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Social Mobility and Differential Occupational Opportunity in Brazil

Sugiyama Iutaka*

Economic development means that a society will pass through certain stages, each of which seems to be characterized by several features that we can compare and then give a general outline of the process of development. In this article it is my purpose to present some interpretations of both: some aspects of the structure of the Brazilian society, on the one hand, and some aspects of change on the other.

It is well known that the occupational structure reflects the stage of economic and/or industrial development. Brazil, which is now industrializing, shows an increase of certain roles in the occupational structure. My purpose is to study up to what point the traditional occupational structure is going to be reflected in the choice and attainment of occupations by different people in such a structure. Two main aspects seem to be very important to a study of the Brazilian occupational structure: 1) the number of occupations that each person has at the same time; and 2) the role of the public bureaucracy in the Brazilian occupational structure.

The first is held to be one of the characteristics of this society. The number of occupations held or the multiple-job system is accepted as being true at the level of what we can broadly call societal prejudice. That is to say, it is accepted by most people that one individual has several jobs at the same time. This has attracted the attention even of foreign investigators.¹ If a multiple-job system does in fact exist in Brazilian society, one possible explanation for it could be the expansion of the structure. The appearance of new roles would characterize a given stage of economic development. At such a time, conditions would permit that several occupations could be held by an individual.

First, we will discuss the existence of such a multiple-job system and the characteristics of it. A second point that we will examine in this paper is the role of the government occupational structure in relation to this multiple-job system. The third aspect will be the ex-

pansion of the public bureaucracy and its relation to differential opportunity in achieving a role in the governmental structure.

Some Methodological Considerations

The data were obtained by sample survey with direct interview of informants. The unit of analysis was the male head of the household which means that we have a certain bias to consider in the analysis. Normally, in a study of occupational structure we would have to use adults or, in some cases in underdeveloped countries, people of productive age. But the bias that would be considered a disadvantage is positive in our case because we have an older sample. The effect of it is that we shall have a maximization of the occupational opportunities in our study since it is expected that people will succeed to higher positions with older age. In Table 1 we can see that more than half of our sample are 40 years of age or older. At this age it is expected that the person has arrived at a good position within the possibilities that are available to each category of people.

Table I
Distribution of the Informants by Age

Age Groups	Informants	
	Number	Percent
20 - 29	385	13.4
30 - 39	906	31.5
40 - 49	667	23.2
50 - 59	547	19.0
60 - 69	273	9.5
70 and more	98	3.4
Total	2,876	100.0(*)

(*) Only informants giving complete information are computed. For that reason, *n* (number of cases) may vary in the different tables.

A second consideration is that the sample seems to be overrepresented in the lower status categories. The non-existence of a frame and some basic data such as census information at the time of the designing of the sample affected the right proportion of the *favelados* (slum dwellers) concerning which it seems that it was not possible to obtain precise information. As the majority of the *favelados* are in the lower social strata, it seems that there is an overrepresentation of these categories. For that reason, an overall analysis is not presented.

One of the main variables to be considered in this paper is social status. This is represented here by the

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1. See Anthony Leeds, "Brazilian Careers and Social Structure," *American Anthropologist*, LXVI, No. 6, 1321-1347.

different occupations. The prestige hierarchy developed for Britain by Glass and associates and replicated by Hutchinson² with some modification for Brazil is used here.³

The bureaucratic job will be divided into two categories: semi-public and public. The former category of institutions are the *autarquias* and *economia mista* (government has about fifty percent of the shares) in this paper. Actually, the division is more a question of dependency on the different branches of the government. The *autarquias* hold most of the characteristics of the public institutions and depend almost completely on the government. Examples are Lóide Brasileiro (Steamship Company), Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics), or Instituto do Sal (Salt Institute), or the Banco Nacional do Desenvolvimento Econômico (National Bank for Economic Development).

The Results

The number of occupations⁴ that a person has in Rio de Janeiro shows the prestige he has. We can see in Table 2 that there is a relationship between the social status and the number of occupations held. The higher the social level of the individual, the more occupations he is likely to have. The contrast between the two extremes of categories 1 and 6 is very sharp. While for the former we have about 50 percent with one occupation, in the lower category more than 90 percent have only a single occupation.

The tendency from upper to lower categories is very clear. The lower the social status, the more the head of the family has to depend on one occupation. Consequently, we would expect the proportion of those without employment to be greater in the lower categories. However, it is clear that even in the highest categories the number of occupations held by one person is not as many as has been thought. Half of those who are in the Status Category 1 maintain two, while only 7.1 percent have three occupations. Such a distribution could be explained by the fact that these people tend to be professionals or hold high positions in public or private enter-

Table 2
Number of Remunerated Occupations Held by Informants by Status Category

Status Category of Informants	NUMBER OF OCCUPATIONS					N=(100.00%)
	None	1	2	3	4	
1 (highest)	—	50.9	42.0	7.1	—	112
2	—	82.1	16.3	1.6	—	123
3	0.2	84.8	14.3	0.5	0.2	399
4	0.2	90.2	9.4	0.2	—	436
5	0.9	91.5	7.5	0.1	—	917
6	3.4	92.0	4.4	0.2	—	886

prises. As could be expected, the lower the social stratum of the person the more likely he is to be without a job. This low proportion of unemployed men can be explained, on the one hand, by the age of the population interviewed, and on the other by the fact that even those who are *biscateiros*⁵ do not answer as being without a job.

It is a characteristic of the Brazilian occupational structure that permits the doubling of occupations for a given stratum. It would be expected that in a modern society a person would have an occupational role and devote most of his time to it. In a society where economic development is occurring, it is supposed that those in the highest positions should devote their maximum efforts toward installing an incipient bureaucracy that could back such a development. However, in urban Brazil, as far as Rio de Janeiro reflects it, people in the higher categories tend to disperse themselves among several activities and those who have to maintain one occupation are in the lower categories. In terms of differential opportunities, those who are in the upper strata have good possibilities.

The probability of establishing an efficient bureaucracy, in the Weberian sense, seems to be small. If we assume that such a bureaucracy can contribute to a more rapid economic development, we find that the present structure in Brazil tends to inhibit this economic growth.

Summarizing the situation, Table 3 shows the mean occupations per person according to the different social strata. The outstanding group is that of Category 1 with Categories 2 and 3 forming another level, then 4, 5, and finally, 6. In terms of opportunities which the Brazilian structure offers to the different groups, we can detect those four strata. On the other hand, if we see the differential opportunities within each stratum, the picture is not the same. In Category 1 we have the number of occupations more spread out among the people who are in this social level, followed by those in Category 2. Combining those two factors, we can conclude that only those

2. For details see, C. A. Moser and J. R. Hall, "Social Grading of Occupations," in D. Glass (ed.), *Social Mobility in Britain*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1954; and B. Hutchinson and C. Castaldi, "A hierarquia de Prestigio das ocupações" in B. Hutchinson (ed.), *Mobilidade e Trabalho*, Rio de Janeiro, 1960.

3. The six status categories are distributed as follows:
1. Professional and high administrative
2. Managerial and executive
3. Inspectional, supervisory and other nonmanual (higher grade)
4. Inspectional, supervisory and other nonmanual (lower grade)
5. Skilled manual
6. Semi-skilled and unskilled manual

4. In this paper we shall refer only to paid occupations.

5. *Biscateiro* is a man whose occupation is characterized by "doing everything" and he works according to the demand. Therefore, he may have days without work.

in the highest social level have a real chance to obtain more than one occupation. For this group many factors seem influential since about half of them have only one occupation. On the other hand, we have a more homogeneous situation for those who are in the middle and lower strata.

Table 3

Mean of Remunerated Occupations and its Variation by Status Category

Status Category of Informant	Mean	Coefficient of Variation
1 (highest)	1.56	40.38
2	1.19	36.97
3	1.16	29.31
4	1.10	28.18
5	1.07	26.16
6	1.01	27.72

In Brazil, professionals more than any occupational category tend to have double occupations. An example is the medical doctor who may work for the state half-time and have his own clinic as the second occupation. The same pattern is valid for lawyers. Since professionals are included in the highest category, the pattern found in this category can be explained. On the other hand, it is necessary to receive a degree in order to practice such an occupation, and Table 4 reflects the relationship between education and number of occupations. It would seem that education is a class characteristic, but education alone could not explain the two-occupation system. It is true that those who have completed their university education tend to have more jobs than those who have less education, but it is also true that the people in the following three levels, below university education, have two or more occupations. However, education is a strong determinant in the extremes; that is, among those who have the highest educational level in society and among those who have none are persons who tend to have the most facility and the most difficulty, respectively, in finding a second job or any job at all.

We can infer that social status influences more this differential opportunity both in the number of jobs held and in education. The latter will reinforce the privileges of the social level in which the individual is placed, but if he is in a lower level, it is more likely that he will tend to have one job even though his educational level is higher than expected. The reverse also appears to be true.

To what extent may we consider this multiple-job system as part of the Brazilian occupational structure or as a reflection of one stage of economic development? It is thought that there is an increasing industrialization, necessarily leading to an expansion of the occupational structure. One immediate consequence of an expansion would be an increasing rate of vertical social mobility and we could argue that those who are mobile would be the ones who would take advantage of such a changing structure.

All structures in their expansion create, especially in a case like this in which industrialization is one of the main propelling factors, new roles which traditionally have not been played. We could expect that for these roles the mobile persons, chiefly those moving upward, could be the persons who would perform several of these roles.

Another consequence of social vertical mobility is that those who move upwards tend to copy the model of the people in the highest positions of the social structure, and those who tend to descend socially tend to maintain previous models. Despite this well-known fact, it is necessary to recall that the Brazilian economy for many years has been characterized by a chronic inflation which makes daily life more difficult for mobile people. To have more than one occupation may be one of the responses that people find to this kind of problem, or it might be that it is just a characteristic of the Brazilian occupational structure.

Table 5 shows the mobile persons according to the strata in which they are located and the number of jobs that they hold. We can confirm the previous data stating that to have more than one occupation is a characteristic of the structure. The mean number of occupations is almost the same among those who are upwardly mobile and who are in the higher status categories (1 and 2) —

Table 4

Educational Level of Informants by Number of Occupations

Educational Level of Informants	NUMBER OF OCCUPATIONS					N=(100.0%)
	None	1	2	3	4	
Complete College	—	65.7	30.2	2.6	1.5	271
Incomplete College	—	86.9	10.5	2.6	—	38
Complete Secondary	—	86.2	13.4	0.4	—	419
Incomplete Secondary	0.3	87.3	12.1	0.3	—	356
Complete Elementary	1.0	93.0	5.9	0.1	—	814
Incomplete Elementary	2.7	93.5	3.8	—	—	631
Without Education	3.8	90.9	5.0	0.3	—	341

Table 5
Number of Remunerated Occupations by Social Mobility Status

Status Category of Informant	Informant's Status in Relation to Father's	NUMBER OF OCCUPATIONS					N=(100.0%)	Mean of Remunerated Occupations
		None	1	2	3	4		
1 and 2	Higher	—	65.9	29.0	5.1	—	138	1.39
	Same	—	65.4	30.8	3.8	—	78	1.38
	Lower	—	84.2	15.8	—	—	19	1.15
3 and 4	Higher	0.4	90.3	8.7	0.6	—	482	1.09
	Same	—	85.4	14.6	—	—	267	1.14
5 and 6	Lower	—	79.1	19.8	—	1.1	86	1.23
	Higher	1.2	92.9	5.9	—	—	407	1.04
	Same	2.6	91.6	5.6	0.2	—	1102	1.03
	Lower	1.4	90.8	7.5	0.3	—	294	1.06

1.39, and those who remain in the same level—1.38. The difference is not significant.

This table suggests that there is a contradiction if we consider the pattern found in the higher level on the one hand, and the middle and lower on the other. The differential distribution suggests that the multiple occupational system is a characteristic of the higher strata and is not the case of the lower and middle strata.

In Brazil the role performed by the state seems to be crucial to an understanding of the occupational structure. This country passing from an agricultural economy to an incipient industrial one, is without question undergoing an expansion of the occupational structure in urban areas. Moreover, the state has played an important role in the occupational structure, either traditionally or as the necessity of a bureaucracy to sustain an industrial society.

We can see this relation in Table 6. It is clear that the higher the social status of the person, the higher is his participation in public positions. We have to remember that Rio de Janeiro used to be the capital of the country, which explains to some extent the immense proportion of people who have as their main job a public one. Even in the lowest status category we see that more than 20 percent of the heads of families in this city are employed by the public occupational structure. This proportion is

Table 6
Type of Enterprise in which Informant Works by Status Category

Status Category of Informant	TYPE OF ENTERPRISE			N=(100.0%)
	Private	Public	Semi-public	
1 (highest)	49.1	37.5	13.4	112
2	53.7	37.4	8.9	123
3	52.5	32.2	15.3	398
4	63.9	27.6	8.5	435
5	76.9	18.7	4.4	915
6	78.8	14.8	6.4	874

much more significant when we consider those who are in Category 1 in which more than half of the informants work for the government.

Table 7 gives a clearer picture of the importance of the public occupational structure in Brazil. Looking at this table we have an overall evaluation of this aspect of the social structure in Brazil. On the one hand, we have the majority of the interviewed in the highest social status groups of the society identified with public jobs. It is well documented that in a traditional society which experienced slavery, manual work was not only regarded as being an activity for the lowest groups of the society but also it had some negative connotation. Brazil had legal slavery until 1888, being one of the last countries to give up the institution. This can partially explain the importance of public jobs in this country because other kinds of jobs with prestige are very recent as, for instance, in the industrial bureaucracy. On the other hand, we have to bear in mind one contradiction of the Vargas regime. Tenure in public jobs was definitely established during this period. Before this time only a few public positions had tenure. One of the reasons claimed by Vargas for his ascent to power was to end this kind of abuse—tenure in public jobs. A public job in Brazil means: good salary, retirement, social security—benefits that exist legally for other jobs, but not as guaranteed for others as for the people who work for the government.

Historically the idea of public jobs had been related to the people who were connected with the extended upper-class families. If such a link actually exists, as it seems to do, the consequences are clear when we consider the proportion of people of the high status group participating in them. On the other hand, we have to consider the public occupational structure as giving chances to their employees, at least in the higher levels, to have other jobs.

If occupational structure in Brazil ultimately means job manipulation possibilities, we can clearly understand the distribution we find in Table 7. The first and clearest pattern is that the mobile people who are declining so-

Table 7
Type of Enterprise in which Informant Works by Social Mobility Status

Status Capacity of Informant	Informant's Status in Relation to Father's	TYPE OF ENTERPRISE			N=(100.0%)
		Private	Public	Semi-public	
1 and 2	Higher	50.0	37.7	12.3	138
	Same	56.4	37.2	6.4	78
	Lower	42.1	36.8	21.1	19
3 and 4	Higher	61.0	28.1	10.9	480
	Same	60.7	28.8	10.5	267
	Lower	37.2	41.9	20.9	86
5 and 6	Higher	79.6	16.5	3.9	406
	Same	79.8	15.2	5.0	1091
	Lower	68.2	22.9	8.9	292

cially are the ones who are less likely to work for a private enterprise. The second pattern is that among these same people — the downwardly mobile — are those who are most likely to work for the semi-public institutions. This pattern is valid for the three social levels of the society.

To be a civil servant is to have relative prestige in one's own membership group; therefore, this means that the larger part of the population will look for a position in the public structure. If we take into account the fact that the public job implies tenure, we can immediately conclude that there will not be sufficient places for everyone in this structure. Even Parkinson's Law has a limit. The consequences suggested by the data of this desire of people to participate in the public bureaucracy are two: 1) the number of openings in the public bureaucracy does not correspond to the number of people who want to participate at the same level as their fathers; and, as a consequence: 2) the loss of status when the occupational pattern is maintained. The number of positions opened in the public structure is differential, according to the levels. Oversimplifying, if a head of a family has three sons, he cannot put these three sons in the public structure at the same level as he is in now. Two alternatives are open to this man: either to get a place in the bureaucracy with the consequent loss of status by the second generation, or to look for an equivalent position outside the public structure. In other words, the rate of expansion of the public occupational structure at all levels is not the same as the fertility rate. The consequence is a loss of status, as we can see in Table 7. It would seem that to be a civil servant is more desirable than to lose status, and some of the people prefer to be in a lower social level than to be out of the structure.

The picture is even clearer when we analyze the role of the semi-public enterprises. The public structure cannot expand as fast as the number of people wishing to participate in it. One of the answers for preserving the system was the creation of the semi-public enterprises. We can see how the creation of these kinds of enterprises

fits with the participation of the downwardly mobile. That is to say, the people who move downward are the ones who are more likely to participate in the semi-public enterprises. That is true for all the three strata presented in Table 7.

We can see that there would be a pressure of people toward a participation in the public structure. The politicians, in order to answer this pressure, would try to create and expand the semi-public enterprises that would give them continuous job manipulation possibilities. The existence of such a pattern in the three social levels suggests that not only are the high administrative positions good for bargaining, but also to have positions open at the middle and lower levels means job-manipulation to obtain additional support or to use as political plums.

Conclusion

Some observations with respect to the Brazilian occupational structure emerge. The Brazilian occupational structure permits a multiple-job system for the highest stratum of the society. Nevertheless, there seems to be an exaggeration in the societal prejudice in terms of the quantity of occupations to be held by one person. It is a fact that the existence of a public bureaucracy permits people to have more than one occupation. Nevertheless, only 7.1 percent have three occupations in the highest level, which leads one to question how characteristic the multiple-job system is for Brazil. It is possible that the fact that some officials participate in meetings, board committees, representation in other public institutions has given rise to this sort of societal prejudice.

The importance of public bureaucracy in Brazil is great. Without its characteristics, a large part of the population could not participate in the structure as they do. The importance of a public job is so great that people prefer to descend socially than to be upwardly mobile in the private system. The creation of the semi-public enterprise seems to be crucial to the maintenance of the present structure.