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## Social Mobility Trends in the United States

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that the result is a tendency to achieve those culturally approved objectives through whatever means are possible."<sup>17</sup>

Still another kind of need is the need of business men for political aid, aid which the formal structure, with its commitment to fair competition as the mechanism for distributing talent among important positions, is not able to give efficiently. "Business corporations . . . seek special political dispensation which will enable them to stabilize their situation and to near their objective of maximizing profits."<sup>18</sup> Whence this need? Merton quotes Lincoln Steffens: "Our economic system, which held up riches, power, and acclaim as prizes to men bold enough to buy corruptly . . . and get away with it . . ." <sup>19</sup> is the source.

Using Merton's analysis as a model, we might summarize and elaborate a recom-

mended procedure for functional analysis as follows:

- (1) Productive analysis begins with a statement of the kind of action necessary to maintain some system of inter-relationships, namely, the system of which the observed uniformity is a part.
- (2) It states the motivational conditions which are necessary to produce that action (the normative criteria of gratification which will yield the relevant action).
- (3) It describes the motivational patterns actually operating so as to produce the uniformity under analysis.
- (4) It seeks to find the source of those patterns (to isolate the normative criteria responsible for the observed actions).
- (5) It compares the consequences of the operating motivation with the motivations described as necessary, including the deviant modes of adjusting to frustration of efforts to meet the criteria in question.
- (6) It finally assesses the role played by the uniformity in question in contributing to the system of which it is a part.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>19</sup> *Loc. cit.*

## SOCIAL MOBILITY TRENDS IN THE UNITED STATES

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THE view that the rate of upward mobility in American society has declined seems to be widely held among social scientists. W. Lloyd Warner has commented, for example: "There is strong proof now that the American worker, as well as others, can no longer expect to achieve success with anything like the same probability as did his father and grandfather."<sup>1</sup> Discussions of the Horatio Alger tradition of "rags to riches" and "strive and succeed" often refer to it as a myth once applicable to American society but now only an ideological prop to things as they are.<sup>2</sup> Even introductory text-

books in sociology frequently assert that there has been a definite decline in the rate of upward movement in the social structure.<sup>3</sup>

The recent appearance of several substantial studies which suggest that the rate of mobility may not have declined<sup>4</sup> and the

function for motivating members of the society to work within the social framework. . . . In short, the role of this doctrine has changed from that of roughly valid theorem to that of an ideology." *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1949, p. 380, n. 20.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, A. Green, *Sociology*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952, pp. 303-307; F. E. Merrill and H. W. Eldredge, *Culture and Society*, New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952, pp. 288-291; M. M. Tumin and J. W. Bennett, *Social Life: Structure and Function*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948, pp. 474, 575-576.

<sup>4</sup> N. Rogoff, *Recent Trends in Occupational Mobility*, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1953; S. M. Lipset and R. Bendix, "Social Mobility and Occupational Career Patterns," *American Journal of Sociology*, LVII (January and March, 1952), pp.

<sup>1</sup> W. L. Warner, *Structure of American Life*, Edinburgh: The University Press, 1952, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, R. K. Merton's comment: "The 'office-boy to president' imagery was once in approximate accord with the facts, in the loose sense that vertical mobility was probably more common then than now. The ideology persists however, possibly because it still performs an important

growing awareness among sociologists of the inadequacy of the available data call for an appraisal of our knowledge concerning possible changes in the rate of upward movement in American society. Only by assembling and collating the facts which are available can we test the prevalent assertions about vertical mobility, see the gaps in our knowledge, and define the direction in which research should be channelled.

Students of social mobility have usually focused their attention upon movement in the occupational hierarchy. Despite difficulties inherent in the use of occupational data, no other type of information is as readily available or as amenable to systematic analysis. More important, however, are the theoretical and empirical reasons for using occupational mobility as equivalent to, or an index of, social mobility. Occupational data are relevant to all theories of stratification utilized by contemporary sociologists. For those who define class structure as a prestige hierarchy or as a number of "class-conscious" groups, occupation is both an index and a determinant of class position. For Marxists, occupational mobility is roughly the same as social mobility if occupations are classified on the basis of their relations to the means of production. For those whose categories of stratification follow Max Weber, occupation is of obvious utility because of its role in determining life chances in the market-place.

The mass of available evidence demonstrates clearly the existence of a high correlation between occupation and the various criteria of class: prestige, income, wealth, style of life, and power.<sup>5</sup> Although there is

some disagreement on the relative importance of each of these variables within the total system, there seems ample warrant for concluding that in American society, at least, occupation is probably the most significant, that is, it is more likely to influence other variables than to be influenced by them.<sup>6</sup>

The analysis of occupational mobility has taken two forms, inferential and direct. Inferential analysis focuses attention upon changes in American society which may affect the rate of mobility. Conclusions about trends are inferred from the facts of institutional, structural, and demographic change.

The second form of mobility analysis seeks to compare directly the social origins and career patterns of members of each class at different times in order to establish the frequency or rate of mobility and to discover any changes or trends. There are serious unresolved problems in this form of analysis. No adequate, clearly defined measure of the rate of mobility exists.<sup>7</sup> Even if an adequate measure were available, there are few data concerning the origins and careers of representative groups of individuals in past generations with which to make comparisons with the present. The first steps toward filling gaps in our historical knowledge have been taken,<sup>8</sup> but it is quite possible that we shall not be able to uncover more than scattered pieces of information.

These two modes of analysis are not unrelated lines of inquiry. The study of mobility among groups of individuals should be guided by hypotheses derived from the main features of historical development and must

366-374, 494-504; R. Bendix, S. M. Lipset, and T. F. Malm, "Social Origins and Occupational Career Patterns," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, VII (January, 1954), pp. 246-261. See also W. Petersen's attempted refutation of the assertion of declining mobility, "Is America Still the Land of Opportunity?" *Commentary*, XVI (November, 1953), pp. 477-486, and G. Sjoberg, "Are Social Classes in America Becoming More Rigid?" *American Sociological Review*, XVI (December, 1951), pp. 775-783.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Warner's findings that the correlation between occupation and "evaluated participation," that is, prestige standing in the community, was .91 and between occupation and amount of income .87. W. L. Warner, M. Meeker, K. Eels, *Social Class in America*, Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1949, pp. 168, 172.

<sup>6</sup> See T. Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory*, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1949, pp. 174, 178.

<sup>7</sup> The ingenious formula for "social distance mobility" constructed by Natalie Rogoff and Herbert Goldhamer is of only limited value because it deliberately excludes the influence of changing occupational structure upon the rate of mobility. See Rogoff, *op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Rogoff, *op. cit.*; R. Ginger, "Managerial Employees in Anthracite, 1902: A Study in Occupational Mobility," *Journal of Economic History*, XIV (Spring, 1954), pp. 146-157; W. Miller (Ed.), *Men in Business*, Chapter 7 (by F. W. Gregory and I. D. Neu) and Chapter 11 (by W. Miller), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952; C. W. Mills, "The American Business Elite: A Collective Portrait," *Journal of Economic History*, Supplement V (December, 1945), pp. 20-44.

take into account changes in the class structure itself. Conversely, hypotheses drawn from the study of social change can only be tested by systematic investigation of the experience of groups of individuals.

The major changes in American society from which scholars have inferred that the rate of vertical mobility has declined have been the closing of the frontier, the cessation of mass immigration, the growth of giant corporations, and diminishing differences in the birth rates of various occupational groups. The principal stimulus to vertical mobility, in the judgment of most scholars, has been the occupational redistribution of the working population.<sup>9</sup>

Let us examine each of these inferences.

For many years it has been almost a commonplace of American history that the closing of the frontier meant that dissatisfied and frustrated urban workers could no longer easily acquire land in the west.<sup>10</sup> The investigations of Fred A. Shannon, Carter Goodrich and Sol Davidson have shown clearly, however, that after the Civil War urban workers did not take advantage in substantial numbers of land available on the frontier.<sup>11</sup> The closing of the frontier, therefore, could not have caused any substantial decline in the rate of mobility of urban workers.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of some of these assertions, see E. Sibley, "Some Demographic Clues to Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, VII (June, 1942), pp. 332-340, and J. O. Hertzler, "Some Tendencies Toward a Closed Class System in the United States," *Social Forces*, XXX (March, 1952), pp. 313-323.

<sup>10</sup> Frederick Lewis Allen has written, for example: "Traditionally, when the American workingman's position had become intolerable, he could always go west—if he could raise the cash to go. The West had been the land of new hope, not only for men of adventurous disposition, but also for the discards of industrialism. But now the frontier was closed, and though there were still chances for a man to arrive in the West with nothing and then to achieve comfort, these chances seemed to be dwindling." *The Big Change*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952, p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> F. A. Shannon, "The Homestead Act and the Labor Surplus," *American Historical Review*, XLI (July, 1936), pp. 637-651, and "A Post-Mortem on the Labor-Safety-Valve Theory," *Agricultural History*, XIX (January, 1945), pp. 31-37; C. Goodrich and S. Davidson, "The Wage-Earner in the Westward Movement," *Political Science Quarterly*, L (June, 1935), pp. 161-185 and LI (March, 1936), pp. 61-116.

<sup>12</sup> Shannon has suggested not only that the west

In the cities, the mass immigration which ended only with the First World War generated strong pressure for upward mobility among those who had come earlier. Since most immigrants entered the economy as unskilled laborers, earlier arrivals were able to work their way upwards in business and industry.<sup>13</sup> Jobs at the bottom of the industrial heap now must be filled by native Americans instead of by recent immigrants.<sup>14</sup> If other things were equal, therefore, only greater competition for desirable positions and an increased rate of downward mobility could compensate for the cessation of mass immigration.

The immigrants' contribution to vertical circulation was possible, however, only because of the rapid growth of the economy. Both immigration and the settling of the west contributed directly to that growth. When economic expansion came to a virtual halt during the thirties, many observers, convinced that the economy was "mature," concluded that the rich opportunities for individual advancement which had accompanied the nation's economic development could no longer exist. The expansion of the economy during and since the war has clearly disposed of the view that there was no longer room for economic growth. Yet in itself economic growth offers no assurance of continued or increasing mobility. Even in our highly productive, expanding economy, the possibility of a persisting volume of mass unemployment which might inhibit advancement for millions of individuals still exists. In addition, opportunity and mobility in a society dominated by giant corporations and big government differ in many ways from what they were in the past.

Since the end of the Civil War large cor-

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did not serve as a safety-valve for discontented workers, but also that "The rise of the city in the nineteenth century was a safety valve for rural discontent." *The Farmer's Last Frontier*, New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1945, p. 359.

<sup>13</sup> See I. Hourwich, *Immigration and Labor*, New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1912, Chapter 7, and Sibley, *op. cit.*, pp. 324-325.

<sup>14</sup> Peterson has suggested that migration from Canada, Mexico, and Puerto Rico has compensated to some extent for the virtual ending of migration from Europe. As he points out, however, the total number of migrants from these sources is quite small compared to earlier mass immigration and is significant only in certain regions. *Op. cit.*, p. 481.

porations have increasingly dominated the economy. The effects of this trend upon the rate of mobility, however, are not clear. The size and scope of big business tend to obscure the fact that the relative size of the small business population has not decreased in the past century; nor has the rate of failure of small business increased substantially.<sup>15</sup> It is still possible for men to go into business, as large numbers do each year, although the social and economic position of small businessmen has been significantly altered. They are confined largely to the fields of distribution and service in which the rate of failure is particularly high and the chances of growing from a small to a large business are limited. They have lost many of their entrepreneurial functions to the corporations whose products they usually sell or service, and their income and prestige may be less than that of many manual workers and clerical employees, and their style of life less rewarding.

Within giant corporations, increasing organizational complexity and extensive mechanization have changed the form and perhaps the frequency of mobility. There is considerable evidence that movement from the ranks of manual labor into management has diminished,<sup>16</sup> although a declining rate of ascent from the bottom may be counterbalanced by increased mobility within white-collar ranks.<sup>17</sup>

The development of giant bureaucracies in business and industry,<sup>18</sup> and in government

and mass organizations, together with the expansion of tertiary industries—service, distribution, communication—has, however, generated occupational shifts which have probably led to a substantial volume of upward mobility. There has been a marked increase in the proportion of the total working force engaged in white-collar, non-manual occupations, from twenty-one per cent in 1910 to thirty-eight per cent, in 1950. Most of this growth has been balanced by a sharp decrease in the farm population, from thirty-one per cent in 1910 to only twelve per cent in 1950.

The intensive mechanization of industry has also changed the composition of the working class, with possible consequences for the rate of mobility. Although the proportion of skilled workers has remained approximately the same, unskilled workers declined from fifteen per cent to less than ten per cent while semi-skilled workers increased from fifteen to twenty per cent during the years from 1910 to 1950. These changes probably represent an upgrading of a large number of industrial workers.<sup>19</sup>

Mobility generated by occupational changes was further stimulated for many years by differences in the birth rates of the major occupational groups. Professionals, businessmen, and clerical employees who were increasing their proportion in the total working force were not producing enough children to replace themselves, while manual workers and farmers were having more children than were necessary to maintain their numbers.<sup>20</sup> The "social vacuum" created by the low birth rate of white-collar groups was filled by children of urban manual workers and farmers. Since a large number of mi-

<sup>15</sup> K. Mayer, "Small Business as a Social Institution," *Social Research*, XIV (September, 1947), pp. 332-349, and "Business Enterprise: Traditional Symbol of Opportunity," *British Journal of Sociology*, IV (June, 1953), pp. 160-180.

<sup>16</sup> For a description of how mechanization has narrowed opportunities for textile workers to rise into management, see E. D. Smith, *Technology and Labor*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939, pp. 130-133. See also J. McConnell, *The Evolution of Social Classes*, Washington: American Council on Public Affairs, 1942, pp. 87-88, and R. S. and H. M. Lynd, *Middletown in Transition*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1937, pp. 67-72.

<sup>17</sup> J. T. Adams has pointed out that with the decline of family enterprise positions at the top of large corporations cannot be inherited but must be earned. Sons of executives possess obvious advantages, but they must be able to demonstrate some ability as well. *Big Business in a Democracy*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945, pp. 217-218.

<sup>18</sup> In industry the ratio of administrative, clerical and technical employees to production workers rose from 9.9 in 1899 to 22 in 1947. These figures,

however, probably exaggerate the opportunities available, since many of these positions were undoubtedly dead-end clerical jobs held by women. S. Melman, "The Rise of Administrative Overhead in the Manufacturing Industries of the United States," *Oxford Economic Papers* (New Series), III (February, 1951), p. 89.

<sup>19</sup> Data for 1910 to 1940 from *Comparative Occupation Statistics for the United States 1870 to 1940*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943, p. 187. Data for 1950 from *Census of Population: 1950*, Volume II, Part I, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953, p. 102.

<sup>20</sup> For a summary of evidence, see P. H. Landis and P. K. Hatt, *Population Problems*, Second Edition, New York: American Book Company, 1954, Chapters 12, 14. See also C. F. Westoff,

grants to the city seem to have come from the lower economic levels of agriculture,<sup>21</sup> it is a plausible hypothesis that many of those who left the farm have become manual laborers, replacing workers—or their children—who in turn have moved into white-collar ranks.

The stimulus to mobility provided by differential birth rates has probably lessened in recent years with the increased fertility of white-collar workers, an increase which has seemingly narrowed the differences between manual and non-manual workers.<sup>22</sup> The higher birth-rate among non-manual workers fills at least part of the "social vacuum" which existed in the past, while working class and farm families produce a smaller surplus population.

Upward mobility resulting from migration to the cities has been offset at least in part by a steady decline in the possibility of movement up the so-called agricultural ladder, whose steps went from hired hand to tenant to farm owner. The proportion of tenants among farmers increased steadily from 1880 to 1935, when forty-two per cent of all farmers were tenants. Several studies after the First World War demonstrated clearly that farmers were taking longer to gain ownership of their land and suggested that many tenants were giving up their ambitions and moving to the city.<sup>23</sup> Census data for the past fifty years verify this hypothesis, for the total number of farm owners has remained roughly the same from 1900 to 1950 while the number of tenants,

which had increased slightly from 1900 to 1935, dropped by almost fifty per cent from 1935 to 1950. The number of farm laborers has also diminished by one-third since 1930.<sup>24</sup>

From this historical analysis no conclusive answer can be given to the question: What has been happening to the rate of upward mobility? The channels for mobility have changed, as have the prerequisites for advancement and, in all probability, the rate of upward movement within each channel. But we cannot yet determine, without more studies focused directly upon the experience of groups of individuals, whether the factors which have tended to maintain or increase the rate of vertical mobility have offset those circumstances which have inhibited ascent in the class structure.

What can we learn from those direct studies of mobility which are available? These studies fall into three categories: (1) research into the social origins and career patterns of specific occupational groups, usually those at the top of the occupational ladder; (2) investigations of mobility in samples drawn from specific localities; <sup>25</sup> (3) a study by Richard Centers of a sample drawn from the total population.<sup>26</sup> Most of these studies deal with intergenerational mobility, that is changes in occupation from father to son. Much less attention has been given to career advancement, that is movement from occupation to occupation during the lifetime of individuals.<sup>27</sup>

A series of investigations which began with Sorokin's study of millionaires and Taussig and Joslyn's *American Business Leaders* provide considerable evidence that the proportion of top business owners and executives recruited from lower levels of

"Differential Fertility in the United States: 1900 to 1952," *American Sociological Review*, XIX (October, 1954), pp. 549-561.

<sup>21</sup> See C. C. Zimmerman, "The Migration to Towns and Cities," *American Journal of Sociology*, XXXII (November, 1926), pp. 450-455, and XXXIII (July, 1927), pp. 105-107; T. J. Woofter and E. Winston, *Seven Lean Years*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939, pp. 36-37; G. W. Hill and H. T. Christensen, "Some Cultural Factors Related to Occupational Mobility Among Wisconsin Farmers," *Rural Sociology*, VII (June, 1942), pp. 193-200.

<sup>22</sup> Hertzler, *op. cit.*; Westoff, *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> See W. J. Spillman, "The Agricultural Ladder," *American Economic Review*, IX (March, 1919, Supplement), pp. 170-179. For a more recent discussion see J. D. Black and R. H. Allen, "Farm Tenancy in the United States," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, LI (May, 1937), pp. 393-425.

<sup>24</sup> *Census of Agriculture: 1950, General Report*, Volume II, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1952, pp. 924-925.

<sup>25</sup> P. E. Davidson and H. D. Anderson, *Occupational Mobility in an American Community*, Stanford University: Stanford University Press, 1937; Lipset and Bendix, *op. cit.*; Bendix, Lipset, and Malm, *op. cit.*; Rogoff, *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> R. Centers, "Occupational Mobility of Urban Occupational Strata," *American Sociological Review*, XIII (April, 1948), pp. 197-203.

<sup>27</sup> See, however, Davidson and Anderson, *op. cit.*, Chapter 3, and Bendix, Lipset, and Malm, *op. cit.*

American society has steadily declined.<sup>28</sup> Although this fact possesses obvious sociological importance, it is not adequate evidence of an over-all decline in the rate of vertical mobility. Comparable data for other elite groups are not available, and increasing movement into other segments of the social structure may balance this decline in mobility into the upper ranks of business.

The direct studies of mobility which encompass all occupational groups found that "The general tendency is for more sons to be located on their fathers' levels than any other."<sup>29</sup> Each of them also reported that a considerable proportion of its sample experienced some vertical mobility. Centers, for example, found that thirty-five per cent of his sample were in positions which could be considered better than those of their fathers, while twenty-nine per cent were in positions not as good as those of their fathers.<sup>30</sup> Most of the mobility in all studies, however, was only to occupational levels adjacent to those of the fathers.

Comparison and collation of results of these direct studies in order to ascertain changes or trends in the rate of mobility are difficult for several reasons. First, there is considerable variation in the occupational categories which are used. The only classification which has been used consistently has been skilled workers. Some comparability can be achieved by combining categories, but only at the expense of precise analysis.

Second, no information is available about the specific localities in which studies have been done. One may legitimately ask whether

the rate of mobility in any one area is typical of the entire society. Without data about these localities and their history, no answer to this question is possible. Nor are we able to judge which forces stimulating or inhibiting mobility are at work, and the findings therefore cannot be used to test precise hypotheses about variations in the rate of mobility.

Third, each of these investigations covered different periods of time. Davidson and Anderson secured their data in 1933-1934, Centers in 1945, Bendix, Lipset, and Malm in 1949-1950. The data used by Rogoff were from two periods, 1905-1912 and 1938-1941. It is quite possible that in each case short-run economic fluctuations might have affected the findings.

It is hardly, surprising, therefore, that the findings of these direct mobility studies have been variously interpreted. The studies by Davidson and Anderson and Richard Centers, for example, have been frequently taken as evidence of declining mobility.<sup>31</sup> This conclusion rests, however, at least in part upon an image of the American past which may not correspond to the historical facts.<sup>32</sup> But recently produced evidence that not as much mobility has existed in the past as Americans have long assumed has led to the conclusion, equally unwarranted by the available evidence, that there has been no decline in the rate of mobility.<sup>33</sup>

Only the study by Natalie Rogoff seeks to deal systematically with the problem of changing rates of mobility. Her conclusion that no change has occurred has only limited value, however, because it is based upon a formula which excludes the effects of the changing occupational distribution and does not adequately balance the gains and losses in the rates of mobility of different occupational groups. Nor do we know enough as yet about the locality in which the research

<sup>28</sup> P. A. Sorokin, "American Millionaires and Multimillionaires," *Social Forces*, III (May, 1925), pp. 627-640; F. W. Taussig and C. S. Joslyn, *American Business Leaders*, New York: Macmillan, 1932; Mills, *op. cit.*; Miller, *op. cit.*, and "American Historians and the Business Elite," *Journal of Economic History*, IX (November, 1949), pp. 184-200; "Thirty Thousand Managers," *Fortune*, February, 1940; "The Nine Hundred," *Fortune*, November, 1952. Compare also the lists of leading business men prepared by B. C. Forbes in 1917 and 1947. B. C. Forbes, *Men Who are Making America* and *America's Fifty Foremost Business Leaders*, New York: B. C. Forbes Publishing Company, 1917 and 1947.

<sup>29</sup> Davidson and Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 23. See also Centers, *op. cit.*, p. 199, and Rogoff, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> Centers, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, W. E. Moore, *Industrial Relations and the Social Order*, revised edition, New York: Macmillan, 1951, pp. 582-583.

<sup>32</sup> William Miller has commented: "Poor immigrant boys and poor farm boys who became famous business leaders have always been more conspicuous in American history books than in the American business elite," "American Historians and the Business Elite," p. 200.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Petersen, *op. cit.*

was done to enable us to draw wider conclusions. Fortunately other students will be able to examine and analyse in their own fashion the raw data collected by Miss Rogoff and included in her published report.

It seems clear, then, that neither inferential analysis based upon historical study nor direct analysis of mobility of groups of individuals can yet indicate whether there has been any change in the rate of vertical mobility in American society. The answer to that question must wait upon more detailed studies which not only build upon the research already done, but which also seek

to test precise hypotheses concerning the impact of changing institutions, social organization, and demographic characteristics upon the rate of mobility. The balancing of the as yet unformulated mobility equation, which must take into account increased mobility through new channels of upward movement, decreased mobility through narrowing channels of advancement, changing frequencies of mobility in different groups, and trends in the nature of the class system itself, requires considerably more research energy and effort than sociologists have as yet devoted to the problem.

## CHILDHOOD BACKGROUNDS OF SUCCESS IN A PROFESSION

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THE general run of vertical mobility studies seem to constitute an attempt to delineate occupational movement along a vertical axis between two or more male generations.<sup>1</sup> However valuable some of these studies may be, they do not seem to throw much light upon vertical movement within a given occupation group.<sup>2</sup>

Does anyone know what makes for success within any occupation? Some vocational counselors who believe they know proceed to give advice to high school and college students on the occupation for which each is presumably best fitted. The more sophisticated of such counselors utilize vocational aptitude tests,<sup>3</sup> despite their questionable validity. Until rigidly controlled scientific studies within occupations are conducted, attempting to associate background

factors with success in each occupation, aptitude tests and vocational counseling based upon them will rest upon uncertain foundations.

Paul Horst seems to be aware of the problem, here, when he states:

In repeated studies there seem to be indications of a relationship between . . . background items and success in various activities. . . . Since personal history data appear to be important for prediction, it would seem worthwhile to give more logical and systematic consideration to this type of material. . . . At the present time, this body of predictive materials gives the impression of much disorder and overlapping effort.<sup>4</sup>

Several investigators have attempted to relate background factors to *general* achievement.<sup>5</sup> What seem to be needed are studies

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., F. W. Taussig and C. S. Joslyn, *American Business Leaders*, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1932; Stuart Adams, "Regional Differences in Vertical Mobility in a High-Status Occupation," *American Sociological Review*, 15 (April, 1950), pp. 228-235; P. A. Sorokin, *Social Mobility*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> See the pertinent criticism of Charles F. Westoff, "The Changing Focus of Differential Fertility Research: The Social Mobility Hypothesis," *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, XXXI (January, 1953), pp. 24-38.

<sup>3</sup> G. I. Freeman and E. K. Taylor, *How to Pick Leaders*, New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1950 (especially Chapter VIII).

<sup>4</sup> Paul Horst, *et al.*, *The Prediction of Personal Adjustment*, New York: Social Science Research Council, Bulletin No. 48, 1941, pp. 123-124.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Lewis M. Terman and Melita H. Oden, *The Gifted Child Grows Up*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1947; Paul Witty, editor, *The Gifted Child*, New York: D. C. Heath and Co., 1951; S. S. Visher, "Environmental Backgrounds of Leading American Scientists," *American Sociological Review*, 13 (February, 1948), pp. 66-72; J. Schneider, "Social Origin and Fame: The United States and England," *American Sociological Review*, 10 (February, 1945), pp. 52-60; Robert E. L. Faris, "Sociological Causes of Genius," *American Sociological Review*, 5 (October, 1940), pp. 689-699.