

Education and Social Mobility in Ghana

Author(s): G. E. Hurd and T. J. Johnson

Source: *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Winter, 1967), pp. 55-79

Published by: American Sociological Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2112187>

Accessed: 22-12-2019 16:24 UTC

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/2112187?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



American Sociological Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Sociology of Education*

Education and Social Mobility in Ghana *

G. E. HURD AND T. J. JOHNSON, *University of Leicester, England*

Studies of the process of modernization in Africa focus attention upon the primacy of the occupational structure rather than the educational system in the determination of rates of social mobility. Where occupational placement depends on educational qualifications, however, the educational system is a crucial channel of social mobility. Ghanaian data on patterns of social selection into institutions of higher education suggest that, despite the expansion of the number of school and university places, there are bottlenecks in the educational system that ensure the placement of children of the elite in high occupational positions. These processes represent a closure of the elite giving rise to differential opportunities for various social groups within the modern sector of the economy akin to those associated with the class divisions of industrial societies.

THE MAJOR CONCERN of this paper is to show the degree to which the educational system of Ghana acts as a channel of social mobility into the Ghanaian elite.¹ However, in looking at a society at the level of social and economic development of Ghana our attention has also been drawn to broader problems of the relationship between education, social mobility and social stratification. For example, the precise relationship between educational expansion

* The main body of material used has been the findings of a survey of sixth form and university students in 1964. The survey of sixth form students was planned to include 50% of the students attending sixth forms in the year 1963-4. The sample was stratified according to region only. Two schools selected failed to co-operate, and on our visits to others we failed to see all of the registered students. However, we believe that the sample of 460 who did respond (approximately one third of the total sixth form population) is representative. The characteristics of regional and sex distribution in the sample are similar to those of the total sixth form population. The university survey was administered by students of the Statistical Training Centre and consisted of a one in four stratified sample of first, second and third year students at the University of Ghana. We are indebted to Mr. C. Scott for allowing us to analyze the material in the questionnaires. Our survey material was supplemented by interviews with teachers and lecturers.

¹ Unless we have stated to the contrary, we refer to inter-generational mobility. We have also followed the normal pattern of using the terms social mobility and occupational mobility interchangeably although we are aware of the dangers of this. The plural *elites* is used to refer to past elite groups, since influence, status and in a limited sense power were diffused among a number of groups. In contemporary Ghana, however, there is a sense in which the attributes of these elites of the past are being concentrated in a single, more homogeneous group. Thus, when referring to the present or the future we use the singular *elite*.

and social mobility is more clearly seen in a society undergoing rapid social change. Secondly, such societies illustrate the complexity of patterns of social mobility where the stratification system itself is changing rapidly. Students of industrial societies have not been concerned with the second of these factors, and there has been considerable conceptual confusion in the discussion of the first. Our first task, therefore, is to attempt some clarification of the concepts involved in discussions of education and social mobility.

I

In the last decade and a half there has been a great deal of interest in the relationship between education and social mobility and some recognition of the complexity of the relationship. The discussion has been unclear, however, because of a failure to differentiate between two aspects of social mobility. A statement that education affects social mobility may mean one of two things. It may mean that changes in the structure of the educational system bring about changes in the *rate* of social mobility in the society. On the other hand it may mean that the educational system is a *channel* through which individuals achieve social mobility—i.e. that the educational level reached by an individual affects his mobility. Any meaningful discussion of the relationship between education and social mobility must start from a recognition of this distinction.

Because of their failure to distinguish between these two aspects of social mobility a number of sociologists have fallen into the error of imputing a causal relationship between education and rates of social mobility. For example, Howard S. Becker says,

"In most complex societies . . . schools tend to play an important role in the drama of social mobility. Education being at the same time a symbol of social position and a means by which higher position may be achieved, *the amount of access to it is one of the keys to the amount of social mobility possible in a society.*"² (Our italics)

There is in this statement a confusion between the effect of education on individual mobility—the statement that education is a symbol of social position and a *means* of social mobility—and the relationship between education and *rates* of social mobility. Because education is the main channel of mobility it does not follow that it influences the amount (or rate) of mobility possible in a society. Similarly, Jean Floud and A. H. Halsey start their paper on "Secondary Schools and the Supply of Labour" with the assumption that social mobility rates are a product of the educational system. They say:

"Since in a modern economy the quality and efficiency of the working population *and the degree of vocation and social mobility very largely depend on the educational system*, an analysis of its relation to the occupational structure must natu-

² Howard S. Becker, "Schools and Systems of Stratification," in A. H. Halsey, Jean Floud, C. Arnold Anderson, *Education, Economy and Society*, Free Press of Glencoe, 1961, pp. 93–104.

rally dominate any discussion of the economic consequences of educational provision or any attempt to assess the effect of education on the national economy.”³ (Our italics)

Even Gösta Carlsson, who seems at some points to recognize the importance of the distinction between the means of mobility and the overall rate of mobility, confuses the two in other statements. For example, he acknowledges the “possibility that a more general diffusion of higher education will have the effect of increasing mobility between generations,” a statement that is clearly concerned with the increase in rates of social mobility, and then proceeds to examine this “notion that education plays a strategic role in the process of social mobility” by an exclusive concentration on the educational system as a channel of mobility.⁴ When he does return to the problem of mobility rates, however, he does not commit himself to a causal connection between educational expansion and rates of social mobility, recognizing the alternative possibility that as education at a given level becomes more widespread, other factors may surpass education in importance.

“... why is it that increased enrollment in the secondary schools, and perhaps the universities, should be expected to make for a higher rate of vertical mobility between generations? . . . It might be that the extension of the services of the educational system to larger groups makes education a more important criterion for future career, and other things, including parents’ status, less important . . . It might, however, equally well be argued that the more general prevalence of higher education will make for instance employers more prone to take other things into consideration.”⁵

It is important to notice, however, that even if the extension of the services of the educational system to a larger section of the population results in education becoming a more important criterion for the future career of the individual, and other factors less important, this does not in itself tell us anything about the rate of social mobility in a society. If education as *a criterion of occupational placement* takes the place of parental status (the only alternative Carlsson names), then rates of mobility are likely to rise. But if education as a criterion of occupational placement takes the place of ability in business and commerce (however measured), then there need be no change in the rate of social mobility, although different individuals may be selected for the mobility process.

We would suggest that the study of underdeveloped countries provides a critical test case for the hypothesis that changes in the educational system—particularly its expansion—bring about changes in the rate of mobility. In Ghana in particular, there is a relatively highly developed educational system, and yet mobility rates are low. Social mobility in Ghana, as elsewhere

³ Jean Floud and A. H. Halsey, “English Secondary Schools and the Supply of Labour,” in *The Yearbook of Education, 1965*, London: Evans Brothers, 1956, pp. 519–32.

⁴ Gösta Carlsson, *Social Mobility and Class Structure*, Lund: Håkan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1958, p. 123 ff.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

in Africa, is a highly visible phenomenon, but this is not the result of a high rate of mobility so much as of the social distance traveled by some of the mobile. For the few people who are mobile inter-generationally the mobility may be highly significant, as the social origins of some of the most powerful men in the country testify. We must bear in mind that the low overall rate of social mobility does not rule out the possibility of an open elite, nor the significance of the mobility that does occur for the process of social change.

Carlsson claims that there are theoretically two possible consequences of educational expansion. The first involves an increase in the rate of social mobility, and the second involves educational devaluation—that is to say, using Carlsson's terminology, it takes more education to 'buy' a given occupational position. In Ghana (largely because of the slowly expanding occupational structure) it is this second process that has taken place, so that with the expansion of, for example, the primary sector of the educational system, a primary education today 'buys' less in terms of occupational position and its associated status than it did twenty or even ten years ago. Not only does it take more education to 'buy' a given position, but it is possible that educational devaluation may also mean that a given level of education has little or no 'currency value.' Thus we have the increasing level of unemployment that has been evident among middle school leavers over the last few years.⁶ If the expansion of education continues to affect secondary schools and universities in future years without concomitant changes in the occupational structure we might expect this crucial level, where devaluation leads to unemployment, to rise to the secondary level, and eventually perhaps to affect university graduates as was the case in Eastern Europe between the wars.⁷

In order to see more clearly the relationship between education and social mobility rates it is necessary to distinguish the way in which the overall rate of mobility is made up. Following Yasuda⁸ and others, we distinguish between forced mobility and pure mobility. Forced mobility is that proportion of the total mobility rate that can be traced to changes in the occupational structure (e.g. changes associated with technological change) or to differential fertility. Pure mobility is that proportion of the total mobility rate that is due to an exchange of statuses. Forced upward mobility, then, is determined by the number of vacant high statuses that are available to the new generation, and this is in turn determined either by the creation of new occupational positions or by differential fertility. There is evidence from different societies that the educational system cannot initiate changes in the occupational sphere.⁹ There is, however, one possible way in which educa-

⁶ See T. David Williams, "Some Economic Implications of the Educational Explosion in Ghana," in *The World Yearbook of Education, 1965*, London: Evans Brothers, 1965, p. 491.

⁷ See W. M. Kotsching, *Unemployment in the Learned Professions*, London: Oxford University Press, 1937, pp. 173–178.

⁸ S. Yasuda, "A Methodological Inquiry into Social Mobility," *American Sociological Review*, 29 (1964), pp. 16–23.

⁹ See O. Banks, *Parity and Prestige in English Secondary Education*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955; and Philip J. Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.

tion could influence the rate of forced mobility, and that is indirectly, through its influence upon fertility rates.

It is often argued, for example, that fertility rates vary inversely with the level of education, and thus it could be argued that the reduction of fertility within the educated stratum would lead to vacant statuses and consequent forced mobility. Whatever the general efficacy of the hypothesis that levels of education affect fertility, there is no evidence to suggest that differential fertility is important in increasing the rate of mobility in Ghana at present.¹⁰ Our own data strongly suggest the contrary. A high level of fertility among the elite seems to ensure that existing high status positions *could* be filled entirely from within this elite group. But furthermore, the fertility rate is such that the children of the elite also compete with other groups for the positions newly created by such expansion of the modern sector of the economy as has taken place. For example, 268 of the total of 460 in our sixth form sample came from non-manual parental backgrounds, and 67.2% of these came from families of four children or more. Furthermore, 88% of the siblings of these students who were already at work were employed in white collar occupations. The impression given, then, is that the majority of the sixth formers in our sample came from high status families who, through the existing educational system, are able to ensure a high degree of inter-generational status maintenance.

The other determining factor in the inter-generational creation of vacant statuses with its consequent effect upon the rate of forced mobility is expansion of high occupational positions. In Ghana, however, such occupational expansion has not been great either in absolute terms or relative to the total employed population. Thus although between 1951 and 1961 employment in the civil service increased by some 35,000 this is not disproportional to the overall increase in the employed population during these years. In 1960 the non-manual sector of the economy still only numbered 187,000—about 7% of the total employed population.¹¹ Thus, when seen in the light of the overall increase in population, the expansion of non-manual employment does not imply any significant increase in the total of forced mobility.

We would suggest, then, that education has little or no role with regard to increasing the rate of forced mobility, and any part it plays in the determination of total rates of mobility will be in the determination, or partial determination, of rates of pure mobility. The typical argument here is that the determination of *occupational placement* by educational qualifications has brought about an increase in social mobility in societies in which occupational placement was previously by parental status. But this argument ignores the possible role of other channels of social mobility as we have pointed out above. More important, the statement that the introduction of *occupational placement* by means of educational qualifications affects the rate of social mobility (which we would agree is a possibility) is different from the argu-

¹⁰ See J. C. Caldwell, "Population Change," in W. Birmingham, I. Neustadt, and E. N. Omaboe, *A Survey of Contemporary Ghana*, Vol. II, London, Allen and Unwin, (forthcoming.)

¹¹ Calculated from 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Accra: Census Office, 1962.

ment that *educational expansion* affects the rate. This clear distinction between occupational placement by reference to educational qualifications, and the expansion of the educational system enables us to see that what effects the rate of pure mobility is, in fact, another aspect of the occupational structure, namely the demands made by the occupational roles on those who fill them. In a society where technology is highly complex and where occupational roles are highly differentiated, occupational placement will be largely by reference to educational qualifications, but this is to be seen as a function of the complexity of the occupational roles, not of the size of the educational system. Any statement that an expansion of the educational system results in an increase in pure mobility, we would argue, is an example of the classic confusion involved in imputing a causal relationship where a correlation is observed but where, in fact, both factors result from the operation of a third variable, in this case the changing *nature and requirements* of the occupational roles.

In our view a study of a society such as Ghana, with its relatively large and rapidly expanding educational system co-existing with an occupational structure that is both highly constricted and slowly expanding in its upper reaches, clearly points to the fallacy of statements to the effect that educational changes determine changes in the rates of social mobility.

II

The more relevant aspect of the relationship between education and social mobility, then, has to do with the educational system as a channel of individual mobility, and it is to this that we now wish to turn. We have already pointed to educational devaluation as a consequence of the expansion of the educational system. A related and important consequence is that as primary and middle schooling in Ghana has become more widespread, the functions of occupational selection once performed at these levels have passed to the secondary schools and universities. Today the secondary schools (particularly the sixth forms) and the universities command access to high occupational positions, and for this reason we concentrated our attention upon these levels of the educational system. It is evident from the figures of total enrollment that the sixth form has become a crucial bottleneck. In the year of our study, for example, less than 2% of the output of the educational system was passing through secondary schools, and the 1,331 students in the Upper and Lower sixth forms represented a 1 in 330 chance for a Ghanaian child to enter the sixth form. It is the selective functions of this bottleneck that will determine the extent to which the educational system acts as a channel of individual mobility into the elite.

These selective functions of education are particularly important because employment opportunities in the expanding modern sector of the economy lie increasingly within public agencies. In the decade 1951–1961 the public share of wage employees rose from 40% to 60%. Moreover, in attempting to modernize at a speed and under conditions that demand large scale state entrepreneurship, great prominence in status, as well as numbers, has been

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

given to civil servants and the professions. This prominence is partly a consequence of the lack of opportunities for the emergence of an indigenous business class since, apart from the large scale enterprise of Government and international firms, commerce and trade are largely dominated by Lebanese and Syrian immigrants, and petty trading is in the hands of the women. The consequent lack of mobility through business ownership is indicative of an important structural difference between many newly developing societies such as Ghana and the industrialization experiences of Europe and America where, until recently, business has been an important avenue of individual mobility. This means that in Ghana education has become a general prerequisite for placement in high occupational positions. With occupational placement determined by educational qualifications, whether or not the educational system operates as a channel of social mobility or merely as an alternative way of passing on high occupational status from one generation to the next depends upon the degree of access all groups have to higher education.

In Ghana the sixth form (a two year course leading to the Advanced level examinations of the General Certificate of Education) is seen as a part of one's education separate from the main body of the secondary school although the sixth form and the main school are administered together. This is largely because entry to the sixth forms is competitive, with the result that many students change schools to go to the sixth form. (We found, for example, that 37% of the students in our sixth form sample had made such a change.) For the first half century of secondary schooling in Ghana (until 1955) there were no sixth forms as such, and less than one-third of the secondary schools have sixth forms today. In the 1963/64 academic year there were 85 secondary schools with 28,136 pupils. Twenty-six of these had sixth forms, nine of which had been founded in the year of our study and so had only a lower sixth. The sixth forms, as well as forming a numerical bottleneck, were also found to perform the functions of social selection more rigorously than did even the universities, which had expanded to house 2,462 students in the year 1963/64. In 1963 sixth form leavers qualifying for university entrance numbered 378 whereas the undergraduate intake of the universities in September of that year was 866. The discrepancy between the sixth form output and university intake is partly accounted for by the existence in the universities of preliminary courses at Advanced level standards, but also by the fact that there is a widely used "backdoor" to the universities. Students who had not been to sixth form or even to secondary school qualify for university entrance by private study or through adult education classes.¹²

How then does this bottleneck function to determine the life chances of individuals? To what extent is entry to these levels of the educational system characterized by openness to all groups? There has been some democratization of access to education in recent years beginning with the *Accelerated Development Plan for Education, 1951*, and culminating in the introduction

¹² See T. J. Johnson and G. E. Hurd, "The Supply of Scientists in Ghana," *West African Journal of Education*, 9 (October 1965), pp. 138-141.

of free primary education in 1960. (This latter measure, of course, does not affect our sample.) Full university grants and secondary school bursaries have also been introduced with the stated intention of ensuring that talent is utilized whatever the financial or social background of the student. We might expect then, with education expanding at a rapid rate from a low base, that there would be relatively high opportunities for those of peasant, unskilled and illiterate backgrounds to achieve high occupational placement through education. This was, in fact, the conclusion of the only study of the problem so far attempted.¹³ In a study of fifth form students Foster emphasized his finding that one third of his sample were the sons and daughters of farmers and viewed as "remarkable" the extent to which "youths from rural backgrounds and markedly low levels of parental occupation and education are successful in entering these highly selective institutions."¹⁴ He concluded that this marked fluidity of access apparent in the Ghanaian educational system was due to a fundamentally "egalitarian culture."¹⁵ Our data suggest different conclusions.

III

There are various indices by which the degree of social selection in the Ghanaian educational system may be measured. For example, social selection may be expected to result in variations in the enrollment of students from different regions, and in further inequalities in the selection of town as against rural dwellers. We would also expect, from studies that have been carried out in industrial societies,¹⁶ that the occupations and level of education of parents would be significant in the educational chances of their children. The factor of parental education may have a heightened importance in Ghana where the gap that divides the educated from the uneducated is wider than that which exists in industrial societies.

In both sixth form and university samples there was a heavy, although predictable, domination of males. Nearly 80% (363) of the sixth form sample and nearly 90% (223) of the university sample was male. The female group, in addition to being smaller had far more of the characteristics of a privileged group than did the male.

Both sixth form and university students were older than comparable groups in Britain and America. This difference is partly to be explained by the gaps in the educational careers of many of the students. Thirty-two of the sixth formers have in the past had full time jobs, mainly for one year as teachers or clerks. Fifteen percent also indicated that they would be working for a year or more before continuing their education at university. The reasons for this decision were usually financial, although there is evidence that a few

¹³ Philip J. Foster, "Secondary Schooling and Social Mobility in a West African Nation," *Sociology of Education*, 37 (Winter 1963), pp. 150-171.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

¹⁶ See for example, A. H. Halsey, Jean Floud, and C. A. Anderson, *op. cit.* See also William Sewell and Vimal P. Shah, "Socioeconomic Status, Intelligence, and the Attainment of Higher Education," *Sociology of Education*, 40 (Winter 1967).

of these sixth formers do not go straight on to a Ghanaian university in the hope that they will be able to gain entry to a university abroad.¹⁷

The system of entry to secondary schools in Ghana makes regional comparisons difficult, as students who do well in the common entrance examination may choose to attend any school in the country irrespective of its distance from their homes. It has always been recognized, both officially and unofficially, that the quality of the education received in the secondary schools in Ghana varies considerably from school to school. The schools with the highest reputations and the best examination results are centered on Cape Coast, Accra, and Kumasi—areas which contain a disproportionate number of the secondary schools. The system operates to ensure that the best students attend the best schools with the result that the differences in quality between the schools tend to be perpetuated. The numbers attending secondary school in any region are therefore no indication of regional recruitment. A student may attend secondary school in Accra when his home is elsewhere and his previous education has been completed in yet a third place. Because of this, most studies of regional inequality in the provision of education have sought to discover the region of birth of those attending the schools. But this procedure also has its difficulties, for in a society where there is a great deal of geographical mobility the place of birth may be of little significance in the life experience of large numbers of people. It is a common occurrence in matrilineal groups, for example, for the mother to return to her parents' home for the birth of her children. A count of the number of times the students in our sixth form sample had moved showed them to be a highly mobile population. Nearly 60% (263) recorded two or more moves. We decided, therefore, to record both birthplace and residence at entry to secondary school, but only the latter is used in this paper. The university survey data refer to place of birth and the place of longest residence in the first ten years of life. We use the latter as being a more realistic index. The difference is also important for assessing urban/rural selection, as the movement of mothers returning to the ancestral home for the birth of their children is a movement that is typically from town to village. The recording of birthplace alone would therefore have biased any conclusions in this respect as well.

Table 1, then, compares the regional distribution of the population of Ghana with the regional distribution of the places of origin of the sixth form and university samples. An important variation emerging from this table is that while only 12.4% of the sixth form sample and 6.8% of the university students come from the Northern, Upper, and Brong Ahafo regions (the three most northerly regions in Ghana), in 1960, one or at the most two years after the sixth formers entered secondary schools, nearly 28% of the total population lived in these regions. On the other hand there is considerable over-representation of Accras—20.9% of the sixth formers and 10.3%¹⁸ of the university students coming from the Capital District as compared with 7.3% of the total population in 1960. The only other region to show signifi-

¹⁷ See E. M. Hartley, "Sixth Form Scientists in Ghana and Recruitment to University Courses," *West African Journal of Education*, 9 (October 1965), pp. 132–133.

¹⁸ See note (d) to Table 1.

WINTER, 1967

TABLE 1
REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE TOTAL POPULATION OF GHANA COMPARED WITH REGIONAL
DISTRIBUTION OF SIXTH FORM STUDENTS AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Region	Total Population ^a	Sixth Formers ^b	University ^c
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Central	11.2	11.3	10.1
Western	9.3	9.1	6.5
Eastern	16.3	15.4	25.8 ^d
Accra C.D.	7.3	20.9	10.3 ^d
Volta	11.5	15.9	16.9
Ashanti	16.5	13.9	22.6
Northern	7.9	4.1	0.8
Upper	11.3	4.6	1.2
Brong Ahafo	8.7	3.7	4.8
Other Countries	...	1.1	1.0
Total	100.0 (6,726,800)	100.0 (460)	100.0 (291)

^a Calculated from *1960 Population of Ghana Census*, Vol. I, Accra, Census Office, 1962.

^b At entry to Secondary School.

^c Place of longest residence during first ten years of life.

^d The figures for Accra C.D. and Eastern Region are subject to informant error because many people believe large areas of Accra C.D. to be in the Eastern Region. A follow up survey in 1965, which corrected this error, showed the proportion of students from Accra C.D. and Eastern Region to be 15.9% and 19.0% respectively. Statistical Training Centre, *Second Survey of the Students of the University of Ghana, 1965*. Achimota, 1965. Mimeo.

cant over-representation in both sixth form and university was Volta. The over-representation of Ashanti Region in the university sample alone indicates an over-representation of students who have not attended secondary school sixth forms but have entered the university through some other channel. (See above). If we express regional distribution in terms of the chances of a young person from a given region entering the sixth form we perhaps get a clearer picture.¹⁹ For example, 1 in 140 Accras of sixth form age entered the sixth form, whilst young people in Brong Ahafo, the least favored region, had a 1 in 850 chance. The chances in the other regions were: Volta—1 in 260; Central, Western, and Eastern—1 in 330; Ashanti—1 in 460; Northern and Upper—1 in 480. The university and sixth form girls show a sharper degree of regional differentiation than the total sample, 30.9% of the female sixth formers coming from the Accra region and 4.2% from Upper, Northern and Brong Ahafo regions together.

The overall picture is of higher education (including sixth form) thinning out as one moves north, away from the coast, which suggests an interpretation of the pattern in terms of the degree and length of exposure to European contact. The north has been exposed to the intensive influence of European

¹⁹ A number of crude assumptions had to be made to compute these figures, but we believe the relationships they express to be reasonably accurate. The base population for these ratios was the regional distribution of Ghanaians between the ages of 15 and 24.

culture only since 1945,²⁰ and in spite of the efforts that have been made to remove the disparities in educational provision between north and south, northerners still suffer from the disadvantage of a late start. On the coast there is a long history of contact. More specifically, there has been a long exposure to formal education, and a number of the existing secondary schools in the south were founded well before the second world war.²¹ The only other area comparable to Accra educationally is another coastal town and former administrative capital, Cape Coast, where seven of the twenty-six secondary schools with sixth forms are situated compared with four in Accra. In the south a long period of continuous contact with the metropolitan country brought economic, political and social changes which were expressed in an increasing awareness of formal education and the advantages it could confer. Kimble points to this increasing awareness of the Gold Coast African during the first two decades of this century.

"... those in closest contact came to attribute his (the European's) material advantages to the mystique of his education. They also saw that only Africans who had been to school could hope for employment as teachers, or clerks, or even (sic) in higher posts. Education thus offered the prospects of a higher salary, increased authority and prestige, possibly the chance of a trip to Europe, and certainly the means of avoiding manual labour which was traditionally allotted to slaves, but was liable to be demanded by the white man of any illiterate African."²²

Although the educated African did not enjoy the unambiguous authority and prestige suggested here, there is no doubt that such factors did lead to the demand for education becoming an important political pressure in the south as early as the 1920's. Consequently, secondary education rests on a firmer basis in the south since primary and middle school attendance has been higher in the past. Moverover, as Ferrez has pointed out,²³ the distance between a child's home and the nearest school is in itself an important index of inequality. In France, he argues, "geographical factors (are still) even more important than the social ones." This pattern is modified in Ghana by the system of entrance to secondary school and the high level of geographical mobility, but is nevertheless a contributory factor to regional inequalities in attendance.²⁴

Foster²⁵ has pointed out that the development of commerce and trade and the growth of cash crops constitute social conditions that lead to the expansion of education. But since these economic pressures have impinged differentially upon the various regions, the associated educational demand

²⁰ See G. E. Hurd, "Education in Ghana," in W. Birmingham, I. Neustadt and E. N. Omaboe, *op. cit.*

²¹ See David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana, 1850-1928*, London: Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. 83-94.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²³ J. Ferrez, "Regional Inequalities in Educational Opportunity," in A. H. Halsey, editor, *Ability and Educational Opportunity*, Paris: O.E.C.D. Publications, 1961, pp. 69-87.

²⁴ In 1954, 80% of Accra's primary and middle school children lived within one mile of their school. Ioné Acquah, *Accra Survey*, University of London Press: 1958, p. 112.

²⁵ Philip J. Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana, op. cit.*, pp. 125-8.

and subsequent provision of educational services has been unequal. These factors go far towards explaining the present regional inequalities of educational provision. But the over-representation of both university and sixth form students from the Volta region cannot be explained in this way. The Volta region rivals Accra in the provision of sixth formers and university students, even though there was in 1960 no town numbering more than 18,000 inhabitants, cocoa—the major cash crop of Ghana—is relatively unimportant, and until 1964 the region could boast only one secondary school with a sixth form. The Volta representation is even more surprising if one looks at the male students alone, for while only 4.2% of the female sixth formers come from the Volta region, the region supplies as large a proportion of the male sixth formers (18.5%) as does Accra (18.2%). It may be that the contact thesis will partially explain this phenomenon, for it was in this area that the Bremen mission conducted its pioneer work in education in the nineteenth century, when the region was under German control. Support for this view is to be found in the fact that the Ewe, a tribal group coterminous with the Volta region, have a higher male literacy rate than any other major tribe. The overall literacy rate for Ghanaian males in 1960 was 35.8% while for the Ewes it was 48.8%.²⁶ These figures suggest a more highly educated parental generation who would be more likely to encourage their children in their education. Another factor perhaps concerns the traditional value-attitudes of the Ewe, for there is a stereotype commonly accepted in Ghana of the Ewe as being an enterprising and adaptable group. It is interesting, for example, that in the one technical sixth form in Ghana the Ewe predominate, even though it is situated some 200 miles from traditional Ewe territory.

The over-representation of Accra Capital District suggests that the regional pattern that favors the south as against the north may be further modified by urban/rural differences. There is no satisfactory single index of urbanisation. The index of size generally used does not necessarily indicate the relative importance of secondary as against primary relationships, which for the sociologist fundamentally distinguishes urban as against rural social relationships. The factor of size can be misleading when, as in many studies, a population of 5,000 is taken as the dividing line between urban and rural communities. Many "towns" of 5,000 and over retain the social characteristics of the village and are more typically rural than urban. In order to differentiate significantly those towns and cities in Ghana where secondary relationships and non-agricultural activities prevail, we have designated towns of 20,000 or more inhabitants as "urban." Taking this as our index we find considerable differences in representation.

Thirty-nine percent (179) of our sample of sixth form students were born in towns of 20,000 or more inhabitants. In 1948, 8.5% of Ghana's total population was resident in such urban areas, which had a combined population of 351,400. Table 2, however, shows that immediately prior to entry to secondary school, the percentage of the sixth form sample living in urban areas

²⁶ 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Special Report 'E,' Tribes in Ghana, Accra, Census Office, 1965.

TABLE 2
URBAN-RURAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE TOTAL POPULATION AND OF SIXTH FORM STUDENTS AT THE TIME OF THEIR ENTRY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

	Total Population in 1960 ^a	Sixth Form Students
	Percent	Percent
Over 20,000	11.6	47.8
Under 20,000	88.4	52.2
Total	100.0 (6,726,800)	100.0 (455) ^b

^a Calculated from 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Vol. I, Accra, Census Office, 1962.

^b Foreign students excluded.

had risen to 47.8% (220), while the 1960 Census returns show that the number of Ghanaians living in towns had more than doubled to 778,770, and formed 11.6% of the population.²⁷

It is clear from these figures that town dwellers as a whole are highly favored although this does not apply to all urban groups (see p. 22 below). Less than 12% of the population provide nearly 50% of the nation's sixth form students. Again the girls were a more extreme group; two-thirds of the females in the sixth form sample living in the large towns of Ghana immediately prior to their secondary schooling.

The favored position of the urban dweller is in part a function of the location of schools in and around towns. The simple fact of living in a community with a large number of schools means that the parents, and later the youths themselves, become more aware of the possibilities and advantages of attending institutions of formal education. The Accra youth will also benefit from the fact that the teaching staffs in their primary and middle schools are usually better trained and have higher status than "bush teachers." Also, as Lipset has pointed out,²⁸ the greater propensity of the urban dwellers to obtain higher education is related to the fact that they are better acquainted with the occupational possibilities that exist than are those raised in rural areas. The degree of differential selection between urban and rural children is related to the sharp contrasts in social conditions to be found in Ghana. In their comparative study Davis and Golden²⁹ point out that urbanization in West Africa today is neither the "urbanization of the late medieval period in Europe nor the urbanization of the 18th and 19th century." The sudden juxtaposition of 20th century cities and primitive cultures gives rise in some respects to a "sharper urban/rural contrast than can be found anywhere else in the world."

Are regional origins and urban/rural origins independent variables or does one explain the other? Table 3 shows that the population of large towns

²⁷ There were in 1960 nine such areas in Ghana, in order of size: Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, Cape Coast, Tamale, Koforidua, Obuasi, Winneba, and Nsawam.

²⁸ S. M. Lipset, "Social Mobility and Urbanization," *Rural Sociology*, 20 (September-December 1955), pp. 220-228.

²⁹ K. Davis and H. H. Golden, "Urbanization and the Development of Pre-Industrial Areas," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 3 (October 1954), pp. 6-26.

TABLE 3
REPRESENTATION OF URBAN POPULATION IN SIXTH FORMS BY REGION

	Accra C.D.	Ashanti	West- ern	Central	North- ern	East- ern	All Ghana
Total population urban (20,000+) *	68.7	18.3	12.1	8.8	7.6	5.0	11.6
Sixth form urban population (20,000+)	94.8	79.7	64.3	50.0	47.4	16.9	47.8

N.B. Volta, Upper, and Brong Ahafo regions have no town with a population of 20,000.

* Calculated from 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Vol. I, Accra, Census Office, 1962.

is considerably over-represented in sixth forms irrespective of the region in which they are situated. Nor is it the case that Accra is more favored in the selection process than the large towns in other regions, for as Table 4 shows, the contribution of the towns in any given region to the total urban population of Ghana is closely reflected in the proportion that the towns of that region contribute to the total number of sixth form students with urban origins. In other words, having one's home in a large town not only influences one's chances of reaching the sixth form, but influences one's chances more or less equally wherever the town may be. It is in the rural areas that the decisive regional influence remains, and it can be seen from Table 5 that the Eastern and Volta regions are still over-represented when the urban factor is taken into account.

What we have documented so far, then, is the extent to which the educational system in Ghana selects personnel to man the higher echelons of the modern economic sector from those parts of the country which are themselves within the modern sector, that is, from the more developed south and from the large towns. Thus, the operation of the educational system maintains the imbalance which originally stemmed from the character and timing of colonial intrusion.

TABLE 4
REGIONAL COMPARISON OF URBAN REPRESENTATION IN SIXTH FORMS

Region	Percentage of Total Urban Population of Ghana *	Percentage of Total Number of Sixth Formers with Urban Origins
Accra C.D.	43.4	42.1
Ashanti	26.1	23.6
Western	9.7	12.5
Central	8.5	12.0
Eastern	7.1	5.6
Northern	5.2	4.2
Total	100.0 (778,880)	100.0 (216)

* Calculated from 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Vol. I, Accra, Census Office, 1962.

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

TABLE 5
REGIONAL COMPARISON OF RURAL REPRESENTATION IN SIXTH FORMS

Region	Percentage of Total Rural Population of Ghana ^a	Percentage of Total Number of Sixth Formers with Rural Origins
Accra C.D.	2.6	2.1
Ashanti	15.2	5.4
Western	9.2	6.3
Central	11.5	10.9
Eastern	17.5	24.7
Northern	8.3	4.2
Upper	12.7	8.8
Brong Ahafo	9.9	7.1
Volta	13.1	30.5
Total	100.0 (5,947,937)	100.0 (239)

^a Calculated from the 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Vol. I, Census Office, Accra, 1962.

IV

The most widely documented aspect of social selection in education is that of parental occupation, father's occupation usually being taken as an operational index of social class. Table 6 shows the occupational distribution of Ghana's working population in 1960 as compared with the occupations of the fathers of our sixth form and university samples. This material is supplemented in the table by the distribution of paternal occupations found in a sample of secondary school fifth form students in 1960,³⁰ and a further distribution derived from a survey of students at the University College of Cape Coast in 1964.³¹

This table points to the fact that the sixth form was operating as the most rigorous level of social selection in the educational system, in the sense that it drew from a narrower range of social backgrounds than other levels. Whereas less than 7% of the employed male population of Ghana in 1960 was employed in professional, managerial, executive, technical and white collar occupations, students from such backgrounds comprised 31.6% of the University College of Cape Coast sample, 40.3% of the fifth form students, 45.6% of the University of Ghana students, and 55% of the sixth form sample. At the other end of the scale farmers, who form the bulk of the male working population (62.8%) find their lowest representation in the sixth forms, only 23.3% of the fathers of our sample engaging in farming or fishing. Of the fathers of fifth formers, 32.5% were farmers, while farmers' children comprised 37.7% of the University of Ghana students and 47% of the Cape Coast students. Even so, the table understates the *degree* of social selection by concealing many important differentials within its broad categories.

³⁰ Philip J. Foster, "Secondary Schooling and Social Mobility in a West African Nation," *op. cit.*, p. 159.

³¹ R. Wylie, "The New Ghanaian Teacher and His Profession," *West African Journal of Education*, 3 (October 1964).

TABLE 6
OCCUPATIONS OF WORKING MALE POPULATION OF GHANA AND OF FATHERS OF SIXTH
FORM, UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AND FIFTH FORM STUDENTS

Occupational Group	Male Working Population ^a 1960	Sixth Form	University	University College ^b	Fifth Form ^c
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
I. Professional, Admin- istrative, Higher Technical and Clerical	6.9	55.0	45.6	31.6	40.3
II. Private Traders	3.8	7.8	3.5	4.8	10.3
III. Skilled Workers and Artisans	11.8	6.3	5.8	7.5	12.1
IV. Semi Skilled and Unskilled	13.4	0.2	0.3	1.6	1.5
V. Farmers	62.8	23.3	37.7	47.0	32.5
VI. Others (including armed services, other ranks, and police	1.3	2.6	1.0	0.5	0.7
No Answer, Don't Know, Retired, Dead	...	4.8	5.1	6.3	2.6
Total	100.0 (1,573,170)	100.0 (460)	100.0 (291)	100.0 (172)	100.0 (963)

^a Calculated from 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Advanced Report, Vol. III and VI, Accra, Census Office, 1962.

^b From R. Wylie, "The New Ghanaian Teacher and His Profession," *West African Journal of Education*, 8 (October 1964).

^c From Philip J. Foster, "Secondary Schooling and Social Mobility in a West African Nation," *Sociology of Education*, 37 (Winter 1963), p. 159.

Table 7, which is confined to a further breakdown of the sixth form material, indicates the considerable internal differences within Occupational Group I. The administrative/executive/managerial grouping is clearly the most over-represented sub-group with about fifty times the representation that would result from a random distribution. The higher professional ³² sub-group fol-

³² The term "higher professional" refers to occupations such as medical doctor, lawyer, university or secondary school teacher, i.e. those occupations for which a degree or equivalent qualification is normally required. The term "lower professional" is used for occupations such as primary or middle school teacher and nurse, occupations that while often spoken of as professions and not fitting into any other group definition are, in Ghana, held in relatively low esteem, command low levels of salary, and have low educational entrance requirements.

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

TABLE 7
SIXTH FORM REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE PROFESSIONAL AND WHITE COLLAR GROUP

Occupational Sub-Group in Order of Representation	Male Working Population of 1960 ^a	Fathers of Sixth Formers 1964
	Percent	Percent
1. Administrative, Executive, Managerial	0.3	15.9
2. Higher Professional	0.5	11.1
3. Supervisory	0.6	9.3
4. Lower Professional	2.3	9.6
5. White Collar (non-clerical)	0.5	3.2
6. White Collar (clerical)	2.7	5.9
Total Professional and White Collar	6.9	55.0
Other Occupational Group	93.1	45.0
Total	100.0 (1,573,170)	100.0 (460)

^a Calculated from 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Advanced Report of Vols. III and IV, Accra, Census Office, 1962.

lows with about twenty times the representation, while the lower professional sub-group has four times, and the clerical group twice the representation that would be achieved with a random distribution.

The category of farmer in Table 6 is also heterogenous. Previous studies of social selection in societies with a large proportion of the people engaged in farming have, on the whole, failed to differentiate among those recorded as farmer; including under a single heading those farmers who are wealthy, literate, and command high prestige with those who scrape a bare subsistence from the soil. The inadvisability of assuming farmers to be a homogeneous group is indicated by Kilson's comments on the emergence of new social classes in West Africa.

"In addition to stimulating the rise of a wage-laboring class, the growth of a money economy in West Africa has given birth to a small but well-to-do group of African farmers who produce all sorts of primary commodities . . . for foreign markets. Some of these farmers have gross incomes of over £700 per year and have attained standards of wealth that are high even by Western standards."³³

In Ghana it is misleading to describe cocoa farmers in particular as belonging to the underprivileged farming masses. Indeed, a decade before the present study was carried out it was suggested that

"the cocoa farmers as a group could be fairly described, from the point of view of income, as the 'upper tenth' of the Gold Coast population."³⁴

Our data suggest that such heterogeneity within the farming group is impor-

³³ M. L. Kilson, Jr., "Nationalism and Social Classes in British West Africa," *The Journal of Politics*, 20 (1958), p. 373.

³⁴ B. N. Niculescu, "Fluctuations in Incomes of Primary Producers: Further Comment," *The Economic Journal* (December 1954), p. 730. Quoted in Kilson, *op. cit.*

tant in social selection and to this extent undermine Foster's major conclusions.³⁵

We have already seen that the children of farmers were less successful in gaining entrance to the sixth form than most other occupational groups. But our material so far conceals the success of cocoa farmers' children in obtaining higher education relative to the children of other farmers.³⁶ As has been suggested cocoa farmers are, on the whole, a more wealthy group and are certainly more involved in the cash crop economy of modern Ghana. Their orientation to a market is one important value for a group characterized by a "cluster" of attitudes favorable to education. It has already been pointed out that the spread of cocoa cultivation has, in some parts of Ghana—especially the Eastern and Ashanti regions—been highly correlated with the spread of education. Cocoa farmers, then, are significantly differentiated from the subsistence farming majority as being part of the modern rather than the traditional economy. Table 8 shows that of the total number of sixth formers from farming origins 69% (73) are the sons and daughters of cocoa farmers, whereas cocoa farmers are less than one-third of the total farming population of Ghana. Cocoa farmers, moreover, comprised 20% of the working population and their children were nearly 16% of the sixth form sample, so the children of cocoa farmers are only slightly under-represented in sixth forms, while the children of other farming groups are considerably under-represented. One might conclude that the sixth form, in so far as it caters for the children of farmers at all, caters for the children of a privileged farming group—a conclusion that is reinforced if we differentiate within the farming group by measuring farmers' relative prosperity. We did this in a crude way by classifying farmers according to the number of plots they farmed. A little under half of the farming group was categorized as large

³⁵ See above p. 62.

³⁶ Non-cocoa farmers are mainly subsistence farmers, although a number of these we categorize as "other" farmers engage in some form of cash cropping.

TABLE 8
SIXTH FORM REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE FARMING GROUP

Occupational Group	Working Population of 1960 ^a		Fathers of Sixth Formers 1964	
	Percent of Total	Percent of Farmers	Percent of Total	Percent of Farmers
Cocoa farmers	20.1	31.9	15.9	68.9
Other farmers	42.7	68.1	7.4	31.1
Total farmers	62.8	100.0 (987,950)	23.3	100.0 (107)
Other Occupational Groups	37.2	....	76.7	....
Total	100.0 (1,573,170)	....	100.0 (460)	....

^a Calculated from 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Advanced Report of Vols. III and IV, Accra, Census Office, 1962.

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

farmers³⁷ and 78% (36) of these were large cocoa farmers. We have no means of knowing what the comparable distribution is for the total population, but it seems likely that the larger farmers are more than proportionately represented in the sixth forms.

Our case is further strengthened by looking at the phenomenon of the urbanized farmer. More than one-fifth of the students whose fathers were farmers were living in large towns at the time they gained entrance to secondary schools. This perhaps unexpected phenomenon may be explained to some extent by the fact that some of the students no longer regard their father's residence as "home." Boys with educational potential may be "taken up" at an early age by a wealthy member of the extended family or even by some influential person who is not a relative. There is also the continued possibility in Ghana that a boy or girl may look to their mothers' brother to finance their education and may become members of the uncle's household. However, it is also likely that these figures are indicative of a wealthy, prestigious farming group who are farmers in name only, having their homes in urban areas. Thus we see that this urbanized group is concentrated among cocoa farmers. One-third of the children of large cocoa farmers were resident in the cities. Whatever the reasons for this degree of urbanization among the sixth form children of farmers it remains clear that their life experiences and chances are not consistent with those of children from a subsistence farm background.

By locating the existence of a relatively advantaged group of cocoa farmers, we have revealed the extent of educational underprivilege among the majority of farmers. This represents the gulf between those farmers involved in the modern sector of the economy and those primarily involved in traditional social and economic relationships. Such a line of division is, however, perhaps less significant than cleavages of a class nature which are emerging *within* the modern sector. Perhaps the most remarkable figures in Table 6 are those for occupational group IV which indicate that the lower level occupations in the towns are even more poorly represented than the underprivileged among the farmers. These semi-skilled and unskilled workers comprised 13.4% of the working population in 1960, but their children formed only 0.2% of the sixth form sample and 1.6% of the University College of Cape Coast sample, which in other ways was far more representative. Thus although the modernization of the economy creates conditions that are favorable for the expansion of the educational system, at the same time there emerge within the modern sector differences of life chances greater than those that distinguish the modern sector from the traditional. In other words, the rigidity of the emerging class system is such that achievement through higher education is more difficult for the child of a laborer than for the child of a subsistence farmer.

A further index of social selection is parental education. Table 9 indicates that the chances of gaining a sixth form or university place were highly related to the educational achievements of the students' fathers. More than three-quarters of the sixth form sample had fathers who had attended primary school, while the figure for university students was 71.3%. This com-

³⁷ Those farmers cultivating three plots or more we arbitrarily classified as large.

TABLE 9
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF SIXTH FORM AND UNIVERSITY FATHERS COMPARED WITH
THAT OF ALL MALES AGED 25 AND OVER

	All Males ^a	Fathers of Sixth Form Students	Fathers of of All University Students	Fathers of Univer- sity Ex- Sixth Form Students	Fathers of Uni- versity Non- Sixth Form Students
Level of Schooling	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
No schooling	79.0	23.7	28.0	23.7	35.9
Level Unknown	....	0.9	0.7	0.5	1.0
Primary	21.0	75.4	71.3	75.8	63.1
Middle	15.7	68.7	62.0	68.8	49.5
Secondary	2.5	34.8	{ 23.9	{ 33.9	{ 5.8
University	0.2	8.9			
	(1,343,910)	(460)	(291)	(186)	(105)

^a Calculated from 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Advanced Report of Vols. III and IV, Accra, Census Office, 1962.

pares with the 21% of all Ghanaian males over the age of 25 who had had primary education.³⁸ Of the total sixth form sample, 68.7% had fathers who went on to middle school and 34.8% had fathers who had a secondary education compared with 15.7% and 2.5% respectively for the male population over the age of 25. The pattern for the fathers of the university sample is similar to that for the sixth formers although less extreme. Sixty-two percent of the fathers of the university sample had attended middle school, and 23.9% had attended secondary school. Only 0.2% of Ghanaian men over the age of 25 had been to university compared with 8.9% of the fathers of sixth formers. The same pattern is apparent in a comparison between the female population and the mothers of the students in our samples. In fact the sixth formers' mothers exhibit a considerably higher level of education than the *male* population of Ghana. Similarly the parents of sixth form and university students exhibit much higher rates of literacy than does the adult male population. Very nearly 80% of the fathers of both student samples were literate compared with 36% (26% in English) for the male population over the age of 15.³⁹

³⁸ 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Advance Report of Vols. III and IV, Accra, Census Office, 1962, Tables 17 and 19. The figure for all Ghanaian males over the age of 35—the age group from which the fathers of our sample come—was even less—16.1%. We use the age of 25 plus because subsequent figures are available only for this group, but it should be recognized that this understates the selective function of parental education.

³⁹ 1960 *Population Census of Ghana*, Special Report 'E,' "Tribes in Ghana," Accra, Census Office, 1962, p. lxvi.

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

If we look further at the factor of literacy, differences are revealed between the fathers of sixth formers who are farmers and the total farming population. Foster's arguments concerning the "fluidity" of higher education emphasize the "markedly" low level of education of parents in farming occupations.

"... It is ... important to note in the case of boys that over one-third are the children of rural farmers and fishermen, the overwhelming bulk of whom are totally illiterate."⁴⁰

It appears that Foster draws his conclusions from the literacy rate of the total farming population, for he says nothing about the literacy of the parents of his sample who are farmers. In our sixth form sample, however, we found that nearly half (48.1%) of the farmer fathers were literate, and a further 7% were married to literate women. Thus only 45% came from families where both parents were illiterate. Although the census figures for literacy by occupational group are not yet available it is safe to assume that the rate for farmers will be less than the overall rate of 36%. Literacy among cocoa farmers in our sample of fathers was higher, at 54.8%, than that for other farmers, which stood at 33.3%, again indicating the differences within the farming category. The relatively high level of literacy exhibited by the students' parents suggests that the fact that the language of instruction (English) differs from the language of general communication at the family and community level is important in educational achievement. In very few homes is English used in conversation between members of the family, a factor that may greatly hinder the educational attainment of the children of those who speak only the indigenous languages in the home.⁴¹

So far we have emphasized the extent to which selection into institutions of higher education favors the southern, urban student whose father is highly placed occupationally and is also relatively highly educated. As we pointed out earlier, however, the sixth form is the bottleneck in the system, both in terms of numbers and in terms of the social origins of the students. The apparent inconsistency between the social origins of sixth form students and those of university students is largely to be explained, as we suggested earlier, by the fact that many university entrants never attended secondary school or bypassed the sixth form. Only 64.4% (186) of the university sample had been to sixth form, 52.2% (97) of these having fathers in occupational group I. (Table 10, Column 2.) This confirms the findings of our sixth form investigation. However, the table also indicates that there is a larger percentage of students from farming backgrounds among the ex-sixth form students who have continued to university. It may be that fewer of the sixth form children of farmers than of other groups fail the A level examinations, although infor-

⁴⁰ Philip J. Foster, "Secondary Schooling and Social Mobility in a West African Nation," *op. cit.* p. 163.

⁴¹ The work of Bernstein on linguistic adaptation is relevant here in a situation complicated by the confrontation of "pidgin" and "standard" English which in many ways closely resemble Bernstein's "restricted" and "elaborated" codes. See Basil Bernstein, "A Socio-Linguistic Approach to Social Learning," in Julius Gould, editor, *Penguin Survey of the Social Sciences 1965*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965, pp. 144-168.

TABLE 10
OCCUPATIONS OF FATHERS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BY EDUCATIONAL
LEVEL OF STUDENTS PRIOR TO UNIVERSITY

Occupational Group	All University Students	Ex-Sixth Form Students	Non-Sixth Form Students	Non-Secondary Students
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
I. Managerial, Professional etc.	43.3	52.2	34.4	16.6
V. Farmers	37.7	30.1	44.2	62.0
II, III, IV, VI, and VII "others"	19.0	17.7	21.4	21.4
Total	100.0 (289)	100.0 (186)	100.0 (61)	100.0 (42)

mation from the university survey suggests that there is no correlation between social background and relative success in university examinations.⁴²

Unfortunately we cannot differentiate between the types of farming backgrounds of university students, so we have no means of knowing whether this is an increase of children of cocoa farmers or if it represents an increase in students from under-privileged farming backgrounds. We can, however, provide further evidence that those who qualify for university entry privately are less of a socially privileged group than those who come up through the formal channels of the educational system. If we further divide the university sample according to the level of formal schooling reached prior to university, as in Table 10, we find that of the 61 students who went to secondary school but not to sixth form, 34.4% (21) have fathers with occupations ranking in group I, while 44.2% (27) were the sons of farmers. Of the 42 students who had never been to secondary school, only 16.6% (7) had fathers with occupations in group I, while 62.0% (26) were from farming backgrounds. Although these figures are based upon two few cases to allow generalization, we have confirmatory evidence from the Cape Coast study, where again students with farming backgrounds made up 47% of the total sample. This finding adds confirmation because both groups consist of students who came to university *via* teaching, having left school on completion of their middle schooling, or at the very most on completion of their main secondary school course. In 1964 the University College of Cape Coast was functioning explicitly as a further training institution for such teachers.⁴³

Differential selection to sixth forms and university can also be illustrated from Table 9. The level of education attained by students' fathers varies concomitantly with the level of education achieved by the sons prior to university, so that one-third of the fathers of students who entered university from the sixth form had themselves reached secondary school, whereas the

⁴² Statistical Training Centre, *Social Survey of the Students of the University of Ghana*, Achimota, 1964, mimeo., p. 35.

⁴³ See R. Wylie, *op. cit.*

comparable figure for the fathers of students who did not go to sixth form was 5.8%. If we separate ex-sixth form students from the total university sample we can again see the remarkably close fit with the findings of the sixth form survey. Such comparison reinforces the conclusion that those who bypass the sixth form in getting to university—those outside the formal channels of educational achievement—are less of an elite group, although the level of their fathers' education is still high compared with that exhibited by the total male population.

V

In our initial discussion we suggested that rates of social mobility were not affected by educational expansion and that the educational system operates as a channel of social mobility only under certain conditions—namely where educational qualifications are the main criterion of occupational placement and when the higher levels of education are characterized by openness to all groups. Although in Ghana the first of these conditions is fulfilled, the second is not in so far as social selection into sixth forms and universities favors children from high occupational, literate, urban backgrounds. Social mobility may be highly significant for the upwardly mobile individual, but such individuals make up a minute proportion of all low status young people (signifying a low rate of social mobility) and, furthermore, a small proportion of the future elite (signifying limited access to the elite). Higher education in Ghana then functions largely to place the children of the elite in high occupational positions.

Why is it that the educational system is marked by such rigidity in spite of measures such as the *Accelerated Development Plan for Education, 1951*, which have led to an expansion of education at all levels? First, the high rate of fertility exhibited by elite families (above p. 59) creates pressure on school places from within the elite itself. Secondly, the possibility of the elite maintaining such a near-monopoly on sixth form places has been affected by the high cost of a secondary education. Measures such as the abolition of secondary school tuition fees in September 1965⁴⁴ are unlikely to change this situation since fees are a small part of the cost of maintaining a child at one of the secondary boarding schools. Indeed, the abolition of tuition fees is likely to have the unintended consequence of subsidizing those who can afford the high boarding fees. This is a close parallel with the post war situation in England where the middle classes, partly through their over-representation in secondary grammar schools, were the main beneficiaries of the Welfare States.⁴⁵ Thirdly, the close connection between educational achievement and parental literacy and level of education suggests that the gap between the educated and the uneducated, straddled as it is in Ghana by the barrier of language,

⁴⁴ Since the recent change of regime, secondary school fees have been reintroduced. There is an advisory committee on education currently meeting, and this may well result in other changes that would affect the details of educational organization to which we refer. The general argument, however, remains unaffected.

⁴⁵ See B. Abel-Smith, "Whose Welfare State," in N. MacKenzie, *Conviction*, London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1958, pp. 55-73.

is crucial in explaining rigidities in social selection. A child coming from a home where the English language is spoken daily has an enormous advantage in school where English is the language of instruction. Facility in the use of language, which Bernstein⁴⁶ has shown to be so important in England in biasing selection against children from certain backgrounds, is likely to be even more critical in explaining social selection in Ghana.

There are indications that this rigidity will be maintained and possibly increased in the future. One change in the educational system, which may well contribute to the maintenance of rigid social selection, is to be found in the recent shortening of primary schooling and in the intention to select students for secondary schools at the end of their primary school course instead of during their middle schooling. If the government implements the decision to operate a bifurcated secondary school system—with 90% entering vocational continuation schools and the minority going to secondary schools—this, combined with the earlier age of selection for secondary schools, is likely to favor the children of the elite even more than the present system since in that situation home environment will have an enhanced importance in the selection process. The vocational continuation schools will, in fact, effectively terminate the formal education of the majority of “failures.”

As we have pointed out, selection into institutions of higher education in Ghana has until now been complicated by the fact that talented individuals from subsistence farmer backgrounds who dropped out of the formal channels of educational achievement at an early age, have been able to enter university through the “backdoor.” This opportunity for the private student has had the effect of increasing the fluidity of access to higher education and thus to high occupational positions. It seems likely, however, that this phenomenon is a transitional one. If the projected expansion of the sixth form and university preliminary courses is attained, these institutions will shortly be able to act as the sole feeders of university undergraduate courses. Since under present economic and political conditions university expansion is likely to be curtailed, the qualification required for entry to university may rise, thus favoring sixth form students.⁴⁷ There are also indications that the perception of graduate needs is changing in other ways that will affect social selection. Both policy statements and the general belief among educators stress the need for more science graduates. But those who qualify for university places privately are, virtually without exception, arts students, while those who pass through the sixth form are equally distributed between arts and science subjects.⁴⁸ Science students are already receiving preferential financial treatment, and it may well be that one function of such preference will be the establishment of higher standards of entry for arts students, which will in turn militate against the private candidate who currently gains entry to university only in the face of severe disadvantages.

⁴⁶ See Basil Bernstein, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ See West African Examinations Council, *Annual Report 1964*, unpublished, which shows a considerably higher pass rate for candidates from the schools than for private candidates.

⁴⁸ See T. J. Johnson and G. E. Hurd, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

Even if there were a further expansion of higher education and changes in the occupational structure, which would make such an expansion meaningful in terms of occupational placement, our data suggest that, given the present structure of power and opportunity, the new school and university places would largely be filled by the children of lower professional and clerical workers and the upper grades of farmers, while urban manual workers and peasant farmers would remain under-represented. Thus the selective nature of higher education could lead to a differential distribution of opportunity, which closely parallels that which has proved an obstinate feature of British education.

Finally, we would argue that the situation revealed by our data has important ramifications for an understanding of the changing system of social stratification in Ghana. Analyses of social stratification, and particularly studies of social mobility, are complicated by the co-existence of two orders of differentiation—the traditional and the modern. As the modern occupational structure of Ghana has developed it has been manned, at all levels, by persons from the traditional sector. These changes are represented by movement into towns, by movement into cash cropping, and by educational achievement which, for a minority of the children of subsistence farmers, has led to long distance upward mobility. Our data suggest, however, that most upwardly mobile individuals are today mobile from positions within the modern economic sector although this is short distance mobility from middle level positions. At the same time the modern sector exhibits the greatest barriers to long distance mobility as is indicated by the gross under-representation in higher education of the children of semi- and unskilled workers. With the growing predominance of the modern economic sector, this rigidity is likely to become even more important, creating a large educationally underprivileged group and virtually eliminating long distance social mobility. It is often argued that the concept of class is inapplicable to Africa. While we would agree that traditional forms of differentiation still have some influence, we would suggest they are of declining importance. In contrast, the emergent class divisions within the expanding modern sector are already an important determinant of the life chances of individuals and are indicative of the direction of social change in Ghana.

WINTER, 1967