediate occupations	3	12	78	5	2	100
Skilled worker	2	4	6	73	15	100
Unskilled worker	-	2	8	7	83	100
Total	2	14	26	16	42	100

22. The figures in the main diagonal reveal the proportions of those who retained their occupational position during their first break for childbirth or over their last career stages. The sizes of the diagonal elements are greater for the second table (except for the unskilled workers) which means that women are most likely to retain their status over the last work phases. As regards the figures in Table 4, the diagonal elements show that unskilled workers have the best chance of being in the same occupation after the first childbirth, and employees in the upper service class are most likely to leave their original job, women in these occupations experienced the largest outflow. Over 40 per cent of upper service class women could not retain their position during the first childbirth break. Of course, moves out of occupations at the top are downward transitions. But, much of the shifts at the intermediate level of occupations are also downward move. 34 per cent of women who were in skilled manual occupations before childbirth had some kind of unskilled work at the time of the first reentry into labour force. For women with lower service or intermediate nonmanual jobs the amount of downward mobility is far smaller (17-20 per cent), but the chance of upward shift is also limited (only 3-6 per cent). The pattern which emerges from the proportions of Table 5 is somewhat different from the trends outlined above. As the figures show, **after the childbirth phase women have more likelihood of experiencing upward occupational mobility than over childbirth period.** It is particularly true for women in intermediate nonmanual jobs, of whom 15 per cent experienced upward shifts after their last childbirth.

23. The figures in Table 6 provide a summary of those in Table 4-5. The first column shows women who experienced downward movements on their first return to work, second column represents the percentage of status recovery after childbirth period. The results confirm that women in upper service class and skilled manual jobs have the most chance of experiencing downward mobility. However, one can see that **females who belonged to the upper service class before their childbirth can most easily recover their status if they lost it;** 30 per cent of them recover their occupational position after the childbirth period. As we move down on the occupational ladder the proportion of those who are able to recover their class standing becomes less and less.

Table 6.
Occupational downward mobility during childbirth and status recovery (per cent)

	Downward mobility after first birth	Recovering occupational status after childbirth period
Upper service class	19	30
Lower service class	10	22
Intermediate occupations	9	20
Skilled worker	20	15

Discussion

24. The goal of this paper was to show women's occupational career mobility pattern in the light of family formation. The analysis has several implications. First, due to increasing educational attainment and modernization, women's career profiles appear to become similar to men's mobility experiences. Women gradually turn to male-dominated occupations, their proportion in professional and managerial jobs has markedly increased in the last decades. However, it is obvious that women's mobility pattern is some kind of combination of their labour market preferences and constraints which emerge from their family commitment. Undoubtedly, women's family roles (responsibilities for child-care) are a major source of gender inequality in the labour market. But, as my analysis showed, substantial number of females retain their occupational position over the childrearing phase which means that this source of gender inequality in labour market is narrowing, women have lifetime attachment to their career. At the same time, females who lose their occupational status because of childbirth have very low likelihood to recover their position, but this chance depends on the original class position of women. Females in higher level nonmanual and professional occupations recover their class position after their childbirth period with higher probability than others. Accordingly, they are the least likely to experience the substantial and long-standing damage to

their future career prospects because of breaks for childbirth. Moreover, as women marry only rarely men with very different class status, these inequalities between women are likely to be translated into inequalities between families. In addition, my results give some support the suggestion of increasing inequalities between families through a comparison of the class distribution of the couples. Spouse's occupational resources influence positively wife's upward mobility indicating that couples pool together their resources for the interest of the family. In other words, the social and financial advantages brought into family by husband's high-level occupational status are increasingly likely to be enlarged by wife's more likelihood to move to higher occupational class.

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