Population Investigation Committee

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Author(s): B. G. Zimmer
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The Impact of Social Mobility on Fertility: A Reconsideration

B.G. ZIMMER*

The search to find factors that account for fertility differentials among sub-groups of the population appears to be almost without limits. Yet the evidence to date, even in the United States, is inconsistent as well as confusing and often even contradictory.[1] Nonetheless, the problem remains a challenging one, both theoretically and practically. This paper re-examines one of the research hypotheses discussed by Westoff that showed a great deal of promise theoretically, but proved to be of limited merit when subjected to empirical test.[2] It is the thesis of this paper that the most influential work that served largely to discredit the social mobility–fertility hypothesis may not have been an adequate test due to serious shortcomings in method and there may be justification to examine it more closely with a different body of data.[3]

As is well known, the relationship between mobility and fertility was one of the important research hypotheses of the so-called 'Princeton studies'.[4] Since this paper grows out of their work, it seems appropriate to take a brief look at their findings, before proceeding with the present analysis.

In the report on *Family Growth in Metropolitan America*[5] the authors tested the traditional hypothesis that 'indications of low fertility would characterize couples whose occupational status had improved either by comparison with their own status during the first year of their marriage, or with the occupational class of their parents'. According to the findings of that study, the hypothesis as a whole was rejected.

The authors of the study summarized their analyses by stating that: 'When by the use of a prestige scale the measure of occupational mobility was expanded to include finer shifts than those implied by the white-collar and blue-collar classification, no correlations with fertility of any significance emerged. This conclusion applied not only to inter-generational mobility but also to changes of occupational status within the husband's own career.'[6]

* Professor of Sociology and Chairman, Urban Studies Program, Brown University, Rhode Island 02912, U.S.A.

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[1] D. Goldberg, 'The Fertility of Two Generation Urbanites', *Population Studies*, **12** (March 1959), pp. 214–222; and 'Fertility and Fertility Differentials: Some Observations on Recent Changes in the United States', in Mindel C. Sheps and Jeanne C. Ridley (eds) *Public Health and Population Change: Current Research Issues*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965, pp. 119–142; O. D. Duncan, 'Farm Background and Differential Fertility', *Demography*, **2** (1965), pp. 240–249; and R. Freedman and Doris Slesinger, 'Fertility Differentials for the Indigenous Non-Farm Population of the United States', *Population Studies* **15** (November 1961), pp. 161–173.

[2] C. Westoff, 'The Changing Focus of Differential Fertility Research: The Social Mobility Hypothesis', *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, **31** (January 1953), pp. 24–38.

[3] C. Westoff, R. Potter Jr., P. Sagi and E. Mishler, *Family Growth in Metropolitan America*, Princeton. Princeton University Press, 1961; and C. Westoff, R. Potter Jr. and P. Sagi, *The Third Child: A Study in the Prediction of Fertility*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963.

[4] C. Westoff et al., *op. cit.* in footnote 3.

[5] C. Westoff et al., *op. cit.* in footnote 3.

[6] C. Westoff et al., *op. cit.* in footnote 3.

Clearly, the hypothesis was not supported by their data. Nonetheless, in the follow-up study (*The Third Child*), the social mobility–fertility hypothesis was pursued further, so as to determine 'whether fertility following the second birth is in any way connected with mobility'.[7] Mobility was measured in two ways: (1) movement between white-collar and blue-collar classes across generations; and (2) finer changes in occupational status during the three-year period following birth of the second child. This part of the analysis was limited to a comparison of mobile with non-mobile women.

After a careful analysis of the data, the authors concluded that, 'there is still no evidence to support the general hypothesis that upward mobility is associated with lower fertility, at least in terms of the occupation structure crudely dichotomized,' and they noted further that 'essentially the same generalizations are appropriate for intergenerational mobility measured from the wife's rather than the husband's father's longest occupation'. In short, to this point the hypothesis was not found to be valid.

But with the persistence of devoted scholars, they continued to pursue a further examination of the hypothesis. To quote: 'On the chance that the correlations were masking more complex associations, each of the three mobility measures (intergenerational, from marriage to the second birth, and over the last three years) was first divided according to whether the mobility was upward or downward, or showed no change in occupational prestige. Then the patterns produced by this combination were examined for variations in fertility within each religious category separately. (For some reason, they thought religion was important). However, even capitalizing on chance variations implied by such a procedure produces no theoretically suggestive findings. The conclusion that occupational mobility (as measured) and fertility are unrelated in this sample again seems inescapable'.[8]

Certainly their findings, along with the general lack of support of the hypothesis reported in the Indianapolis studies[9] served to diminish the enthusiasm earlier expressed by Westoff that 'lower fertility is related to upward mobility.'[10] In point of fact, Freedman suggested that the social mobility–fertility hypothesis should not apply to the situation in economically advanced societies.'[11]

Given these rather negative findings, it would seem fruitless to pursue the hypothesis further. Yet the hypothesis is an intriguing one, and is important both theoretically and practically; thus, it would seem to be worth further attention, particularly when, as already noted, there were some weaknesses in the Princeton studies, relating to the method used to examine the relationship between mobility and fertility, which may account for their negative findings. It is also noted, that the Princeton findings are substantially at odds with the earlier observations reported by Bresard[12] for France, Berent[13] for England and Wales, as well as Tien[14] for a sample of the Australian academic elites. While the latter study has been criticized because of deficiencies in research design and the restricted sample, the other studies, which showed considerable support for the social mobility–fertility hypothesis, were based on large representative national samples.

[7] C. Westoff et al., *op. cit.* in footnote 3.

[8] C. Westoff et al., *op. cit.* in footnote 3.

[9] J. Kantner and C. V. Kiser, 'The Interrelation of Fertility, Fertility Planning, and Intergenerational Social Mobility', in P. K. Whelpton and C. V. Kiser (eds), *Social and Psychological Factors Affecting Fertility*, New York, The Milbank Memorial Fund, 1954, vol. 4, pp. 969–1003.

[10] C. Westoff, *loc. cit.* in footnote 2.

[11] R. Freedman, 'American Studies of Family Planning and Fertility: A Review of Major Trends and Issues', in C. V. Kiser (ed.), *Research in Family Planning*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1962, pp. 211–227.

[12] M. Bresard, 'Mobilité sociale et dimension de la famille', *Population*, No. 3 (July–September 1950), pp. 533–566.

[13] J. Berent, 'Fertility and Social Mobility', *Population Studies*, **5**, (3) (March 1952), pp. 244–260.

[14] H. Y. Tien, *Social Mobility and Controlled Fertility* (especially Chapter 7, 'Intergenerational Mobility and the Pattern of Family Building', pp. 121–37), New Haven, College and University Press, 1965.

Of particular interest, in terms of the problem at hand, is the study reported by Berent who states the problem thus: '. . . people who find themselves in a particular grade or class at the time of the inquiry may have arrived there in a number of ways. Some of them were born in a lower class and have moved up the ladder, others have come down and yet others have remained in the class of their fathers. Can the direction of this movement, i.e. social promotion or demotion, be associated with the number of children born to the families concerned?' (p. 224).[15]

To test this proposition he examined the fertility behaviour of a sample representing the adult population of England and Wales in 1949. Fertility was measured in terms of number of live births per couple. The study was restricted to once-married couples who had been married for at least 20 years and who had largely completed their fertility.[16]

Berent's analysis, which focused on both origin and destination status, found consistent support for the social mobility hypothesis. This is evident when he notes that, 'the comparison of family size of persons of the same class of origin shows that those who have moved up have smaller families than those who remained static or who have moved down' (p. 246). 'It will be seen that the lowest fertility (2.01) was experienced by families whose heads are in the same group. At the other end of the scale, an average of 3.20 is found among 'manuals' whose fathers were also manuals. The intermediate values are of most interest. Those who moved up from a lower class at birth have smaller families on the average (2.22) than those who moved down (2.56), and *a fortiori* smaller than manuals who remained static (3.20), but at the same time their fertility is higher than that of the top group. In other words, among those who experienced a change in their social status, those who moved down are characterized by having larger families than those who moved up from the same status of origin' (p. 250).[17]

Given the rather strong support for the hypothesis reported by Berent in particular, and the general lack of support for the hypothesis as reported by the Princeton studies, it would seem that the hypothesis should be explored further by testing it with a different body of data and at the same time attention should focus on the methodological problems found in the Princeton analysis. This is what we propose to do. However, before doing so we briefly describe the sample on which the present analysis is based.

SAMPLE

This discussion is based on a random sample of some 3,098 once-married women in Aberdeen, Scotland, who had given birth to a child between 1950 and 1955, and whose fertility histories were followed up to 1970. The data were obtained from two different sources: (1) Pregnancy histories were obtained directly from hospital records (a central record system including domiciliary confinements), and (2) social information on each family was obtained through personal interviews, with a completion rate of 91 per cent.

At the end of the follow-up period, about 85 per cent of the women were 40 years or older and thus had largely completed their fertility. Since slightly more than three-fourths of the mothers and fathers had only achieved the minimum level of education, this is not a complicating factor in mobility. The sample is biased against higher status groups, due to

[15] J. Berent, *loc. cit.* in footnote 13.

[16] Berent's study differs from the present analysis in that he focused on the mobility of the male head of the family, while we focus on the mobility of the wife. Both studies, however, are based on samples of once married couples that had largely completed their fertility.

[17] J. Berent, *loc. cit.* in footnote 13.

out-migration. While the rate of out-movement from Aberdeen is small, it is selective of the higher status groups.[18] One of the shortcomings of these data is the exclusion of childless couples. The study is limited to couples who have had at least one child.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

The status levels used in the analysis are the standard British social classes – based on occupation. These classes represent at least an approximate hierarchy of socio-economic status levels. No information is available on income since such statistics are not as regularly collected in Britain as they are in the U.S.A.

In Britain, both men's and women's occupations – as defined by the Registrar General's office – are grouped into five main social classes; however, men's occupations can also be sub-divided into seven groups. These are shown in Table 1. It is from these classes that we constructed our mobility categories.

Table 1. *Social Class by Occupation and by Sex*

Occupation	Social class*
Male	
Professional	I
Managerial	II
Non-manual	III_a
Upper skilled	III_b
Lower skilled	III_c
Semi-skilled	IV
Unskilled	V
Female	
Professional	I–II
Clerical–Distributive	III_a
Skilled manual	$III_{b,c}$
Semi-skilled	IV
Unskilled	V

* Census of Scotland, 1951, p. xii.

The mobility categories used are shown in Tables 2 and 3. In Table 2, only three status levels were used, but in Table 3, we differentiated four status levels. The amount of mobility varies substantially depending on the amount of detail used in establishing mobility categories. In the ninefold scheme (Table 2) a much higher proportion of the women are non-mobile than when the sixteenfold scheme is used (Table 3), since in the more detailed classification even slight changes in social status between manual occupations are recorded. However, even within this scheme, mobility within the white-collar class would go undetected. The figures in Table 4 show the mobility status of the wife through marriage (based on a simple ninefold scheme) measured in two different ways – i.e. based on the wife's father's and husband's occupation and the wife's occupation before marriage and husband's occupation.

According to the classification scheme used by Westoff *et al.* in their studies,[19] these figures show that 1,307 of the wives were non-mobile (all cells labelled 'a' added), 992 women were upwardly mobile (all cells labelled 'b' added), and 456 wives were downwardly

√:.[18] R. Illsley, Angela Finlayson and Barbara Thompson, 'The Motivation and Characteristics of Internal Migrants', *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, Part I, **41** (January 1963); Part II, **41** (July 1963).

[19] C. Westoff, *op. cit.*, in footnote 3.

Table 2. *Mobility Status Categories Based on Class of Origin and Class of Destination*

Class of destination	Class of origin I–II High	III Medium	IV–V Low
I–II	1 Non-mobile	4 Up mobile	5 Up mobile
III	7 Down mobile	2 Non-mobile	6 Up mobile
IV–V	8 Down mobile	9 Down mobile	3 Non-mobile

Table 3. *Mobility Status Categories Based on Class of Origin and Class of Destination*

Status level of destination		Status level of origin I White-collar	II Skilled	III Semi-skilled	IV Unskilled
I	White-collar	Non-mobile	Up mobile	Up mobile	Up mobile
II	Skilled	Down mobile	Non-mobile	Up mobile	Up mobile
III	Semi-skilled	Down mobile	Down mobile	Non-mobile	Up mobile
IV	Unskilled	Down mobile	Down mobile	Down mobile	Non-mobile

Status Level	*Social Class*
I	= I, II, IIIa
II	= IIIb, IIIc
III	= IV
IV	= V

mobile (cells 'c'). In the bottom panel of Table 4, based on wife's occupation before marriage and husband's occupation, when the a, b, and c cells are added, we find 1,587 non-mobile, 926 upwardly mobile, and 453 downwardly mobile women. To test the social mobility–fertility hypothesis, following the type of analysis undertaken by the authors of the Princeton studies, the next step would be to look at fertility in these mobility status groups.

Table 4. *Mobility Status of Wife Through Marriage*

Present Status	Status Before Marriage: Number				Per cent			
	Wife's father's occupation							
	High	Medium	Low	Total	High	Medium	Low	Total
High	138*	275†	93†	506	45.1	20.2	8.6	18.4
Medium	125‡	800*	624†	1549	40.8	58.7	57.5	56.2
Low	43‡	288‡	369*	700	14.1	21.1	34.0	25.4
Total	306	1363	1086	2755	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
* Non-mobile = 1307; † Up mobile = 992; ‡ Down mobile = 456								
	Wife's occupation before marriage							
High	96*	405†	46†	547	55.2	21.5	5.1	18.4
Medium	67‡	1107*	475†	1649	38.5	58.7	52.5	55.6
Low	11‡	375‡	384*	770	6.3	19.9	42.4	26.0
Total	174	1887	905	2966	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
* Non-mobile = 1587; † Up mobile = 926; ‡ Down mobile = 453								

To illustrate: (1) In the first study, *Family Growth in Metropolitan America*, they compared the fertility of the mobile with that of the non-mobile women. An examination of the data presented in Table 4 shows what is involved in this approach. The 'a' cells are

combined for non-mobile women, all other cells (i.e. all 'b' and 'c' cells) are combined for the mobile group. (2) In *The Third Child*, they refined their measure and looked at the non-mobile comparing them with the mobile by direction of movement, i.e. non-mobile ('a' cells), upwardly mobile ('b' cells), and downwardly mobile ('c' cells) were combined for each of the mobility categories.

SOCIAL MOBILITY AND FERTILITY

It is important to note that it was on the basis of these two approaches in measuring mobility that the Princeton studies concluded that 'they found no support for the mobility–fertility hypothesis.' When we repeated the analysis using the same approach, we also found little or no difference by mobility status as is evident from the figures presented in Table 5. Regardless of mobility status, fertility levels are practically the same.

Table 5. *Average Number of Children by Social Mobility Status for Selected Measures of Mobility*

Social mobility based on social class status of:	Direction of Mobility		
	Down	No Change	Up
Marriage Mobility			
Wife's father and husband's father	3.1	3.2	3.1
Wife's father and husband's occupation	3.1	3.2	3.0
Wife's pre-marital occupation and husband's occupation	3.3	3.1	3.2

Again, the obvious conclusion, even with our figures, is that social mobility (as here measured) has little or no impact on fertility behaviour. Mobile and non-mobile wives have the same fertility. No differences are found even when the direction of change is examined. Whether a woman married into a family of higher (upwardly mobile) or lower status (downwardly mobile) does not appear to affect her reproductive performance (Mean Family Size = 3.1 or 3.2 in all status groups). The similarity between the finding for Aberdeen and the United States in the Princeton analysis is noteworthy. Clearly, the findings are not a function of the type of data used in the analysis.

The Aberdeen figures seem to support the claim of those who have discarded the social mobility hypothesis in fertility research. But as we have already noted, the Princeton type approach, which we have replicated, has serious methodological shortcomings. In the discussion to follow we will take another look at what is involved in establishing mobility status groups. We suggest that the approach used by Westoff *et al.* in the Princeton studies, resulted in mobility categories that made it impossible for any analysis to produce meaningful results. Thus, it is not surprising that 'the hypothesis as a whole was rejected.'

A closer examination of these figures suggests that there is no reason to expect that fertility would vary by this simple classification of social mobility, since there is considerable heterogeneity within each mobility status group. To illustrate, in the data presented in the upper panel of Table 4, the 1,307 non-mobile wives include: (1) 11 per cent (138 cases), who came from high-status families and married into high-status positions: (2) 61 per cent (800 cases), where the wife came from and married into a medium status; and (3) 28 per cent (369 cases), who were women of low status who married husbands of the same status. Thus, in the non-mobile category, women came from families at three different

status levels, and married into families of the same status, also at three different status levels.

To treat all three levels of non-mobile women as a single category, combines women of consistently 'high' and consistently 'low' status, who would be expected to differ markedly in their fertility behaviour. But in the Princeton studies the fertility of non-mobile women is based on the average of the extreme values associated with high or low status. Without labouring the point, it is noted that a similar heterogeneity is found within the upwardly mobile and downwardly mobile women, since the status of origin and destination at various levels can be quite different. Here, too, the average fertility, among either the upwardly or downwardly mobile women as a group, may mask important variations between the sub-groups, within each mobility category.

Thus, it becomes apparent that in order to test the social mobility–fertility hypothesis, it is necessary to examine fertility behaviour for each of the status levels of the non-mobile women separately, and to examine the fertility of both upwardly and downwardly mobile women according to the status level of their point of origin, and their point of destination.

RESTATEMENT OF HYPOTHESIS

Sociologically each sub-group, within each of the broader mobility categories, is different; thus, one would not expect any of the broader mobility groups to show common fertility patterns. Yet, this is what the Princeton group assumed. With these qualifications and specifications in mind, let us take another look at the hypothesis. A different type of analysis might show that mobility does have an important influence on fertility. Accordingly, the social mobility–fertility hypothesis is restated thus:

The level of fertility will vary inversely among non-mobile women by social class position, *and*

The level of fertility of upwardly mobile women from any given social class of origin will be lower than for women of the same social class of origin who are non-mobile or downwardly mobile, *and*

The level of fertility of downwardly mobile women from any given social class of origin will be higher than for women of the same social class of origin who are non-mobile or upwardly mobile.

The main measure of fertility used here refers to the number of live born children who survived the first year, but we will also look at age at first pregnancy as a related, but quite independent measure of reproductive behaviour. We now turn to an examination of the data.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN EVER BORN

The figures presented in Table 6 show substantial support for each of the hypotheses as stated, i.e. they indicate that fertility differentials are found, if both the direction and amount of social mobility is taken into account. It is also evident that within the non-mobile group there are substantial differences in number of live births by social status, ranging from 2.7 at high status to 3.8 in the low-status category (diagonal). Clearly, non-mobile wives from high-status backgrounds, who married into high-status positions, are much less fertile than non-mobile women, who came from low-status backgrounds and married within their group.

However, when the women in these extreme non-mobile categories are combined into a single non-mobile category (as was done in the Princeton studies), the differences in fertility, at the three status levels, are averaged out, and the fertility of non-mobile women is approximately the same as that of both the upwardly and downwardly mobile women (see

Table 6. *Average Number of Live Births by Social Mobility of the Wife*

Current status	Status of origin		
	High	Medium	Low
	Wife's father's status		
Husband's occupation			
High	2.7	2.7	2.8
Medium	2.5	3.0	3.2
Low	3.0	3.4	3.8
	Wife's pre-marital status		
Husband's occupation			
High	2.7	2.9	3.0
Medium	2.8	2.8	3.6
Low	*	3.4	3.9

* Fewer than 20 cases.

Table 5). Similarly, the range of difference within the upwardly and downwardly mobile women also tends to cancel out when the sub-groups, within each type of movement, are combined into a single category. However, the fertility of the upwardly mobile women, as shown in Table 6, varies according to status of origin and destination. Women of medium status who marry into high-status families have fewer children (2.7) than non-mobile women of the same status of origin (3.0). Low-status women who married into high-status families have fewer children (2.8) than if they marry into a low status family (3.8).

When we look at mobility in terms of the occupation of the wife before marriage and the occupation of the husband (lower panel) we continue to find the same pattern of differences in fertility among mobility status groups. Women from high-status occupations have the smallest families, but the size increases slightly among women who marry husbands in lower status positions. High-status women who marry medium-status husbands have much smaller families than do low-status women who marry husbands in the medium-status category (2.8 compared with 3.6 children). It is also noted that women in low-status occupations before marriage have fewer children if they marry a husband of high rather than of low status. The range is from 3.0 to 3.9 children. In short, it is evident that fertility varies inversely by the occupational status of the wife before marriage, but within each pre-marital status group fertility also varies inversely by the husband's social status. For both the upwardly and downwardly mobile women there are substantial differences in fertility by the type of movement involved.

When a more detailed classification scheme for measuring social mobility is used, we continue to find the same pattern, but the size and range of differences is even more marked. In Table 7, statistics are presented for selected indices of mobility

Table 7. *Average Number of Live Births by Selected Measures of Social Mobility by Amount and Direction of Movement*

Level of social status	Level of social status of origin based on:			
	I	II	III	IV
	Wife's father's occupation			
Husband's occupation				
I	2.5	2.7	2.9	3,0
II	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.6
III	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.4
IV	3.5	3.9	3.8	4.0
	Wife's pre-marital occupation			
Husband's occupation				
I	2.6	2.9	3.2	3.3
II	2.8	3.2	3.3	3.9
III	3.1	3.3	3.9	4.5
IV	3.4	3.8	3.4	3.8

according to a sixteenfold classification scheme instead of the ninefold scheme used in Table 6.

These figures show that for each mobility measure there is a consistent difference, in fertility behaviour, by type of mobility involved. The wide range of differences within the non-mobile marriages, as shown in the top panel of Table 7, is worthy of note.

Non-mobile high-status women have 2.5 children on average, whereas for those in the lowest category (status IV) the figure is 4.0 children. Of more importance, in terms of our problem, is that, regardless of status of origin, downwardly mobile women (values below the diagonal line) have more children, and upwardly mobile women (values above the diagonal) have fewer children than women from the same status of origin who remained at the same status level. This holds regardless of which index of mobility is used. Here, too, it would seem the figures provide substantial support for the social mobility–fertility hypothesis.[20] But let us pursue the issue further by examining at least one other dimension of reproductive behaviour. Specifically, we will look at age at first pregnancy. Once again we shall first replicate the procedures used in the Princeton studies, and then disaggregate the mobility data as was done above. The statistics on age at first pregnancy outcome are summarized in Table 8 and shown graphically in Figure 1.

Table 8. *Percentage Distribution of Age at First Pregnancy by Mobility Status of Wife Based on Family Background and Current Status*

Mobility status	Total number	Age at first pregnancy				
		20 or under	21–24	25–29	30 or over	Total Per cent
A Non-mobile	1303	19.7	42.2	29.7	8.6	100.0
Downwardly mobile	456	23.2	39.7	26.8	10.3	100.0
Upwardly mobile	990	17.2	40.8	29.4	12.1	100.0
B Non-mobile						
High–high	138	3.6	22.5	50.0	23.9	100.0
Medium–medium	798	16.8	43.6	32.0	7.6	100.0
Low–low	367	31.3	46.6	17.2	4.9	100.0
C Upwardly mobile						
Medium–high	275	9.5	32.0	39.3	19.3	100.0
Low–medium	622	20.3	46.8	25.2	7.7	100.0
Low–high	93	19.4	26.9	33.3	20.4	100.0
D Downwardly mobile						
High–medium	125	13.6	30.4	39.2	16.8	100.0
Medium–low	288	27.4	45.5	21.5	5.6	100.0
High–low	43	23.3	27.9	25.6	23.3	100.0

AGE AT FIRST PREGNANCY OUTCOME

In Panel A, where the analysis is based on the Princeton approach, it is clear that age at first pregnancy is unrelated to the social mobility of the wife. Whether women married into the same status (non-mobile) or were upwardly or downwardly mobile, the distribution curve by age at first pregnancy tends to be the same.

[20] There is a striking similarity between our findings and those reported by Berent who used the same type of analysis by focusing on upward and downward mobility in relationship to status of origin. These figures suggest that if a similar method of analysis had been used in the Princeton studies their figures might not have led to a rejection of the mobility–fertility hypothesis. This tentative conclusion is based on the marked similarity between our findings and theirs when the same method of analysis is used.

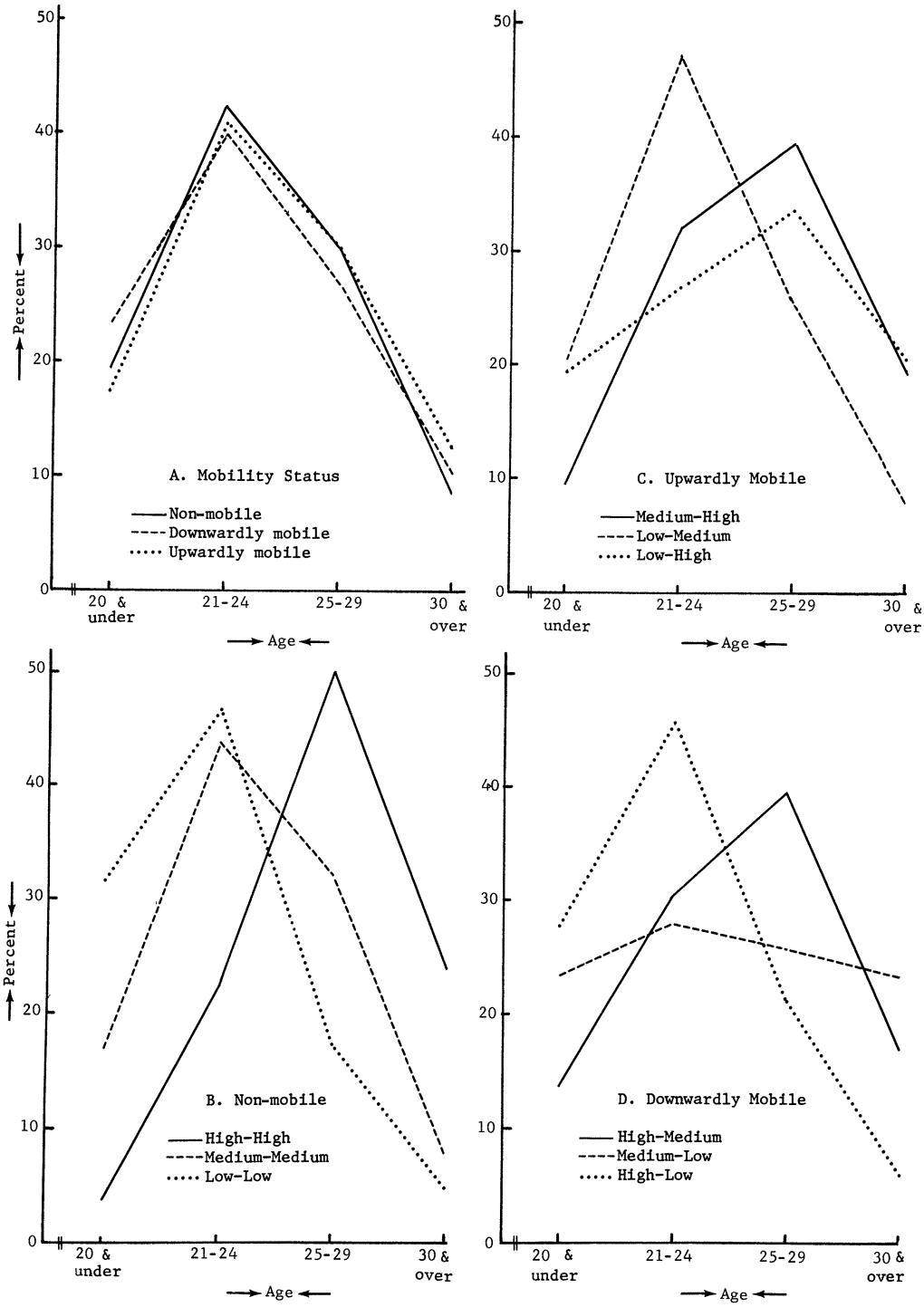

Figure 1. Age at first pregnancy by mobility of wife, based on family background and current status.

The similarity of the curves is so striking that it would seem necessary to reject any hypothesis that stated that there would be a difference by social mobility which, of course, is the conclusion reached in the Princeton studies. However, here, too, quite a different conclusion is reached if we disaggregate the figures and focus on both origin and destination status, as we have done in the other panels of Figure 1. Panel B indicates substantial differences in age at first pregnancy among sub-groups of non-mobile women. When both spouses come from high-status backgrounds they tend to have their first pregnancy late, while if both were of low status they tend to have their first pregnancy much younger. Obviously, while women in the three status levels differ substantially from each other, these differences cancel out when the three status levels are combined into a single category. Clearly, the non-mobile women are not a homogeneous group. On the contrary, they represent three distinct sub-groups of the class system and each status level has a marked impact on age at entrance into active reproductive life. The average age at first pregnancy ranges from only 22.6 years among non-mobile low-status women to 26.8 years among those in high-status positions.

In pursuing the analysis further it is evident from Figure 1, that neither the upwardly nor the downwardly mobile women constitute homogeneous populations. Among both the upwardly (Panel C) and downwardly (Panel D) mobile women, age at first pregnancy varies by the type of mobility. Clearly, it is not only the social class of origin that is important but also the type of mobility involved in the marriage. It is of more than incidental interest to note that all mobile women, regardless of direction of movement enter active reproductive life earlier than non-mobile high-status women and later than non-mobile women of low status.

SUMMARY

These figures strongly suggest that the social mobility–fertility hypothesis may have been prematurely discarded as a significant variable in accounting for variations in fertility among sub-groups of the population. The general lack of empirical support for the hypothesis that has been reported may have resulted from serious methodological shortcomings on the part of the most influential work that has been done in this area in recent years. At any rate, when we attempted to replicate the Princeton studies, our findings led us to agree with their earlier conclusions, since we failed to find any relationship between mobility (as used in the Princeton studies) and reproductive behaviour. It became apparent, however, that each of the three broad mobility groups (non-mobile, upwardly and downwardly mobile) contain heterogeneous sub-groups that differ markedly in fertility, as Berent had previously observed. Thus, when we disaggregated the non-mobile women by status, as he had done, and disaggregated the upwardly and downwardly mobile women by both status of origin and destination, our findings supported quite a different conclusion. Under these conditions, instead of discarding the hypothesis, we found consistent and substantial support for it.

It might be argued that the Aberdeen sample is a unique case and that the relationship between social mobility and fertility may be different in the United States. If this were true, we would not have expected the striking similarity in the findings, that we have observed, when the same method of analysis is applied to the Aberdeen sample as was used in the Princeton studies. It is emphasized that when we replicated their findings we agreed that the social mobility–fertility hypothesis should be rejected, which is a compelling argument against the uniqueness, at least in this respect, of the Aberdeen sample. It was only when we focused attention on status of origin and status of destination simultaneously, and on the level of status of non-mobile women separately, as Berent had done in his earlier study, that we reached the opposite conclusion to that reported in the Princeton studies.

These figures suggest that the fertility patterns of any status group may result from the additive impact of the combination of statuses that make up the given status group as Blau and Duncan have suggested.[21] We have noted that there is a marked tendency for women, regardless of the direction of movement, to take on the fertility patterns of the status groups into which they move through marriage, but the influence of status of origin is only partially overcome. Consequently, upwardly mobile women are less fertile than non-mobile or downwardly mobile women from the same status of origin and downwardly mobile women are consistently more fertile than women from the same status of origin who are either non-mobile or upwardly mobile.[22] The simultaneous influences of different statuses within the same familial units, due to mobility, may, at least in part, account for the range in behaviour that is found at any given status level, and the large areas of overlap in behaviour among different status groups that are found when investigators focus only on current status. In short, social mobility status more successfully differentiates groups with different fertility patterns than do measures of current socio-economic status. These data, along with the work of Berent and others, suggest that the social mobility–fertility hypothesis may warrant further attention.[23]

[21] P. Blau and O. Duncan, *The American Occupational Structure*, New York, John Wiley and Sons, inc., 1967, pp. 361–399.

[22] This is consistent with the findings reported by Berent who noted that 'there were two forces affecting fertility: the acquisition of fertility characteristics of the class into which the sons have moved and the maintenance by them of the family building habits of the class in which they were born' (*loc. cit.* in footnote 13). An equally plausible alternative interpretation is that mobile women do not in fact, represent their class of origin in terms of potential fertility behaviour, but rather that they come from one of the ends of the distribution within their class of origin that overlaps the level of fertility which characterizes the class into which they move. Thus, their fertility differs from the origin class and resembles the level of fertility of the destination class, but this is due to selectivity and not to the additive impact of two different status levels, which results in 'completed family size intermediate between the averages pertaining to their respective origin and destination status' (Blau and Duncan, *op. cit.* in footnote 21). It is known that there is substantial overlap in the fertility behaviour of status groups that differ substantially in their average levels. Mobile women may represent this area of overlap, so it is not necessary to posit an additive model in order to account for differences in fertility among mobile women. For example, we have shown elsewhere that size of family of origin at any given status level affects life chances (in terms of status attainment) and that fertility is, in turn, related to status attainment. This is consistent with the selective interpretation as suggested here in that at any status level, women from smaller families, within the range of family sizes at that status level, have advantages in terms of status attainment and opportunities for upward mobility that are not shared by women in the same class who came from large families. Thus, it is the women from the smaller families that are more likely to be upwardly mobile into a higher class that is characterized by lower fertility than their class of origin, while downwardly mobile women are likely to come disproportionately from larger families within their status of origin, which characterizes the fertility of lower status groups into which they move. This, of course, assumes that the size of family of origin influences their level of fertility. (B. Zimmer and J. Fulton, 'Size of Family, Life Chances and Reproductive Behavior', *Journal of Marriage and the Family,* **42,** 3 (August 1980). Even though we are unable, from the available figures, to provide an 'explanation' for their behaviour, the important point is that mobile women do differ in their fertility from non-mobile women from the same status of origin.

[23] For attempts to test for the independence of the destination and origin effects see K. Hope, 'Social Mobility and Fertility,' *American Sociological Review,* **36,** (6) (December 1971), pp. 1019–1032; and O. D. Duncan, 'The Methodological Issues in the Analysis of Social Mobility,' in N. J. Smelser and M. S. Lipset (eds), *Social Structure and Mobility in Economic Development*, Chicago, Aldine, 1966.