second edition

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION
The forms and functions of inequality

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1985

Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

CHAPTER 14
SOCIOECONOMIC MOBILITY
Concepts, Measures, Trends

The study of socioeconomic mobility is an indispensable part of the study of social stratification. Data about inequalities in property, prestige, power, and education tell us how equal or unequal are the distributions of the good things of life at a given moment. The data about mobility, by contrast, tell us how much movement or change there has been or is currently going on between and among various positions on the ladders of stratification. How many people are moving upward? How many downward? How many are standing still? From where have the upward moving people risen? From where have the downward moving people descended? What kinds of people are standing still? How does the volume of upward movement compare with that of downward movement and/or no movement? How much of the upward movement is due to changes in the number of available places, and how much is due to new opportunities? New laws? New educational credentials?

The answers to those questions tell us about the amount of opportunity or openness there is in a society, and if we have such data on a number of societies, we can compare them with regard to their openness. An open society is one in which it is possible for young people to rise higher on the socioeconomic ladders than their parents did or to fall down to positions lower than their parents occupied. A society in which such rising and falling goes on over generational time is a fluid or open society: people acquire their statuses by achievement. By contrast, a society in which most children end up just where their parents were is considered a rigid, inflexible, or closed society; statuses are acquired by inheritance. Caste and estate systems are characterized by a great preponderance of such status inheritance. By contrast, the term *class* is usually applied to those systems in which there is a noticeable degree of status achievement even if there is also substantial inheritance.

The interest of sociologists in the openness of a society is due in large part to the high moral and political value placed on that openness in the western societies where most sociologists are located. The opportunity to succeed in accordance mainly with one's talents, and thereby to improve one's situation beyond that achieved by one's predecessors, is taken as the mark of a good society. A society is deemed to be fair when most achievement is based on merit, without advantage or impediment from one's origins, skin color, religion, sex, or any other such irrelevant characteristic. All western societies officially approve such equality of opportunity and deplore it when studies show it to be lacking or deficient.

Equality of opportunity, however, is not the same as equality of situation or outcome. The latter refers to the condition in which everyone receives equal amounts of the good things of life, whatever their talent, fitness, and performance. It is therefore eminently possible to have both equality of opportunity and inequality of situation in the same society at the same time. Even if everyone had perfectly equal opportunity, it would still be quite possible to reward the expectable different levels of natural talent and ability with unequal amounts of the good things and thus to create unequal situations and outcomes. Equal situations can be achieved only by altering the reward structure so that everyone is rewarded equally or, failing that, by redistributing the good things after they have been unequally allocated in order to achieve equal situations. The socialist ideal has always been "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," which means equal outcome in spite of unequal achievements or performances.

It is also possible to have inequality of opportunity side-by-side with equality of situation, or, at least, to have much more inequality in opportunity than in final outcome. Modern welfare states practice a version of this plan. Rewards are distributed unequally according to performance or other criteria; and then some of the resultant inequality is reduced by securing funds through taxation, which are then redistributed mostly to the less-well-off people.

But sociologists study socioeconomic mobility for reasons other than the moral and political value attached to openness and fairness. Primary among these is the supposition that the amount of mobility in a society may be importantly connected to a number of other societal features which would be most difficult to understand without taking account of mobility.

Among these are the degree of political freedom and democracy; the level of economic productivity; the amount of social and political solidarity felt throughout the society; the rates of various kinds of criminal acts; the amount of violence in social relations; the extent of participation in voting and other political processes; the changes in the role of the school system; and the quality of the networks of personal associations, including friendships, community groups, and even marriage patterns.

We do not now have the data that would decisively demonstrate that all those features of a society vary in accordance with the amount of mobility in the system. But one can trace the hypothetical ways in which degrees of openness might relate meaningfully to variations in such other features. For example, while poverty is not

a major cause of most crimes, the extent to which poor young people feel they have a chance to make their ways by legitimate means must surely be reckoned as a possible connecting link between socioeconomic status and crime rates. In the same vein, if some groups in a society are experiencing rapid social mobility while others are not, the consequences may be very beneficial for the former while the latter, because of their relative deprivation, may show high rates of personality disorder and other pathologies. In that way a good deal of mobility, from which some are relatively excluded, may bring serious and costly disorders to the society.[1] Because of these possible influences of mobility on other important outcomes, mobility has become a matter of intense interest to sociologists.

WHAT KIND OF MOBILITY SHOULD BE STUDIED

If socioeconomic situations are made up of positions on the ladders of income, occupational prestige, power, and educational accomplishments, then, in principle, we should be interested in changes or mobility in all of these.

Various students have, in fact, focused on one or more of these four distributions to see what changes have occurred over generational time. As a result, we have studies of the distribution of incomes that go back numbers of decades, so that it is possible to say how many people in earlier times earned what amounts of income at an earlier date and what the shares of income were like at that time for various deciles or quintiles of the earning population. We have comparable studies of changes in the distribution of education and occupational achievements. But we do not have good studies of changes in power distributions because it is so extremely difficult to measure power. For now, therefore, we will ignore mobility in power and concentrate on income, occupation, and education.

It is always possible, indeed likely, that the three distributions will change in quite different ways and at quite different tempos; if we are to discover and represent socioeconomic mobility fully, then, we must examine and report changes in all three distributions. Practically, however, this is an enormous task. Perhaps the single greatest difficulty is in getting reliable information about income and educational levels of families over generational time. By contrast, it is today easier to get such information about occupations. If we ask young persons what kind of work their fathers did, we can get a more accurate report than if we ask how much education their father had or what the family income was at given points.

The greater accessibility of reliable information on occupations has been largely responsible for the fact that most studies of socioeconomic mobility today use occupation as the indicator of that mobility.

Several things commend that choice. First, we now have reasonably reliable ways of assigning prestige scores to categories of occupations. Moreover, the very high correlation (in the .90's) among the scores from one study to another, even across national boundaries, encourages us to consider those scores reliable measures of occupational prestige. Since prestige is one of the main socioeconomic ladders, it

is obviously of great value to have such reliable scores, even if they represent only a portion of the totality of honor.

Second, because a great deal of research has been done on the relations between occupational levels and levels of income and education, it is now possible to use occupation to stand for all three things—prestige, income, and education. One has to be cautious, of course, since the correlations among these three are not impressively high. But they are high enough so that we can take occupation as a rough indicator, within specified limits, of the average income and average years of school achieved or required by members of an occupational category.

Table 14–1[2] (p. 136) shows the mean or average years of school and income for seventeen major categories of occupations in the United States for men aged twenty-one through sixty-four, for both 1962 and 1973. The occupational categories are arrayed in a descending order of prestige, as judged by their typical scores on the NORC scale of prestige. The general patterns of relationship are easy enough to see. As we go down the ladder of occupations and with that the levels of occupational prestige, we go down the ladder of educational and income levels as well. There are irregularities, to be sure; but the general patterns persist. at least enough to say that, within very broad limits and with a large margin of error, to know a man's occupational level is to know his educational and income levels as well.

PROBLEMS IN STUDYING MOBILITY

Movement within Categories

Various scholars have warned of a number of difficulties in the studies of change in occupations. First, the movements from one to another category of occupation fail to take account of many, possibly quite significant, shifts *within* any one category, where people can experience what they consider to be important changes. Within the category called managers, for instance, there are numerous and quite different levels, and movement among those levels is the essence of the mobility of managers. Yet in most mobility studies, those movements would be ignored, since they do not involve movement in or out of the large category. In general, much of the improvement (or deterioration) in title, salary, working conditions, autonomy, and power that people experience in their adult careers occurs within one occupational category rather than between several of them, and that movement is not caught in the studies of mobility.

Objective versus Subjective Mobility

A second critique is closely allied. It has to do with the distinction between the subjective meaning versus the objective facts about mobility. If a group of sons has moved up the ladder from the skilled labor positions of their fathers to their own white-collar clerk positions, but if the sons do not view this as real movement,

TABLE 14-1 Means and Standard Deviations* of Schooling and Income By Occupation: U.S. Men Aged 21-64 in the Experienced Civilian Labor Force, 1962 and 1973

	YEARS OF SCHOOLING		*INCOME (1972 DOLLARS)*	
Occupation category	*1962*	*1973*	*1962*	*1973*
1. Professionals, self-employed	15.55 (2.66)	15.89 (1.98)	15977 (12648)	24944 (21656)
2. Professionals, salaried	14.87 (2.33)	15.20 (2.16)	10443 (6897)	13412 (8362)
3. Managers	12.88 (2.69)	13.58 (2.38)	12748 (8671)	16450 (11931)
4. Salesmen, other	13.21 (2.33)	13.64 (2.13)	9717 (6317)	13777 (9016)
5. Proprietors	11.10 (2.96)	11.93 (2.71)	9785 (10564)	11495 (14085)
6. Clerks	11.84 (2.53)	12.42 (2.18)	7174 (3073)	9419 (4508)
7. Salesmen, retail	11.32 (2.55)	12.41 (2.30)	6550 (3640)	9025 (8119)
8. Craftsmen, manfuacturing	10.34 (2.51)	11.17 (2.30)	8856 (3227)	10964 (4976)
9. Craftsmen, other	10.23 (2.64)	11.19 (2.36)	7519 (3159)	9722 (4913)
10. Craftsmen, construction	9.70 (2.72)	10.57 (2.70)	6784 (3735)	9899 (6147)
11. Service	9.74 (3.19)	11.07 (3.02)	5444 (3236)	7569 (4515)
12. Operatives, other	9.50 (2.69)	10.47 (2.71)	6295 (3346)	8418 (4874)
13. Operatives, manufacturing	9.40 (2.70)	10.35 (2.70)	6661 (2606)	8415 (3851)
14. Laborers, manufacturing	8.32 (3.32)	9.90 (2.99)	5275 (2719)	7326 (4050)
15. Laborers, other	7.98 (3.50)	9.79 (3.36)	4245 (2800)	6953 (4941)
16. Farmers	9.00 (3.29)	10.56 82.98)	3972 (4921)	7647 (8610)
17. Farm laborers	6.97 (3.62)	8.26 (4.15)	2300 (2278)	4573 (3547)

* The standard deviation is a measure of the scatter or range of values around the mean. Take the mean years of schooling for professionals in 1962. It was 15.55 years with a standard deviation of 2.66 years (the figures in parentheses). That means that approximately two-thirds of all the professionals (self-employed) had completed between 15.55 plus and 15.55 minus 2.66 years, or between 18.21 years and 12.86 years.

because they do not feel any better off than their fathers, is this real mobility? In general, must the subjective experience of significant improvement (or deterioration) be present before we count a movement as a real one? We do not know now how to deal with these complications effectively. Yet we know that the influence of mobility on other social outcomes, such as rates and kinds of political participation,

must surely depend to some degree on the *extent* to which the subjective experience of improvement accompanies the objective movement.

Absolute versus Relative Mobility

A closely related distinction is between absolute and relative mobility. A group of children may, for example, end up in occupations that are objectively more prestigious and better paid than those of their parents. But if they compare themselves with other groups who have moved even further from their parents' positions, the first group may judge the relative movement they have experienced as inadequate and unsatisfactory. So, though they have moved up absolutely, they have not moved enough, relative to others, to permit their improvement to yield a sense of satisfaction.

The Points between Which to Measure

Another problem in studying occupational mobility is the choice of the points between which mobility is to be measured. For instance, if we compare a son's occupation at the time he enters the labor force with his father's highest occupation, we will get a different score than if we compare a son's highest occupation with his father's highest, or a son's first with last occupation.

What Is a Son?

Another problem is involved in the identification of *son*. When we measure movement from father to son, shall we take the oldest son's occupational achievement? The youngest son's? The average of all sons? Suppose some of the sons have not yet achieved the highest point of their careers? How do we take account of that? Suppose, further, that the income and educational correlatives of the various sons' occupations are quite different? How do we allow for that contingency?

How Many Categories to Use

Another problem: How many occupational levels should be distinguished? There are over 20,000 different titles in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*. To how many categories shall we reduce these? How much by way of manageability gained is worth the loss of detail?

The Equivalence of Steps-up and Steps-down

Still another problem: Shall we count each step on the occupational ladder, however we construct it, as representing an equal amount of distance moved? Is the movement from the top of the blue-collar to the bottom of the white-collar level equal to a move from the lowest white-collar job to the second lowest?

Summing up All Movements

For a society as a whole, how do we add together the movements up and down the occupational ladder into a meaningful net score?

Structural versus Circulation Mobility

Another major concern in studying mobility is how to separate the mobility that is due to changes in the division of labor and labor supply from those that arise because of genuinely new opportunities for people who did not have such opportunities in the past.

This is a distinction between what is called structural as against circulation mobility.

Structural mobility, sometimes called forced mobility, means movement in and out of occupational categories or changes in the number of people in those categories that result from changes in the occupational structure itself, for example, the changed ratio of blue- to white-collar jobs. Such changes can come from a number of sources, including economic expansion and growth that make manual labor obsolete; differences in birth rates between levels of workers so that, for instance, the professional group may not produce enough children to replace itself; changes in death rates and rates of immigration that affect the number of people seeking and available for jobs.

By contrast, *circulation mobility*, sometimes called true mobility, refers to movements that occur as a result of the opening-up of opportunities in the system to kinds of people who did not have such opportunities before. Major factors here are laws that reduce discrimination against members of religious, racial, and sex groups; natural crises that require new and more kinds of labor; new educational opportunities that permit new kinds of people (as judged by their social origins) to acquire the skills needed for jobs their parents could not fill; and new attitudes on the part of those who serve as the "gatekeepers," such that they now welcome, or at least accept, as job applicants kinds of people they would not have accepted before. In short, anything that makes it possible for people to move into jobs from which they or their ancestors were barred or limited because of prejudice or lack of opportunities is called circulation mobility.

The movement into elite positions at the top of the occupational ladder of people from nonelite origins, so that the elites now come to be composed of quite different kinds of people from various origins, is called circulation of the elites. In popular parlance, "from rags to riches," or the Horatio Alger story, is the archetype of circulation mobility.[3]

While this distinction between structural and circulation mobility is certainly valuable to make, it must not be used to discredit the significance of structural mobility for the openness of the society. If new opportunities open up because of changes in the division of labor and the technological needs of the society and if this means that new kinds of people will be encouraged to train for these jobs and to

enjoy the higher prestige and pay, it makes no sense not to consider these worthy of being included in the measure of openness of the society.

Intergenerational versus Intragenerational Mobility

A distinction also needs to be made between *intergenerational* and *intragenerational mobility*. The former refers to changes in the occupants of positions from father's generation to son's generation, for example, how many professional fathers have sons who become professionals as against sons who become managers, salesclerks, manual workers, and so forth and/or how many sons who are now professionals had fathers who were professionals, as against fathers who were managers, salesclerks, manual workers, and the like.

The first question, concerning the distribution of the sons of professional fathers, is called a matter of outflow. We are asking here what is the destination of those who flow out of each of the occupational categories in the father's generation. The second, which asks about the various kinds of sons who make up a given occupational category in the son's generation, is a matter of inflow. We are asking here what is the makeup of the population that flows into each of the occupational categories in the son's generation. Both outflow and inflow are important ingredients of intergenerational occupational mobility.

By contrast, intragenerational mobility refers to changes in the occupations held by people during the course of their lifetimes or working careers. Here we are interested in whether people enter the labor force at one level and remain at that level or move to other levels, and in what the factors are that lead to such changes.

One of the most important studies of occupational mobility[4] is very much concerned with occupational changes within one generation, that is, intragenerational mobility. It pays a good deal of attention to the extent to which father's education and occupation influence son's first and last jobs. In doing that, it is, in fact, considering the flow of forces both between and within generations. The main questions which the study addresses are: How can we best account for why various people end up in different places on the occupational ladder? What are the forces which influence their careers? How much influence is exerted by father's occupation and education? How much by their own? How much by their first job? The answers are put in terms of amount of variation in sons' jobs that can be attributed to each of these forces. The technology of the study is complicated but no more than is required by the questions and the desire for answers, in which one can be confident. Moreover, all of the problems confronting students of mobility that were just mentioned were faced and met as successfully as any other study has ever done.

CALCULATING MOBILITY

How then does one go about calculating rates of mobility? The most important figure is one which expresses the ratio of the amount of actual (observed) movement to the expected movement between occupational categories. To get this ratio, we

use census or interview data, or both, to chart the distribution of a generation of sons in various categories of occupation, arrayed by their father's occupations. For example, we specify where all the sons of professional fathers ended up, where all the sons of managerial fathers landed, and so forth, down the ladder to the bottom category of sons of farm laborer fathers.

Table 14–2[5] (p. 141) shows these figures for 1962. Reading across the top row we see that 16.7 percent of all sons of professionals ended up as professionals, 31.9 percent ended up as salaried professionals, 9.9 percent landed in the category of managers, and so on.

Reading across the next-to-last row, for farm laborers we see that .2 percent of all sons of farm laborers ended up as self-employed professionals, 1.9 percent as salaried professionals, and so on.

> The last row, which represents the percentage distribution of the total labor force in the several occupations, serves as the standard against which all other percentages in the body of the matrix are compared [and becomes] the divisor in the ratio [we seek].
>
> By dividing each value in the matrix by the corresponding figure in the total row at the bottom of its column, we obtain an index of the influence of occupational origins on occupational destinations. This ratio, which has been termed the "index of association" or "social distance mobility ratio," measures the extent to which mobility from one occupation to another surpasses or falls short of "chance," that is, a value of 1.0 indicates that the observed mobility is equal to that expected on the assumption of statistical independence[6] (on the assumption that the father's occupation had no influence on the son's final destination).

Ratios larger than 1 indicate that the father's occupation had larger than a chance influence, and ratios smaller than 1 indicate that father's occupation had less than chance influence on son's occupation. Ratios larger than 1 indicate increasing degrees of inheritance; ratios smaller than 1 indicate decreasing degrees of inheritance.

Table 14–3[7] (p. 142) presents the ratios calculated from the figures presented in Table 14–2. Reading across the top row, for professionals we find that there were 11.7 times more sons of self-employed professionals who themselves became self-employed professionals than one would have expected if father's job had no influence on son's job; and, further, 3.1 times more of salaried professionals who became salaried professionals; 1.2 times as many managers; 3.0 times as many salesmen and other similar employees. All the other ratios are below 1, indicating, for example, that there were fewer sons of self-employed professionals who entered or landed in those lower-rated jobs than would have been expected on the assumption of independence.

Reading across the bottom row, we see that not until we get to the category *construction workers* do the sons of farm laborers reach the level of chance expectations. The ratio of observed to expected in the box for self-employed professionals is .1, meaning that the number of sons of farm laborers who achieved that high occupation were only one-tenth of what one would have expected by chance alone.

TABLE 14-2 Mobility From Father's Occupation to 1962 Occupation For Males 25 to 64 Years Old: Outflow Percentages

	Father's Occupation	*RESPONDENT'S OCCUPATION IN MARCH, 1962*																	
		1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*16*	*17*	*Total*[a]
	Professionals																		
1	Self-Empl.	16.7	31.9	9.9	9.5	4.4	4.0	1.4	2.0	1.8	2.2	2.6	1.6	1.8	.4	2.2	2.0	.8	100.0
2	Salaried	3.3	31.9	12.9	5.9	4.8	7.6	1.7	3.8	4.4	1.0	6.9	5.2	3.4	1.0	.6	.8	.2	100.0
3	Managers	3.5	22.6	19.4	6.2	7.9	7.6	1.1	5.4	5.3	3.1	4.0	2.5	1.5	1.1	.8	.5	.1	100.0
4	Salesmen, Other	4.1	17.6	21.2	13.0	9.3	5.3	3.5	2.8	5.4	1.9	2.6	3.7	1.7	.0	.8	1.0	.3	100.0
5	*Proprietors*	3.7	13.7	18.4	5.8	16.0	6.2	3.3	3.5	5.2	3.9	5.1	3.6	2.8	.5	1.2	1.1	.4	100.0
6	Clerical	2.2	23.5	11.2	5.9	5.1	8.8	1.3	6.6	7.1	1.8	3.8	4.6	5.6	1.0	1.8	1.3	.0	100.0
7	Salesmen, Retail	.7	13.7	14.1	8.8	11.5	6.4	2.7	5.8	3.4	3.1	8.8	5.1	4.6	.1	3.1	2.2	.0	100.0
	Craftsmen																		
8	Mfg.	1.0	14.9	8.5	2.4	6.2	6.1	1.7	15.3	6.4	4.4	10.9	6.2	4.6	1.7	2.4	.4	.1	100.0
9	Other	.9	11.1	9.2	3.9	6.5	7.6	1.5	7.8	12.2	4.4	8.2	9.2	4.6	1.2	2.8	.9	.3	100.0
10	Construction	.9	6.7	7.1	2.6	8.3	7.9	.8	10.4	8.2	13.9	7.5	6.2	5.2	1.1	4.3	.8	.6	100.0
	Operatives																		
11	Mfg.	1.0	8.6	5.3	2.7	5.6	6.0	1.4	12.2	7.3	3.2	17.9	6.9	5.1	4.0	3.5	.8	.6	100.0
12	Other	.6	11.5	5.1	2.5	6.6	6.3	1.4	7.1	9.3	4.9	10.4	12.5	5.9	2.1	4.2	.9	1.1	100.0
13	Service	.8	8.8	7.4	3.5	6.0	9.0	1.9	8.0	6.4	5.4	11.7	8.1	10.5	2.7	3.3	1.0	.2	100.0
	Laborers																		
14	Mfg.	.0	6.0	5.3	.7	3.3	4.4	.7	10.7	6.0	2.8	18.1	9.4	9.4	7.1	5.8	1.7	.9	100.0
15	Other	.4	4.9	3.5	2.5	3.5	8.7	1.7	7.7	8.2	5.7	12.7	10.6	8.1	3.4	9.9	.9	1.1	100.0
16	Farmers	.6	4.2	4.1	1.2	6.0	4.3	1.1	5.6	6.7	5.8	10.2	8.6	4.8	2.4	5.4	16.4	3.9	100.0
17	Farm Laborers	.2	1.9	2.9	.6	4.0	3.5	1.2	6.4	6.6	5.8	13.1	10.8	7.5	3.2	9.2	5.7	9.4	100.0
	Total[b]	1.4	10.2	7.9	3.1	7.0	6.1	1.5	7.2	7.1	4.9	9.9	7.6	5.5	2.1	4.3	5.2	1.7	100.0

[a] Rows as shown do not total 100.0, since men not in experienced civilian labor force are not shown separately.

[b] Includes men not reporting father's occupation.

TABLE 14-3 Mobility From Father's Occupation to Occupation in 1962, For Males 25 to 64 Years Old: Ratios of Observed Frequencies to Frequencies Expected on the Assumption of Independence

		RESPONDENT'S OCCUPATION IN MARCH, 1962															
Father's Occupation		*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*16*	*17*
	Professionals																	
1	Self-Empl.	11.7	3.1	1.2	3.0	.6	.7	.9	.3	.3	.5	.3	.2	.3	.2	.5	.4	.5
2	Salaried	2.3	3.1	1.6	1.9	.7	1.2	1.1	.5	.6	.2	.7	.7	.6	.5	.1	.2	.1
3	Managers	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.0	1.1	1.2	.7	.8	.7	.6	.4	.3	.3	.5	.2	.1	.1
4	Salesmen, Other	2.9	1.7	2.7	4.1	1.3	.9	2.2	.4	.8	.4	.3	.5	.3	.0	.2	.2	.2
5	Proprietors	2.6	1.3	2.3	1.9	2.3	1.0[a]	2.1	.5	.7	.8	.5	.5	.5	.2	.3	.2	.2
6	Clerical	1.6	2.3	1.4	1.9	.7	1.4	.8	.9	1.0[a]	.4	.4	.6	1.0[a]	.5	.4	.2	.0
7	Salesmen, Retail	.5	1.3	1.8	2.8	1.6	1.0[a]	1.7	.8	.5	.6	.9	.7	.8	.1	.7	.4	.0
	Craftsmen																	
8	Mfg.	.7	1.5	1.1	.8	.9	1.0	1.1	2.1	.9	.9	1.1	.8	.8	.8	.6	.1	.1
9	Other	.6	1.1	1.2	1.2	.9	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.7	.9	.8	1.2	.8	.6	.6	.2	.2
10	Construction	.6	.7	.9	.8	1.2	1.3	.5	1.4	1.1	2.8	.8	.8	.9	.5	1.0	.2	.4
	Operatives																	
11	Mfg.	.7	.8	.7	.9	.8	1.0	.9	1.7	1.0[a]	.6	1.8	.9	.9	1.9	.8	.2	.4
12	Other	.4	1.1	.6	.8	.9	1.0[a]	.9	1.0	1.3	1.0	1.0[a]	1.7	1.1	1.0	1.0	.2	.7
13	Service	.5	.9	.9	1.1	.9	1.5	1.2	1.1	.9	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.9	1.3	.8	.2	.1
	Labor																	
14	Mfg.	.0	.6	.7	.2	.5	.7	.5	1.5	.8	.6	1.8	1.2	1.7	3.3	1.4	.3	.5
15	Other	.3	.5	.4	.8	.5	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	2.3	.2	.7
16	Farmers	.4	.4	.5	.4	.9	.7	.7	.8	.9	1.2	1.0[a]	1.1	.9	1.1	1.3	3.2	2.3
17	Farm Laborers	.1	.2	.4	.2	.6	.6	.8	.9	.9	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.5	2.1	1.1	5.5

[a] Rounds to unity from above (other indices shown as 1.0 round to unity from below).

By contrast, looking at the lowest right-hand box, we see that 5.5 times as many sons of farm laborers themselves became farm laborers as we might have expected if their father's occupations had nothing to do with where they landed. In effect, father's occupations had a very strong influence on their destined occupation.

OTHER USES OF MOBILITY TABLES

An interesting and useful figure results, too, when we compare the number of cells where the ratio is above 1 with those where the ratio is below 1. A preponderance of the former (both upward and downward movements) indicates much movement among occupational strata. So, too, if one draws a diagonal that goes from top left to bottom right, the cells with values above 1 that lie to the lower left of the diagonal line represent disproportionate upward mobility, while those with values above 1 that lie to the upper right of the diagonal represent disproportionate downward mobility.

One can then calculate the ratio of upward to downward mobility and use that as a measure of the prevailing direction in which mobility is taking place.

One can also compare short-distance moves with long-distance moves to see how far on the average sons of various fathers are moving when and if they move. Or one can analyze special patterns of individual occupations to see how those sons are faring compared to some other individual occupation. For example, are sons of clerical people more or less mobile, in what direction, and over what distance, as compared with sons of construction workers?

From these tables, too, one can analyze the flow of manpower that each occupation is supplying to the other occupations, for example, from what categories does the self-employed professional category receive its manpower. An analysis of this kind makes it possible to say such things as "...every occupational origin above the level of construction craftsmen sends more than one-fifth of its sons to only two of the seventeen occupations—salaried professionals and managers. A major reason is that these two occupational groups have been expanding rapidly while reproducing at a level somewhat lower than the rest of the population."[8]

Or from another matrix, which shows inflow percentages, that is, what proportion of men in each occupation were recruited from various occupational origins, one can discover such things as that in 1962, "every occupational group has recruited more than 10 percent of its members from sons of farmers. Three evident reasons for this are the large size of the farm category in the past...the rapid decline in the number of farmers in recent decades; and the exceptionally high fertility of farmers."[9]

With these same data, one can calculate what is called an index of occupational inheritance, or the percent of men in one category whose fathers were in the same one; and one can also calculate an index of self-recruitment, which is the percent of fathers whose sons continue in their occupational category. One can also

analyze the data to discover how concentrated or dispersed are the inflows and outflows to and from various occupations.

All of these and still other observations and measures are the kinds of statements about the volume and patterning of mobility in a society that one can make on the basis of data about son and father's occupations. With those kinds of summary measures and statements about mobility, one can then compare various time periods to see what has happened to the volume and patterning mobility; and one can also compare the volumes and patterns of various nations.

SOME GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT MOBILITY

Blau and Duncan, on whose work we have relied very heavily here, venture a summary statement about American mobility patterns and volumes. They base these on three sources:

1. intergenerational movement from father's occupations to son's occupations in 1962
2. intergenerational movement from father's occupations to son's first occupations in 1962
3. intragenerational movement from son's first occupation to son's occupations in 1962

These three tables, they say, bring the main characteristics of the American occupational structure into "high relief." The conclusions include the following:

1. Occupational inheritance is in all cases greater than one would expect if one assumed perfect independence of father and son's occupations.
2. Social mobility is nevertheless pervasive.
3. Upward mobility is more prevalent than downward mobility.
4. Short-distance movements occur more often than long-distance movements.

Exceptional patterns include the following:

1. Industrial lines constitute stronger barriers to mobility than do skill levels within an industry.
2. Sons of craftsmen are more likely to move into higher than lower white collar occupations.
3. Sons of manual workers outside manufacturing are more apt to be upwardly mobile than those in manufacturing.
4. Downward mobility to first job is most marked for those in the highest white collar groups and for skilled craftsmen, while upward mobility to the first job is most common among both lower manual and nonmanual workers.

With regard to trends over time in the amount of mobility, some of the conclusions these authors reach include the following:

1. Mobility has slightly increased in the ten or fifteen years covered (as of 1962). At least there is no indication of increasing rigidity in the class structure.
2. The recent increases in overall chances of mobiltiy are due primarily to the expansion in the higher salaried positions to accommodate the upward flow of people, and it is the younger men in particular who have been able to take advantage of this expansion.
3. The amount of upward intergenerational and intragenerational mobility have both increased in the last decade.
4. Since World War II there has been no evident rigidification in the occupational opportunity system. The fear that the "land of opportunity" is giving way to a society with rigid classes is "premature" and perhaps "unfounded".[10]

Most of these generalizations were confirmed in a 1973 study by Featherman and Hauser[11] who replicated the 1962 study done by Blau and Duncan. They drew a sample from the 1970 Census that resembled the 1962 sample as closely as possible and to them they put almost all the same questions that had been asked in the earlier study.

Some of their most important conclusions were the following:

1. There is a great deal of movement both within occupational careers and between generations. More than 80 percent of the men in the 1973 sample had moved at least one level out of their fathers' occupations.
2. The trend was toward a greater volume of occupational mobility.
3. Upward mobility was far more prevalent than downward mobility.
4. There was, nevertheless, a moderate degree of correlation between occupational origins and destinations, both within and between generations.
5. The observed trends in mobility were due mostly to changes in the occupational structure, that is, in the numbers and kinds of jobs available, and only a small portion of the mobility was due to genuinely improved chances for mobility.

RACE AND MOBILITY

Featherman and Hauser[12] were also able to secure a sufficiently large sample of Black males so that they could study Black mobility and make some comparisons with White mobility. Among the most important findings were the following:

1. The mean difference between Black and White educational achievements was at an all-time low in 1973.
2. The payoff of education in occupations and incomes for Blacks, especially those with college education, rise sharply from 1962 to 1973. But the payoffs were still smaller than those for Whites.
3. The relative improvement in the socioeconomic status of better-educated Blacks was not matched by Blacks at lower socioeconomic levels. Instead, socioeconomic class lines within the Black community were drawn more sharply, and occupational inheritance among Blacks came to resemble that among Whites more closely than ever before. In sum, while the overall opportunities for Blacks had significantly improved, this was accompanied by greater inequality of opportunity *within* the Black population.

4. Younger cohorts of Blacks experienced more extensive educational and occupational mobility between generations than their predecessors, and for those born after the mid-1930s the mobility rates compare favorably with those of the White population.
5. Blacks born during and after World War II experienced occupational mobility (from fathers' to sons' current jobs) that far exceeded the mobility of older Blacks.

The authors believe that those trends in the Black population suggest a weakening in the influence of racial identity on socioeconomic standing and on chances for improvement across generations.

SEX AND MOBILITY

The 1962 and 1973 studies did not contain information about women's positions and patterns of mobility. Future censuses and special national studies are sure to provide this information. In the meantime, generalizations about women's patterns must rely on smaller studies, of which an impressively large number have been done since the early 1970s. Some of these have studied subsamples of representative national panels, but the total number of women studied in even the largest of these is far smaller than the more than 20,000 males studied in 1962 and 1973. Comparisons between the mobility patterns of men and women must therefore be made with considerable caution. We can report some of the findings from a few studies.

Treiman and Terrell[13] compared a small but representative national sample of women (1649 White and 875 Black) with a subsample of the larger group of men studied by Blau and Duncan. Their major findings include the following:

1. Men and women are about equally well educated, and their educational attainments are similarly influenced by their parents (p. 197).
2. Both the level and process of occupational attainment are very similar for women and men. The prestige of occupations held by women is roughly equal to the prestige of those occupations when held by men, and, for both women and men, attaining an occupation depends mostly on education and only slightly on social origins (p. 197).
3. Wives earn about half as much as their husbands. Less than half of this difference is attributable to the fact that wives worked less and have worked only part of their adult lives. The remainder of the difference is due to a combination of three factors: direct discrimination against women, lack of equal opportunity for married women, and norms that lead or force women to take account of nonincome aspects of their jobs. These inferences are supported by the fact that single women earn substantially more than married women, while still earning less than men (p. 198).
4. In regard to income, Black women are more like Black men than are White women like White men. But Black women are paid much less than Black men, even when they are as well educated, perform comparable work, have as much experience, and work as many hours (p. 198).

The foregoing findings on White women and men were largely supported by a later study by McClendon,[14] who also found that the number of children at home had no influence on the occupational status of women.

Still another study by Featherman and Hauser[15] also supports the major themes of these studies and adds the finding that sexual discrimination accounts for about 85 percent of the difference in the earnings of women and men, both in 1962 and 1973.

Taylor and Glenn[16] examined the evidence about the popular assumption that there is a direct correlation between the physical attractiveness of women and the occupational prestige of their husbands. The implication in this notion is that more attractive women are able to secure high-standing men, on some principle of exchange of attractiveness for status. The authors studied a nation-wide sample drawn in 1972 and found that the attractiveness of women is not nearly as influential as it is believed to be. The influence was insignificant in the marriages of women who came from families with higher social standing, and its influence was significant but only at a low level in the marriages of women from lower social origins. Among all women, educational level was more influential than attractiveness or social origin.

Another widespread assumption holds that because women spend more time at domestic affairs even when they are employed, there is a degrading effect on their earnings. Shelly Coverman[17] examined this matter in a study of a national sample of persons, aged 16 and over, who were working for pay for 20 hours a week or more, in 1977. She found that spending time at domestic labor significantly decreased the wages of both men and women. The wages of working-class men were most influenced, and nonworking-class women's wages were depressed by domestic labors more than the wages of working-class women. The author suggests that if wage differentials between men and women are to be reduced, domestic labor must be more evenly divided.

Only one major study[18] suggest that there are significant differences in the status acquisition patterns of men and women. This involved a 1975 follow-up on a sample of people who had been seniors in Wisconsin high schools in 1958 and had been studied at that time. The researchers report that the effect of post-high school education on first jobs was twice as great among men as among women, and the effect of first jobs on current jobs is one-third greater among men than among women. But they also found that by midlife the total effect of schooling on job status had become the same for both sexes, and that childless women closely resemble men in the patterns of occupational attainment.

With the exception of this one study, there is a consensus among researchers on two major findings: (1) the general patterns of status attainment that hold true for men also apply to women, with education and first job being most important in determining final job, while social origin is less influential;(2) while women have achieved educational parity with men, they still show significantly lower occupational and income levels. This difference is due to the persistence of their normative roles which involve marriage, child bearing, and domestic work, along with jobs, and to the continuation of prejudice and discrimination against women in the job market. The implication here is that if and when discrimination reduces or ceases, and if and when the traditional views about the proper roles for women and men

move toward greater equality, the achievement levels of the two sexes will show comparable equalization.[19]

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

How then does the picture of opportunity and mobility in the United States compare with that of other nations? Is America more or less the land of opportunity than others? Can immigrants from abroad still count on the United States as a place where one can start from very humble origins and by diligence, education, and training climb high on the ladder of occupational prestige and income?

More important, from a sociological point of view, are such questions as the following: What kinds of economic and industrial organization are correlated with what amounts and patterns of mobility? Do countries with similar levels of economic development have different volumes and patterns of mobility so that we must turn to noneconomic factors to try to understand the differences? Do countries with higher rates of upward mobility show less or more internal disorders, social pathologies, and participation in political processes? In short, the same kinds of questions that one asks about the significance of mobility within any one nation can be raised about the differences between nations.

To answer these questions one needs equally good data from all the countries one wishes to compare. While competent sociologists are at work in all western European countries on many of the same problems and while the techniques and methods for measuring mobility are available to all, we do not have sufficiently good comparable data to be able to answer many of the questions about comparative amounts and kinds of mobility in various countries. Many problems plague the person who tries to make international comparisons.

In general the difficulties involved are precisely the same as those one encounters in trying to measure mobility within one country, magnified and multiplied now by the necessity to get genuinely comparable data from several countries.

Yet studies of comparative mobility rates have been made by various scholars since the early 1960s.

The soundest comparisons are those that restrict themselves to selected portions of the total picture of mobility, for example, by whom are the elite or top educational ranks and jobs being filled? Alternatively, various comparisons have been made of the movement of the sons of blue-collar fathers into white-collar occupations. To do this requires that one condense the ladder of occupations into two large groupings, and, naturally, much detail is lost in the process.

From these and other studies, it is possible to venture a number of generalizations, albeit tentative ones, about mobility patterns in the United States and other western European industrialized democracies.

1. Rates of mobility in all industrial societies are high and there is little difference between them.

2. While rates of upward mobility, as well as of upward and downward combined, seem somewhat larger in various European countries when measured by movement across the blue-collar–white-collar line, the overall rate of mobility, taking more detailed distinctions into account, is probably not very significantly different and may indeed favor the United States, but not by much.
3. The greater degree of egalitarianism in America, as expressed particularly in its system of education, has served in the past, and continues to serve to a lesser degree, as one of the main sources of American mobility. It has been reflected in the past in the greater movement in the United States of sons of manual and other lower-category workers into elite positions at the top of the occupational ladder. At the same time, the greater degree of indifference to social origins in the United States probably has made the transition for mobile sons easier, at least so far as acceptance in the ranks of elites is concerned. These latter differences in ease of transition probably still persist.
4. The former superiority of the United States to other European countries as measured by wealth, or GNP per capita, has by now virtually vanished; and indeed a number of other European countries now outrank the United States in wealth per capita and have more egalitarian distributions of wealth. To that extent, the former greater ability of people in the United States to enjoy higher standards of living, without correlative changes in occupations, has probably by now been eliminated or equalized.
5. Shifting economic fortunes and shifting structures of occupational opportunities in the United States and Europe (and Japan) make it perilous to predict the future shapes of occupational opportunities and the related mobility rates. The very sharp decrease in the well-being of certain basic industries in the United States probably has produced depression in the educational and occupational fortunes of the children of workers employed in those industries. Many of the same observations apply to European countries as well.
6. The single, safest prediction one can make about the future of comparative mobility rates is that as all the countries involved become more alike in their political and economic structures, as they are in the process of becoming, the more similar do they become in their rates and patterns of mobility.

NOTES

1. See Melvin Tumin, "Some Unapplauded Consequences of Social Mobility in a Mass Society," *Social Forces,* 36, 1 (October 1957), 32–37.

2. Reprinted by permission of Academic Press from D.L. Featherman and R.M. Hauser, *Opportunity and Change* (New York: Academic Press, 1978).

3. See, for example, Suzanne Keller, *Beyond the Ruling Class: Strategic Elites in Modern Society* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1963).

4. Peter M. Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan, *The American Occupational Structure* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1967).

5. Ibid., p. 28. We also use Blau & Duncan's formulations in explaining various of the measures and in specifying the uses of mobility tables. All page numbers in parentheses refer to that volume. Reprinted with permission of The Free Press, a division of Macmillan, Inc. Copyright © 1967 by Peter M. Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan.

6. Ibid., p. 35.

7. Ibid., Table 2.5, p. 32. Reprinted with permission of The Free Press, a division of Macmillan, Inc. Copyright © 1967 by Peter M. Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan.

8. Ibid., p. 38.

9. Ibid., p. 38.

10. Ibid., p. 113.

11. David L. Featherman and Robert M. Hauser, *Opportunity and Change,* (New York: Academic Press, Inc., 1978). All the findings reported here are taken from pp. 135–38 of this book.

12. All the observations on Black mobility patterns are drawn from pp. 325–29 and 381–84 in Featherman and Hauser, *ibid.*

13. Donald J. Treiman and Kermit Terrell, "Sex and the Process of Status Attainment: A Comparison of Working Women and Men," *American Sociological Review,*40 (April 1975), 174–200. (Page numbers in parentheses refer to this article.)

14. McKee H. McClendon, "The Occupational Status Attainment Processes of Males and Females," *American Sociological Review,* 41 (February 1976), 52–64.

15. David L. Featherman and Robert M. Hauser, "Sexual Inequalities and Socioeconomic Achievement in the U.S., 1962–1973," *American Sociological Review,* 41 (June 1976), 462–83.

16. Patricia Ann Taylor and Norval D. Glenn, "The Utility of Education and Attractiveness for Females' Status Attainment Through Marriage," *American Sociological Review,* 41 (June 1976), 484–98.

17. Shelley Coverman, "Gender, Domestic Labor Time, and Wage Inequality," *American Sociological Review,* 48 (October 1983), 623–37.

18. William H. Sewell, Robert M. Hauser, and Wendy C. Wolf, "Sex, Schooling, and Occupational Status," *American Journal of Sociology,* 86 (November 1980), 551–83.

19. Each of the works cited in footnotes 12 to 19 contains extensive bibliographical citations to other works in the field of sex differences in status attainment.