The Effects of Upward Mobility: A Study Of Working-Status College Students*

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Sociologists often view the process of social mobility as being socially and psychologically disruptive to the mobile person. This article tests that hypothesis with a group of socially mobile college students. Far from displaying psychological symptoms of marginality, however, students from lower-status backgrounds were found to have equally high grades as upper-middle-status students; nor were they more troubled by worries. They displayed no higher symptoms of anxiety, did not harbor a lower self-concept, and did not feel socially rejected. Data on social relationships show that when students from working-status backgrounds go to a public university, they actually experience social continuity rather than disjuncture and marginality. The suggestion is made that mobile college students undergo anticipatory socialization, while in high school, and that those attending public universities experience sufficient social continuity to become assimilated into upper-middle-status positions without major disruption.

UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY has traditionally occupied an almost sacred place among American values. Persons who achieve prominence by rising from humble beginnings have become our heroes, and their biographies are the folklore of our society. From their earliest years, children are taught that they should aspire to a success greater than that of their parents. In the mid-twentieth century, one way of achieving the required upward mobility is through higher education, which opens the door to upper-middle-status professional and managerial positions.

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Sociologists have noted that individuals who rise in the status hierarchy often face severe psychological difficulties. To be upwardly mobile means more than improving one's material comforts; it also entails changes in social relationships and alterations in life style. Upward mobility means leaving behind the familiar associations, the norms, the values and practices of a lower status. The newcomer into a more privileged class may have difficulty in being accepted as a social equal, and hence feel insecure about his claims to high status. (See, for example, Sorokin, 1927: 522–525; Hollingshead, Ellis, and Kirby, 1954; Blau, 1956, Janowitz, 1956; and Vorwaller, 1970.)

The study reported here examines the marginality hypothesis of social mobility, that a change in status is socially and psychologically disruptive for the individual, by focusing on the characteristics of college students from working-status backgrounds. If intergenerational upward mobility creates problems, these should be apparent during the college years as students from low-status backgrounds are being assimilated into upper-middle-status social contexts and acquiring higher status roles.

While there is considerable research on social class and educational attainment (see, for example, Iffert, 1958; Turner, 1964; Sewell and Shah, 1967; and Wegner, 1969), only one study (Ellis and Lane, 1967) has examined the characteristics of working-status college students in order to assess the impact of social mobility. Using data collected at Stanford University, Ellis and Lane found compelling evidence that upwardly mobile students experience social isolation. Students from lower-status backgrounds were judged to be unpopular, reported fewer dates, and were less likely to join a fraternity than were other college students. Nevertheless, they did accumulate outstanding academic and athletic records. Apparently these working-status students had acquired the values needed for successful task performance, but this did not lead to acceptance by upper-middle-class primary groups.

These findings of Ellis and Lane, however, may be affected by the social context of a private, upper-middle-status, residential university, where working-status students are the exception. A working-status student is most likely to attend a public, urban college because it is less expensive and he can live at home. While such schools are less distinctively upper-middle class, they nevertheless prepare students for upper-middle status positions. Most important, an urban commuter school provides greater social continuity for upwardly mobile students. Those who achieve upper-middle status through attending these schools may not experience the social marginality or psychological disruption evident among the Ellis and Lane sample.

This paper will examine the effects of mobility among stu-

dents attending the University of Hawaii. The University of Hawaii is a public land grant university. Since it is the chief institution of higher education in Hawaii, it is a major channel for entry into the professional and managerial positions of the state. Its student body is predominantly middle class, but it also draws many students from working-status backgrounds. Since it is an urban, commuter campus, a large proportion of its students experience social continuity between high school and college. In this study, 69 per cent of the respondents were from the island of Oahu, on which Honolulu and the university are situated, and the same proportion report living with their family or relatives while attending college.[1]

This paper also differs from the Ellis and Lane study in that it examines a broader range of variables in relation to mobility. Studies of status inconsistency that show the effects of status ambiguity on individuals suggest that such persons are likely to exhibit symptoms of anxiety (Jackson, 1962), to have a lower self-evaluation (Segal, Segal, and Knoke, 1970), to be socially withdrawn (Lenski, 1956), and to be discontented with the status quo in the social order (Lenski, 1954).

In this paper, working-status students will be compared to middle-status students in regard to academic achievement, symptoms of anxiety, level of self-esteem, feelings of social rejection, alienation from college, and the extent to which they worry about a variety of specific problems. If the mobile individual is experiencing problems of marginality, he may be expected to earn poor grades, worry about many problems, feel insecure and anxious, harbor feelings of self-doubt or inferiority, fear that he is socially undesirable, and resent the college as being unresponsive to him.

Finally, this paper goes beyond Ellis and Lane in trying to specify intervening variables that might indicate which working-status students will experience personal problems. Under some circumstances, the mobility process may be more stressful and the individual involved will experience greater marginality.

THE DATA

The Sample. At the time of this study in 1969, there were 12,536 full-time undergraduate students on the main campus of the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. A random sample of approximately 1,588 undergraduates, or 13 per cent of the student body, was drawn. A questionnaire was mailed to those who were

[1] In addition to the 69 per cent from Oahu, 13 per cent had come from the other Hawaiian Islands, 17 per cent were from the mainland United States, and a few had lived most of their lives in foreign countries.

American citizens and under 25 years of age. After several follow-up notices, a response rate of 79 per cent, or 1,238 questionnaires, was obtained. No differences were found between the respondents and nonrespondents on items contained in administrative records.[2]

In this paper, only the findings for the male half of the sample will be presented; they show no major departures from the findings for women.[3]

An important feature of this sample of students is its multiethnic composition. This diversity permits a test of the generality of the effects of mobility for different types of students. A separate analysis of the largest groups will be reported. In all tables presented here, controls for ethnic background have been maintained to insure that ethnic diversity would not confound the results.[4]

The Variables. A major variable in this study was the original socioeconomic status of the student. Students were classified according to their fathers occupation, using the U.S. Census categories.[5] These categories were grouped into four status levels, based on an examination of the average education and income of the fathers in each occupational group. Professional, managerial, and related occupations were grouped into an upper-middle-status category. The lower-middle-status level consisted of students whose fathers were farm owners, clerical workers, and salesmen. Skilled laborers and foremen were considered upper-working-status; service workers, semiskilled and unskilled laborers, and farm laborers, lower-working-status.

Upper-middle-status students were considered as socially stable. Students from lower-status backgrounds were defined as socially mobile, as persons destined for an occupational status higher than that of their fathers. By using four status levels, the data could be analyzed for the effects of relatively small amounts of social mobility from lower white-collar positions, as well as considerable upward mobility from lower blue-collar backgrounds. The procedure followed in the analysis tested whether

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[2] No differences were found between the respondents and the total sample in respect to college class, college at which they were registered, grade point average, marital status, SAT scores, or rank in high school class. The respondents can be considered to be representative of the larger undergraduate student body in these respects.

[3] The author will send copies of the tables giving the results for women to anyone who writes for them.

[4] In response to a self-report item in the questionnaire, 51 per cent classified themselves as of Japanese ancestry, 24 per cent as Caucasian, 10 per cent as Chinese, 10 per cent from a mixed marriage, and 5 per cent from another category; Fillipino, Hawaiian, or black. The author will provide tables which show the results of this study analyzed separately for Caucasians and Japanese to those who write for them.

[5] Students whose fathers were in military service were excluded from the study, as were those giving inadequate occupational information. As a result, the sample was reduced from 566 to 511 men.

students from lower-status backgrounds were significantly different from upper-middle-status students. One-tailed significance tests were used when appropriate.[6]

Six dependent variables were examined to test the marginality hypothesis of social mobility. Five of these variables were indices created by combining items on the questionnaire. In all cases, the Likert method of scoring was used. The items in each index were selected on the basis of their intercorrelations, and an attempt was made to include both positive and negative statements so as to correct for any response bias.

1. Grade point averages for the sample, obtained from university records, were used an an indication of the task performance of students from different status backgrounds.

2. A Problems score was computed for each student, based on his reports of how much he worried about getting along with his family, dating, being accepted by others, academic problems, career goals, financial difficulties, conflicts over moral, religious, and political beliefs, and finding a philosophy of life.

3. The third dependent variable was an Anxiety score. An index was constructed by combining the student's responses to a series of questions regarding how frequently he was bothered by psychosomatic symptoms. Several validity studies have shown that these items discriminate between persons who are healthy and those judged as neurotic (see, for example, Maxmillan, 1957).

4. A Self-Esteem score was computed for each student. The items used in this index were taken from Rosenberg's study of adolescent self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965) and have been subjected to reliability and validity checks. Sample items are "At times I

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[6] Several questions may be raised regarding the measure of mobility in this study. Since the students in the sample have not arrived at their occupational destination, can the sample be used to study the effects of mobility? Some of the students may, in fact, not succeed in graduating, and some may enter occupations below the upper-middle status.

Nevertheless, these students are in an important mobility channel. When asked about their future plans, only 9 students, or 1.8 per cent of the sample, named an occupation that was below the professional or managerial positions defining the upper-middle status in this study. Whether or not they all succeed in reaching their goals, it seems reasonable to assume that working-status students aiming for the upper-middle status should be experiencing in college whatever strains accompany being mobile.

Second, the rather crude categories used in defining status background mask much movement between the generations. Thus, within the upper-middle status some students may be moving upward if their parents are low-level professionals and they enter a high-status profession; or an upper-middle-status student may move downward if the reverse pattern occurs. These movements, however, are of less magnitude than movement from a blue-collar category, and it is this latter case which could be expected to cause a greater adjustment of life style and perhaps difficulty for the individual. Thus, while upper-middle-status students may not be strictly stable, for purposes of this study it makes sense to regard them as such and to concentrate on how students from occupational backgrounds such as plantation workers, dock workers, and hotel workers differ from them.

feel I am no good at all," and "I feel that I have a number of good qualities."

5. A Social Rejection score was computed by combining four items indicating that the respondent felt socially rejected by others. Sample items: "I am very satisfied with the friends I now have," and "Often when I'm with people I feel lonely."

6. An Alienation score was computed from seven items indicating discontent with the university. Sample items: "Students are forced to do too much that is dull and not worthwhile," and "I believe college is preparing me well for my future life and career."

THE ANALYSIS

If the hypothesis that upward social mobility is disruptive for an individual is true, evidence of stress should be found for the six dependent variables defined above. The relationship of socioeconomic status background to these variables is presented in Table 1. This table shows the percentage of students with an unsatisfactory grade point average and those experiencing various forms of psychological difficulty at each status level. The psychological variables were dichotomized in such a way that approximately one-third of the respondents were defined as showing high distress.

In general, socially mobile students do not have more academic trouble, worry about more problems, display higher anxiety, have a lower self-esteem, or feel more socially rejected than do upper-middle-status students. However, more upper-working-status students display high anxiety, and more lower-middle-status students report low self-esteem than do the socioeconomically stable. In contrast, fewer lower-working-status students than upper-middle-status students worry about problems, report high anxiety, or feel socially rejected. These findings run counter to the predicted negative effects of social mobility.

The chi square for alienation reaches statistical significance due to low alienation among upper-working-status students. Interestingly, these same students have a relatively high rate of anxiety. In contrast, students from lower-working-status backgrounds have low anxiety and high alienation. Apparently whatever frustration is encountered by these two groups of mobile students is handled differently, directed inwardly as anxiety by upper-working students and directed outwardly in the form of hostility towards the university by lower-working students.

In order to examine the specific concerns of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, the proportion of students in each status who worry some or much about each of the items in the Problems index is presented in Table 2. A sizable propor-

TABLE 1

Percentage of Undergraduate Men Experiencing Distress, by Socioeconomic Status Background

Social Status	Percentage of Under 2.0 GPA	Percentage of High Problems	Percentage of High Anxiety	Percentage of Low Self-Esteem	Percentage of High Social Rejection	Percentage of High Alienation	N
Upper-middle	22.9	35.4	33.3	32.1	40.4	27.9	(239)
Lower-middle	19.7	30.3	31.6	40.8	43.4	31.6	(75)
Upper-working	22.3	34.8	41.1	33.9	33.9	16.1	(112)
Lower-working	24.7	29.4	27.1	38.8	36.5	36.5	(85)
Total sample	22.6	33.5	33.7	34.9	38.8	27.3	(511)
Chi=square value for column	.59	1.48	4.58	2.62	2.26	11.46	...
Level of significance (d.f.=3)	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.01	...

TABLE 2

Percentage of Undergraduate Men Who Worry Some or Much About Selected Problems, by Socioeconomic Status Background

Social Status	Family	Dating	Social	Grades	Career	Finances	Morals	Philosophy	N
Upper-middle	40.6	49.0	36.0	71.5	69.9	50.2	39.3	59.0	(239)
Lower-middle	41.3	40.0	33.3	69.3	62.7	41.3	44.0	57.3	(75)
Upper-working	35.7	47.4	32.1	83.0	74.1	46.4	26.8	45.5	(112)
Lower-working	36.5	44.7	29.4	78.8	65.9	52.9	28.2	51.8	(85)
Total sample	38.9	46.6	33.7	75.0	69.1	48.5	35.4	54.6	(511)
Chi=square value for column	1.16	1.99	1.38	7.31	3.24	2.68	9.58	6.08	...
Level of significance (d.f.=3)	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.10	n.s.	n.s.	.05	n.s.	...

tion of students show some worry over all these problems, indicating that the items apparently do tap the concerns of many college students. Concern over doing well in school and making future educational and occupational plans are especially on the minds of college men.

However, socioeconomic background is not notably related to worries about getting along with one's family, dating, being accepted socially, planning for a future career, financial difficulties, or finding a meaningful philosophy of life. As often as not, lower-status groups show less concern about these problems than do upper-middle-status students.

There is a tendency for upper- and lower-working-status students to worry more about their grades, though their grades are about the same as other students. In contrast, upper- and lower-middle-status students express greater concern over value conflicts regarding religion, moral beliefs, and politics than do their working-status peers. These differences are small, but they run counter to the predicted effects of upward social mobility.

Because this sample of students is highly diverse, ethnic background may mask the effect of mobility for some students. In order to examine this possibility, a separate analysis is presented for the Japanese and Caucasian students. These two largest groups contrast in many respects, including the fact that most Caucasian students are from the mainland while the Japanese students are overwhelmingly local.

The six dependent variables being used to assess the effects of mobility in this study are presented separately, by socioeconomic status, for Caucasians and Japanese in Table 3. Notable differences exist between the two groups as a whole. Japanese students have higher grades, higher anxiety, and lower self-esteem than do Caucasians, but tend to feel less socially rejected and less alienated from the university.

Socioeconomic status differences, however, are almost completely absent within each ethnic group. In fact, the patterns for the two groups are remarkably similar. Among both Caucasians and Japanese, the upper-working-status students display more anxiety, while those from lower-working-status backgrounds tend to feel more alienated from the university than do upper-middle-status students. Nevertheless social mobility is not in itself a particularly stressful experience for members of either of these two ethnic groups.

The results so far show that upwardly mobile college students do not generally seem to suffer from psychological difficulties. Furthermore, these negative findings hold for both Japanese and Caucasian students. Nevertheless, perhaps there is some segment of the upwardly mobile who undergo problems of marginality.

TABLE 3

Mean Values * of Dependent Variables, by Socioeconomic Status Background for Caucasian and Japanese College Men

	GPA	Problems	Anxiety	Self-Esteem	Social Rejection	Alienation	N
Caucasians							
Upper-middle	2.14	20.5	10.3	30.6	8.32	17.0	(82)
Lower-middle	2.07	20.4	10.4	31.1	8.35	17.1	(17)
Upper-working	2.13	20.3	12.1[a]	29.3	8.31	16.8	(16)
Lower-working	1.91	21.8	10.3	31.0	8.22	17.6	(9)
Japanese							
Upper-middle	2.39	20.6	11.5	29.2	8.06	16.3	(110)
Lower-middle	2.40	20.1	10.6	27.9	8.29	16.2	(38)
Upper-working	2.44	19.7	11.9	28.7	8.09	16.2	(68)
Lower-working	2.44	20.1	11.2	28.2	8.02	17.3	(44)
Subtotals							
Caucasians	2.12	20.5	10.6	30.6	8.31	17.0	(124)
Japanese	2.41[c]	20.2	11.4[b]	28.7[c]	8.10	16.4	(260)
Total sample							
Mean	2.31	20.2	11.1	29.3	8.14	16.6	(511)
Standard Deviation	.58	4.71	2.97	4.19	1.74	3.36	...

* Variables are so coded that a high score indicates a high rank on the variable.
[a] Difference from upper-middle status is significant at .025 level (one-tailed t test).
[b] Difference from Caucasians is significant at .02 level (two-tailed t test).
[c] Difference from Caucasians is significant at .001 level (two-tailed t test).

One possibility is that the negative consequences of social mobility are experienced primarily by freshmen. When upwardly mobile freshmen enter the university, they may be encountering an upper-middle-status social milieu for the first time. These students may feel insecure about their ability to perform and be accepted by other students. Yet after this initial social disjuncture, they might gradually be assimilated into the upper-middle-class throughout their college years.

Thus, it may be that among freshmen, lower-status youth will display greater psychological distress than their upper-middle-status peers, but these status differences will no longer exist among seniors. Table 4 presents the relevant data for examining this hypothesis. The means for each social status level on the six dependent variables are presented separately for freshmen and seniors. The only major overall difference between freshmen and seniors is the higher grade point average for seniors.

The findings, however, do not support the hypothesis. Lower-status youth do not appear to suffer, as compared with upper-middle-status students among either freshmen or seniors. Only one relationship is in the predicted direction: lower-middle-status

TABLE 4

Mean Values * of Dependent Variables, by Socioeconomic Status Background for Freshmen and Senior Men

	GPA	Problems	Anxiety	Self-Esteem	Social Rejection	Alienation	N
Freshmen							
Upper-middle	2.18	20.5	11.0	29.1	8.01	17.0	(67)
Lower-middle	2.16	18.6	10.6	28.9	8.91[a]	17.3	(22)
Upper-working	2.20	20.6	11.4	29.5	8.04	16.6	(25)
Lower-working	2.17	17.9	10.6	28.4	8.11	17.6	(18)
Seniors							
Upper-middle	2.57	20.4	11.8	30.3	8.51	16.2	(43)
Lower-middle	2.71	20.1	10.6	27.3[b]	8.21	17.3	(19)
Upper-working	2.60	18.3	11.7	29.5	7.96	15.8	(25)
Lower-working	2.58	20.6	10.6	30.3	7.64	16.6	(22)
Subtotals							
Freshmen	2.18	19.9	10.9	29.1	8.19	17.1	(134)
Seniors	2.60[c]	19.9	11.3	29.6	8.16	16.4	(109)
Total sample							
Mean	2.31	20.2	11.1	29.3	8.14	16.6	(511)
Standard Deviation	.58	4.71	2.97	4.19	1.74	3.36	...

* A high score indicates a high rank on the variable.

[a] Difference from upper-middle status is significant at .025 level (one-tailed t test).

[b] Difference from upper-middle status is significant at .005 level (one-tailed t test).

[c] Difference from freshmen is significant at .001 level (two-tailed t test).

freshmen display more fear of social rejection than do other students. Lower-working-status freshmen show a tendency toward a lower level of self-esteem, more fear of social rejection, and higher alienation from the university; but they also report fewer problems and lower anxiety than upper-middle-status freshmen. Since none of these findings is statistically significant, there is no compelling evidence that upwardly mobile college students undergo psychological stress even initially as freshmen.

Another major difference among students in this sample is that they may or may not live at home. The socially mobile student living with his family may experience less difficulty than would a lower-status student living away from home. His family may provide enough security and support to mitigate any psychological distress. On the other hand, a low-status student living at home may have trouble, because he is forced to communicate across status lines. This situation may intensify his marginality and make effective socialization into the upper-middle status difficult. For higher status youth, on the other hand, there is congruity between the social status levels of home and university.

The data in Table 5 are presented to show differences in the effect of mobility for students living with or away from their families. In general, living away from home is associated with lower grades, worrying about more problems, feeling alienated from the university, and having slightly more fear of social rejection.

However, no status differences appear in the six dependent variables for either students living at home or for those living away from their families. In fact, except for the alienation score, lower-working-status students living at home have fewer negative characteristics than do upper-middle-status students. There is no evidence that living at home while attending college has a detrimental effect on students undergoing upward social mobility.

In summary, social mobility for this sample of students in a public, urban university apparently does not have disruptive effects. Furthermore, no negative effects are found for Japanese and Caucasian students when examined separately, for freshmen when compared to seniors, or among socially mobile students living at home or away from their families. Thus, the marginality hypothesis regarding the negative psychological effects of social mobility is not supported by this study.

An explanation for these negative findings is apparent from

TABLE 5

Mean Values * of Dependent Variables, by Socioeconomic Status for College Men Living with Their Families and Those Living Away from Their Families

Lives	GPA	Problems	Anxiety	Self-Esteem	Social Rejection	Alienation	N
With family							
Upper-middle	2.34	20.0	10.9	29.5	8.15	16.5	(151)
Lower-middle	2.39	19.6	10.8	28.5	8.24	16.3	(56)
Upper-working	2.38	19.4	11.5	29.1	7.93	15.9	(83)
Lower-working	2.24	19.8	10.9	28.9	7.92	16.8	(62)
Not with family							
Upper-middle	2.21	21.2	11.2	29.9	8.26	17.0	(86)
Lower-middle	2.18	21.4	10.8	29.5	8.67	17.8	(18)
Upper-working	2.29	20.5	11.8	29.5	8.21	16.6	(28)
Lower-working	2.35	20.5	10.8	29.4	8.13	17.0	(23)
Subtotals							
With family	2.34	19.8	11.0	29.2	8.07	16.4	(352)
Not with family	2.24	21.0 [b]	11.2	29.7	8.28	17.0 [a]	(155)
Total sample							
Mean	2.31	20.2	11.1	29.3	8.14	16.6	(511)
Standard Deviation	.58	4.71	2.97	4.19	1.74	3.36	...

* A high score indicates a high rank on the variable.

[a] Difference from living with family is significant at .10 level (two-tailed t test).

[b] Difference from living with family is significant at .01 level (two-tailed t test).

data regarding the social relationships of these students. The hypothesis that social mobility has negative psychological effects on persons rests on the notion that socially mobile individuals have difficulty finding satisfying social relatonships.

Table 6 presents data regarding the social activity of students from different socioeconomic status backgrounds. Students reported whether or not they felt they had enough friends, the frequency with which they got together with their friends, the frequency of their dates, and the extent of their participation in a variety of campus activities, including athletics, political groups, student government, fraternities, and a variety of special interest clubs.

A significant socioeconomic status difference emerges in regard to whether students feel they have enough friends. Lower-

TABLE 6

Percentage Breakdown of Social Participation Variables, by Socioeconomic Status Background

	Upper-Middle	Lower-Middle	Upper-Working	Lower-Working	Total %	Total N
A. Number of friends (N.A.=5)						
Enough	71.8	61.3	76.9	77.6	72.3	(366)
Not enough	28.2	38.7	23.1	22.4	27.7	(140)
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	(506)
N	(238)	(75)	(108)	(85)	...	...
Chi square=6.86, significant at the .10 level (d.f.=3)						
B. Frequency of seeing friends (N.A.=5)						
Once a week	60.5	52.6	54.6	58.8	57.8	(292)
Less often	39.5	47.4	45.4	41.2	42.2	(214)
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	(506)
N	(238)	(75)	(108)	(85)	...	...
Chi square=2.03, not significant						
C. Frequency of dating (N.A.=5, Married=33)						
Once a week	45.0	31.9	33.6	37.3	39.4	(186)
Twice a month	24.8	18.1	18.3	16.0	20.9	(99)
Once a month, less	30.2	50.0	48.1	46.7	39.7	(188)
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	(473)
N	(222)	(72)	(104)	(75)	...	...
Chi-square=16.58, significant at the .02 level (d.f.=6)						
D. Participation in campus activities (N.A.=5)						
High participation	24.8	16.0	13.0	20.0	20.2	(102)
Some participation	48.3	50.7	49.0	43.5	48.0	(243)
No participation	26.9	33.3	38.0	36.5	31.8	(161)
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	(506)
N	(238)	(75)	(108)	(85)	...	...
Chi square=10.18, not significant						

middle- and also upper-middle-status students are more likely than their working-status peers to feel they do not have enough friends. This finding runs contrary to the prediction that the socially mobile have inadequate social relationships. Furthermore, no status differences are present in the frequency with which students report they get together with friends. The frequency of dating, however, does differ by status background: upper-middle-status students are more likely than others to date once a week or more. Finally, upper-middle-status students appear to be more active in campus activities, but this difference is small and not statistically significant.

In conclusion, these findings do not generally support the notion that upwardly mobile persons are socially isolated. While they may date less frequently than socially stable students, they are more likely to report having enough friends and they get together with these friends as frequently as others. University of Hawaii students from low-status backgrounds apparently are reasonably successful in finding satisfactory relationships.

Finally, the socially mobile are often thought to be marginal. They are suspended between two social worlds, the one from which they came and the one represented by the status they are entering. Thus, even if their social participation is of the usual frequency, they are believed to suffer conflicts arising from different value orientations among their friends and to feel they are not fully accepted.

The data in Table 7 are the result of examining the extent to which upwardly mobile students at this university experience

TABLE 7

Percentage Breakdown of Social Continuity Variables, by Socioeconomic Status Background

	Upper-Middle	Lower-Middle	Upper-Working	Lower-Working	Total %	Total N
A. When met most friends (N.A.=7)						
Before college	67.8	68.0	68.5	61.2	66.9	(337)
In college	32.2	32.0	31.5	38.8	33.1	(167)
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	(504)
N	(236)	(75)	(108)	(85)	...	...
Chi square=1.51, not significant						
B. Kind of friends (N.A.=6)						
College students	74.8	78.9	78.7	84.7	77.9	(393)
Not other students	25.2	21.1	21.3	15.3	22.1	(112)
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	(505)
N	(237)	(75)	(108)	(85)	...	...
Chi square=3.71, not significant						

social discontinuity and cross-pressures. Information as to whether the student met most of his friends before college or since entering college, and whether most of his friends are other college students or nonstudents, is reported by socioeconomic status. Some judgment regarding the extent to which college represents a disjuncture in social worlds for the lower-status student can be made by analyzing this table.

Perhaps surprisingly, the vast majority of students from all status backgrounds report that they knew their closest friends before entering college. Less surprising, these college students overwhelmingly report that their closest friends are other college students, and, significantly, this is at least as true for lower-status as for upper-status students.

The general picture that emerges is one of social continuity rather than a disjuncture of social worlds for students at all status levels. The upwardly mobile student does not arrive on campus to find a different social context and is not forced to find his way into new social relationships. Rather, most of his friendships have been formed earlier, and these close friends are also college students destined for the upper-middle status. It is thus not surprising that no psychological evidence of social marginality has emerged in this study.[7]

CONCLUSION

The general notion in the sociological literature that social mobility entails marginality and personal distress for individuals has been examined in this paper. Among a sample of undergraduate men attending the University of Hawaii, students from lower-status backgrounds were found to have equally high grades, were no more troubled by worries, displayed no higher symptoms of anxiety, did not harbor a lower self-concept, and did not feel socially rejected when compared to upper-middle-status college students. Working-status students, however, did appear slightly more alienated toward the university and tended to worry more about grades and less about moral conflicts. These findings, furthermore, were found to be true of Caucasians as well as Japanese, freshmen as well as seniors, and students living at home as well as those living away from their families.

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[7] The social continuity explanation for negative findings is not completely satisfying for Caucasian students from the mainland U.S. Indeed, only 30 per cent of working-status Caucasians knew their best friends before entering college. However, 80 per cent indicated that other college students were their best friends, and they generally had high levels of social activity. Their social success may be based on previous associations with high school peers who went to other colleges, plus the sizable number of students at the University of Hawaii who at least come from a similar social background.

The reason social mobility does not appear to have the posited negative effects seems clear from the other data presented. Lower-status students seemed to be involvd in satisfactory social relationships. Furthermore, there is evidence that these students had experienced social continuity rather than social disjuncture after entering college.

The most important suggestion to be made from this study is that environment and other contextual effects of the college may be critical for mobile students. Which college a lower-status student attends may have a great deal of influence on whether he will experience psychological problems there. Ellis and Lane found clear evidence that working-status students at Stanford University did suffer social difficulty in adapting to the college environment. In a previous study (Wegner, 1970), lower-status students were found to be more successful in completing work for their degrees if they attended state colleges than if they went to private liberal arts colleges or a prestigious university. The conclusion seems clear that some college environments are conducive to the success of lower-status students, while others can create problems. Furthermore, these students apparently adapt best in public, urban commuter schools, where they are likely to go for financial reasons, rather than in private or prestigious institutions.

The social composition of the school is probably the most important aspect of the college environment for the mobile student. In a public, urban school, social relationships formed earlier in childhood and high school can be continued. In contrast, the private or high prestige university is likely to have few low-status students, who must form new relationships with students from very different backgrounds. For the mobile student, a disjuncture between the university environment and past social contexts is likely to be stressful.

The question can be raised as to whether young people in schools attended predominantly by commuting students from lower-status backgrounds are, in fact, being assimilated into the upper-middle status. Perhaps they will not face the problem of marginality until they leave college. Only a study of mobile persons following college graduation could supply a definite answer. In any case, such an explanation of the negative findings in this study seems unlikely.

Rather, anticipatory socialization does occur among the socially upward mobile (Merton and Rossi, 1957). They acquire the characteristics of higher-status persons before actually entering a higher status themselves, largely because their reference group consists of persons of high status. One study (Krauss, 1964) has shown that working-status students who plan to attend college

acquire many attitudes and interests characteristic of the middle class as early as high school. The working-status students in the sample used in this study indicated that their closest friends were other college students, and that they had formed these friendships before entering college. Since their most important social contacts were with other individuals destined to enter the upper-middle-status, anticipatory socialization seems likely to have been taking place.

One other explanation for the lack of distress among mobile students is possible. The marginality hypothesis of the effect of social mobility rests on the assumption that an individual changing social status levels in American society must face significant cultural relearning, which is disruptive for him. It is questionable, however, that well-crystallized class subcultures exist in American society (see, for example, Cuber and Kenkel, 1954). It may be the case that students attending public, urban universities experience mobility into upper-middle-status positions without significantly changing their values or behavior.

In conclusion, this paper has reported findings which cast doubt on the notion that social mobility necessarily entails psychological distress for the individual. Two conditions seem to underlie these negative findings. First, the mobile person undergoes anticipatory socialization, which begins early in life and prepares him for participation in his new status. Second, some college contexts provide social continuity for the individual. In a public, urban university many students are able to continue relationships which they formed earlier, or at least to find social support among students from a similar social background. Which type of college the mobile student attends may be critical to his chances for social and psychological well-being.

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