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SOCIAL MOBILITY AND URBANIZATION *

Discussion of the factors which have helped preserve the "open" character of the American class system has traditionally pointed to the role of the immigrant as the base of the class ladder upon which the native-born climbed. Until the end of mass immigration in the 1920's, millions of immigrants entered the economic structure in unskilled and semiskilled occupations. The children of the previous generation of immigrants were, presumably, able to secure the next highest level of jobs which opened up in an expanding economy. The end of mass immigration is, therefore, now cited as a major reason for predicting the emergence of rigid class stratification in the United States. In this paper, evidence will be presented which suggests that certain internal structural trends -- specifically those associated with increased urbanization and internal migration -- operate to continue to make possible a pattern of social mobility similar to that posited as resulting from high rates of immigration.

Heavy internal migration is a continuing aspect of American society, occurring in depression, in wartime, and in prosperity. What is the effect of the movement of tens of millions of Americans on their socio-economic position, on that of their children, and on the structure of communities? Such questions would best be answered by a systematic research projects designed to analyze the relationship between migration and social mobility. As a preliminary

(*) This article is one of a series based on the Oakland labor-mobility survey, conducted by the Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Berkeley, during 1949-50. In this survey, 935 principal wage earners were interviewed, chosen as a random sample from Oakland, California households after eliminating the highest and lowest socio-economic areas in the city. A standardized questionnaire was used, covering the subject's family background, education, area shifts, job history since leaving school, and other factors considered to be important in an analysis of labor mobility in this community.

contribution to such research, the data collected in the Oakland mobility study have been subjected to a secondary analysis to learn what hypotheses are suggested by examining the relationship between geographical and occupational social mobility. (1)

Extent of Mobility. The geographically mobile character of the members of the sample can be seen from the following data. Only 24 per cent were born in the San Francisco Bay Area, with an additional 8 per cent born in other parts of California. A large majority of the respondents, 61 per cent, began their working careers outside the San Francisco Bay Area. Once having reached adulthood, as defined by entrance into the labor market, the sample's members continue to reveal a pattern of migration. More than three-quarters of them have worked in two or more communities; as many as a third have held jobs in five or more areas.

In an attempt to analyze the effect of migration on current position in the occupational structure, the respondents were classified according to the size of the community in which they spent their teens (community of orientation). (2) While there is a certain amount of unreliability in such information, the data revealed significant differences between the size of the community in which the respondent spent his most important pre-employment years and his later job career. For example, a comparison of the total work

(1) Since the Oakland mobility study was not designed for the purpose, this paper, like all secondary analyses, cannot pretend to offer a rounded presentation. Nevertheless, it may serve as another example of the way in which sociologists may profitably re-analyze some of the vast amounts of empirical data collected in the past two decades.

(2) The community of orientation was obtained by asking the respondents: "Where did you live most of the time between the ages of 13 and 19? Did you live inside the city limits? Did you live on a farm?" Each community was then classified according to the population size reported by the census.

careers of men coming from communities of different sizes indicates that the smaller the community of orientation of present (1949) Oakland residents, the more likely they are to have spent a considerable proportion of their work careers in manual occupations. (See Table 1.)

Effect of Original Community Background. The data clearly point to the role which original community background plays for residents of large cities. Those coming from a rural background are most likely to have been manual workers for most of their careers. Those from towns and small cities reveal a similar job history. The typical member of the sample coming from a village under 2,500 in population spent an average of 41 per cent of his work career in nonmanual occupations, as compared with 53 per cent for one who spent his teens in a metropolitan center. (3) The data indicate two principal "breaking points" in the influence of community of orientation on job careers: (1) There is a sharp break between those from farms and all others; and (2) among those from villages, towns, and cities, the largest differences are between communities under and over 250,000 in population.

While Table 1 treats the entire work history of the respondents, regardless of where the jobs were located, Table 2 presents the relationship between community of orientation and present job.

(3) The analysis revealed that size of community of orientation, rather than migration background per se, was most crucial in affecting subsequent career patterns. That is, there is little difference between natives of metropolitan San Francisco and natives of other large urban centers. If anything, migrants from other metropolitan areas were even more successful than native Bay Area residents. The difference, however, seems in large part related to the fact that the natives in the sample were somewhat younger than the migrants, and consequently were not as close to the peak of their careers as migrants.

Table 1 --Relation of Community of Orientation to Average Proportion of Career Spent in Each Type of Job *

	TYPE OF COMMUNITY OF ORIENTATION					
	RURAL		URBAN, BY POPULATION SIZE			
	Farm (N=131)	Nonfarm (N=87)	2,500- 24,999 (N=71)	25,000- 249,999 (N=75)	250,000 749,999 (N=42)	750,000 and over (N=250)
Average Per Cent of Career						
Nonmanual	27	41	45	46	52	53
Manual	57	52	52	49	44	43
Farm	11	2	1	2	1	1

* Includes only respondents aged 31 and over. The average proportion of career spent in a specified types of job applies to the group of respondents in the size-of-community category. Each respondent's career was individually analyzed, and the proportion of career time spent in each type of job was calculated. These individual percentages were averaged to obtain the group averages presented in the above table. Because of the biases involved in average unweighted percentages, the proportion cannot be summed nor do the implicit sums account for the total career.

If we examine this table a clear pattern emerges -- the larger the community of orientation, the higher the status of the job held in San Francisco. Sixty-seven per cent of the business executives and upper white-collar workers grew up in large cities (250,000 or over in population) as compared with 60 per cent of the lower white-collar workers, 51 per cent of the sales personnel, 44 per cent of the skilled, 40 per cent of the semiskilled, and 21 per cent of the unskilled. These data suggest that migration from rural areas and smaller communities to metropolitan centers is playing the same role in ordering people in the occupational structure that immigration once played.

The deviations from the above trend lie mainly in two groups, the self-employed and the professionals. Other data in this study suggest that the deviation of the self-employed is related to the

unique position that self-employment plays in our society. (4)

Table 2 --Relationship Between Community of Orientation and Present Job

		TYPE OF COMMUNITY OF ORIENTATION			
		Farm	Rural- nonfarm, and Urban, 250,000 Under 250,- 000	Urban, Over 250,000	All Types
		Percentage Distribution of Respondents			
All types	(N=898)	19	33	48	100
Nonmanual	(N=510)	14	31	55	100
Professional	(N= 68)	12	48	40	100
Self-employed	(N=114)	21	30	49	100
Upper white-collar*	(N=105)	8	25	67	100
Lower white-collar	(N=159)	12	28	60	100
Sales	(N= 64)	16	33	51	100
Manual	(N=388)	25	36	39	100
Skilled	(N=195)	24	32	44	100
Semiskilled	(N=136)	23	37	40	100
Unskilled	(N= 57)	35	44	21	100

* Includes business executive and other high-status white-collar jobs.

The self-employed have the most heterogeneous occupational career of any group in the sample. Many of them have had unskilled and semi-skilled jobs previous to entering business for themselves. Of all the nonmanual occupations, this group contains the largest number of former manual and farm workers. The data also indicate that self-

(4) See Seymour M. Lipset and Reinhard Bendix, "Social Mobility and Occupational Career Patterns, II, Social Mobility," American Journal of Sociology (Mar., 1952), pp. 497-499.

employment is the principal means of upward mobility for manual workers and the less educated, while the better-educated nonmanual workers tend to move up the occupational ladder within the bureaucracy of large-scale organizations. Owning a business, therefore, is the pattern of upward mobility of the lower-class migrants. If they do not enter self-employment, they tend to remain in lower-status manual jobs.

Table 3 --Relationship Between Occupations of Fathers and Sons, by Type of Community Orientation

Son's Present Job	FATHER'S OCCUPATION*				
	Professional, Self-employed, and Business Executive	White-collar and Sales	Manual Skilled	Manual Semi-skilled and Unskilled	Farm
Percentage distribution of Respondents					
COMMUNITY OF ORIENTATION - FARM, RURAL-NONFARM, AND URBAN UNDER 250,000					
Manual	31	37	65	54	61
Nonmanual	69	63	35	46	39
All	100	100	100	100	100
	(N=115)	(N=30)	(N=97)	(N=55)	(N=147)
COMMUNITY OF ORIENTATION - URBAN, 250,000 AND OVER					
Manual	28	21	43	50	52
Nonmanual	72	79	57	50	48
All	100	100	100	100	100
	(N=106)	(N=52)	(N=106)	(N=70)	(N=33)

* These categories differ from those for present job (Table 2). The data on father's occupation did not permit distinguishing between upper and lower white-collar jobs but did make it possible to separate business executives, who have been grouped here with professionals and the self-employed.

The professionals, on the other hand, present a different problem. Most professionals have spent their entire working career in this category. It is probable that many natives of small communities who become professionals leave their home town to go to the larger cities, where greater opportunity exists in their field. Thus, we find that size of community of orientation is related to occupational position within the ranks of industry and large-scale organization. The smaller the community of schooling training, the more obstacles the individual is likely to encounter in his attempt to be upward-mobile within bureaucratic structures.

The hypothesis that the larger the community of orientation of individuals living in metropolitan areas, the more successfully mobile they will be may be tested directly by examining the difference between the occupations of the respondents and those of their fathers as an indicator of generational mobility, and the variations between the first jobs of the sample members and their present positions as a measure of intragenerational mobility, holding size of community of orientation constant in both cases. Tables 3 and 4 present the results of this analysis.

It is clear from the above tables that the larger the community in which one is brought up, the greater the likelihood that a man will be successfully upward-mobile, or conversely, the lower the possibility that he will fall in occupational status. (5) There are many factors which underlie these relationships; some are discussed below. One important element, however is the fact that educational opportunities are greater in larger cities and the

(5) While the differences in some of the internal comparisons are slight and the number of cases in some of the cells is small, the fact that in each of the ten possible comparisons the difference is in the direction indicated by the hypothesis suggests that the results have some validity.

potential rewards for educational attainment are more visible to those who live in larger cities while attending school.

Table 4 --Relationship Between First Job and Present Job, by Type of Community of Orientation*

Present job	FIRST JOB		
	Nonmanual	Manual	Farm
Percentage Distribution of Respondents			
COMMUNITY OF ORIENTATION - FARM			
Nonmanual	60	29	40
Manual	40	71	60
All	100	100	100
	(N=20)	(N=62)	(N=48)
COMMUNITY OF ORIENTATION-RURAL-NONFARM, AND URBAN UNDER 250,000			
Nonmanual	73	31	44
Manual	27	69	56
All	100	100	100
	(N=94)	(N=120)	(N=9)
COMMUNITY OF ORIENTATION - URBAN, 250,000 AND OVER			
Nonmanual	88	42	
Manual	12	58	
All	100	100	
	(N=129)	(N=158)	

* Includes only respondents aged 31 and over, in order to eliminate those men who have not been in the labor force for a considerable length of time.

Natives of large cities are generally better educated than those living in smaller communities, and the data indicate that the same differentials in educational backgrounds exist among residents of Oakland, when they are compared according to community of

orientation (Table 5).

While the lower educational attainments of those residents of Oakland who grew up in smaller communities explain in large part why native metropolitan urbanites are more likely to attain non-manual positions, it is interesting to note that, even when amount of education is held constant, more of the metropolitan residents hold nonmanual positions (Table 6).

Table 5 --Relationship between Community of Orientation and Education.

Years of schooling completed	TYPE OF COMMUNITY OF ORIENTATION		
	Farm (N 167)	Rural-nonfarm, and Urban, 250,000 urban under 250,000 (N 305)	and over (N 434)
0-11	65	53	42
12	23	22	35
13+	12	25	23

Similar findings have been reported in European studies of social mobility. A recent Swedish study indicates clearly that the manual working class of Stockholm is primarily recruited from smaller urban communities and rural areas, while the majority of the sons of manual workers who grow up in the metropolis move up to the middle class. (6) An early German study of the relationship between

(6) See Gunnar Boalt, "Social Mobility in Stockholm" in Transactions of the Second World Congress of Sociology, Vol. II (London: International Sociological Association, 1954)

migration and social mobility also reported comparable results. (7)

Interpretation. The cycle in which immigrants or migrants into large cities take over the lower-status positions while native urbanites move up in the occupation structure has been one of the more important processes underlying social mobility ever since cities began to expand rapidly. It is this cycle which gives to cities their character of great mobility and ever present change.

Table 6 --Relationship Between Community of Orientation and Occupation, with Education Held Constant

	TYPE OF COMMUNITY OF ORIENTATION								
	Rural-Farm			Rural-Nonfarm			Urban,		
	Years of Schooling Completed			and Urban under 250,000 Years of Schooling Completed			250,000 and over Years of Schooling Completed		
	0-11	12	13+	0-11	12	13+	0-11	12	13+
	(N=157)	(N=55)	(N=34)	(N=108)	(N=51)	(N=57)	(N=135)	(N=151)	(N=97)
	Percentage distribution of respondents								
Nonmanual	36	49	79	36	63	79	50	72	82
Manual	64	51	21	64	37	21	50	28	18
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Of those persons born and raised in cities, some are socially mobile and some, of course, are not. But they all tend to stay in the city

(7) See Otto Ammon, *Die Gesellschaftsordnung und ihre natürlichen Grundlagen* (Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1895), p. 145.

(although they frequently move from one urban center to another). On the other hand, rural and small-town dwellers, if they move out of their parental status, are most likely to do so in a large city -- while their more stable neighbors remain in their place of origin.

(8) Thus, more mobility takes place in the city than in the country or in small communities. But this conclusion still leaves unexplained the factors which facilitate the social mobility of native urbanites. While little research has been done which bears directly on this problem, it is possible to suggest a number of processes which seem significant:

1. Greater social mobility in large urban centers as compared with smaller communities is inherent in the simple fact that metropolitan areas are characterized by a greater degree of specialization and a more complex division of labor than smaller communities. The economies that flow from specialization of function are able to take effect primarily in metropolitan centers. Consequently, increased size of community is related to the existence of a greater variety of positions. This means that there is a greater likelihood, on a chance or random basis alone, that people in large cities will move occupationally than will small-community dwellers.

2. Since the beginnings of the great urbanization and industrialization trends in the nineteenth century, cities have experienced

(8) It may, indeed, be suggested that the more ambitious small towns and city lower-class youth leave their home community for "greener pastures" in large cities. This hypothesis was in part validated by Scudder and Anderson, who compared the patterns of social mobility of "migrant" sons and those who remained at home with those of their fathers in a small Kentucky community. They found that "sons who migrate out of small or moderate-size communities are more likely to rise above their parents' occupational status than sons who remain in the home town." [Richard Scudder and C. Arnold Anderson, "Migration and Vertical Occupational Mobility," *American Sociological Review*, XIX (1954), pp. 329-334.]

considerable population and economic growth. They have far more than matched the expansion in total inhabitants and total economic activities of the countries in which they are found. (9). This pattern of urban growth necessarily means that there are more new (and higher level) positions to be filled in metropolitan centers than in smaller and demographically more stable communities.

3. In spite of their rate of rapid growth, large cities have a lower birth rate than smaller communities and rural areas. Except for a brief period after World War II, cities over 100,000 in the United States have not been reproducing their population. Thus, migration to metropolitan areas not only accounts for the expansion of urban population, but also fills in the gap created by low birth rates. And within urban society, the wealthier and higher-status socio-economic strata have the lowest reproduction rates. Consequently, variations in fertility rates help account for the maximization of social mobility in the city. (10)

The processes cited above clearly indicate why metropolitan areas have a higher rate of social mobility than smaller communities. They do not, however, suggest why men raised in large cities are more likely to be upward-mobile than migrants from smaller communities and rural areas. A few hypotheses may be suggested.

As was indicated earlier, lower-class individuals growing up in a large city are more likely to secure high education than their brethren in smaller communities. Almost every major city in the Western world has one or more universities, and natives of such

(9) Between 1870 and 1950, the proportion of the population living in cities over 100,000 jumped from 11 to 30 per cent in the U. S., from 5 to 27 per cent in Germany, from 26 to 38 per cent in Great Britain, and from 9 to 17 per cent (1946) in France.

(10) See Pitirim Sorokin, *Social Mobility* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1927), pp. 346-360; and E. Sibley, "Some Demographic Clues to Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, VII (1942), pp. 324 f.

communities can attend college or university while living at home. In addition, the simple fact of living in a community which has a college or university within it should mean that a school youth will be more aware of the possibilities and advantages of attending an institutional of higher learning than will one who grows up some distance from a college. Metropolitan youth also benefit from the fact that the teaching staffs in their high schools are usually better paid and trained than those in smaller communities, and consequently are more likely to give their students more incentive to attend college.

Related to the greater propensity of urban youth to obtain higher education is the fact that they are more likely to be acquainted with the occupational possibilities which exist in such communities than will those who are raised in the occupationally less-heterogeneous smaller community. In re-analyzing the occupational choices of school youth in a number of German and Austrian cities, Lazarsfeld reported that "local variations in occupational choice are parallel to differences in the economic structure." (11) Thus, the larger the proportion of jobs in a given occupation in a city, the greater the number of fourteen-year-old school youth who desired to go into that occupation. Lazarsfeld interpreted this finding as follows:

. . . the nature of occupational choice is not determined primarily as an individual decision, but rather is a result of external influences. For the occupational impressions offered by daily life are proportional to the actual occupational distribution. The greater the number of metal workers, the more frequently will young people hear about it, and the greater will they be stimulated to choose it. (12)

Lower aspirational levels derived from their immediate class

(11) Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Jugend und Beruf* (Jena: C. Fischer, 1931), p. 13.
 (12) *Loc. cit.*

and community environment probably result in lower-class small-town or rural youth being less likely to try to obtain the education or skills which will permit them to be successfully upward-mobile. Thus, lower goals, plus the objectively greater difficulty in securing such training, result in lower-class youth not raised in a metropolitan center entering the labor market with greater handicaps than their big-city class-cousins. And in the labor market of the metropolitan centers, we find that working-class youth who are native urbanites are, in fact, more successful than migrants with similar class backgrounds.

The fact that urban origins are conducive to upward social mobility may help account for a phenomenon that has long puzzled students in this field: the success of the Jews in moving out of lower-class occupations. As compared with any other visible social group, the Jews are the urbanites par excellence. The mobility patterns of the Jews, therefore, may in some part be a consequence of the fact that they are urban dwellers. Other natives of metropolitan areas are also successful in moving up, but this is observed as individual rather than group mobility.

Conclusions. This article has focused primarily on the ways in which the relative size of the community of orientation affects the training, opportunity, perceptions of the occupational structure, and occupational aspirations of individuals, and thus increases or decreases men's chances for an advantaged position in the occupational structure. It should be recognized, however, that variation in the size of community of orientation is only a special case of the variables which structure the horizons and opportunities of individuals. The sociological and psychological mechanisms involved are little different from the restrictions set by socio-economic origins, education, or ethnic background. When documenting the effect of each variable on a given behavior pattern, the sociologist is calling attention to the way in which an individual's potential

behavior is limited or responsive to factors derivative from his location in the social structure. For example, Herbert H. Hyman pointed out that lower-status individuals are less likely to appreciate the value of higher education, or to recommend high-status jobs as occupation objectives to youth. (13) The members of the lower strata not only are disadvantaged in terms of economic resources, but, like the residents of small communities, they take their cues about opportunity or education for their immediately visible social environment. (14) Given the fact that most people in that environment do not have high-status jobs or good educations, many of them are not even aware that these goals are attainable. Thus, a self-perpetuating cycle exists for men in less-privileged environments. The fact remains, however, that many men do break this cycle; and it is the further task of research in this and other areas of behavior to locate the sources of such "deviant" behavior.

(13) See Herbert H. Hyman, "The Value Systems of Different Classes," in Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), *Class, Status and Power* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1953), pp. 426-442.

(14) The question may be raised as to how these findings may be reconciled with those of Scudder and Anderson, who, as was previously noted, found that individuals who migrate from small communities were more mobile than those who remained. It is obvious that this study is not in conflict with that of Scudder and Anderson. The latter report more mobility by small-town out-migrants than natives, while the present study indicates greater mobility by large-city natives than by migrants from small towns. If these two studies are typical of patterns in the whole country, then they suggest the following relationship between social mobility and community of orientation: Those who grow up in small communities and remain in them are least mobile, those who leave these communities are more mobile than the stay-at-homes, while those who are socialized in metropolitan areas have the most opportunity for mobility. The pattern indicates why students of the status structure of small towns and cities report the existence of a relatively static structure. Unwittingly, they select for research the communities which are least representative of mobility trends in American society.