Abstract
We decompose a well-known mobility measure into directional components, using it to compare male and female labor income mobility using data for Germany, Korea and the United States from 2013 Cross-National Equivalent File. Our main interest is testing whether a glass ceiling exists for women, and how its existence and placement differs over time and across countries. Conventional thinking about the glass ceiling highlights the belief that the playing field is level for women and men in the labor market up to a certain point, after which there is an effective limit on advancement for women. We look at the income dynamics – the absolute and relative movements of women and men through the distribution of income over time. Our initial findings on Germany and the United States indicate a glass ceiling both in Germany and the United States with men having a large premium in their upward income mobility compared to women in the upper income classes. We also find significant, but smaller, differences at middle and low income levels for both countries. In our earlier work on Germany we found that men have overall greater upward income mobility, while women have greater upward mobility in the lower initial income classes, In the upper initial income brackets men’s mobility is higher than women’s.

This paper builds on our earlier preliminary work on mobility by (1) updating the data; (2) including in the analysis Germany, South Korea and the U.S.– three very different economies which the conventional wisdom holds have very different treatments of men vs. women; (3) introducing weighted probits that allow us to examine the correlates of directional mobility in a way that corresponds directly to our mobility index. This is also applied to subsets of the mobility matrix. (290 words/300 allowed)